



# Unveiling the gendered dimension to the challenges of inmates at Agodi Correctional Centre, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

The plight of inmates in Nigeria's correctional facilities has been reasonably explored in prior studies. However, no study has critically examined the gendered perspective on inmates' challenges. Therefore, this study examined the gender dimension of inmates' challenges at the Agodi Correctional Centre, Ibadan, Nigeria. Framed within intersectionality theory, the study adopted mixed methods combining quantitative data obtained from 201 inmates (92% male and 8% female inmates) using structured questionnaires and qualitative data using KII and FGD from both inmates and correctional officers. Similarly, secondary data were obtained from existing literature. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages), while a synthesis of descriptive and narrative methods was utilised to analyse qualitative data. Findings indicated that male inmates faced severe overcrowding and security risks while female inmates were severely affected by a lack of reproductive health services, emotional well-being and privacy. The study, therefore, concluded that Nigerian Correctional Service policy and practices do not adequately

address the gender needs of inmates and recommended the provision of gender-responsive services.

**Keywords:** Gendered dimension, correctional facilities, Nigeria, intersectionality, challenges of inmates

## Introduction

The challenges facing the Nigerian correction facilities are evident, reflecting systemic issues in her criminal justice system. The most prevalent among these challenges is overcrowding, as many of these facilities are operating above their approved capacity for accommodation. This can be largely attributed to the slow justice delivery process, as the majority of the inmates are awaiting trials (Joseph et al., 2021). Lack of adequate facilities is also a problem, as many of the centres lack basic necessities like clean water, sanitation, and medical care, thereby increasing health risks (Agbo, 2022; Adefisoye et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the Nigerian correctional system is suffering from underfunding and resource shortage, hindering the provision of essential services and rehabilitation programmes. Rehabilitation, an important objective of the correctional service, is often neglected due to insufficient funding and staff training (Makinde & Olabode, 2020). As a result, there is a high rate of recidivism, as inmates are often released

without providing them with the necessary skills needed for successful reintegration (Alamu & Makinde, 2019).

Notably, the needs and challenges of male and female inmates are heterogeneous due to their physiological makeup. Importantly, significant differences have been identified between male and female inmates' experience of incarceration within the Nigerian correctional system (Adefisoye & Aina, 2025). Gender divide, a primary tool for social division (Agbo, 2020), is quite evident in correctional facilities. Female inmates are affected by a lack of sanitary products and reproductive healthcare, while male inmates are disproportionately affected by overcrowding due to their large numbers, among other things. However, these distinct gender-specific issues often remain obscured behind prison walls, particularly in a society where gender roles and expectations are deeply entrenched.

Importantly, the correctional facilities were designed from an androcentric

perspective. As a result, female inmates were not considered in the planning and design of these facilities (Arua et al., 2023). The Agodi Correctional Centre, a federal medium-security prison, provides a glaring example of the systemic challenges in the correctional service. It was designed to accommodate 390 inmates; however, the old facility, which was designed to accommodate only male inmates, is severely overcrowded (with a staggering number of about 1500 inmates) (Nigerian Tribune, 2019). The gender-blind design of the correctional facilities projects the neglect of the gender specific needs of the female inmates.

However, despite the importance of the need to create a socially inclusive and gender-friendly correctional environment, limited studies have focused on exploring the gender-specific challenges of inmates within the correctional system. Due to the biological and emotional differences between male and female inmates, the need for gender-sensitive healthcare and rehabilitation services, among others, is paramount (Arua et al., 2023). To this end, this study examined gender-specific challenges faced by inmates in the federal (medium) correctional facility, Agodi, Oyo State.

## Research questions

These research questions guided this study:

- i. What are the gender-specific challenges regarding healthcare, nutrition, and hygiene facing inmates at Agodi Correctional Centre?
- ii. Do overcrowding and resource constraints affect male and female inmates differently?

## Research objectives

The objective of the study was to:

- i. explore the gender-specific experience of inmates on healthcare, nutrition, and hygiene in the Agodi correctional centre;
- ii. investigate the differential impact of resource constraints and overcrowding on male and female inmates.

## Hypothesis

Based on the identified issues, it was hypothesised that:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the experiences of male and female inmates in healthcare, nutrition, and hygiene.

H<sub>02</sub>: The effect of resource constraints and overcrowding on male inmates does not significantly differ from that of female inmates.

