

**SUICIDAL IDEATION BY INCARCERATED INMATES OF  
KUJE MEDIUM CUSTODIAL CENTRE ABUJA:  
PERSONALITY TRAITS, SELF-BLAME AND PERCEIVED  
SOCIAL SUPPORT AS FACTORS**

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**ABSTRACT:** The psychological effect of being incarcerated takes a toll on inmates, which is often characterized by withdrawal, despair, melancholy and deprivation, and a combination of these effects plays a significant role on inmates. As such, inmates are more likely to contemplate suicide or be prone to suicide. Therefore, this study explores personality traits, self-blame and perceived social support as predictive factors of suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. The study instruments were completed by providing informed consent. The suicidal ideation scale (SIS), The Big Five Personality Inventory scale (BFI), the Self-blame Sub-scale (SBSS) of Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CEMRQ) and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) scores were collected and analysed using SPSS version 27. The result revealed that personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) jointly predicted suicidal ideation ( $R = .857$ ,  $F = 78.863$ ,  $P < .01$ ). Findings also revealed that self-blame had no significant influence on suicidal ideation ( $R = .122$ ;  $F = 2.216$ ,  $P > .05$ ). In addition, the result revealed that social support had a significant influence on suicidal ideation ( $R = .893$ ;  $F = 573.575$ ,  $P < .01$ ). Overall, personality traits, self-blame and perceived social support jointly and significantly predicted suicidal ideation ( $R = .388$ ;  $F = 15.507$ ,  $P < .01$ ) among incarcerated inmates. It was recommended that Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja should endeavour to engage inmates in therapeutic programmes and clinical interventions that will help them to gain self-awareness and enhance their psycho-emotional development.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Globally, suicide persists as a major public health concern, affecting people across the lifespan, regardless of gender, culture or socioeconomic background (Turecki & Brent, 2016). According to the (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014), more than 800,000 people die by suicide each year, making it the fifteenth leading cause of death worldwide. An extant body of research indicates that contact with the criminal justice system is associated with a heightened risk for suicide (Webb et al., 2011), both among community-residing (Gunter et al. 2011; King et al., 2015; Sattar, 2003) and incarcerated inmates. Moreover, with respect to the latter group, suicide is a leading cause of mortality in custodial settings across the globe (Konrad et al., 2007; Rabe, 2012), accounting for roughly half of all deaths during imprisonment (Fazel & Baillargeon, 2011). On the basis of data sampled across 12 high-income countries, suicide rates in male inmates have been reported to be three to eight times higher than those recorded in their nonincarcerated counterparts in the population at large, reflecting rates of over 100 suicides per 100,000 inmates (Fazel et al., 2011). Majekodunmi et al. (2017) found that those inmates awaiting trials were more depressed than convicted inmates. Duration of incarceration

in the correctional facility is another trigger of suicidal ideation among inmates. Some inmates acquire suicidal ideation when they are unable to cope with the stress of confinement (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014). At the initial period of incarceration, the stress can be limited to the fear of the unknown and isolation from the family members. However, as the period of incarceration extends, the stress factor becomes exacerbated to include loss of relationships, conflict within the correctional facility environment, victimisation by the other inmates, legal frustration, physical and emotional breakdown and as the inmates reach this emotional breaking point, suicidal ideation can be the result. (Oyeleke et al., 2018).

Personality traits are linked to suicide because these traits contribute to a diathesis for suicide behaviour (Brezo et al. 2006). Goldberg (1990) proposed five dimensions of personality that are used to describe human personality. These five factors are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Within the correctional setting, the five-factor model of personality is found in any of the inmates, and those traits are what might or might not predispose and perpetuate the inmate to suicidal ideation and suicide. Several studies have used Costa and McCrae's five-factor model (Costa & McCrae 1992) to explore associations between personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) and different dimensions of suicidality among older adults (De Young, Quilty & Peterson, 2007).

Given the various dimensions of personality and the dynamics of each, it is plausible to assume that an inmate's personality would indicate or determine the tendency to self-blame. Shirley and Ilene (2010) reported that suicide completers had significantly higher scores on blaming self/self-blame and suicide ideation, concluding that those who eventually commit suicide may endorse a greater tendency toward self-blame and introversion.

