

The Influence of Antisocial Personality Patterns on Recidivism among Non-Custodial Offenders in Nairobi County, Kenya

Andrew Kanyutu Mungai¹ Florence S.A. K'Okul²

¹Mount Kenya University

Department of Psychology, Mount Kenya University

Abstract: Recidivism of offenders has become a major focus of studies evaluating the efficacy of prison rehabilitation programs. However, there are few studies on recidivism among non-custodial offenders serving community sentences. This study used descriptive survey design to examine the influence of antisocial personality patterns on recidivism among non-custodial offenders in Nairobi County, Kenya. Structured and close ended questionnaires were used to obtain data on 139 recidivists out of 146 target population of recidivists in Nairobi County. Recidivism was measured by the number of rearrests, reconvictions and re-incarceration while as antisocial personality patterns were measured by aggression, callous disregard of others, lack of empathy, and impulsivity. The results indicated that most recidivists acknowledged presence of anti-social personality patterns that influenced reoffending. The results highlights the importance of understanding antisocial personality patterns and future research should help in coming up with rehabilitation interventions to address recidivism. The study concludes that antisocial personality patterns have direct influence on recidivism. It is recommended that the current findings needs to the further replicated and explored in other study locations.

Keywords: Antisocial personality patterns, recidivism, probation, rehabilitation,

I. INTRODUCTION

Psychologists have sought psychological explanations for the reasons behind some offenders continued reoffending despite the negative consequences and interventions to check their reoffending. The prevalence of anti-social personality (ASP) among offender populations stands between 30% and 60% (Howard, McCarthy, Huband & Duggan, 2013). Offenders experiencing personality disorders experience deficiency in adjusting to external pressures and problem situations. ASP is an enduring and inflexible maladaptive personality traits that cause negative social economic consequences (Daniel, 2015). Anti-social personality manifests itself in callous disregard of others, impulsiveness, lack of remorse or guilt. Offenders with ASPD exhibit maladaptive behaviour in their failure to adjust properly to environmental stressors. It occurs because of rigid, poor, maladaptive defenses to early childhood experiences of abuse and neglect. Antisocial personality patterns are type B disorder manifested by offenders projecting pervasive

disregard of rights of others, non-conformity to social norms and lawful authorities, deceitfulness as indicated in affinity for untruths, impulsivity, being easily irritable, overly aggressive and violent, lack of remorse by justifying offending behaviour. The ASPD manifests its self in early years through adolescence and transits to adulthood where it starts declining (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The presence of antisocial personality patterns across offender populations is about 50%, higher than the general population or in clinical settings. A worldwide survey of prisoners by Fazel and Danesh (2002) indicated high prevalence of anti-social personality disorder. The survey found 47% men and 21% women having anti-social personality disorders. In the UK 63% male awaiting trial, 49% convicted males and 31% female prisoners experienced anti-social personality disorder. An estimated prevalence of ASPD within United Kingdom (UK) prison and probation stands at 60-70% (Ministry of Justice, 2011). Another study in UK on prevalence of ASPD among probationers found a prevalent rate of 39% (Brooker, 2012).

A study conducted in Sweden on registered offenders observed that offenders with ASPD are more susceptible to commit subsequent crimes within one year of follow up. The study found ASPD to be closely associated with substance abuse among the youth and adult males (Fridell, Hesse, Jaeger & Kuhlhorn, 2008). A study in Indiana, USA on non-violent offenders who engage in frauds for personal financial gain showed personality was important in predicting recidivism Listwan, Piquero & Kuhlhorn, 2008). The study found that offenders who are aggressive and neurotic had increased likelihood of reoffending. Offenders with low intelligence and emotional intelligence are predisposed to commit crimes and have high likelihood of reoffending. Such offenders have low self-control and often act impulsively without weighing down the consequences (Adetunji, Soezin & Margaret, 2015).