## Theoretical framework

This study adopted the intersectionality theory, propounded by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality theory posits that various social categories, such as gender, race, class, disability, and age, intersect to generate an individual's experience of discrimination and access to resources. Regarding incarceration, the intersectionality theory highlights the interconnectivity of gender with other social identities to construct individual inmates' experiences of inequality within correctional facilities (Steffensmeier et al., 2017).

Intersectionality engenders examination of the interface of social identities such as level of education, age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status with gender to influence inmates' experiences of violence, access to services, and overall quality of life within the correctional setting (Cho et al., 2013). Adopting the intersectionality framework in analysing the incarceration experience of women of colour, Blasse and Haas (2024) revealed the unequal impact of racial and gender discrimination in creating their unique vulnerabilities.

Similarly, Hewins (2023) emphasised the connectivity between class, educational

attainment, disability, ethnicity and gender to determine women's pathways to crime and experiences of incarceration. The intersectional approach to understanding the gender dimension to incarceration, therefore, recognises that all oppressions exist simultaneously and that categories of oppression mutually construct each other to create unique experiences for both women and men (Agboola et al., 2022).

In the analysis of the gender differences in the experience of inmates in Agodi Correctional Centre, the intersectionality theory explores the intersection of gender with other factors (age, incarceration status, access to resources, access to healthcare services) to shape inmates' experience during incarceration. The intersectionality theory provides an understanding of the differences in the experience of inmates, providing a basis for a gender-sensitive recommendation.

## Literature review

### *Overview of the challenges of inmates in correctional facilities in Nigeria*

Outstanding among the various challenges facing the Nigerian correction facilities is overcrowding, which has a significant impact on every other aspect (feeding and access to healthcare

services) of inmates' lives. Studies by Adefisoye et al. (2024) revealed that many Nigerian correctional facilities operate above their approved accommodation capacity. This severe overcrowding creates numerous problems, including increased health risks, increased tension among inmates, strain on facility resources, poor ventilation, inadequate sleeping space, and unsanitary conditions (Nwefoh et al., 2020; Adefisoye et al., 2024). However, overcrowding has been observed to be more severe for male due to their numbers.

The healthcare system within correctional facilities faces significant challenges that profoundly impact the well-being of inmates. According to Bukhari et al. (2024) and Hackett (2024), the correctional facilities are plagued with inadequate provision of medical facilities and services, leading to a high and increasing incidence of infectious diseases like tuberculosis, scabies, and other communicable diseases. Similarly, Adelekan et al. (2024) reported that inmates in Nigerian correctional centres have enormous health challenges, which can be largely attributed to insufficient medical personnel compared to the number of inmates, low budgetary

provision for medical supplies, and poor medical facilities. These often result in the neglect of the health needs of the inmates during their incarceration period. Although poor healthcare has a negative impact on both male and female inmates, reproductive healthcare services, which are exclusive to female inmates, are non-existent. This is evident in the lack of prenatal and postnatal care for pregnant women and nursing mothers among the inmates (Adefisoye & Aina, 2025).

Mental health management and treatment are other critical concerns within the Nigerian correctional facilities. Reagan et al (2024) revealed a high rate of mental health disorders (depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, among others). Similarly, pre-incarceration trauma and stress, coupled with a lack of access to mental health services in the correctional facilities, often aggravate the deteriorating mental health condition of the inmates. The shortage of mental health professionals and appropriate intervention programmes further compounds these challenges.

The feeding of inmates in Nigerian correctional facilities has also been identified as a challenge in academic discourse, as it directly impacts inmates' quality of life. The daily feeding

allowance allocation per inmate in the correctional facilities was found to be grossly inadequate, resulting in severe malnutrition. According to Jeremiah et al. (2021), the quality, quantity, and nutritional value of meals served in Nigerian correctional facilities fall significantly below recommended standards. Ojo and Okunola (2014) found that many inmates rely heavily on supplementary food from family members and charitable organisations to meet their nutritional needs. This creates disparities between the inmates who receive external support and those who do not. Furthermore, female inmates who are pregnant and those with babies, who require special diets, lack access to such.

Pre-trial detention remains a critical challenge within the Nigerian correctional system, and it contributes significantly to overcrowding. A large proportion of inmates in Nigerian correctional facilities have been reported to be awaiting trial, some for several years (Adefisoye et al., 2024). The prolonged pre-trial detention often results from delays in court proceedings, inadequate legal representation, and systemic inefficiencies in the criminal justice system (Nwam et al., 2021).

