

## **PRISON GANGS FOR PRISON LIFE SURVIVABILITY: EXPLORING THE REASONS FOR PRISON GANG FORMATION IN KIRI-KIRI MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON**

Uzoamaka Okwunwanne & Geraldine K.L Chan

### **ABSTRACT**

Prison conditions in Kiri-Kiri Maximum prison are harsh due to overcrowding, poor hygiene and outdated prison amenities; however, prisoners survive and endure life in prison because of prison gangs. This study sought to explore the reasons why prisoners form prison gangs and eventually for prison life survivability in Kiri-Kiri Maximum Security Prison. This study made use of a qualitative case study approach to collect data from 34 informants who comprised 2 prison staffs and 32 prison gangs purposively selected. The results from this study discovered that the reasons for prison gang formation were the need to cope, to fulfil the prison authority's needs, for prosocial support and the need for rehabilitation. On the need to cope since the conditions in prison were harsh prison gangs assisted in the maintenance of the prison environment, thus enabling survivability in prison. For fulfilling the prison authority's needs, findings suggest that some of the prison gangs were formed solely to assist the prison authority with menial works. Furthermore, for prosocial support prison gangs provided mutual support to members, thus helping to ease some pains of incarceration. For rehabilitation through vocational workshops, prison gangs are impacted with the life skills needed to survive. The implication of the study is that prison authorities should pay more attention to prison gangs as a way to run the prison effectively.

**Keywords:** Prison, Prison gangs, Prisoners, Prosocial support, Social relations

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent times renewed attention has particularly been directed to inmate social groups, also known as prison gangs. In line with the trend, this article seeks to further the study about the prisoner's community by exploring the reason prisoners form prison gangs in Kiri-Kiri Maximum prison and eventually for prison life survivability. Kiri-Kiri Maximum Prison is situated at Apapa Local Government Area of Lagos, Nigeria and has been in existence since 1965. Kiri-Kiri Prison is chosen for the study because all categories of prisoners from across Nigeria who are serving varieties of offences are within the prison facility. A prison is a place of rectification for offenders whose actions no longer agrees with the standards expected from members within the society. Prisoners being in prison ensure they are waned from inflicting more damages to the general public, likewise enabling the offenders to reflect on their mistakes. Prisoners' time in prison is not expected to be pleasurable since prisoners are in prison for punishment; neither is prison supposed to be filled with impediments to take the life out of the inmates (Lyida 2018).

Surviving within Nigerian prison including Kiri-Kiri Maximum prison have been harsh for prisoners; this is because, over the years, prisons have been impacted by inadequate funding leading to an impediment in the effective running of the prison (Onyekachi 2016). There is also the issue of a high influx of wrongdoers into Nigerian prison believed to be intensified by insufficient adjudicators (Borokini 2008), delay by police and court (Ayade 2010), transfer or removal of investigative officers (Olateru-Olagbegi 2009), excessive amount as a bond requirement (Okagbue 1996), absence of quick trial and misuse of incarceration by judges (Agomoh et al. 2001). Apart from these challenges mentioned above which are caused by the criminal justice system in Nigeria, there are also social problems which include joblessness, poverty and corruption which resulted in inadequate socialisation and low internalisation of societal norms and values (Stephen & Dudafa 2010). According to Ogundipe (2009), most offences committed in Nigeria are because of dearth and poverty from offenders who are mostly from the lower strata in society both in finance and social connectedness. The hell-bent pursuits of wealth among Nigerians have also negatively impacted the prison conversely with social problems which led to an increase in criminal activities since nothing is structured to curb these social problems (Eze & Okafor 2007).

The intriguing questions across social analysts have been how to design an effective social system in prison to enhance the quality of life for prison inmates (Skarbek 2012). In other words, how do prisoners survive during the period of imprisonment? Some scholars, however, have argued that the conditions within Nigerian prisons have deteriorated and required substantial reformation to support inmates in prison (Eze & Okafor 2007; Chikwen 2008; Ayuk et al. 2013). In respect to conditions within Nigerian prison, recent studies have specified that they are shortages of sleeping mattresses, overcrowded cells, outdated prison structures and amenities which leaves the inmates with no choice but to nap on bare prison flooring (Aduba 1993; Okoza et al. 2010; Amnesty International 2012; Ajah 2018). The issue of prison congestion in Nigerian prison has led to stress among inmates likewise strain on prison amenities, poor personal hygiene and sanitation among inmates (Agbakwuru & Ibe-Godfrey 2017). The problem of overcrowding within Nigerian prison is also believed to be caused by the abuse of the presumption of innocence of suspect until found guilty (Ogwezzy 2011). Similarly, Agomoh et al. (2001) consider that congestion within prison cells is the result of the massive numbers of offenders who are either awaiting trial or because of logistics problems such as the conveyance of defendants to court and insufficient prison structures.