The ASPD is more prevalent in persons coming from dysfunctional families and marginalized neighbourhood characterised by social exclusion, poverty and availability of drugs of abuse (Meier, Slutske, Arndt, & Cadoret, 2008). Offenders with ASPD record high incidences of reoffending. Many engage in repeated criminal acts such as offences

against property, persons and alcohol and substance abuse (Fridell, et al., 2008). Most offenders score high on impulsivity, which refers to the lack of planning before acting out. Impulsive persons make decisions on the spur of the moments.

a. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the how the antisocial personality patterns influence on recidivism among non-custodial offenders in Nairobi County, Kenya. The findings of the study will inform the best practices in reducing the recidivism and also create deeper understanding of antisocial personality patterns on offenders.

b. Significance of the Study

The research sought to add to the knowledge of what works in reducing recidivism and the evidence based practices that correctly predicts risk of recidivism. The study results are expected to benefit psychologist working within criminal justice system in understanding of the psychological dispositions that explain recidivism. It will increase the psychologist’s insight into the contribution of antisocial personality patterns in reoffending. The study hopes to benefit probation officers and other professional working in the field of community correction on the major issues facing the community rehabilitation programmes. The study hoped to enhance the understanding effect of antisocial personality patterns on the risk of reoffending and thus break the crime cycle. The outcome of the study is hoped to create confidence in the various stakeholders in the penal system. Judicial officers are hoped to have more confidence in the work of probation officers and consequently increase utilization of community sanctions. The findings may lead to policy makers rethinking about increasing resources to Probation and Aftercare department to fight recidivism and ensure public safety. Further, the research was expected to bridge the knowledge gap by making empirical solutions to challenges facing non-custodial rehabilitation in Kenya where research in effectiveness of community rehabilitation n is limited.

c. Research Questions

1. To what extent does antisocial personality patterns influence recidivism among non-custodial offenders
2. What are the main elements of antisocial personality patterns that influence recidivism among non-custodial offenders

II. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The study used descriptive survey design. The design was used because the phenomenon under study did not require experiment and no manipulation but rather description. The design further allowed data analysis through descriptive statistics and presentation through frequency tables, charts and Histograms (Neuman, 2014). Quantitative approach was employed whereby the researcher used close ended questionnaire to gather information. The questionnaire method

is aptly used where information sought is personal and secret such as precious criminal records and antecedents of crime (Creswell, 2014). The researcher developed the questionnaire and subjected the research tool to validity and reliability testing through a pilot study on 10 recidivists and input from experts and professional peers. The participants in the pilot study were excluded in the main study.

Census method was used as the target population of 146 was considered small for sampling purposes. The study excluded juvenile offenders and psychiatric offenders. The participants were required to grant informed consent before undertaking the study. To ensure compliance with ethical standards of conducting research with human participants, ethical clearance and licenses were obtained from the University ethics review board and the national body mandated to manage research in Kenya. Participants self-administered the questionnaires and the researcher administered for those with literacy challenges. Debriefing was carried out at the end of filling the questionnaire.

III. RESULTS

The researcher sought to investigate the presence of antisocial personality patterns among recidivists. Antisocial personality patterns were measured using the following items: juvenile conduct problems, impulsivity, irritability and aggression, feelings of remorse, callousness, risk taking and readiness to commit offences.

Table 1

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.822	.818	9

The Cronbach’s correlation coefficient $\alpha = .822$ for the 9 items as shown in Table 1 for anti-social personality patterns show that items included in the questionnaire have high inter relatedness. The study recorded a response rate of 95.2% with 139 recidivists out of target population of 146 recidivists.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics

		Previous convictions			Total		
		1	2	3	over 3		
Age	18-25 years	47	4	0	0	51	
	26-35 years	48	3	0	1	52	
	36-45 years	24	1	1	0	26	
	46-55 years	7	0	0	0	7	
	over 55 years	2	1	0	0	3	
Gender	Male	100	7	1	1	109	
	Female	28	2	0	0	30	
Education level	None	3	0	1	0	4	

	Primary	52	6	0	0	58
	Secondary	46	1	0	1	48
	Tertiary	18	1	0	0	19
	University	9	1	0	0	10

The demographic characteristics of respondents indicated that offenders in age group 18- 25 years and 26-35 years accounted for 36.7% and 37.4% respectively. The respondents were 109 male offenders and 30 female offenders as shown in Table 2. Most of the recidivists had primary level of education 41.7% and 34.5% for those with secondary education.