Safety and security within correctional facilities also have remained persistent challenges in the Nigerian correctional system. Gidado (2021) highlighted several forms of violence identified as prevalent among inmates, including corporal punishments, physical assault, denial of basic amenities, bullying, and exploitation among inmates and also by correctional staff. Due to the severe level of overcrowding and inadequacy of resources in the facilities, there is a high rate of conflict and tension among the inmates (Gidado, 2021). Detailing the pattern and prevalence of violence and abuse within the correctional facilities, Human Rights Watch Report (2018) noted that cases of violence are often left unreported due to the fear of retaliation and poor reporting mechanisms. Olugbenga-Bello et al. (2013) also reported a high prevalence of physical and sexual violence within the Nigerian correctional facilities, thereby emphasising the importance of upgrading security measures and monitoring.

Incarceration has also been observed to have a severe negative emotional impact on inmates and their immediate families. Incarceration often leads to the breakdown of family relationships, loss of social connections, and severe emotional

distress (Arua et al, 2023). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) advocated for family-friendly correctional policies to lessen the adverse effects of incarceration on children and the immediate families of female inmates (Myers et al., 2017). Incarceration within the Nigerian context is equally laden with social stigma and discrimination, contributing immensely to the difficult reintegration of inmates into society (Arua et al., 2023).

Furthermore, rehabilitation of inmates, which is one of the main aims of incarceration, is not often implemented in Nigerian correctional facilities. Fathonah et al. (2023) attributed this primarily to a lack of funding and inadequate facilities due to the large number of inmates. Arua et al. (2023) and Olawunmi et al. (2023) revealed that many Nigerian correctional facilities struggle to provide comprehensive vocational training and educational programmes. When they do, such programmes do not address the differential needs of male and female inmates. The lack of well-structured rehabilitation initiatives hampers inmates' chances of successful reintegration into society and increases the likelihood of committing more crimes.

## Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design and a mixed-methods approach to examine the gendered dimension of inmates' challenges in Agodi Correctional Centre, Nigeria. The facility, with a capacity of 390 inmates, housed approximately 1,500 inmates (1,470 male, 30 female) at the time of the study. Using Cochran's formula, 204 male inmates were randomly selected through stratified sampling, while all female inmates were included due to their small number. However, the final sample comprised 201 respondents (92% male, 8% female). The reduction in number was due to non-response, incomplete questionnaires, and a few female inmates who declined participation in the study.

Structured questionnaires were administered to inmates to obtain quantitative data. The instruments underwent face and content validity by academics to ensure that the content of the instruments was appropriate and complete. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, a pre-test was carried out among inmates in Ilesa Correctional Centre (10%). The questionnaire had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.911 (mean=94.75, SD=16.171), indicating strong internal consistency.

On the other hand, qualitative data were also obtained through key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD) with inmates and correctional officers of both sexes. Interviews were conducted with the assistance of a research assistant. Respondents include Awaiting Trial and Convicted Inmates to capture their experiences within the correctional facility.

The qualitative data collected was subjected to a rigorous process. The interviews and discussions were recorded, transcribed, and edited. Data were analysed using descriptive and narrative methods. The study adopted manual thematic analysis to identify patterns following qualitative research protocols.

## Presentation of results

### *Analysis of quantitative data*

Table 1

*Frequency distribution showing respondents' socio-demographic data*

Factors	Options	Male		Female		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Age</b> <b>Mean = 33.64</b> <b>SD = 9.827</b>	Below 18 years	2	1.1	1	6.3	3	1.5
	18 - 30 years	83	44.9	8	50.0	91	45.3
	31 - 50 years	89	48.1	4	25.0	93	46.3
	51 – 70 years	11	5.9	2	12.5	13	6.5
	71 years & above	0	0	1	6.3	1	0.5
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>Level of education</b>	No formal education	8	4.3	1	6.3	9	4.5
	Primary	24	13.0	4	25.0	28	13.9
	Secondary	70	37.8	7	43.8	77	38.3
	Tertiary	83	44.9	4	25.0	87	43.3
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
	1 – 24 months	137	74.1	41	95.3	178	78.1