A handful of recent studies have argued that rehabilitation is an educative approach and platform for prisoners to join in readiness for continued existence and acquisition of skills to be self-employed, self-sufficient and for the alleviation of poverty (Uche et al. 2015; Ekpenyong & Dudafa 2016; Abubakar & Abba 2018; Igbiovio & Omorogiuwa 2019). However, the widespread corruption in Nigerian has resulted in prisons not attaining this fundamental mandate, which is the rehabilitation and reformation of inmates (Ugwuoke et al. 2015). In support, Obioha (2011) stated that Nigerian prisons contribute little or nothing to the developmental effort within the country since the prison does not satisfactorily rehabilitate prisoners. According to Johnson (2002) prisoners' time in prison, maybe tough nonetheless, this time can be useful through the creation of daily routines which allows the prisoners to endure in prison. For instance, Johnson compared life in prison for some prisoners to be similar to living

outside the prison environment; however, teaching the prisoners how to endure in prison can help with survival after the prison term. According to Johnson (2002:14):

*Though it may be obvious, there are parallels, sometimes striking parallels between the pains of prison and the pains of life in general. These similarities can be exploited for correctional purposes. Prison citizenship can serve as a rehearsal for citizenship in other harsh environments, most notably the low-income, high crime and distinctly prison-like milieus from which most prisoners are drawn and to which the vast majority of them will return.*

The challenges faced by prisoners within Nigerian prison for example as indicated in the literature above speaks conversely about the massive amount of money budgeted for prison every year and the apparent realities happening within the prison (Ugwuoke et al. 2015). Another notable instance is the inadequate funding allocated for prisoners feeding stipend alleged to be amongst the worst in the world (Agomoh 1996). The discomfort, loss and privation experienced by prisoners in Nigeria cannot justify the wrongdoing committed because some of the offenders apprehended are in exchange for a family member who could not be located (Alabi and Alabi 2011).

It is puzzling however that the consistency between prison life and living in the free society of today in Nigeria is fast closing up as inmates in some instances feel better off inside the prison than outside the prison (Ogbozor et al. 2006:2). For instance ex-convict move from a time in hell typical of the conditions in prison with congested cells, ill-treatment of inmates, outdated prison facilities and inadequate health care to a life outside the prison environment likened with the life the prisoners experienced in prison (Ogbozor et al. 2006). According to Adams (1992), it is inhuman for prisoners to leave the prison in a much worse state than the inmates came into the prison. Many offenders for example, within Nigerian prison, still do not know the reasons for their continued imprisonment; while on the other hand, the offenders who are aware of their offence have long-sufferingly waited for justice but to no avail.

The period in custody for inmates, to the investigation of crime, appearance in court, enquiry into the case and court verdict are all tainted (Okogbule 2005). In addition to the challenges of overfilled prison cells, poor feeding of inmates, and inadequate funding for prisoners welfare; however, despite these circumstances, prisoners continue to cope and survive every day with life in prison. Some studies have argued for the formation of prison gangs as a means to survive in harsh conditions (Clemmer 1958; Sykes 1958; Irwin & Cressey 1962). Numerous studies justifiably have been carried out about prison gangs; each of these studies has established and discussed various reasons for prison gang formation. Some studies specifically argued that prison gangs started because of overcrowding and shortage of prison staffs (Darke 2013). Some other studies consider that prison gangs provide managerial backing to jail management through consensus as to ensure a habitable prison environment (Naraq & Jones 2016; Symkovich 2018), and the promotion of illegal contraband market (Skarbek 2012).

According to Jones (2014) because of the harsh conditions in prisons, there was increased competition among prisoners since all categories of offenders were sheltered together hence to give a sense of belongingness and prevent violence it required assigning some part of prison administration to prison gangs. Also, Jones (2014) identified the lack of resources, under-

trained prison personnel as additional reasons for giving prison gangs custodial and administrative powers in prison. For Lessing (2010) prison gang started because of deprivation and irregularity in prison; consequently, there was a collective effort by prison gangs to improve the conditions in prison by offering protection to members through financial support, food, medications and solicitors to support members. Aside from these studies, some other literature reasoned that prison gangs are mostly because of prohibited imports into the prison environment, thus leading to violence (Kalinich 1980; Kalinich & Stojkovic 1985). While Ingraham & Wellford 1987; Crank & Marcum 2017) considers prison gangs as disturbances to correctional activities, likewise a threat to the safety of inmates and prison staffs (Knox 2012). In light of these arguments, the author sought to explore through a study about prisoners in Kiri-Kiri Maximum Security Prison forming prison gangs.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***The concept of prison gang***

There is no generally accepted definition for prison gangs; this is likely because prison gangs have so many meanings which reveal the locality or the confined conditions where the prison gangs operate. Skarbek (2014) defined prison gang as a social group which functions inside a prison as a corporate entity and exist into eternity with restricted members. For Lyman (1989), prison gang is a selection of inmates who are governed by an established code of conduct. According to Camp & Camp (1985), a tightly knitted group of inmates who are in a relationship for mutual caretaking; solidarity and profit-making activity is prison gang. Wood (2006) & Knox (2012) considers prison gang as an interconnected group of three or more persons with a recognised leader operating and repeatedly committing crime and misconduct openly identified to the group and whose contrary activities trouble the prison that holds them. In the study conducted by the author, Prison gang is recognised as a social group of prisoners who are formed based on collective interest, experiences, sense of unity and yearnings for needs and continued existence.