Table 3: Influence of antisocial personality patterns on recidivism

	SD		D		U		A		SA		Mean	SD
	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Harming animals	58	41.7	30	21.6	0	0.0	22	15.8	29	20.9	2.53	1.624
Setting fires	70	50.4	33	23.7	0	0.0	20	14.4	16	11.5	2.13	1.454
Impulsivity	37	26.8	23	16.7	3	2.2	36	26.1	39	28.3	3.12	1.623
Aggression	23	16.5	25	18.0	1	0.7	46	33.1	44	31.7	3.45	1.500
Lack of remorse	46	33.1	20	14.4	0	0.0	30	21.6	43	30.9	3.03	1.715
Callousness	42	30.2	29	20.9	3	2.2	56	40.3	9	6.5	2.72	1.419
Risk taking	48	34.5	28	20.1	1	0.7	51	36.7	11	7.9	2.63	1.465
Readiness commit offences	69	49.6	17	12.2	1	0.7	15	10.8	37	26.6	2.53	1.754
Lack of empathy	65	46.8	39	28.1	5	3.6	17	12.2	13	9.4	2.09	1.356

Key: A- Agree, SA- Strongly agree, D-Disagree. U- Undecided.

Source: Researcher, 2020

The study showed in Table 3 that 15.8 % and 14.4% agreed to have being involved in harming animals and settings fires when they were young. According to Andrews and Bonta (2017) the onset of antisocial personality patterns is at an early age. A significant number 63.3% of the recidivists disagreed having a history of harming animals while 74.1% stated that they did not engage in fire setting. A recent study in Portugal found that most recidivists had early onset of conduct problems and encounter conflict with law (Pechorro, Seto, Ray, Alberto, Smoes, 2019).

The findings showed that 26.1% offenders agreed being impulsive while 28.3% strongly agreed to have impulsivity. A significant number of offenders 43.5% stated that they do not act impulsively. On irritability and aggression 33.1% recidivists agreed and 31.7% strongly agreed being irritable and aggressive. Those who did not experience irritability were 8% disagree and 16.0% strongly disagree. One participant was undecided.

Findings indicated that 21.6% recidivists agreed and 30.9% strongly agreed that they did not experience remorse after committing offences, while 14.4% disagreed and 33.1% strongly disagreed that they did not experience remorse. Other studies show that lack of remorsefulness and guilt to be a risk factor to reoffending (Bandes, 2015). Past studies have shown that lack of remorse is very strong consideration by judicial officers, prosecution and probation officers in passing out sentences. Lack of remorse is seen as risk factor for continued offending (Bandes, 2015, Weisman, 2014).

The anti-social personality patterns were also measured by callousness of recidivists which is manifested by a general deficit in empathy, indifference to people’s concerns and manipulation of others for personal gain. Callousness is a construct referring to persons who are described as cold and uncaring (APA, 2013). The results showed that 20.9% of recidivists disagreed and 30.2% strongly disagreed that callousness affected their offending behaviour. Those who felt that being affected by callousness were 40.3% agreed and 6.5 strongly agreed while 3 respondents representing 2.2% were undecided.

The gathered data also showed that 20.1% of recidivists disagree and 34.5% strongly disagree that they were risk takers while 36.7% agreed and 7.9% strongly agreed to engage in risk taking. Only one respondent was undecided. A recent research by Dhimi and Mandel (2012) concluded that risk taking involved offenders engaging in activities without proper planning and consideration of the consequences.

Lastly, study outcomes established that 49.6% strongly disagreed and 12.2% disagree on the statement that they are ready to continue coming further offences. Those still clinging on committing offences in future are 10.8% agree and 26.6% strongly agree. Readiness to persist in reoffending is a positive risk factor for recidivism.

