

## Inmates' Wives' Unusual Dedication at Nigeria's Agodi-Ibadan Medium Correctional Facility

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### Abstract

This research set out to explain how inmates wives perceived the phenomenon of their incarcerated partners. The research used the personal iceberg metaphor model of Satir and interpretative phenomenology analysis to understand the lived experiences of ten non-incarcerated partners at Nigeria's Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility. According to the findings, the non-incarcerated partners believed their partners were not guilty of the offense that was brought against them. They also thought that society made incorrect judgments about their partners. Additionally, they believed that God had approved of their spouses' incarceration. Their co-parenting, interpersonal relationships, physical and emotional health, and socioeconomic situation were all impacted by these opinions. The research offered counseling professionals a few recommendations.

**Keywords:** Agodi-Ibadan, phenomenology, innocence, supernatural, Satir

### Background

Çengel (2023) defined perception as the process by which humans organise and interpret information inputs in order to generate a meaningful image of their surroundings. Furthermore, Orhan et al. (2023); Rączaszek-Leonardi & Zubek (2023) conceptualised perception as a dynamic process of choosing, organizing, and interpreting people, objects, events, circumstances,

and activities. Likewise, Aksyuk (2023), Maharaj (2023), and White et al. (2023) understood perception as an individual's or a group's unique method of comprehending an event that involves the processing of information and fusing memories and experiences. Niedenthal and Sandhowers (2020), Ciciurkaite (2018), and Cahuas et al. (2023) also maintained that perception is a relatively unique experience that is influenced by a variety of variables, including social, gender, and socioeconomic status, they were all making reference to the same ideas. Studies show a substantial connection between confidence, perception, and self-esteem, particularly during challenging times (Gebresilase & Zhao, 2023; Kim et al., 2023; Radjenovic et al., 2023).

Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how perception influences the lived experiences of non-incarcerated partners, as is needed in qualitative research (Klinke et al., 2023) in Yorubaland, especially in light of Yang's and Emery's (2021, 2023) definitions of perception as an individual's worldview. Perception, which entails the processing of data and the incorporation of recollections and experiences in the creation of understanding, can act as a powerful motivator for taking action after a partner's incarceration. According to Mannella and Tummolini (2023), Rafindadi et al. (2023), and Silva (2023), the idea of perception combines sensory and cognitive processes to understand the effect of an occurrence, which must be comprehended by interpreting sensory data based on prior experience, processing data, and building mental models. This argument is congruent with the connectivity of perception to cultural backgrounds. As Granjon et al. (2023), Liao et al. (2023), Olayemi et al. (2009), and Peterson et al. (2023) observe, a person's perception of pain is linked to their race. While some non-incarcerated partners associate pain with mental or medical suffering, the intensity of gravity, penal tension, and proximity exclusion (Lanskey et al., 2018), others interpret pain as long prison schedules, not spending enough time with the incarcerated partners, or not having control over their time (Kotova, 2019).

Furthermore, people from various cultures have vastly different perspectives on themselves and others (Verma, 2020); Ho (2017) found a strong connection between personal perceptions and attitudes. It is possible that the non-incarcerated partners are concerned or perplexed by the nature of their spouses' detention. This may incite them to withdraw their approval or support, as trust triggers people to maintain their capacity to act in a complex environment (Siegrist, 2021). However, non-incarcerated partners who have a positive view of their spouses' incarceration are more likely to have a positive attitude. For instance, in their study on the perspectives of men with imprisoned romantic partners, Dutcher and Barnes-Ceeney (2021) reveal that the views held by the men improved the relationship, enhanced social love and commitment, and dealt with the situation.

As shown by Mitchell (2023), Moltu et al. (2023), and Nickbakht et al. (2023), perceptions are heavily influenced by one's understanding of oneself, other people, and the circumstance, as well as the perspectives of others. Self-discovery may be required by non-incarcerated spouses because it could culminate in self-intervention. According to Amarsanaa et al. (2023), this minimizes tension and emotional concern while enhancing self-confidence. The best way to demonstrate self-awareness, according to Carden et al. (2023) and London et al. (2023), is to exercise cognition, emotions, insight, and mindfulness without undermining individual differences in opinions, sentiments, and prompts, as highlighted by Bettis et al. (2022), Mao et al. (2022), and Webster and Albertson (2022).