### ***Social Interaction***

Social interaction is a vital and indispensable part of human existence (Easthope & McNamara 2013). Through social interaction, the essence of society is conveyed since, without social relations, there is no group life. Social groups learn and mature through interaction with members in a society. According to Thompson & Hickey (2005), social interaction is a component of social order which influences and affects people behaviour and lives. Johnson and Dobrzanska (2005) specified that the relationship among inmates reduces tediousness by creating an opportunity for friendship. For Dawson & Gettys (1948) and Green (1956), social interaction is the process whereby people permeate the minds of others as interaction tends to have a reciprocal influence, among groups in their efforts to resolve difficulties and in striving towards their goals. Social interaction for the study is a process of mutual understanding which results

from interacting and leads to cooperation and alliance among members of prison gangs with the intention been to achieve their various needs and goals which helps in survival.

### ***Socialisation***

Socialisation is an essential and unending process for members in a society, beginning from birth members within a group or society are taught the behaviour expected from members of a social group. Sociologists recognise socialisation as the foundation for sustaining both the civilisation and the well-being of people within the society (Long & Hadden 1985). When members of a social group socially acquire the shared values which the social environment requires from its members' socialisation is said to have occurred. According to Glen (1969), socialisation involves learning and hastening people's moves from one position to another, likewise conditioning the required conduct for specific roles and group life. Socialisation equally assists during rectification after wrongdoing by establishing helpful techniques and day to day routines needed to support offenders into becoming a member of a social group. Kimmel & Aronson (2012) assert that socialisation inculcates group with norms, values, belief, and desires applied in social situations. Socialisation in the study is referred to as a learning process whereby members of a prison gang socially learn new ideas and skills needed to survive every day in prison, including learning shared norms and shared values.

### ***Shared Values***

Human values are immeasurable; this clarifies the reason the concept of value is fundamental and unique in society. Value can be inferred in so many ways such as about personal value, social value, family value, religious value, moral value, core value and shared value. The characterisation of shared values depends on how it is understood or used; which explains why values have so many meaning. No organisation or social group can thrive without an established set of values which guides, guarantee and stabilise their continued existence. While shared values are not written down, it continues to guide the behaviour of groups and is always functional during decision making by helping to simplify and guide members' choice between right, wrong, good, bad and what is acceptable to members of groups. According to Williams (1970), value is the communal idea of right and wrong, good or bad, desirable or undesirable, which are all linked with ethical thinking. Pepper (1958), for example, pointed out that shared values comprise sets of orientations such as interest, pleasures, preferences, moral, obligation, needs, aversions and attractions. Some example of shared value among prison gangs in Kiri-Kiri Prison is similar and includes respect for life, loyalty, kindness, respect for others and helping friends in need. Shared values in the study are the ideas understood by gang members regarding what is good and appropriate to guide their behaviour in prison.

### ***Shared Norms***

Shared norms can either be formal or informal, personal or collectives or expressive of what most members in a group do and its complementary prospects (Bicchieri 2006). There are

expected standards in all aspect of human behaviour, activities and accomplishment within the society. Social life depends on the significance of social norms. For norms to be binding, there must be a mechanism which interprets rules into actions so that people who accept these shared norms can have access to similar information, witness the same limitations and support a comparable tolerant of their situation (Horne 2001). Without social norms, the meaning of human behaviour will be confusing to understand. According to Hechter & Opp (2001); Rimal & Real (2003), social norms are the codes which endorse or prohibit behaviour through social interactions. Norms have a vital role in individual choices since it decides individual need and preferences, thus serving as standards for selection among alternatives (Bicchieri et al. 2018). Shared norms for the study is the agreed-upon standard and informal rules which prison gang understands as being suitable in guiding their behaviour. For prison gang in Kiri-Kiri Prison, some of the shared norms include respect for prison rules and regulation, trust, respect for other prisoners, peaceful coexistence and tolerance.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

There are several theories which can be used to explore prison gang formation and survivability; these theories include the deprivation models, importation models, administrative control models, which all support the leading theories for the study the human relations theory and coping theory. Prison life survivability is the capability of inmates to endure harsh conditions and continue to survive. Studies have previously shown that conditions in prison determine how prisoners and prison gangs cope and adjust within the prison environment (McCorkle & Koln 1954; Garabedian 1963; Tittle 1974).

The deprivation models are centred on Clemmer (1958) and Sykes (1958) studies on the prison. According to Clemmer (1958), the isolation of prisoners within a prison environment deprives inmates of their distinctiveness; these deprivations leave an emptiness which enables prisoners to create new identities to replace former identities. These identities are survival response by inmates in reaction to the harsh conditions in prison and the need for prison life survival, for example, the formation of prison gangs. Clemmer (1958) further stated that for prison gangs to survive and adapt to time in prison, they experience prisonization. Prisonization is prison gangs accepting the prisons way of life and adapting to the conditions. In support, Sykes (1958) specified that prisoner pains in incarceration are because of deprivations to basic needs such as the deprivation to good and services, autonomy, security, heterosexual relationship and liberty.