<b>Incarceration period</b> <b>mean = 20.14</b> <b>SD = 26.87</b>	25 - 48 months	22	11.9	1	2.3	23	10.1
	49 - 72 months	14	7.6	1	2.3	15	6.6
	73 – 96 months	8	4.3	0	0	8	3.5
	97 – 120 months	4	2.2	0	0	4	1.8
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	228	100.0
<b>Incarceration status</b>	Convicted	31	16.8	2	12.5	33	16.4
	Awaiting Trial	154	83.2	14	87.5	168	83.6
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>Crime committed</b>	Theft	66	35.7	5	31.3	71	35.3
	Assault	40	21.6	4	25.0	44	21.9
	Drug-related	14	7.6	1	6.3	15	7.5
	Fraud	18	9.7	0	0	18	9.0
	Homicide	8	4.3	1	9.3	9	4.5
	Debt	2	1.1	3	18.8	5	2.5
	Conspiracy	6	3.2	1	6.3	7	3.5
	Armed Robbery	22	11.9	0	0	22	10.9
	Rape	9	4.9	0	0	9	3.5
	Others	0	0	1	6.3	1	0.5
	Total	185	100	16	100.0	201	100.0

**Note:** Field survey, 2024

Table 1 presents inmates' demographic representation and incarceration patterns within the Agodi Correctional Facility. The study population predominantly consisted of male inmates, with an overwhelming 92% of 201 respondents, while female inmates represented only 8%.

Age demographics indicated that most inmates fall within the productive years of their lives. The majority of male

respondents were between 31 and 50 years (48.1%) and 18 and 30 years (44.9%), with a small proportion (5.9%) aged 51 and 70 years. Female respondents, on the other hand, were predominantly between 18 and 30 years (50.0%) and 31 and 50 years (25.0%). Notably, females showed a higher percentage (12.5%) in the 51-70 years group compared to males, and 6.3% of female respondents were over 71 years.

Inmates had a relatively high level of educational attainment. Among males, 44.9% had tertiary education, 37.8% had secondary education, 13.0% had only primary education, and 4.3% had no formal education. For females, 43.8% had secondary education, 25.0% had tertiary education, 25.0% had primary education, and 6.3% had no formal education. Most male respondents (83.2%) were awaiting trial, with 16.8% convicted, while 87.5% of female respondents were awaiting trial and 12.5% had been convicted.

Theft was the most common offence among males (35.7%), followed by assault (21.6%), armed robbery (11.9%), fraud (9.7%), drug-related crimes (7.6%), and homicide (4.3%). For females, theft (31.3%) and assault (25.0%) were also common, but 18.8% were involved in debt-related crimes—a notable difference from males. Only female inmates were reported to be involved in homicide (9.3%) and conspiracy (6.3%).

**Table 2:** *Gender specific experience of inmates on healthcare, nutrition, and hygiene*

Question	Options	Male		Female		Total	
		Freq(M)	%	Freq(F)	%	Frequenc y	%
<b>Have you had any physical health issues since you got to the correctional facility?</b>	Yes	175	94.6	16	100.0	191	95.0
	No	10	5.4	0	0	10	5.0
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>Have you had any mental health issues since you got to the correctional facility?</b>	Yes	102	55.1	11	68.8	113	56.2
	No	83	44.9	5	31.3	88	43.8
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>Did you receive treatment for the health issues you experienced?</b>	Yes	156	84.3	8	50.0	164	81.6
	No	29	15.7	8	50.0	37	18.4
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
	NA	29	15.7	8	50.0	37	18.4

<b>If yes, rate the adequacy of the treatment you received.</b>	Very adequate	22	11.9	0	0	22	10.9
	Adequate	52	28.1	4	25.0	56	27.9
	Indifferent	42	22.7	0	0	42	20.9
	Inadequate	38	20.5	4	25.0	42	20.9
	Very Inadequate	2	1.1	0	0	2	1.0
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>Have you faced any barriers to accessing healthcare services?</b>	Yes	141	76.2	11	68.8	152	75.6
	No	44	23.8	5	31.3	49	24.4
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>Are your health concerns taken seriously by correctional officers?</b>	Yes	100	54.1	8	50.0	108	53.7
	No	85	45.9	8	50.0	93	46.3
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>Does the food provided meet the inmates' nutritional needs?</b>	Always	9	4.9	0	0	9	4.5
	Often	9	4.9	0	0	9	4.5
	Sometimes	26	14.1	5	31.3	31	15.4
	Rarely	44	23.8	6	37.5	50	24.9
	Never	97	52.4	5	31.3	102	50.7
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>Do you have access to menstrual hygiene products?</b>	Yes	0	0	6	37.5	6	3.0
	No	0	0	10	62.5	10	5.0
	NA (male)	185	100.0	0	0	185	92.0
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>Have you had access to adequate prenatal/postnatal</b>	Yes	0	0	0	0	0	0
	No	0	0	1	6.3	1	0.5
	NA (male)	185	100.0	0	0	185	92.0

<b>I care while being incarcerated?</b>	NA (female)	0	0	15	93.8	15	7.5
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0