Similarly, in her study of prisoners' wives in south-west Nigeria, Oyekola (2018) linked the wives' views of support networks, perceived social support, and financial independence. According to the research, non-incarcerated partners saw themselves as pushovers because they were wives of prisoners. They felt compelled to make comparisons with previous classmates, neighbors, friends, and coworkers. The results confirm the existence of a link between belief, assumption, mind-set, subjective reality, thoughts, ideas, and an individual's stance (Gosselin et al., 2020; Wamsler et al., 2020; McMullen, 2010). Additionally, Nickels (2020) reported the perceptions of non-incarcerated women about their identified lack of interpersonal interactions, an absence of communication during contingencies, proximity and transportation costs, isolation, correctional facility regulations, affective detachment, and marginalisation as a result of their male partners' confinement in their study of 124 female partners of incarcerated individuals.

In a similar way, Moore and Hutchinson's (2020) report emphasised the importance of ideals, thoughts, and the learning process in shaping perceptions. Thomas (2020) equally stated that a faulty perception has two consequences: it lowers self-esteem and causes incongruent stances. Thus, when a spouse sees that her incarcerated husband has violated the law and that his status has changed to that of a prisoner, her confidence in him begins to dwindle (Sholihah et al., 2021). The Yoruba community, however, employs folk songs to prevent children from getting to this state. The same mechanism also facilitates children's development into responsible members of society (Kolawole & Ibekwe, 2021). "Kini ni n o fole se laye ti mo wa" (Appendix 1) is one such example, which portrays the Yoruba view of incarceration and what causes it. This may clarify the reason partners, relatives, and possibly even acquaintances may withdraw from the prisoners (Ishola, 2022; Oyekola, 2018).

The lens on which this research was based was Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy (STST), which was intended to help

with relationship improvement, congruency, emotion, and self-perception. As a result, the inmates' partners were investigated in order to decipher their viewpoints. Consequently, the two goals of this research were to (1) investigate the perspectives of non-incarcerated partners and (2) understand how these perspectives affected them as a consequence of their partners' incarceration.

## **Methods**

### **Study Purpose and Design**

This study used interpretative phenomenological approach to investigate and interpret non-incarcerated partners' perceptions of their partners' incarceration. This was accomplished by keeping in mind the Satir model's personal iceberg theoretical foundation.

### **Instruments and Procedures**

The study relied on primary data to investigate the participants' lived experiences. We conducted in-depth, face-to-face, open-ended, semi-structured interviews with 10 non-incarcerated partners of inmates at the Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility. These interviews, which lasted 60 minutes in a seemingly relaxed atmosphere, were conducted on the grounds of the correctional facility, where each participant interacted freely with the researchers. The primary goal was to comprehend the participants' perceptions of their partners' incarceration and to interpret the amplified effects of their partners' incarceration on them. The interview guide and follow-up questions guided the interviews.

### **Samples and Participants**

The study employed purposeful sampling (Adlit, 2022; Bazen et al., 2021; Wong & Wong, 2021) and recruited 10 female non-incarcerated partners who visited their spouses at Nigeria's Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility. The study also adopted "bottom-up" and sequential analysis. Because they authorised their non-incarcerated partners to participate, the inmates had a vested interest in the recruitment of participants (Adegoke, 2021; Aluko, 2015). We interviewed 10 such non-incarcerated partners who consented to participate upon the assurance of the principle of confidentiality. Individuals in a romantic relationship, co-parenting, or who were still in a relationship with, separated from, or divorced from the inmates prior to or during their incarceration are eligible to participate. Individuals whose partners had completed the terms or whose partners had died in custody prior to the study were excluded from participating.

## Data Analysis

We employed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to identify, analyse, reflect on, and interpret the emerging themes. We processed the result with Larkin et al.'s (2021) six-step analysis method, with each text including commentary on themes and patterns. We streamlined the themes and patterns to connect the similarities. In addition, the members of the research team developed coding and themes. They also discussed the study on a regular basis to ensure that the analysis maintained its roots in the transcripts. This enhanced the IPA's inherent ritual of double hermeneutic commitment.

The study found that four respondents were aged between 30 and 40; three were between 35 and 39; two were between 40 and 44, while one was between 65 and 69. Likewise, their academic qualifications vary: seven completed secondary school each of 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. Furthermore, nine of the respondents' partners had not been convicted (awaiting trial—ATM), while only one had begun to serve terms. Participants' relationship status showed that, eight remained married to their incarcerated partners, while one had divorced and another was on the verge of divorce. In addition, the study showed that the eight respondents who remained 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 (Table 1.)