Furthermore, perceived social support may act as a critical protective factor against both self-blame and suicidal ideation. Research has indicated that perceived social support can act as both a direct and indirect buffer against suicidal ideation (Endo et al., 2013). Conversely, a lack of social support may increase suicide risk. Individuals who suddenly lose support experience sharp increases in suicide ideation (Endo, et al., 2013). Wallace et al. (2016) examined the relationship between inmates' mental health and their social support and reported that inmates who have stronger connections or a sense of closeness with their families during incarceration were reported to have experienced positive mental health. In a correctional centre, social support can be viewed as an essential aspect of a rehabilitation programme for incarcerated individuals who also have no control over decisions made with respect to their daily experience while still in this environment. However, adequate social support might not be available in many correctional centres because of differences in policies that guide the correctional centre administration. In Nigeria, congestion, inadequate welfare and rehabilitation negatively affect inmates' available social support (Ayuk et al., 2013). Therefore, this research attempts to fill these gaps by focusing on personality traits, self-blame and perceived social support as predictive factors of suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study was to determine whether personality traits, self-blame and social support predict suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre. The specific objectives are as follows;

1. To investigate whether personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience) predict suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja.
2. To examine whether self-blame predicts suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja.
3. To determine whether social support predicts suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja.
4. To examine if personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience), self-blame and perceived social support will independently and jointly predict suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja.

### **Statement of Hypotheses**

1. Personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) significantly predict suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja.
2. Self-blame significantly predicts suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja.
3. Perceived social support significantly predicts suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja.
4. Personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience), self-blame and perceived social support independently and jointly predict suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja.

### **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

#### **Personality Traits and Suicidal Ideation**

Segal et al. (2012) conducted a study on personality, suicidal ideation, and reasons for living among older adults using 109 participants. They found that personality shows a positive correlation with suicidal ideation and mixed relationships with aspects of reasons for living. Personality traits had negative correlations with suicidal ideation, with the exception of neuroticism which had a positive relationship, and were mostly unrelated to no reasons for living.

Duberstein et al. (2000) used the 5 personality traits to study the relationship between personality traits and suicidal behaviour. They found that neuroticism had a positive relationship with extroversion and agreeableness had a negative relationship with suicide, and that patients with suicidal thoughts would obtain high scores in openness to experience.

#### **Self-Blame and Suicidal Ideation**

Egwuonwu and Olonade (2014) conducted a study on self-blame, anxiety and depression as determinants of suicidal ideation among female college students with recent history of abortion using 202 female college students. They found that self-blame has a positive significant correlation with suicidal ideation among female tertiary students. It was found that self-blame has a significant independent influence on suicidal ideation among female tertiary students.

Ross (2013) conducted a meta-analysis on self-blame and suicidal ideation among combat veterans. Under the theme of self-blame, he discussed the locus of control shift; pre-combat trauma; suicide as a murder of the self; survivor guilt; self-blame for death of a fellow soldier; self-blame for being raped by a fellow soldier; and several other forms of self that contribute to suicidal ideation and also provided examples of treatment strategies and clinical interventions for each of these reasons for self-blame.

### **Social Support and Suicidal Ideation**

Tabaac et al. (2016) looked at the relationship between social support and suicide risk in a national sample of ethnically diverse sexual minority women. Participants (N = 150) completed measures of social support and suicidal ideation/attempts. After controlling for socioeconomic status, social support explained 12.3% of the variance in past suicidal ideation and 10.7% in lifetime suicide attempts. Social support from family and significant other were both inversely associated with suicidal ideation, and social support from family inversely with lifetime attempts. Interventions that strengthen family relationships could be a buffer of suicidality in this population.

Miller et al. (2015) looked at the role of social support in adolescent's suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. Participants were 143 adolescents (64% female; 81% white; range, 12-18 years). Main and interactive effects of social support on the odds of suicidal attempt were tested with logistic regression. Results from the linear regression analysis revealed that perceptions of lower school support independently predicted greater severity of SI, accounting for parent and close friend support. Further, the relationship between lower perceived social support and suicidal ideation was the strongest among those who perceived lower versus higher parental support. Results from the logistic regression analysis revealed that perceptions of lower parental support independently predicted suicide attempt history, accounting for school and close friend support. Further, those who perceived lower support from school and close friends reported the greatest odds of suicide attempt history.

### **Design**

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which is a type of survey design in which the researcher administers questionnaires to a sample of the population within a time frame. This design helps the researcher measure the opinions of participants on the study variables by collecting data at a particular point in time without manipulating any variables in the study. The independent variables are personality traits, self-blame and perceived social support, whereas the dependent variable is suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja

This study included all available participants (i.e., incarcerated inmates) at the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. The participants were sampled through a convenience sampling technique. The relevant sociodemographic data of the participants such as age, marital status, religion and educational qualifications were collected and described in detail.

