



## The Last Lick: A Lived Experience of Non-incarcerated Partners

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### Abstract

The incarceration of their partners has a profound effect on them and affects them differently from other family members. But what are these effects, and what are the results? The purpose of this study was to (1) assess the notable feelings experienced by non-incarcerated partners and (2) understand the implications of these feelings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 female participants who had their partners incarcerated at Nigeria's Agodi-Ibadan Medium Correctional Facility. An interpretative phenomenological approach was employed to analyse their lived experience with Satir's model. Thirteen sub-themes derived from feelings revealed the participants' frustration, pain, and hurt; betrayal and anxiety; anger, confusion, and interruption; hostility, hunt, and fear; sadness, shame, and humiliation; being depressed and incarcerated; being surprised and in denial; being confused and helpless; being sorry and suffering double losses; being controlled as well as feeling relieved. This study found that 40% of participants felt frustrated, angry, interrupted, and hunted, while 30% felt hurt, bitter, or humiliated, and 20% felt betrayed, incarcerated, in denial, confused, or had a sense of relief while their partners were incarcerated. These experiences intensified the impacts of their partners' incarceration. The study has recommendations for marriage and family specialists.

**Keywords:** Consequences, incarceration, interpretative, personal-iceberg, phenomenological

## Introduction

Disconnection from a loved one as a result of incarceration is possibly the most heinous experience a non-incarcerated partner can have. According to studies, non-incarcerated partners are more affected than other close relatives (Insong & Cuevas Jr., 2021). They are responsible for role changes and must also live and survive on a fixed schedule (Yeboaa et al., 2022). Because incarceration directly affects them, it has a holistic and overwhelming effect on them and their immediate family members (Wildeman et al., 2019; Ashraf & Farha, 2022; Berghuis et al., 2022; Boches et al., 2022; Tadros & Ansell, 2022; Tadros et al., 2022). The non-incarcerated partners face financial hardship, social shame, and intense emotional consequences (Kotova, 2016); relationship dissolution (de Miguel-Calvo, 2021); unsatisfactory psychological wellbeing (Patterson et al., 2021); unexpected medical complications (Connors et al., 2020; DeHart et al., 2017); and deprivation of love, sexuality, and personal life as "invisible detainees" (Cyphert, 2017; de Miguel-Calvo, 2021). According to Jardine (2019), Kirk and Wakefield (2018), and Umamaheswar (2021a), incarceration places significant burdens on non-incarcerated partners. Carretero-Trigo et al. (2021), Hammink (2021), and Tadros et al. (2021) also linked incarceration to the inhibition of significant cooperation, which increases impediments to physical and optimistic association between incarcerated individuals and their non-incarcerated partners. Researchers Arditti et al. (2021), Bennett and Knight (2021), Deegan (2021), Siddall (2021), and Sykes (2021) also linked incarceration to financial, social, clinical, and mental health consequences for non-incarcerated partners.

## The Satir Model

The Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy (STST), also known as the Satir Model, which was developed by Virginia Satir (Satir, 1988), believes that people form and maintain relationships through congruent communication (Banmen, 1986). Satir does not only anticipate the conditions that will result in life-changing phenomena (Banmen & Maki-Banmen, 2014); she also informs a philosophy of ontology: the investigation of being and becoming; axiology: the investigation of qualities and convictions; and epistemology: the investigation of how people know what they know (Pidlocke, 2021). The personal iceberg metaphor, an important concept in Satir's model, is important not only for developing self-esteem (Pidlocke, 2021; Satir et al., 1991; Wang et al., 2022; Walsh et al., 2021), but also for improving family relationships and communications, which bring feelings to the forefront (Allen et al., 2022; Bailey, 2022). It gives us a structure to understand the inward universe of an individual (Elshershaby, 2022; Lum, 2000; Wu et al., 2022). Similarly, as icebergs can be seen on the

outside of the water, the iceberg metaphor relates to various behaviours shown when individuals experience unpleasant trajectories. It is very important for non-incarcerated partners' reactions to incarceration because it is a mirror through which the reasons underlying their performance can be x-rayed (Makhmudov, 2020). Thus, this study used Satir's personal iceberg metaphor model to investigate why non-incarcerated partners may be overwhelmed by the phenomenon of their spouses' incarceration.