Note: Field survey, 2024

Table 2 presents the data on the gendered experience of inmates on healthcare, nutrition, and hygiene at the Agodi Correctional Centre. On the health conditions of inmates, both genders reported declines in health since incarceration, with 94.6% of males and 100% of females experiencing physical health issues. Significantly, 55.1% of males and 68.8% of females reported having mental health challenges. However, the report revealed disparity in access to health care services, as female inmates (50%) compared to male inmates (15.7%) decried a lack of access to healthcare. This can be largely attributed to non-existent reproductive health services for the female inmates, revealing a neglect of female inmates' specific health needs. However, barriers to healthcare affect both genders (76.2% of males and 68.8% of females). Furthermore, the males (52.4%) and

females (31.3%) report poor nutrition as the food provided rarely has nutritional value. Additionally, 62.5% of females lack menstrual hygiene products; similarly, access to prenatal/postnatal care is limited.

The analysis highlighted notable disparities in the experiences of male and female inmates on healthcare, nutrition, and hygiene at Agodi Correctional Centre. While both genders faced challenges regarding health, male inmates are severely affected by poor nutrition and health outcomes. Although female inmates reported better conditions in nutrition, they lack access to reproductive healthcare, supplies of sanitary products, and mental health support. Targeting interventions towards these gender-specific issues will lead to a better prison environment, which will in turn aid the rehabilitation of inmates.

**Table 3: Gender differences in the impact of resource constraints and overcrowding on inmates**

Question	Options	Male		Female		Total	
		Freq(M)	%	Freq(F)	%	Frequency	%
<b>Do you have regular access to clean water for drinking and bathing?</b>	Yes	138	74.6	15	93.8	153	76.1
	No	47	25.4	1	5.3	48	23.9
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>How would you rate sanitation in your correctional facilities?</b>	Very poor	64	34.6	0	0	64	31.8
	Poor	59	31.9	5	11.6	64	31.8
	Average	54	29.2	7	20.9	61	30.3
	Good	8	4.3	4	46.5	12	6.0
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>How would you describe the level of overcrowding in your prison?</b>	Not overcrowded	0	0	10	62.5	10	5.0
	Moderately overcrowded	75	40.5	6	37.5	81	40.3
	Severely overcrowded	110	59.5	0	0	110	24.7
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>How would you describe the condition of the prison buildings and infrastructure?</b>	Very Poor	78	42.2	2	12.5	80	39.8
	Poor	56	30.3	1	6.3	57	28.4
	Average	47	25.4	8	50.0	55	27.4
	Good	4	2.2	4	25.0	8	4.0
	Very Good	0	0	1	6.3	1	0.5
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>Do you have access to legal assistance?</b>	Yes	89	48.1	7	43.8	96	47.8
	No	96	51.9	9	56.3	105	52.2
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0
<b>How often do you receive visitors/ communicate with your family?</b>	Always	50	27.0	4	25.0	54	29.4
	Often	31	16.8	3	18.8	34	20.2
	Sometimes	65	35.1	5	31.3	70	30.7
	Rarely	10	5.4	3	18.8	13	5.7
	Never	29	15.7	1	6.3	30	14.0
	Total	185	100.0	16	100.0	201	100.0

Note: Field survey, 2024

Table 3 shows gender-specific challenges experienced by male and female respondents. At Agodi Correctional Centre, male and female inmates experience distinct challenges. Concerning access to basic amenities, 74.6% of males and 93.8% of females report regular access to clean water. However, good sanitation was lacking—66% of males rated it as inadequate compared to only 11.6% of females. Overcrowding was also a major issue, particularly for the male respondents, as 59.5% of males found the prison severely overcrowded, whereas 62.5% of females reported no overcrowding.

Assessing inmates' access to legal and family support, the study found that access to legal assistance is limited, with only 48.1% of males and 43.8% of females reporting adequate access. Contrarily, family contact is slightly better for females; 18.8% report regular visits compared to 9.7% of males. While both genders face challenges of overcrowding and lack of access to resources, male inmates are disproportionately affected by overcrowding and inadequate access to resources. Conversely, female inmates reported better conditions in these areas. Addressing these gender-specific issues is

important to improve the living conditions of inmates in correctional centres.

### ***Analysis of qualitative data***

This analysis examined the gender-specific challenges faced by male and female inmates in Nigerian correctional facilities, based on key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted with 4 inmates (male and female) and 2 correctional officers (male and female) and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted with male and female inmates and correctional officers at Agodi Correctional Facility.