**Table 1.** The Respondents' Demographic Distribution

Partici pants	Age	Academi c Qualifica tion	Nature of Employment	Partners' Crime	Partners' Prison Status	Years in prison	Relation/ co-parenting Status
P.01	40	High Sch.	Self-employed	aiding & abetting	ATM	2	Married With 4 children
P.02	34	High Sch.	Self-employed	Robbery	ATM	7	About to separated With 0 child
P.03	32	Bachelor Degree	Self-employed	Robbery	ATM	2	Married With 1 child
P.04	38	High Sch.	Self-employed	Rape	ATM	3	Married With 1 child
P.05	68	High Sch.	Self-employed	Land grab	ATM	2	Married With 5

							children
P.06	35	High Sch.	Self-employed	Drug	ATM	1	Married With 2 children
P.07	33	High Sch.	Self-employed	Robbery	Convicted	3	Married With 4 children
P.08	36	Master Degree	Salary earner	Obtain by false pretence	ATM	2	Married With 1 child
P.09	30	Primary Sch.	Self-employed	Rape	ATM	2	Married With 4 children
P.10	43	High Sch.	Wage earner	Robbery	ATM	7	Almost separated With 0 child

**Codes:** Each participant is coded, P. being an acronym for participant, while the number was given and used to identify each of the participants. This measure was taken to protect the identity of respondents.

## Findings

The non-incarcerated partners understood their partners' incarceration in three dimensions: innocence, the societal lens, and submission to God's will (Table 2).

### Innocence

Participants assumed that their partners were not guilty of the crime charged against them:

“My husband is not guilty..... I believe in him and support him.” P. 01

“...he was not caught with any stolen items,... members of society find it difficult to believe that he has not yet been convicted. P. 02

“..... no case has been established against him. Is it no longer correct that any person accused of a crime must be treated as innocent until proven guilty? P. 03

“I am convinced that my husband did not commit that crime....”P. 04

“My husband is not guilty of the crime charged against him.” P. 05

“My husband is not guilty of the crime charged against him, and I believe God will clear him.” P. 06:

“Even though the plaintiff assumes that my husband is guilty, my honest belief is that he is innocent and will be set free by God's grace.” P. 08

“My husband does not rape. His error was that he could not hand over the culprit to the police because he fled as soon as he realised his mistake. **P. 09**

“If you (pointing at the incarcerated partner as she raised her voice) are not guilty of the crimes, as you claim, why are you talking about guns?”

**P. 10**

### **The Societal Lens**

The participants had bitter experiences about their partners' incarceration as the result of society's concept and its punitive measures against incarceration and prisoners' relatives.

“Members of the community who used to respect and admire our family now see me as a criminal. My self-esteem is gone.; life has no value. P. 01

“Members of the community are wary of relating to me because they believe he taught me the art of robbery. P. 02

“My husband's family and friends do not pay visits or come over to help. P. 03

“Members of society are adamant that he is guilty of the offence. P. 05

“Some family members and colleagues have abandoned me. P. 06

“What demoralises me is society's belief that my husband committed the crime and that I was an accessory. P. 08

“Because my husband is in prison, community members have stopped giving me clothes to sew for them. P. 09

### **Submission to God's Will**

Participants' perception for drawing spiritual meanings from their circumstances relieved their burden and disabuse their minds of whatever meanings society assigned to the imprisonment of their partners:

“I believe that God permitted his detention. It is God's will..” P. 01

*“I believe God put him there to save me...”* P. 02

“...but I am convinced that God allows it for a purpose....” P. 03

“...imprisonment is preferable to death and that the Lord who knows the end from the end, will grant him freedom one day.” P. 06

“God permitted his incarceration. It will be over soon..” P. 07

“I am now married to my God and the father of two children. I have seen the light. I do not want to go back into darkness. I cannot afford to go back to depression; now I travel light.” P. 10

### **Discussion**

According to the researchers' field journal, the public's view of participants as inmates' partners compelled them to conceal their identities as romantic partners. Meanwhile, neither the demographics of the participants nor the incarceration status of their incarcerated spouses had a detrimental



effect on them. However, the nature of the crime, particularly in defilement cases, as well as the length of time their partners had been imprisoned, may have had a significant effect on the participants. At first glance, nine out of ten participants' inference views about their partners' alleged offences gave the impression that their partners' incarceration had not negatively impacted their relationship. The results also revealed that the non-incarcerated partners did not appear to be ashamed during the interviews. They not only identified with their spouses, but they also admitted their innocence.