The Satir model claims that people's primary feelings are not always the ones to which they respond (Satir et al., 1991). Rather, they are feelings about feelings, which are analogous to Vogl et al.'s (2021) metacognitive and sentiment encounters that conform to the individuals' intellectual cycle status. While the participants either succumb to the dictates of their emotions or simply pretend they are nonexistent, one of Satir's principles is that people's feelings belong to them. In fact, the Satir model's thought on this concept is that, as an individual, you have "the freedom to feel what you feel, instead of what you ought" (p. 62; Satir et al., 1991). The Satir models also claim that feelings are greatly affected by the intervening time. While it could be obvious that the participants' existing feelings were triggered by the current event of their partners' incarceration, the Satir models believe that the participants' reaction was based on their acquired feelings. Satir models also opine that the participants' feelings were influenced by their beliefs and expectations of their own worth. Satir models, however, anticipate that the participants should use their emotions to finetune the way out of their predicaments rather than allowing their emotions to regulate them (Satir et al., 1991).

The study focused on two central questions:

1. What kinds of feelings do non-incarcerated partners express?
2. What effect do their feelings have on the consequences of their spouses' incarceration?

### **Non-incarcerated Partners' Feelings**

Feelings as secondary emotions (Gonzales, 2022), can be either positive or negative depending on whether they express happiness, excitement, pride, fear, anger, or sadness. They may be associated with self-esteem or wrongdoing (Moghavvemi et al., 2020), possessiveness (Ainsworth, 2020), or mere opinions (Yu & Zhang, 2020). Members of the family, particularly non-incarcerated companions of the inmates, may experience feelings of isolation or stigma, as well as guilt, shame, or embarrassment. According to King and Delgado's (2021) research, as a direct consequence of their relatives' incarceration, family members experience grief and stigma. Karimi's (2021) submitted that this experience is both directly and indirectly related to reasoning and rationality. In their

assessment, Souza et al. (2019) shed light on when non-incarcerated partners' and family members' feelings begin. They contended that the sense of being crippled and interrupted begins with the legal wranglings that precede a spouse's incarceration. According to the authors, the experience of incarceration caused many relationships dealing with a potential jail term to end in divorce or separation before the partner began his or her sentence.

Likewise, Taylor (2016) and Vogl et al. (2021) reported that non-incarcerated partners felt shocked, confused, perplexed, guilty, inadequate, self-critical, or in denial as expressions of epistemic emotions and metacognition when their partners were imprisoned. Tadros and Vlach (2022) also reported that pre-incarceration narratives on feelings are also significant where the connections were tense prior to incarceration. Furthermore, Holmstrom et al. (2021) reported a critical association between feelings of shame, guilt, disgrace, and blame in their 852-participant experiment. Likewise, in four unique studies, Han et al. (2021) reported that stifling blame and disgrace influenced feelings of judgment, expectation, and conduct. Although Bastin et al. (2021) admitted that there was restricted information about the neural underpinnings of disgrace and blame, they conceded that both disgrace and blame were feelings that played a significant part in social functioning. They also reported that the pressure related to partners' detainment intruded on cerebrum exercises (Bastin et al., 2021).

The feelings of the detained relatives vary. An individual whose partner is a political offender could have fewer sensations of disgrace about the partner's detention (Folch, 2021), compared to an individual whose partner is detained for a sex offense. Kavanagh and Levenson (2021) reported that the latter sustained substantial damage. Evans et al. (2021) also reported that the travesty of a felony charge is significantly more pronounced among relatives of sex offenders than among relatives of other offenders. According to the findings, families face discrimination from interpersonal organisations as well as criminal justice authorities. Evans et al. (2021) noted that the media's command over the account worsened relatives' encounters.