The importation model, however, disputes the deprivation model assertions by arguing that conditions in prison do not make prisoners have a subculture; instead, the prisoners came into the prison with ready-made characteristics and approaches which helped to facilitate prison life survivability. Irwin & Cressey (1962) identified these characteristics to include the attitudes, values, experiences, personality, coping styles, responses and culture previously experienced outside the prison by inmates but were imported into the prison environment to enhance prison life survivability. Thomas & Foster (1973), for example, believes that prisoners' reaction and ability to survive in prison may well be based on past experiences or in anticipation of future happenings. Akers et al. (1979); Jacobs (1977) and Sorenson et al. (1998) all considered that

prisoners importing pre-made strategies into prison are useful in resolving problems. Similarly, Otu et al. (2013) added that the ability of prisoners to survive in prison is because of pre-prison experiences and orientation, which were sustained by the norms and values outside the prison. Also, in support, LaCourse (2016) considers that surviving in prison was possible because prisoners applied previous experiences in a time of difficulties rather than creating new strategies for every new problem encountered in prison.

According to the proponents of the administrative control models, prison management shapes how prisoners and prison gangs act and manage in prison. Dilulio (1987) emphasised that failure in prison shows that the prison was ill-managed, under-managed or not managed. Furthermore, if prison authorities introduce orderly prison activities and enforce adherence, there will be less disorder and reoffending; thus, prisoners can adapt in prison. Dilulio (1987) propose the use of prison programs intended to improve prisoners' prospect such as involvement in vocational training or working opportunities.

The coping theory was established based on Lazarus 1966; Lazarus & Folkman (1984) and Folkman and Lazarus (1985) literatures on stress and coping. Coping is the tactics, strategies and behaviour available to people during a strain (Schwarzer & Schwarzer 1996). Coping serves two purposes which are either the regulation of a strain through emotion-focused approach or the consideration of techniques to change or deal with a strain using a problem-focused approach. Coping in prison allows members of gangs to put in effort into tolerating, withstanding or establishing friendship intended to support prison life. Similarly, since coping involves continuous activity or strategies, prison gangs using available tactics such as establishing a relationship with fellow inmates or gang members, involving in prison maintenance or learning from prison vocational training are some approaches to survive and cope in prison.

The human relations theory is attributed to Mayo (1949) and his colleagues Whitehead (1938); Roethlisberger & Dickson (1939). Human relations are the social relationships which develop among people (prison gangs) in the course of recognising their needs, solving difference or nurturing the group way of life. Human relations theory established the importance of social relations, teamwork, and sustaining relationship within an organisation. According to Mayo (1949), an organisation is a social system where individuals are enthused because of their needs and the capability to fit into a social group to establish a sense of unity and identity. In the study, the author is guided by an integration of the deprivation model, importation model, administrative control model, coping theory and human relations theory premised on the understanding that humans including prison gangs are social beings who cannot survive independently in prison except through interpersonal relationship and cooperation within a social group as to achieve a common purpose which is prison life survivability. The choice of integrating these theories and models is also due to the privations and limitations associated with life in prison and the importance of social relations in facilitating prison life survivability.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative case study design inspired by Yin (1994) and Merriam (1998) was adopted in this study to collect relevant data from prison gangs in Kiri-Kiri Maximum Prison. Yin and Merriam's approach was appropriate for this study since it brings attention to the specific case

and what was learnt. A purposive sampling which comprised of thirty-four informants were selected from Kiri-Kiri Maximum Prison to participate in the study. Thirty-two of the informants are prison gangs, whereas two are prison staffs. The prison gangs were divided into two sample groups; the first sample group consisted of fourteen prison gangs, whereas the second sample group consisted of eighteen prison gangs. Since the area of study is a Maximum-Security Prison with restricted access, the author obtained permission to carry out the study from the prison authorities. Once access was granted the prison gangs who met the purpose of the study were informed about the reason for the study and their consent obtained.

As the prison staffs did not allow the use of a camera or recorder inside the prison environment and also because the prisoner's schedules within and outside the prison environment meant that the prison gangs were only accessible at a specific time. Consequently, the collection of data from the prison gangs was through the use of structured interview guides prepared for the two sample groups and carried out simultaneously; prison gangs, however, were allowed to answer by handwritten notes while the author wrote the information from the prison staffs. Triangulation is the use of different method or a variety of sources as the strategy in the collection of data (Shenton 2004 and Maxwell 2005). The triangulation of informants ensured that the viewpoints and experiences from the prison gangs are corroborated with other members of prison gangs.