Nevertheless, the participants' view that their partners were not given a fair hearing added insult to injury. They were also bothered by their family's, peers', and society's stigmatisation. They perceived this as being abandoned when they required support. This exacerbated the effects of their spouses' incarceration on them. According to Nickels (2020), the innocent non-incarcerated partners are forced to alter how they behave, reconsider their romantic relationship expectations, suffer stigma, and directly sense the effects of social control, surveillance, and monitoring. This trend is consistent with Comfort 2009's definition of "secondary prisonisation."

Because of their relationship with their partners, participants experienced social stigma when they argued that their partners were innocent, which may undermine their sense of interpersonal authenticity (Nickels, 2020). The findings also clearly showed how the participants' sociocultural identities were influenced by their partners' incarceration; thus, society impacted their experience. This result is also consistent with Kotova's (2020) observation that partners of incarcerated people face societal stigma and may lose friends, associates, or society's sympathy. It also supports Canoy and Villasanta's (2021) assessment that non-incarcerated partners face friendly disgrace, which may cause them to lose companions, supporters, or the general public's compassion.

This development has revealed incongruent communication postures such as blaming, being overly reasonable, and displaying indifference. This phenomenon had a negative impact on their self-esteem and hampered their relationship with society to the point where they believed their family of origin, friends, and other support systems were conspiring with society to disenfranchise them. "Kini ni n o fole se laye ti mo wa" (Appendix 1) is a premise for the society's stance as well as the lens through which participants' support networks perceive the incarceration of genuine Yoruba society members. This explains why spouses, close family members, and probably even friends, may withdraw from prisoners and their partners (Ishola, 2022; Oyekola, 2018).

These findings suggest that nine of the ten participants seriously thought their partners were innocent. The behaviours of the participants could be explained culturally. In Yoruba culture, for example, a woman must



kneel to impress her husband as a sign of submissiveness (Onwuka, 2022). In other words, because traditional and social beliefs support male supremacy, Yoruba wives should be submissive in communication. That was also the view held by the participants, although sometimes women may appear to be submissive in order to avoid arguments, quarrels, or violence (Adejimi et al., 2022). This is the situation described by Johnson-Bashua (2022) as the fusion of tradition, spirituality, and sexual identity in African ideology, resulting in a conflict between women's rights to liberty. Some participants turned to God for help to cope with trauma and anxiety (Hervey, 2022; Sabran & Burhan, 2023). It is obvious that the participants' spirituality and inner selves were positively impacted by their spouses' incarceration. This supports the findings of Ashraf and Farhad (2022), who emphasised the protective role of religion and faith in the lives of women whose relatives are incarcerated. This falls short of Satir's standard. Participants 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7, who thought that their partners' incarceration was predetermined by God, as well as participant 10, who claimed that she was married to God, who also fathered her children, are both extremely unreasonable and irrelevant, according to the Satir model.

**Table 2.** Tabular presentation of Perception

Sub-theme:	P.01	P.02	P.03	P.04	P.05	P.06	P.07	P.08	P.09	P.10
Innocence	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*
Societal Lens	*	*	*		*	*		*	*	
God's will	*	*	*			*	*			*

### Limitations and Conclusion

This study was restricted to non-incarcerated partners at Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility. Because results are subjective, the same research may yield different results if tested using different methodologies. Furthermore, research that includes both incarcerated and non-incarcerated partners could produce a more comprehensive result than this one. However, the study has established the participants' perception of their partners as innocent of the crime alleged, the support systems' and society's misjudgement of this presumption and how they related to the participants, and the participants' views on their partners' incarceration as part of God's will, which influenced the participants' experiences with incarceration. Each of the three assumptions made by the participants had some implications for how incarceration impacted them. For instance, the findings showed that, apart from a participant whose partner had been convicted, all other participants (table 1) were disgruntled that the state unlawfully put their partners in custody.