Non-incarcerated partners feel powerless while their partners are detained (Taylor, 2016). They also generally feel that they have no control during their partners' detention (Tadros, 2021). Likewise, they feel that their connections are very controlled and removed (Comfort et al., 2018; McKay et al., 2018; Tadros et al., 2021; Tadros & Finney, 2018; Tadros & Ogden, 2020). Furthermore, Goffnett et al. (2021) reported that feelings of disgrace and pride have an association with friendly reality, beneficial encounters of minority stress and strength, and an impression of self. These feelings affect well-being practises through the manner in which they are handled (Goffnett et al., 2021). Anger is another dimension of non-incarcerated partners' feelings. According to the report of Frantsman-Spector and Shoshana (2018),

inmates' wives in Israel despised their vulnerability and expressed their explicit opposition to emotional dialogue with social services, who probably wanted to take advantage of their situation. Likewise, Olusola and Temitope (2020) reported the anger expressed by the non-incarcerated partners over family and friends' withdrawal of support from them and the inmates.

## **Methods**

### **Study purpose and design**

Because this was a qualitative study, we used a phenomenological approach to investigate and interpret the non-incarcerated partners' feelings. This study's legitimate and credible goal of phenomenology was to obtain their lived experiences and determine whether their reported experiences formed a pattern of meanings. To validate and make the study reliable, we kept in mind that the participants' lived experiences are real and valid phenomena worthy of investigation, while also keeping in mind the Satir model's theoretical basis.

### **Instruments and procedures**

We used only the original data, also known as primary data, for the study. To truly understand the layers of feelings non-incarcerated partners have about their partners' incarceration, we conducted ten in-depth, face-to-face, open-ended, semi-structured interviews. This gave us a thorough understanding of how participants interpreted their experiences (Hiennink et al., 2020), as well as how we recorded details about our observations in a field notebook to document our thoughts, perspectives, and preconceptions throughout the research methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These interviews took place within the premises of the correctional facility, where each semi-structured interview schedule lasted between 30 and 60 minutes in a seemingly relaxed atmosphere in which each of the participants interacted freely with the researchers. The main task was to interpret participants' feelings as they amplified the effects their partners' incarceration had on them. The interviews were driven by the interview guide and follow-up questions.

### **Samples and participants**

In this study, we used non-probability sampling. This gave us the ability to choose 10 female non-incarcerated partners who visited their spouses at Nigeria's Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility, employing "bottom-up" and point-by-point analysis. Thus, we deliberately (purposively) sampled non-incarcerated partners of inmates at Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility for this study, according to Bazem et al. (2021). This procedure is in tandem with frequently used intentional sample techniques

such as criterion sampling (Caskurlu et al., 2021; Yldrm et al., 2021); theoretical sampling (Levitt, 2021; Crick, 2021); convenience sampling (Khine et al., 2021; Wong & Wong, 2021); and snowball sampling (Leighton et al., 2021). According to Adlit (2022), "purposeful sampling" is also known as "judgmental," "selective," or "subjected" sampling.

While the inmates had given permission to interview their non-incarcerated partners (Adebayo, 2021; Adegoke, 2021; Aluko, 2015), we interviewed 10 such non-incarcerated partners who consented to participate upon the assurance of the principle of confidentiality. Participant-inclusion criteria are women who were romantic partners, co-parents, or individuals who were still in a relationship with, separated from, or divorced from them pre-incarceration or during the incarceration period. Participants whose partners had completed the terms or whose partners had died in custody prior to the study were excluded.

#### Data Analysis

We used Martin Heidegger's interpretative, inductive, and reflexive analysis to identify, analyse, and interpret the emerging themes. The results were processed with Larkin et al.'s (2021) six-step analysis method, where each synopsis was coded with concise, textual, and thematic comments. Each text included commentary on themes and patterns, which were streamlined by looking for similarities and connections to see which contributed to the overall picture. Coding and theme development were handled by the members of the research team, who discussed the study on a regular basis to ensure that the analysis maintained its roots in the transcripts. The significance of this is that it allows the IPA's inherent ritual of double hermeneutic commitment, which encourages moving back and forth to grasp the meaning intended by each participant as well as juxtaposing those to optimise a detailed understanding of both the transcripts and the interpretations.