### ***Common challenges across genders***

#### ***Insufficient resources and poor living Conditions***

Both male and female inmates face basic resource challenges. A key Informant stated, "The major challenge inmates face in this facility, which also cuts across all the correctional facilities in Nigeria, is insufficient resources. This insufficiency cut across almost every aspect, from food to water, toiletries, and even sleeping space."

#### ***Inadequate healthcare***

Inadequate healthcare service provision also emerged as a universal challenge, affecting both genders. As a male inmate from the FGD noted, "The primary

challenge for us is the lack of adequate healthcare. Most of the time, when we fall sick, the response is slow, and the facilities are inadequate. There are no drugs."

#### *Poor nutrition*

The quality and quantity of food are consistently mentioned as part of their major problems. As one male inmate explained, "The quality of food given to us here is poor, even the quantity is not something to talk about, it is not enough to keep us healthy. The soup is so watery and often without meat or fish".

Despite these challenges that are common to both sexes, male and female inmates experience challenges that are specific to them because of their gender, among which are gender-specific challenges. These challenges will be discussed in turn.

### **Gender-specific challenges**

#### *Severe overcrowding*

Most significant among the challenges facing male inmates in Agodi Correctional Centre is severe overcrowding. Hence, the available resources are stretched to the limit, leading to conflicts among inmates. A female officer noted that overcrowding stretches the available limited resources

and rehabilitation facilities. Similarly, a male inmate stated, "Our cells are often too congested, and we have difficulties sleeping. For instance, the cell I was allocated to was meant to accommodate 30 inmates, but we have about 120 inmates allocated here, which can increase or decrease at any time. We cannot sleep lying down, sometimes we squat. Mostly we prefer the little period we are not locked up daily, we can walk around and stretch our legs". These reports revealed discomfort in the cells. On the contrary, the female inmates' facilities were not overcrowded because of their small number in the Agodi Correctional Centre.

#### *Security and physical violence*

High level of insecurity and physical violence are also gender-specific challenges among the male inmates. A male correctional officer expressed that there is a high rate of physical violence among the male inmates, leading to the adoption of strict regulations and less freedom for the male inmates. Another male officer highlighted that it is challenging to maintain discipline and order among the male inmates, given that they are too many. Similarly, a male inmate interviewed reported that the pressure to 'be a man' and protect themselves often leads to physical

violence, as bullying is a norm that everyone will have to succumb to or fight off. Contrarily, there were low reports of physical violence among the female inmates compared to the male inmates, thereby affording them fewer punishments and a shorter lock-up period.

#### *Emotional and psychological impact*

Female inmates appear to experience more severe emotional challenges, particularly regarding family separation. A female inmate shared: "Not seeing my children is breaking me, and I cry every day... We also face higher rates of mental health issues". However, there was no report of emotional and psychological stress, particularly with reference to separation from family by the male inmates.

#### *Limited privacy*

The female inmates expressed concern about the lack of privacy more than their male counterparts. As noted by a male officer, "Female inmates often deal with issues related to privacy; the cell is just like a hall where there is no privacy, everything is open to the fellow inmates." Although the male inmates were silent on limited privacy, the reported overcrowding rate also indicates a lack of privacy in the male cells.

#### *Reproductive health and hygiene needs*

Importantly, women face unique challenges related to reproductive health and hygiene. A female warder stated, "Women often face challenges related to reproductive health, childcare, and the impact of separation from their families, particularly their children." A female officer also reported that there is limited access to sanitary towels, feminine hygiene products, and maternal care for pregnant inmates. Similarly, a female inmate decried the lack of reproductive healthcare and the emotional toll of being separated from children. The female inmates in the Agodi Correctional Facility had no access to reproductive health services and products. Sanitary towels and other hygiene products are obtained only when they are supplied by family members or donated to the correctional facility.

The analysis of the qualitative data reveals that male and female inmates face challenges (access to basic resources, healthcare services, and poor nutrition) that are common to both; there also exist gender-specific challenges. Primarily, male inmates are disproportionately affected by severe overcrowding, physical violence, and strict treatment and punishments. In



contrast, female inmates face unique challenges related to reproductive health, emotional well-being, and privacy. The findings reveal a need for gender-specific approaches in addressing these challenges while improving the overall conditions of both groups.

Test of hypothesis

H<sub>0</sub>: Challenges experienced by male inmates do not significantly differ from those experienced by female inmates in Agodi Correctional Centres.  
H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the experiences of male and female inmates on healthcare, nutrition, reproductive health, and hygiene.