The data collected from the prison gangs and prison staffs were transcribed and coded according to emergent themes through the steps used by Braun and Clarke (2006). In addition to Bree and Gallagher (2016) recommendation on using Microsoft excels in analysing data. Following Bree and Gallagher, all transcripts from the informants were transferred, coded and stored using Microsoft excel format with pseudonyms which are not the informants' real names. Themes which emerged from the data was assigned a unique colour, and the excel worksheet sorted through the assigned colours which represented a theme. The sorting of the cell by colour presented all the generated themes. As shown in Table 1, below the study's sample comprised of thirty-four informants; thirty-two of the informants are prison gangs while two are prison staffs. The prison gangs that were selected for the study are from from the chief warders' gang, the deputy controller of prison gang, educational gang, kitchen gang, welding gang, bricklayers' gang, barbers gang, football gang, electrical gang, carpentry gang, tailoring gang, shoemaking gang and yardmaster gang, while the two prison staffs used in the study are referred to as Officer 1 and officer 2.

**Table 1: Selection of Study Informants**

Informants Pseudonyms	Names of Prison Gangs and Prison Staff
Andrew	Deputy controller of prison gang
Owalobe	Deputy controller of prison gang
Oduoye	Deputy controller of prison gang
Hassan	Chief warder gang
Idris	Chief warder gang
Idowu	Chief warder gang
Franklin	Yardmaster gang
Christopher	Yardmaster gang



Babatunde	Yardmaster gang
Sam	Yardmaster gang
Ikechukwu	Yardmaster gang
Ebuka	Kitchen gang
David	Kitchen gang
Abiola	Welding gang
Emeka	Welding gang
Junior	Educational gang
Victor	Educational gang
Favour	Educational gang
Kunle	Bricklayers gang
Okereke	Bricklayers gang
Tunde	Barbers gang
Chijekwu	Barbers gang
Goodluck	Football gang
Promise	Football gang
Anichebe	Electrical gang
Franklin	Electrical gang
Abubakar	Carpentry gang
Adams	Carpentry gang
Bello	Tailoring gang
Ibrahim	Tailoring gang
Usman	Shoemaking gang
Chike	Shoemaking gang
Donatus	Officer 1
Oliver	Officer 2

Source: Author Fieldwork (2016)

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Reasons for prison gang formation based on the perceptions and understandings of the informants suggests that there are four reasons which are (a) the need to cope (b) to fulfil the prison authority's needs (c) for prosocial support (d) the need for rehabilitation.

### *The need to cope*

As mentioned on page 6, several theories are applicable to explain and understand the reasons for prison gang formation. As the findings indicate the need to cope in prison is a reason for prison gang formation this is apparent since the conditions in Kiri-Kiri Maximum Prison are harsh due to poor sanitary conditions, overcrowded cells, outdated facilities all made worst by inadequate funds for inmates' welfare the need to cope in prison becomes crucial for gang members (Agomoh et al. 2001; Onyekachi 2016; Ajah 2018). Prison gangs, as social groups active and functional within a prison environment, begin to look for ways to survive and withstand time in prison. To survive and endure the deprivations and pains of imprisonments for Sykes (1958), prison gangs must establish daily routines which help to ensure prison life survivability through

the maintenance of the prison environment to avert the spread of diseases and sickness among the prisoners. Sickness can result especially from prisons which are always congested with inmates who lack access to fresh air for ventilation, lack access to clean water for drinking and bathing and also due to poor sanitary conditions. For Sam, a yardmaster gang member, he had this to say:

*When the prison environment is clean, there will be good health for all the prisoners.*

Sam understands the need to ensure that the conditions in prison are convenient for him, his fellow gang members and even other inmates. Every gang member in Kiri-Kiri Prison has a unique story to tell about prison life, and from the perspectives of the gangs, it reveals the reality of conditions in prison and also the need to cope with the privations by enduring with each passing day in prison. The gangs' perceptions of life in prison depict the feelings of neglect and frustrations conversely it also portrays the willingness of gang members to assist in the maintenance of the prison environment. These views were echoed by Ebuka a member of the kitchen gang:

*The prison conditions is out of hand, infact, the government should do things fast to enhance the present conditions of the prisoners.*

From Ebukas description, it portrays the state of deprivation prison gangs are faced with within the prison daily. In support of the assertion above Franklin, a yardmaster gang member added:

*The prison conditions are bad, it is below average.*

These frustrations were also reported by Kunle who is a member of bricklayers' gang. In the words of Kunle:

*In short, the aim of prison is totally lost by the government failing to live up to their responsibilities.*

Because of the deprivations which inmates are confronted with, members of gangs joined in the maintenance of the prison surroundings, thus ensuring that prison inmates can cope and survive with life in prison. Babatunde, a member of yardmaster gang in his account, had this to say:

*Prison gangs are formed in Kiri-Kiri Prison, just like in any other prison. However, different reasons are behind the formation of different gangs. The gangs are basically formed to work in the barracks and keeping the prison environment clean.*

Prisoners typically are organised into groups to carry out these duties. A clean environment benefits not only the prison gangs but also the offices around the prison locality, inmates and the prison staffs who work every day within the prison environment. According to Ikechukwu, a member of the yardmaster gang stated:

*The formation of prison gang is to enable prisoners to cope by keeping the environment clean.*

From Ikechukwu views, it suggests that the prison gang's survival in prison was possible because of the assistance from gangs in the maintenance of the prison surroundings. Abubakar, a member of carpentry gang, also added saying:

*The prison condition is not good because the government is not helping the prison authority in so many areas that they need help.*

The finding further supports previous studies assertion that conditions within Nigerian Prisons are harsh; this is because the prison gangs in Kiri-Kiri Maximum Prison specified these harsh prison conditions (Eze & Okafor 2007; Chikwen 2008; Ayuk et al. 2013). The result from the study provides supports for the deprivation model of Clemmer (1958) and Sykes (1958), which suggest that the various pains of imprisonment are triggered by deprivations which in this study, for example, showed that prison gangs in Kiri-Kiri Maximum Prison formed because of the harsh conditions in prison. In agreement with many prior studies, the findings from this study found a positive connection between prison gang formation and the need to cope in prison (Clemmer 1958, Sykes 1958, Irwin and Cressey 1962, Darke 2013, Naraq and Jones, 2016, Lessing 2010). As the findings suggest the need to cope in prison is a reason for prison gang formation in Kiri-Kiri Maximum prison, this can be explained based on the findings which revealed that the situations in prison were tough however prison gangs were able to endure and continue in prison by assisting in the looking after of the prison environment. The finding supports the coping theory which specified that coping entails ideas, and behaviour accessible to people (prison gangs) in a time of difficulty which for prison gangs in Kiri-Kiri Prison included building relationship and partaking in prison upkeep. While in support of the human relations theory of Mayo (1949) the findings show the evidence of social relations and teamwork among members of gangs in carrying out prison duties which supported them in prison.

### ***To fulfil the prison authority's needs***

Another reason for prison gang formation is that some of the prison gangs are formed basically to fulfil the prison authority needs. The prison gangs usually are named after the prison authorities and engage in different types of menial works which are lowly and do not impact any skill to the prison gangs. Adherence by the prison gangs to the prison authorities demonstrates acceptance and obedience to the prison guidelines which for the prison gangs is to avoid penalising reports which can make survival and time in prison more difficult. Andrew, who is a member of the deputy controller of prison gang, put it this way:

*It is for prisoners whose arrest connotes with hard labour to work for prison authority, and the inmates will be close to the prison authority.*

For Andrew, the prisoners with hard labour as verdict work for the prison authorities. Prison gangs' working for prison staffs ensure that the prisoners are adequately monitored. Andrew opinion was collaborated by Donatus, who is a prison staff; he reported saying:

*Many of the inmates have been sent to prison with the declaration from the judge as imprisoned with hard labour.*

Prison gangs while at work are adequately monitored by prison staffs however for the gangs working for prison authorities comes with some advantages such as freedom in the course of daily routines likewise the opportunity to raise awareness about issues and conditions within prison cells that needs urgent attention. The comment below by Idowu a member of chief warder gang demonstrates this view:

*It helps the prisoners reach authority in some certain areas.*

The duties carried out by the prison gangs extend beyond the prison environment and also include going on a personal errand like helping to supply water to the prison authorities'

homes. Allowing prison gangs to supply water to prison authorities household brings to light some of the social problems which still affect the citizens in Nigeria. In Nigeria, access to clean water is a pressing challenge for the citizenry. Consequently, prison authorities took advantage of these lapses and used prison gangs to satisfy these personal needs. Oduoye a member of deputy controller of prison gang stated:

*Prison gang formation is used to bring prisoners with various status together to get them doing work together like assisting the prison authority in the area of water supply.*

Together these findings from the informants show that prison gangs are formed and named after prison authorities. The duties carried out by the prison gangs are tailored solely for the prison authority. Moreso working for the prison authorities created opportunities which enable prison gangs to bring attention to any difficulties within the prison environment, thereby helping to support being in prison. The findings support the coping theory of Lazarus & Folkman (1984) which asserts that coping permits people including prison gangs to reduce or alter the source of stress, which for prison gangs in Kiri-Kiri prison was possible because of the interaction which ensued while working for the prison authority. In support of the human relations theory of Mayo (1949), findings showed that prison gangs are also humans with needs; hence the understanding and support from not just gang members but also prison authority is vital for survival. Some example of prison gangs in Kiri-Kiri Maximum Prison named after prison authorities is the chief warder gang and the deputy controller of prison gang. The finding confirms the applicability of the administrative control models of Dilulio (1987) which asserts that prison management plays a role in how prisoners and prison gangs behave in prison for example prison gang in Kiri-Kiri Prison were shaped by the involvement of the prison authorities who outlined systematic activities which although made the prison gangs work for the prison authority, on the other hand, these activities ensured prison survivability for the gangs. These findings even though not substantiated with any known available literature, is worthy of note.