At the time of the study, four respondents were aged between 30 and 40; three were between 35 and 39; two were between 40 and 44; and one was between 65 and 69. According to their academic qualifications, seven respondents completed secondary school. The remaining three completed primary school, a bachelor's degree, and a master's degree, respectively. Furthermore, eight respondents conducted personal business by buying and selling, with the remaining two earning a wage or salary. Four of the respondents' partners had cases of robbery, two of rape, and the remaining three were involved in deception, aiding and abetting, and land grabbing, respectively. According to the respondents' partners' prison status, nine had not been convicted (awaiting trial—ATM), while only one had served terms. According to the participants' relationship status, eight stayed married to their incarcerated partners, while one had divorced and another was on the

verge of divorce. Furthermore, the eight respondents who stayed married to their incarcerated partners also shared parenting responsibilities with them, whereas the two that developed cold feet with their incarcerated partner did not have children with them. Thus, there was zero parenting shared.

### Findings

The study showed that partners' incarceration actually impacted respondents' frustration, pain, and hurting; betrayal and anxiety; anger, confusion, and interruption; hostility, hunting, and fear; sadness, shame, and humiliation; being depressed and incarcerated; being surprised and being in denial; being confused and helpless; being sorry and suffering double losses; being controlled and having a sense of relief.

### Frustration

Four respondents expressed their frustration about their partners' incarceration: A self-employed participant with 4 children reported her two years of:

"I am disappointed... left behind...I cannot afford three square meals a day. I have lost my peace of mind; I have lost my sleep..." (Participant 01).

A participant, whose husband was arrested during the wedding reception and was eventually taken in, interpreted her feelings as:

".... irritating. Irreversible regrets. My grief is not easily forgotten. My marriage hopes were cut short and shattered..." (Participant 02).

Another participant expressed her frustration at not being able to care for her chronically ill husband while he was incarcerated:

"I am disappointed because I am unable to witness his discomfort. I am so used to seeing him experience his pains" (Participant 03).

A participant whose husband has been in custody for two years because he could not produce his culprit apprentice expressed her emotions as follows:

".....only injustice, unfairness, frustration, and outrageous nonsense. My husband was wrongfully imprisoned. Hunger and dehydration have become my constant companions." (Participant 09).

### Pain and Hurt

Likewise, three of the participants felt pained and hurt by their partners' incarceration:

".. It is disgusting that he believes I am seeing someone else. ...His behaviour disturbs me greatly because it implies that he does not trust me... This is torturous" (Participant 01).

"I am in pain. I am deeply hurt that, as I struggle to make ends meet, I am confronted with this stumbling block" (Participant 04).

"...The worst devil is the pain and insanity he instils in me when I learn that the person I have secretly and openly defended, cared for, and been loyal to for seven years has indicted me..." (Participant 10).

### **Betrayal and Anxiety**

Likewise, two of the participants felt betrayed by their partners' incarceration:

"I smell a rat. Everyone around me, including my husband, has betrayed me (tears). Even sleeping at night is difficult for me. I was punished!" (Participant 04).

"After everything we have been through together, after everything we have shared, he believes he has moral grounds to indict me. What a calamity" (Participant 10).

### **Anger**

Furthermore four of the respondents expressed anger as a demonstration of the explicit emotion amplified by their partners' incarceration:

"My relatives and my husband's relatives irritate me with their comments and body language.." (Participant 03).

"If he was not anywhere near the scene, why would anyone allege him; why would I be dragged into this disgusting and annoying mess (furiously striking the fingers; threatening)?

(Participant 04).

"In the neighbourhood, everyone calls me names and stigmatises me. I am really upset. A ha! For what?" (Participant 05).

"I am annoyed with the community for its insensitivity, the fugitive rapist, the girl for allowing herself to be raped, and my husband for hiring someone whose relatives he had no idea " (Participant 09).