**Table 4:** *Summary of independent T-test showing gender differences in the experiences of inmates on healthcare, nutrition, and hygiene*

	Sex	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P
Gender differences in healthcare, nutrition, reproductive health, and hygiene	Male	185	31.91	8.372	199	4.235	< .05
	Female	16	25.79	9.203			

**Note:** Field survey, 2024

The result in Table 4 reveals that there was a significant difference in the challenges experienced by male inmates compared to those experienced by female inmates in correctional centres in Southwest Nigeria  $t(199) = 4.24, p < .05$ . Comparing the mean, there is a mean difference of 6.117 points affirming that male and female inmates in the study face significantly difference in their experience of healthcare, nutrition, and

hygiene. This means that male inmates (M=31.91, SD=8.37) experienced more challenges compared to their female counterparts (M=25.79, SD=9.20) in Agodi Correctional Centre. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

H<sub>02</sub>: The effect of resource constraints and overcrowding on male inmates does not significantly differ from that of female inmates.

**Table 5:** Summary of independent T-test showing gender differences in inmates' experience of resource constraint and overcrowding in Agodi Correctional Centre

	Sex	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P
<b>Gender differences in</b>	Male	185	18.89	2.863	199		
<b>inmates' experience of</b>	Female	16	16.81	2.198		2.824	< .05
<b>resource constraint and</b>							
<b>overcrowding</b>							

**Note:** Field survey, 2024

The result in Table 5 shows that there was a significant difference in the experience of resource constraint and overcrowding by male and female inmates in Agodi Correctional Centre,  $t(199) = 2.82, p < .05$ . Comparing the means, there is a mean difference of 2.08 points. This upholds the position of the quantitative data that the challenges faced by males and females as regards resource constraints and overcrowding are significantly different. Invariably, male inmates ( $M=18.89, SD=2.863$ ) experienced greater challenges compared to their female counterparts ( $M=16.81, SD=2.198$ ) in the Agodi Correctional Centre. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

### Discussion of findings

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative data, in light of the reviewed literature, provided an insight into the

gender-specific challenges in the Agodi Correctional Centre. The findings reveal that the centre is plagued with a high rate of pre-trial detention, with 83.6% of the total inmates awaiting trials.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate gender differences in inmates' access to healthcare services. The quantitative data shows that a high percentage (84.3%) of male inmates received treatments for physical health challenges, while only 50% of the female inmates had the opportunity to access physical healthcare services. Similarly, the female inmates (62.5%) reported no access to menstrual hygiene products and reproductive health services. These findings, revealing a gender disparity in inmates' access to healthcare services, align with the findings of Adelekan et al. (2018), which projected inadequacies in gender-specific healthcare service provision in the

Nigerian correctional facilities. Building on the findings of the quantitative data, the qualitative data also highlighted inadequate healthcare facilities and slow responses to these basic needs of both male and female inmates. Furthermore, it revealed that the female inmates equally decried a lack of access to reproductive healthcare. This finding also strengthens Hackett's (2024) report, which stated that due to a lack of reproductive health services, there is a high prevalence of health complications among female inmates.

Furthermore, the study revealed gender differences in mental health challenges, with a higher percentage of female inmates (68.8%) compared with males (55.1%) reporting cases of mental health issues ranging from depression to post-traumatic stress disorder. This finding supports the report of Arua et al. (2023), which posited that female inmates, due to pre-incarceration challenges, are prone to mental health challenges than their male counterparts. Providing a better understanding, one of the key informants (a female inmate) expressed thus, "Not seeing my children is breaking me, and I cry every day... we also face higher rates of mental health issues". However, this issue was not raised as a concern among the male inmates.

There is a huge difference in the experience of overcrowding between the genders. Quantitative data reveals that 59.5% of male inmates described their environment as "severely overcrowded," however, no female inmate reported severe overcrowding. This is supported by the data obtained from the interviews and discussion with a male inmate reporting serious congestion in his cells. He explained that his cell, which was designed for 30 inmates, had about 120 inmates allocated therein, resulting in severe difficulties in movement and sleeping. The findings underpin Joseph et al.'s (2021) report of overwhelming overcrowding challenges that have plagued Nigeria's criminal justice system. This equally reflects the finding of Gidado (2022) that male inmates face greater challenges due to their larger numbers.

Data also reports the existence of gender differences in inmates' access to basic resources. Importantly, 93.8% of female inmates reported regular access to clean water, while only 74.6% of male inmates had similar access. Similarly, female inmates had a more favourable view of sanitation facilities, with 46.5% rating them as "good" compared to only 4.3% of male inmates. These findings align with Adefisoye et al.'s (2024), reiterating the inadequacy of infrastructures and basic

resources in the Nigerian correctional facilities.