### ***Prosocial Support***

Prosocial support refers to the mutual actions by prison gangs intended to help fellow gang members by ensuring that members are not left behind given the conditions in prison, deprivations to needs and separation from immediate family members support. As human being cannot live separated from others, within the prison environment similarly, prisoners isolated and deprived also start looking for ways to endure in prison by looking out for other prisoners whom they can establish or forge a relationship with for continued existence by offering support, empathy, reassurances and friendship. The use of prosocial support among prison gangs established the significance of relationships and social group in prison. Socialisation in prison is essential and vital since prison gangs survive and endure in prison through social relations with other members. According to Kimmel and Aronson (2012), socialisation prepares members of groups with the needed shared values and shared norms helpful in any environment. While socialisation permits social interaction among members, it also socially prepares members with skills and ideas on how to face up to time, especially living in a prison environment filled with deprivations. From the study's findings, the formation of prison gang allowed members to offer

prosocial support which is vital for continued survival in prison. As Promise a football gang member put it:

*For comradeship and social interaction.*

With every passing day in prison for the prison gangs, continuing within the prison environment brings out the actual reality of life in prison. For some of the prison gangs, the feelings of boredom and isolation kick in. However, the ability of prison gangs to survive with time in prison is established through mutual understanding and socialising with fellow gang members. The friendship among the gangs provides a setting for social interaction based on time and life in prison and what has been learnt through such experiences. According to Green (1956), social interaction has a mutual impact on people during problem-solving. This view was mentioned by Victor, who is an educational prison gang saying:

*Prison gangs' advice, encourage and give confidence to their members.*

Although prison gangs are constrained within the same prison environment and witness the same strict conditions, nevertheless for the gang members who have steadied into the day to day discomforts and pain of incarceration, through social interaction can extend some words of encouragement to members who may be feeling overwhelmed from the pains in incarceration on how best to adapt and endure in prison. This show of support demonstrates the importance of social relations in helping to provide an opportunity for gangs to adapt to daily prison routines. The comment below by David, who is in kitchen gang, illustrates his views:

*There is the need to help, fend and carter for each other in their primary needs.*

No doubt that because of the shared experiences from time in prison, prison gangs utilised on social capital which encompasses prosocial support to benefit members' greater access to daily needs which individually were not possible. Bicchieri (2006) referred to this collective and harmonising action by members in a social group as shared norms. For shared norms to be effective members of a social group must have access to a comparable guideline and also face the same restrictions since shared norms approve and proscribe actions of people through social relations. In the same way, Pepper (1958) and Williams (1970) consider value as the shared knowledge on orientations about what should be suitable to members of the group. The assistance amongst gangs tends to give members a sense of safety and belonging. In agreement with this view, Tunde a member of barbers' gang emphasised his point saying:

*I feel that prison gang exist in prison to encourage themselves in a good manner and also bring relief to the prisoners.*

This finding is in agreement with Johnson and Dobrzanska's (2005) assertion that the relationship among prison inmates reduces boredom, offers support, companionship and creates an avenue for activity, thus making the prison environment accommodative. Prison environment being accommodative for prison gangs permits access and obtainability to needs, thus ensuring continued survival in prison. The findings from this study, however, did not support previous researches which have suggested that prison gangs are violent, create disturbance to prison undertakings and are a threat to other inmates and staffs (Kalinich 1980; Kalinich and Stojkovic 1985; Ingraham and Wellford 1987; Crank and Marcum 2017 and Knox 2012). The explanation for the finding is that the prison gangs in Kiri-Kiri Maximum Prison, by contrast, are centred on shared and collective interests which are contributory both to inmates, gang members and even prison staffs. The finding is in line with the problem-focused approach of coping, which targets

the source of difficulty (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). For instance, the participation of gangs in the maintenance of the prison surroundings brought relief to some of the pains of imprisonment caused by the harsh conditions in prison.

The result from the finding also gives support to the human relations theory which emphasised on the significance of sustaining social relations and teamwork in an organisation through cooperation, unity, empathy and social interaction which helped in facilitating prison life survivability. In other words, without social relations among members of gangs prison survivability will not be attainable. In support for the importation model, the findings showed that members of gangs availed in prison because of their experiences and social skills prior to prison life which created the opportunity for prison gangs to support members in needs through social relationships and sustained cooperation (Irwin and Cressey 1962; Thomas and Foster 1973; Otu, Otu And Eteng 2013 and Lacourse 2016).

### ***The need for Rehabilitation***

Rehabilitation is a predetermined plan envisioned to help correct the frame of mind and actions of offenders in prison. Through rehabilitation, members of prison gangs are given a chance to acquire knowledge, skills and re-socialised with the accepted societal norms and values. Prisons gangs taking part in rehabilitative activities help to educate, integrates, deters and reduce frustration which commonly results due to lack of prison activities. According to Favour, a member of the educational gang he had this to say:

*The reason for prison gang is because most of the inmates are hardened criminals; secondly, most of them are not first-time offenders, and thirdly they lack rehabilitation.*

Majority of prisoners across Nigerian prisons including those in Kiri-Kiri Maximum Security prison are youths of productive ages who usually are expected to contribute to the developing work in their homeland; however, these inmates are locked in prison since their behaviour no longer agrees with the societal norms and values and conversely because of the lack to basic needs. Therefore the formation of prison gang is to fulfil the need for rehabilitation so that on release from prison, the gangs can become productive members of the society by utilising the skills acquired from prison vocational training to survive and met their needs. Chijekwu a member of barbers' gang indicated that prison gang:

*Is to change the inmates' life through learning and for the reintegration of prisoners.*

Chijekwu is aware of the importance of rehabilitation, which is that through rehabilitation; members of gangs can be equipped with the life skills needed to adapt quickly both in prison and after time in prison. Usman in shoemaking gang mentioned that:

*In order for inmates to have handwork doing when they are released.*

For some of the other informants, there is a long term benefit which can be gained from acquiring rehabilitative skills in prison. For Okereke a member of bricklayer gang talking about this he said:

*The reasons for prison gang is to reform the prisoners and also to help the prisoners in making their living.*

Ultimately, the need for rehabilitation is a reason for prison gang formation. Rehabilitation creates an avenue for prison gangs to be impacted with a new skill or improve on

previous skills, likewise keeping the inmates busy, thus facilitating prison life survivability. Involving inmate in rehabilitation activities will impact them with life skills which can enable gangs to become self-employed, self-reliance thus militating against poverty (Ogundipe 2006; Abubakar and Abba 2018). The finding is compatible with previous studies assertions that even though prisoners are challenged in prison however participating in rehabilitation programs offer the opportunity for inmates to survive, acquire knowledge, skills and change in attitude (Johnson 2002; Eze and Okafor 2007). The study equally confirms the need and importance of rehabilitation as having a positive, active and meaningful impact on prisoners as reported in previous studies (Uche et al. 2015; Ekpenyong and Dudafa 2016; Igbinovio and Omorogiuwa 2019). The result from the finding may be explained based on the fact that when prison creates the opportunity for prison gangs to gain knowledge and skills, it is a crucial step towards rehabilitation. The coping theory is also evidenced in this study, as the findings clearly showed that prison gangs as humans are capable of enduring and handling difficulty and trying to establish a new meaning (Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Schwarzer and Schwarzer 1996).

In Kiri-Kiri Maximum prison, gangs applied some examples of problem-focused coping. The use of problem-focused coping allowed members of gangs to minimise or eliminate the cause of difficulty experienced in prison either by involving in rehabilitative programs, participating in prison maintenance and even establishing a friendship with others. These activities are effective strategies for members of gangs to reduce and master the real-life issues and experiences within the prison environment. The findings support the human relations theory assertions on the significance of social relations within an organisation. For example in Kiri-Kiri Maximum prison been that most of the prison gangs are focused on learning from the prison rehabilitative workshops, i.e. the welding gang, tailoring gang, carpentry gang, electrical gang, shoemaking gang and the barbing gang. The prison gangs make use of tools which are sharp and may be dangerous to other inmates and members of prison gangs however the ability of the gang to not use the learning tools as weapon to fight is based on the significance of shared values and shared norms to the gangs (Pepper 1958; Hechter & Opp 2001; Rimal & Real 2003; Kimmel & Aronson 2012).

## **CONCLUSION**

The study conducted by the author of this article examined the reasons for prison gang formation. The finding confirmed that the ultimate reason for prison gang formation is to enhance prison life survivability. Specifically, the study identified the need to cope, to fulfil the prison authority's needs, for prosocial support and the need for rehabilitation as the reasons prisoners form prison gangs. The findings on the need to cope showed that because the conditions in prison are harsh for the prisoners, there is the need to survive and cope with time in prison. Therefore for the gangs in Kiri-Kiri Prison, it demanded participation in the maintenance of the prison surroundings, thereby, helping to ensure that the gangs can withstand the pains from imprisonment.

On the findings on fulfilling the prison authority's needs, the chief warder gang and the deputy controller of prison gangs are some examples of prison gangs formed primarily for the prison authorities. The deputy controller of prison gang and the chief warder gangs required

prison gangs to participate in unskilled and lowly jobs for the prison authority by assisting in all sorts of personal errands. Findings in the study also revealed prosocial support as another reason for gang formation. Because of the human need for social relations and also for the reason that prisoners isolated and restricted within a prison environment cannot survive independently. Therefore to endure the pains from imprisonment, prison gangs start building friendship which can support one another in prison so that accessibility to need is ensured hence sustaining members of gangs in prison.

The need for rehabilitation showed that prisoners in prison need restoration, therefore, the time in prison for gangs creates the opportunity for a new chance to live through learning and acquisition of skills from vocational training aimed at impacting members of gangs with life skills needed to be self-reliance. It can be concluded that although the study confirmed that prison gangs survived in prison because of social relations and participation in prison maintenance, there is however the need for the prison management to enhance the prison facilities to cater for the inmates' needs. The study has two limitations; the first limitation of this study was influenced by the method of data collection, which allowed prison gangs to answer questions by handwritten notes. While the second limitation is that the generalisability of the study is limited because Kiri-Kiri Maximum Prison is a male prison and also because it is one prison out of over two hundred and forty prisons across Nigeria. For further study, one avenue would be a similar study using other prison facilities; likewise, expanding the number of informants to include both female prisoners and awaiting trial inmates.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

### **OKWUNWANNE UZOAMAKA**

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia  
amakachelsea@ymail.com

### **GERALDINE K.L. CHAN**

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia  
geralckl@ukm.edu.my