### **Confusion and Interruption**

Furthermore, four of the participants felt interrupted by their partners' incarceration:

"In my world, I am at a standstill except for being stereotyped and monotonous." (Participant 01).

"Without a doubt, I have been abandoned and forced to follow the tide. I am an outcast.. I despise being blackmailed. It saddens me that I have had no control over my life for the last year and a half..." (Participant 03).

"This is a devastating blow. I am the one bearing the brunt, and the heat is becoming harsher. I am not free to be myself.." (Participant 07).

"Everyone involved in the case is interrupting me. I no longer have control over my life..." (Participant 08).



### **Hostility, Hunting and Fear**

Furthermore, four of the participants felt hunted by their partners' incarceration:

"I am being pursued by members of the community. It shows on their faces when we interact on a daily basis. Their body language indicates that I am an endangered species" (Participant 01).

"Imagine being injured and not receiving medical attention. Imagine falling from grace to the grass!....." (Participant 03).

"...I am being persecuted and prosecuted for an offence that neither my husband nor I are aware of. I am a parasite that needs to be removed from the community." (Participant 09).

"His words, actions, and body language make me nervous. I am saddened....by his threat. I am also afraid he will come looking for me as soon as he steps out of the yard. ...." (Participant 10).

### **Sadness, Shame and Humiliation**

Moreover, three of the participants also felt bitter and humiliated by their partners' incarceration:

"No woman my age or position should have a husband in prison. I am humiliated as his second wife, ...I am said to have brought the family a bad lock..." (Participant 03).

"To be honest, the insults that resulted in my husband's arrest, trial, and incarceration are difficult to swallow" (Participant 04).

"I am ashamed, indignant, and dissatisfied with the development..." (Participant 06).

### **Depressed and Incarcerated**

Among the participants for the study, two had experienced a symbolic impoundment by their partners' incarceration:

"In my world, I am...imprisoned and kept in solitary confinement just like him (my husband). Emotionally and mentally, I am just as confined."(Participant 3).

"Friends and members of the community....we live intentionally withdraw from me. I am dejected, rejected, and isolated." (Participant 4).

### **Surprised and delusory**

Likewise, two of the participants felt a state of dismissal about their partners' imprisonment:

"This episode of the drama is so long that it needs to be paused so I can use the restroom." (Participants 6).

"I have practically been a shadow of myself. I have been wondering if this is true." (Participant 8).

**Being confused and helpless**

Also, two of the participants were confused and hopeless about their partners' incarceration:

"I am just blank, numbed, and disillusioned with everything around me." (Participant 6).

"I have never been more perplexed in my life. My husband's problems messed with me. (Participant 8).

**Being Sorry and Suffering Double Losses**

Moreover, two of the participants felt double losses from their partners' incarceration:

"I was expecting...the infant died. I lost my liberty. His imprisonment has stripped me of everything. I'm at a loss." (participant 2).

"My self-esteem is completely gone. My entire world has collapsed." (Participant 4).

**Being controlled and Lonely**

Likewise, two of the participants felt controlled by their partners' incarceration.

"His stubbornness and subjective thoughts are the only things that have not changed despite being in custody. He has complete control over me.." (Participant 1).

"I must admit that I only pretend to be strong in public. Everything in my life was emotionally controlled by the trauma of my husband's incarceration." (Participant 5).

**Feeling Secured and Sense of Relief**

Finally, the incarceration of their partners provided a sense of relief to two of the participants:

"I am happy without him. The mere thought of his release disturbs my peace. The last thing I expect is a nuisance.." (Particular 2).

"When he became aggressive, hostile, and threatening each time I visited him, his confinement provided me with peace and security as long as we did not cross paths." (Participant 10).