The study presents a slight but noticeable gender disparity in inmates' continued family and social support. Female inmates reported more frequent visitation than the male inmates. Quantitative data shows that 18.8% of females always received visitors compared to 9.7% of the males. This is in line with Arua et al.'s (2023) findings on the importance of social support networks for inmates, particularly women, reducing emotional distress resulting from separation from their children and immediate family.

Highlighting gender differences in inmates' exposure to violence and security, the qualitative data reveals that male inmates are, on the one hand, unfavourably exposed to bullying, physical violence, and gang-related conflicts. On the other hand, the female inmates are vulnerable to abuse and have concerns about a lack of privacy. This finding mirrors the findings of Human Rights Watch (2018) about gender-specific security risks in correctional facilities.

The findings suggest inadequate rehabilitation programmes for both genders, supporting Makinde and

Olabode's (2020) observation about the lack of gender-specific rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian correctional facilities. The qualitative data also indicates that overcrowding particularly affects male inmates' access to rehabilitation opportunities. In contrast, female inmates barely have access to rehabilitation programmes that address their gender needs and interests.

The findings deduced from the qualitative and quantitative data presented resonate with the result of the hypothesis, which emphasised that there is a significant difference between the challenges facing male and those facing female inmates in Agodi Correctional Centre. Notably, the hypothesis revealed that there is a significant gender difference in inmates' experience of healthcare, nutrition, hygiene, overcrowding, and resource constraints. The result of the hypothesis shows that male inmates in the Agodi Correctional Centre are adversely affected by resource constraints, overcrowding, and poor hygiene, basically because of their huge number. These findings reveal that male and female inmates experience gender-specific challenges within the correctional facilities because of their different gender needs and interests.

These findings align with the provision of the intersectionality theory framework adopted for this study. The results demonstrate the intersection of gender with other factors to create inmates' unique experiences and challenges during incarceration. The results of the study corroborate Blasse and Haas (2024) application of intersectionality to addressing the challenges of inmates in the correctional facilities.

### Conclusion

This study provided a basis for understanding the gender-specific experiences and challenges of inmates at Agodi Correctional Centre, revealing how gender significantly shapes the incarceration experience within the Nigerian correctional system. Utilising the intersectionality theory and a mixed-methods approach, the research has shown common and gender-specific challenges in the correctional environment.

The findings revealed that although males and females face challenges within the correctional facilities, these challenges are different, largely depending on the individual's social identity. Importantly, male inmates are invariably affected by overcrowding, exposure to violence and gang-related activities, and limited

access to basic resources. These challenges can be categorised as structural and physical, stemming from the overwhelming population of male inmates in the Agodi Correctional Centre.

Although with better physical conditions, female inmates face significant challenges, particularly as regards their reproductive health needs, lack of emotional well-being, and privacy. Furthermore, there is a lack of access to menstrual hygiene products, heightening their exposure to urinary tract infections, as well as increased experience of mental health issues. Female inmates' lack of access to reproductive health services revealed gender inequality in service delivery to inmates. These disparities in the challenges of inmates in Agodi Correctional Centre emphasise the need to ensure the provision of gender-responsive services within the correctional system.

### Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the study recommends the following:

- i. The Federal Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Nigerian Correctional Service, should develop gender-responsive

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| <p>healthcare services, with provision for gender-specific healthcare needs of inmates.</p> <p>ii. The Nigerian judicial system should address overcrowding of correctional facilities through criminal justice reforms and alternative sentencing.</p> <p>iii. The Nigerian Correctional Service, in collaboration with relevant Non-Governmental Organisations, should enhance rehabilitation programmes tailored towards the gender-specific needs and post-release challenges of inmates.</p> <p>iv. The Nigerian Correctional Service should develop family-friendly policies that encourage family visitation and provide communication facilities to</p> | <p>ensure the maintenance of social connections.</p> <p>v. The Nigerian Correctional Service should address inmates' gender-specific safety concerns by developing gender-sensitive security protocols.</p> |
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### Suggestions for further research

Further studies in this area of research should focus on a comparative study of the challenges of inmates in single-sex facilities. Further studies should also consider broader research that will involve multiple correctional centres with many female inmates.

### Contribution to knowledge

This study provides sex-disaggregated data on the gender-specific challenges of inmates for evidence-based planning and policies in the correctional sector.

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