IV. DISCUSSION

The study found that recidivists with history of setting fires and harming animals in their early childhood were 25.9% and 36.7% respectively. Recidivists who acknowledged impulsivity were 54.4%, being irritable and aggressive

64.8%, lack of remorse 52.5%, callousness 46.8%, adventurers and risk-taking 44.6% and readiness to commit offences were 37.4%. These findings corroborated a recent Canadian study on women recidivism by Greiner, Law and Brown (2015) that antisocial personality patterns are strong predictors of recidivism among non-custodial offenders. The findings are consistent with observations by Sissons and Polaschek, (2017) that antisocial personality disorders are correlated with high risk criminal behaviours and recidivism.

These findings tend to reinforce findings by Andrews and Bonta in Canada (Andrew & Bonta, 2017) that showed that most recidivists exhibited aggression and irritable behaviour. Offenders exhibiting high level of irritability and aggression are prone to commit violent offences (Aguilas-Caceles & Farrington, 2017). Aggression and irritability makes offenders prone to pick up fights and often find themselves committing assaultive and violent offences against others. The study showed high correlation between those who committed violent offences and recidivism (Lee & Hanson, 2016).

Offenders who consistently act impulsively often find difficulties maintain relationships, jobs, residences (APA, 2013). This makes them vulnerable to reoffend. A recent study in the USA found a strong correlation between impulsivity and reoffending (Higgins, Kirchner, & Ricketts, 2013). Several past studies have shown that callousness has been linked to juvenile delinquencies, violent and non-violent crimes (Thornton, 2012). Studies by Lawing, Frick and Cruise (2010) showed that callousness had high relationship with risk for violent crimes and general recidivism.

A recent study by Leigh, Georgia, Hellen, Cerys (2014) that sought to study the effect of denial of sexual offenders on recidivism found that denial of victim or taking responsibility was not significantly associated with recidivism. They also recommended reconsideration of the assumption that denial of responsibility represents risk thus attracting harsher sentences. Offenders with antisocial personality patterns show persistent indifference towards victims, blames victims, and try to minimise the effect of their crimes. These findings are similar with study done in Spain that indicated antisocial personality coupled with empathy deficits for victims are more prone to commit violent offences and engage in recidivism (Martinez, Lila, Albiol, 2016).

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following conclusions are made

1. That there is remarkable prevalence of antisocial personality patterns amongst non-custodial recidivists

2. That a significant number of recidivists have past conduct behavioural problems as juveniles exhibited in harming animals and setting of fires
3. That most recidivists exhibit lack of remorse, aggression and callousness
4. The study concludes that antisocial personality patterns influence criminal recidivism.

The study makes the following recommendations

1. That this findings on the influence of antisocial personality patterns on recidivism of non-custodial offenders need to be replicated and further explored by carrying out research in other study locations.
2. Future studies should focus on the efficacy of existing rehabilitation programs in addressing antisocial personality patterns for those offenders serving probation sentences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge the professional guidance of my Post graduate supervisor Dr. Florence K'Okul for her support and encouragement.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest

FUNDING

I declare that there was no funding for the study and the publication of this article.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adetunji, S.O., Soezin, K., & Margaret, N. N. (2015). Effects of Emotional Intelligence and Creativity Thinking Training on Improving the Emotional Intelligence of Recidivists in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Participatory Educational Research (PER)* Vol. 2(1), pp. 11-23, April, 2015
- [2] Aguilar-Cárceles, M. M., & Farrington, D. P. (2017). Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, impulsivity, and low self-control: which is most useful in understanding and preventing offending? *Crime Psychology Review*, 3(1), 1-22
- [3] American Psychiatric Association (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders. (5th Ed.). Washington, DC: *American Psychiatric Association*.
- [4] Andrews, D., & Bonta, J. (2017). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (6th ed.). London, England: Routledge
- [5] Bandes, S. A. (2015). Remorse and Criminal Justice. Accessed from www.researchgate.net DOI:10.1177/1754073915601222
- [6] Brooker, C., Sirdifield, C., Blizard, R., Denney, D. & Pluck, G. (2012). Probation and mental illness. *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology*, 23(4), 522-537. doi: 10.1080/14789949.2012.704640
- [7] Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* .4th Ed. New Delhi, Sage Publications
- [8] Daniel, J. F. (2015). *Antisocial, borderline, narcissist & histrionic workbook: treatment strategies for cluster B personality disorders*
- [9] Dhami, M. K., & Mandel, D. R. (2012). Crime as risk taking. *Psychology, Crime and Law*, 18, 389-403.