### **Instruments**

The suicidal ideation scale (SIS): was developed by Rudd (1989). It is a 10-item scale that measures suicidal ideation. All the items are responded to via a 5-point Likert scale ranging

from "never" (scored as 1) to "always" (scored as 5). Full scale scores are calculated by summing the values of the response. Possible full-scale scores ranged from a low value of 10 (indicating no suicide ideation) to a high value of 50 (indicating high level of suicidal ideation). The scale contains items such as: "I have been thinking of ways to kill myself" and "I have told someone I want to kill myself", "I believe my life will end in suicide and I have made attempts to kill myself". The scale was designed to quantify the intensity of current conscious suicidal intent by scaling various dimensions of self-destructive thoughts or wishes. Its items exhibit face validity as they measure suicidal ideation in subjects. Rudd (1989) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .86 and adequate item-total correlation ( $r=45-74$ ). The suicidal ideation scale was revalidated by a researcher in Nigeria by Emeka (2017) who investigated 77 Nigerian correctional centre inmates in Anambra state. The results of the reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha of .97.

The Big Five Personality Inventory scale (BFI): was developed by John, et al. (1991). It is a 44-item scale that measures an individual's personality traits or characteristics on the big five factors (dimensions) of personality: extraversion (8 items), agreeableness (9 items), conscientiousness (9 items), neuroticism (8 items), and openness (10 items). All the items are responded to via a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". The scale contains items such as: 'I see myself as someone who tends to find fault with others', and 'I see myself as someone who can be somewhat careless'. Responses to the scale items varied according to the five-point Likert scale from disagree strongly to agree strongly on a scale of one to five. The negative items (items 2, 6, 8, 9, 12, 18, 21, 23, 24, 27, 31, 34, 35, 37, 41 and 43) were reverse scored while the total score for each factor was calculated by finding the sum of the corresponding items measuring each factor. The BFI has been translated and validated for the Brazilian population, showing adequate psychometric properties and coefficients of Cronbach's alpha of 0.65, 0.75, 0.75, 0.64 and 0.69 for the five factors "openness", "neuroticism", "extraversion", "conscientiousness" and "agreeableness" respectively. The Big Five Personality Inventory scale was revalidated by a researcher in Nigeria by Emeka (2017) who studied 77 Nigerian correctional centre inmates in Anambra state and obtained coefficients for each of the subscales, such as extraversion .44, neuroticism .36, openness to experience .77, conscientiousness .56, and agreeableness .54.

The Self-Blame Subscale (SBSS) of the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CEMRQ): was developed by Garnefki, Kraaij and Spinhoven, (2002). This is a 4-item scale that measures self-blame. The scale evaluates items referring to thought processes in self-blame on the basis of an individual's experience. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The psychometric property of the self-blame scale as revealed by Garnefki, et al. (2002), was a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .70. In many cases even over .80 as was done by Garnefki, et al (2002). The scale contains questions such as: I feel that I am the one to blame for it, I feel that I am the one who is responsible for what happened, I think about the mistakes I have made in this matter and I think that basically the cause must lie within myself. Furthermore, the SBSS has been shown to have good factorial validity, good discriminative properties and good construct validity (Garnefki, et al, 2002.). The self-blame subscale of the cognitive emotion regulation questionnaire was revalidated by a researcher in Nigeria by Emeka (2017) who examined 77 Nigerian correctional center inmates in Anambra state. The results of the reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha of .91.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS): This scale was developed by Zimet et al. (1988). This is a 12-item scale that measures perceived social support. The respondents are asked to rate the extent of perceived social support on a 7-point Likert scale from “disagree very strongly” (1) to “agree very strongly” (7). The instrument assesses a person’s perception of the adequacy of social support from three sources, namely, friends, family, and significant others. The scale contains questions such as: 'There is a special person who is around when I am in need', 'My family truly tries to help me', 'I get the emotional help and support I need from my family' and 'I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows'. The MSPSS has three subscales, each of which contains four items: The family subscale: assesses the perceived availability and adequacy of social support from family members. Friends subscale: This subscale assesses the perceived availability and adequacy of social support from friends. Significant other subscale: This subscale assesses the perceived availability and adequacy of social support from a significant other. The MSPSS has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure of perceived social support. The perceived social support scale was revalidated by a researcher in Nigeria by Ike, et al (2013) with 601 employees of the Nigerian Prisons Service in a southeastern state in Nigeria. The results of the reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach’s alpha of .82.