**Discussion**

The researchers' field diary revealed that the "personal iceberg" appeared to have a substantial impact on the lives of the non-incarcerated partners, their incarcerated counterparts, the law enforcement officers, and society at large. For instance, a few incarcerated men who had approved of their partners' participation in the activity during the interview time were taken aback when they discovered that their not-incarcerated partners did

not, despite the fact that they had come to visit. This happened because the non-incarcerated partners presented themselves as sisters rather than partners, especially because of the expected stigmatisation behind the prison walls. They felt more at ease referring to their partners as "brothers." Additionally, on a few occasions, prison officers made direct or indirect claims that the non-incarcerated partners had criminal tendencies comparable to those of their incarcerated partners while laying out justifications for their stringent requirement that some prison officials and the incarcerated partners be present during the interviews. Similarly, some of the non-incarcerated partners expressed their annoyance during the interviews about how officials stigmatised them, either explicitly or indirectly. In a similar spirit, a prison officer buttressed that when the government asked the media to highlight the empowering tools put in place for the incarcerated individuals, the inmates boycotted the ceremony because they did not want the general public to know that they were in prison while their family members claimed that they had travelled overseas. They did not only refuse to participate in the event; they also did not claim the equipment. This feat was to avoid shame and stigma from society.

Meanwhile, age distribution, academic qualifications, employment status, or their partners' prison status (ATM or conviction) had no effect on the outcome of incarceration for the participants. However, it was established that the length of time partners spent in prison facilities was related to the consequences of incarceration on the participants. Findings also indicated that, rape offences imposed more stigma and shame on non-incarcerated partners. Likewise, findings revealed that co-parenting with an incarcerated partner reduced the likelihood of divorce. This study outcome is consistent with Binti Abd Aziz et al.'s (2022) assertion that co-parenting is one of the crucial factors that non-incarcerated partners consider to muster resilience, even though the researcher actually expected all the non-incarcerated partners to throw the baby out with the bathwater given the context of the study site and the Yoruba community's beliefs and perceptions about incarceration (Salihu, 2018).

However, these findings are not in agreement with the previous report that linked imprisonment to an increased risk of disintegration for people who were in sexual relationships prior to detention (Lopoo & Western, 2005; Massoglia et al., 2011; Chui, 2016). It is evident in this study that despite their partners' incarceration, eight of the participants in sexual relationships prior to their partners' incarceration remained married. There is a cultural angle to this resilience. For example, in Yoruba land, marriage is a community affair where parental influence has a large effect on the selection of marriage partners, which entails a lengthy process of deliberation, investigation, dedication, negotiations, and disagreements between both the

groom and the bride before they finally agree to the union (Oresanya & Adebisi, 2021); dissolution of marriage involves parents and in-laws (Omobowale, 2018).

Furthermore, among the Yoruba, marriage is not a transaction between a man and a woman; marriage is essentially a relationship that extends beyond the nuclear family. It entails all individuals, including close relatives and the community at large. Such stakeholders provide physical, divine, virtuous, and financial help (Oladokun & Olatunji, 2022; Oresanya & Adebisi, 2021). Furthermore, according to Tata's (2019) report, family in the Yoruba context includes not only the man, his wife, and their families but also community members. This may have contributed to the participant's resilience.

In addition, contrary to Hariyantia et al.'s (2021) claim that the majority of detainees' families are victims of rising joblessness, developing destitution, pay disparities, and harsh financial conditions, there is no evidence from the demographics of the participants that establishes this claim. For instance, all the participants seemed comfortable prior to their partners' incarceration and did not report pre-incarceration financial conditions. The study's demographic result also did not agree with Garidzirai's (2021) analysis of economic determinants and crime, which found that poverty and inequality are the primary causes of crime. On the contrary, the participants and their partners appeared to be satisfied with their living conditions prior to incarceration.

Furthermore, the study findings revealed that feelings of frustration, pain and hurt, hunted and fear, sadness, shaming, and humiliation, and regret and double losses influenced the socioeconomic dynamics of the participants, whereas feelings of betrayal, anger, hostility, hunted and fear, control and loneliness, security, and a sense of relief demonstrated that incarceration negatively interfered with participants' relationships. Additionally, the findings are consistent with the study's theoretical framework, which holds that transformative change is feasible by focusing on the two influences that coping attitudes have on the mental life force as a whole (Banmen & Maki-Banmen, 2014; Mukherjee, 2021; Satir, 1988).