- [10] Fazel, S. & Danesh, J. (2002). Serious mental disorder in 23,000 prisoners: a systematic review of 62 surveys. *Lancet*, 359,545–550.
- [11] Fridell, M., Hesse, M., Jaeger, M.M., & Kuhlhorn, E. (2008). Antisocial personality disorder as a predictor of criminal behaviour in a longitudinal study of a cohort of abusers of several classes of drugs: relation to type of substance and type of crime. *Addictive Behaviours*, 33, 799-811.
- [12] Greiner, L. E., Law, M. A. & Brown S.L. (2015).Using Dynamic Factors to Predict recidivism among Women- a Four-Wave Prospective study. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. Vol. 42, No. 5. DOI: 10.1177/0093854814553222
- [13] Higgins, G. E., Kichner, E. E., & Ricketts, M. L. (2013). Impulsivity and Offending from Childhood to Young Adulthood in the United States: A Developmental Trajectory Analysis. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences (IJCS)*. Vol 8 Issue 2 June 2013
- [14] Howard, R., McCarthy, L., Huband, N., & Duggan, C. (2013). Re-offending in forensic patients released from secure care: The role of antisocial/borderline personality disorder co-morbidity, substance dependence and severe childhood conduct disorder. *Criminal Behavior and Mental Health*, 202, 191–202. <http://doi.org/10.1002/cbm>
- [15] Lawing, K., Frick, P. J., & Cruise, K. R. (2010). Differences in offending patterns between adolescent sex offenders high or low on callous-unemotional traits. *Psychological Assessment*, 22, 298-305. doi: 10.1037/a0018707
- [16] Lee, S.C., & Hanson, R.K. (2016). Recidivism risk factors are correlated with a history of psychiatric hospitalization among sex offenders. *Psychological services*. 13(3) 261
- [17] Leigh, H., Philip, H., Georgia, B., Hellen, W., & Cerys, M. (2014). Relationship between Denial, Risk and Recidivism in Sexual offenders
- [18] Listwan, S. J., Piquero, N. L., & Van-Voorhis, P. (2010). Recidivism among a white collar sample: does personality matter? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 43(1), 156-174.
- [20] Martinez, A., Lila, M., & Albiol, L. (2016). Empathy Impairments in Intimate Partner Violence Perpetrators With Antisocial and Borderline Traits: A Key Factor in the Risk of Recidivism. *Violence and Victims*, Volume 31 no. 2. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-14-00149>
- [21] Meier, M. H., Slutske, W. S., Arndt, S., & Cadoret, R. J. (2008). Impulsive and callous traits are more strongly associated with delinquent behavior in higher risk neighborhoods among boys and girls. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 117, 377–385
- [22] Ministry of Justice, (2011). *The Offender Personality Disorder Strategy*. Retrieved from <http://www.personalitydisorder.org.uk/criminal-justice/about-dspd-programme/>
- [23] Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social Research Methods:Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 7th Edition. Pearson Education Limited
- [24] Pechorro, P., Seto, M., Ray, J.V., Alberto, I., & Simoes, M. (2019). A Prospective Study on Self-Reported Psychopathy and Criminal Recidivism Among Incarcerated Male Juvenile Offenders. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 1 –23 <tps://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X19849569>
- [25] Sissons, M. K. A., & Polaschek, D. L. L. (2017). *Exploring personality and psychopathology profiles, criminal risk and recidivism in high risk, psychopathic prisoners*. Manuscript under revision
- [26] Thornton, L. C. (2012). Adolescents with Callous Unemotional Traits and their Roles in Adolescents with Callous Unemotional Traits and their Roles in Group Crime
- [27] Weisman, R. (2014). *Showing Remorse. Law and the social control of emotions*. Franham, UK: Ashgate Press