On the one hand, the findings that participants were positive about their partners' incarceration support Satir's iceberg metaphor of the self as a life force in which spirit, soul, and the core—the very essence of being—are processed in reflection to demonstrate the self-awareness that builds inner strength, as presented by Ridley (2015), Rieck (2021), and Sinan (2020). The investigation, on the other hand, revealed that the participants' socioeconomic standing, interpersonal relationships, physical and emotional health, and co-parenting with their incarcerated partners were all affected. Similarly, the results demonstrated how imprisonment influenced the sociocultural identities of non-incarcerated spouses. Thus, the findings showing participants' perceptions of social stigma are consistent with the findings of Kotova's (2020) research, which discovered that non-incarcerated partners may lose friends, associates, or society's sympathy. According to Canoy and Villasanta (2021), incarceration may cause a non-incarcerated partner to suffer friendly disgrace, lose companions, associates, or the sympathy of the general public.

The participants' belief that their spouses' imprisonment is a submission to God's will is both super-reasonable and irrelevant. They tried to conceal their weaknesses with disconnected influence, which is based on intelligence, as the super-reasonable participants. They attempted to avoid feelings. They, on the other hand, acted as if the cause of stress did not exist as irrelevant participants. They merely diverted attention away from the issue (Lambie, 2000). Furthermore, the Satir model thinks that anyone with a high sense of self-esteem has tapped into their spiritual life energy and is not tossed by perceptions or unmet expectations, so the participants in this research may not be as spiritual as they claimed to be (Satir, 1988; Satir et al., 1991).

Given that boosting self-esteem is one of the Satir model's primary goals (Allen et al., 2022; Banmen, 1986; Gitau et al., 2018; Maxey, 2021; Satir et al., 1991), the findings suggest that the participants' self-esteem may have been negatively impacted on the basis of Satir's perspective. For instance, according to Satir, an individual who has low self-esteem is filled with worry and doubts about himself. Furthermore, such an individual's "self-esteem is based to an extreme extent on what he thinks others think of him; his dependence on others for his self-esteem cripples his autonomy and individuality; he disguises his low self-esteem from others, especially when he wants to impress others... A person with low self-esteem has high hopes about what he can expect from others, but he also has great fears; he is only too ready to expect disappointment and to distrust people." (Satir, 1967, p. 8).

## Ethical Considerations

Measures were taken to safeguard the privacy of the non-incarcerated partners of the inmates as a precaution for an intrusive study that probed into their lived experiences. Consequently, this study obtained approval from the Controller of Corrections, Oyo State Command. In addition, the inmates consented to having their non-incarcerated partners recruited in order to fulfill their legal and cultural obligations. (Adegoke, 2021; Aluko, 2015). Before beginning the investigation, we got the consent of the ten participants. We also had the head of the welfare office as our study gatekeeper, who served as a check and balance as the investigation was carried out within the Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility. Because no audio or video recording was allowed, there was no need for special tape care. Likewise, it was difficult to link the data to individual participants because the participant identifiers were replaced with pseudonymous ones.

## Disclosure Statement

We did not have economic, partisan, or social stakes, nor were we involved in any multiple relationships that could affect our engagement in the study procedure.

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**Appendix 1** Kini n o Fole Se Laye ti Mo Wa

Yoruba	English (self) translation
1. Kini ni n o fole se laye timo wa (2x) Laye ti mo wa kaka kin jale Kaka kin jale makuku deru. Kini ni no fole se laye timo wa.	1. Why would I try my hand at stealing in my life (2x) Rather than stealing, in my life Rather than stealing, I would rather be a slave
2. Eni to jale adele ejo (2x) Adajo awa fewon si lese Fewon si lese bi olugbe Eni to jale Adele ejo	Why would I try my hand at stealing in my life 2. Whoever steals will be prosecuted (2x) And the judge would imprison him
3. Aye ema fole segbe ti moni (2x) Egbe ti moni ewon ko sun won Ewon ko sun won fomoluwabi Aye ema fole segbe ti mo ni.	In prison, you are chained Whoever steals will be prosecuted 3. May no one inflict stealing on my company (2x) My company prison does not dignify
4. Oluwa ma fole segbe ti mo ni (2x) Egbe ti mo ni kaka kin jale Kaka kojale bo ba ku to Aye ema fole s'gbe ti mo ni.	Prison is not dignified for responsible person May no one inflict stealing on my company 4. May the Lord not inflict stealing on my company (2x)
5. Beni to jaleba Lola laye(2x) Balola laye kole rorun wo Kole rorun wo bolojo bade Beni to jale Balola laye.	My company rather than I steal Rather than my company steals it would rather die May no one inflict stealing on my company 5. If a thief becomes wealthy on the planet (2x) He will miss heaven even if he is wealthy When he dies, he will miss heaven If a thief becomes wealthy on the planet.