Furthermore, the findings bolster the notion that people's intrapsychic, life-altering experiences in their social systems have significant as well as life-altering effects (Bohecker et al., 2021). The participants' mental instability, disruption, and "imprisonment," as well as their plight and helplessness, were convincingly shown by them. These exacerbated the psychological effects of their partners' detention. In a similar vein, the participants' feelings of disorganisation, lack of commitment to routine, and lack of focus on personal goals were the causes of the implications of the co-

parenting load on non-incarcerated partners. The participants' feelings of loss of life, liberty, the company of the incarcerated spouses, and support from family, friends, and the community negatively impacted their parenting status.

### **Limitations and conclusion**

Because only participants with contact with the Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility were included in the study, the findings should be interpreted with vigilance. Caution should be used when generalising the study findings because the study has not been replicated in Nigeria's remaining five geopolitical zones: North Central, North East, North West, South East, and South South. This could result in a variety of results. Because of the gravity of the offences committed and the penalties imposed, the consequences of incarceration in Nigeria's maximum correctional facilities may be more severe than in medium facilities. Furthermore, this study focused on inmates' non-incarcerated female partners. A study of non-incarcerated male partners of inmates could yield different results.

We discovered that participants' emotions have an impact on their partners' incarceration. The participants' interpretations of the consequences of their partners' incarceration included distress, trauma, disloyalty, indignation, disruptions, target shooting, resentment, mortification, being locked up, being in willful ignorance, confusion, and powerlessness, double losses, being ruled, and a sense of relief. These factors influence how their partners' incarceration affects them. Studying the lived experiences of ten non-incarcerated partners whose spouses served terms at Nigeria's Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility and why and how their feelings interfered with the effects their spouses' incarceration bore on them has practical implications for policymakers in prison services, researchers, marriage and family specialists, prison administrative officers, correction officers, and family and community supporters. According to the study, marriage and family specialists should offer free counselling to non-incarcerated partners. It also suggests that instead of stigmatising non-incarcerated partners, family and community members should support them. These could help them deal with their negative emotions.

As the findings of this study indicate, many of the consequences expressed by the participants are as a result of how their support systems and society treat the incarceration of their partners. For instance, participants' feelings of frustration, pain and hurt, betrayal and anxiety, anger, confusion and interruption, hunting and fear, sadness, shame and humiliation, being depressed and incarcerated were as a result of unmet expectations of the support systems and society. If the shame, and stigmatisation from the support system abated, the self-esteem of the non-incarcerated partners

would be high, and much of the consequences of their partner's incarceration would be alleviated. The study therefore recommends that marriage and family therapists intensify psychoeducation through workshops and seminars for non-incarcerated partners experiencing emotional stress and support systems and members of society.

#### Ethical considerations

Being phenomenological research, this study is somewhat intrusive. This required respecting the participants' liberty, wishes, worth, and preferences. This is important because the study of participants' lived experiences frequently compromises their privacy and exposes sensitive information about them. Thus, this study sought approval from the Controller of Corrections, Oyo State Command, who also insisted that the research should be conducted within the Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility premises under the supervision of the head of the welfare office and that we were not permitted any form of audio or video recording.

The head of the welfare office, as the gatekeeper, facilitated ten of the inmates who agreed to have their non-incarcerated partners recruited, fulfilling legal and cultural obligations (Adebayo, 2021; Adegoke, 2021; Aluko, 2015). The non-incarcerated partners were provided with the information they needed to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. The participants were free to stop participating in the study at any time without feeling obligated to do so or having to give a reason. Also, throughout the study, real participant identifiers were replaced with pseudonymous ones. As a result of the participants' personal information being kept separate from the study data, it was difficult to link the data to specific participants.

#### Disclosure statement

We had no economic, political, or social interests, nor did we have any dual relationships that could influence our participation in the research process.

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