### **Procedure**

An introductory letter was obtained from the Department of Psychology, Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna to the Controller, Nigerian Correctional Service, FCT Command Gwagwalada, Abuja. This letter served as an introduction to the research and a request for permission to conduct research at the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre Abuja. Upon obtaining approval, the researcher then went to the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja with the questionnaires. On arrival, the researcher met with the welfare officer who took him to the officer in charge of Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre for proper introduction. After waiting, the officer in charge instructed the welfare officer to go ahead and organize the inmates for the exercise. The inmates were gathered at the visiting area and the researcher ensured that the inmates were provided with an informed consent form, emphasizing that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to the incarcerated inmates who were readily available for the research and they were assured that the information provided would be treated confidentially and that no identifying information would be needed. The inmates were given the opportunity to ask questions that were clarified by the researcher. Afterwards, questionnaires were distributed to the inmates with the help of the welfare officer who assisted in organizing the inmates. The questionnaire took approximately 45 minutes to complete, and only questionnaires that were properly completed were selected and used for data analysis.

### **Statistical techniques used**

The data collected in this study were analysed via a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 27). The demographic characteristics of the participants such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were analysed via descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics such as multiple regression analysis and linear regression analysis were employed to test the hypotheses. Hypotheses one and four were tested via multiple regression analysis whereas hypothesis two and three were tested via linear regression analysis

## RESULTS

### Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-32 years	78	52.7
	33-47 years	65	43.9
	48-60 years	5	3.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>
Marital status	Single	81	54.7
	Married	61	41.2
	Divorced	6	4.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>
Education	Primary	35	23.6
	Secondary	88	59.5
	Tertiary	25	16.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>
Religion	Christianity	107	72.3
	Islam	41	27.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table shows the demographic characteristics of participants. Age: 18-32 years (N= 78; 52.7%), 33-47 years (N= 65; 43.9%) and 48-60 years (N= 5; 3.4%). Marital status: Single (N= 81; 54.7%), Married (N= 61; 41.2%) and Divorced (N= 6; 4.1%). Education: Primary (N= 35; 23.6%), Secondary (N= 88; 59.5%) and Tertiary (N= 25; 16.9%). Religion: Christianity (N= 107; 72.3%) and Islam (N= 41; 27.7%).

### Test of hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** Personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) significantly predict suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. This hypothesis was tested via multiple regression analysis in Table 1.

**Table 1: Summary Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis on Suicidal Ideation among Incarcerated Inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja**

Variables	B	T	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F
Extraversion	-.469	-4.163**			
Agreeableness	-.234	-3.566**			
Conscientiousness	.938	19.424**	.857	.735	78.863**
Neuroticism	.334	5.126**			
Openness to experience	.190	1.719			

Sig. Level: \* $p = .05$ , \*\* $p = .01$  (df= 5, 142)

Table 1 shows the summary results of the multiple regression analysis, which revealed that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience significantly and jointly predict suicidal ideation ( $R = .857$ ,  $F = 78.863$ ,  $P < .01$ ). Thus, these factors accounted for approximately 73.5% of the variance in suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. Additionally, the results indicated a significant effect of extraversion ( $\beta = -.469$ ,  $t = -4.163$ ,  $p < .01$ ), agreeableness ( $\beta = -.234$ ,  $t = -3.566$ ,  $p < .01$ ), conscientiousness ( $\beta = .938$ ,  $t = 19.424$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and neuroticism ( $\beta = .334$ ,  $t = 5.126$ ,  $p < .01$ ) on suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. However, there was no significant effect of openness to experience ( $\beta = .190$ ,  $t = 1.719$ ,  $p > .05$ ) on suicidal ideation among the sample studied. This implies that, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism significantly predict suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. In other words, the hypothesis was confirmed in this study.

**Hypothesis 2:** Self-blame significantly predicts suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. This hypothesis was tested via linear regression analysis in Table 2.

**Table 2: Influence of Self-Blame on Suicidal Ideation among Inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Centre Abuja**

Variables	B	T	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.
(Constant)	31.324	25.178	.122	.015	2.216	.139
Self-blame	-.208	-1.489				.139

df= 1, 146

Table 2 shows the summary results of the linear regression analysis of the influence of self-blame on suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. The results revealed that self-blame had no significant influence on suicidal ideation ( $R = .122$ ;  $F = 2.216$ ,  $P > .05$ ). Thus self-blame accounted for approximately 1.5% of the variance in suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. Additionally, the results indicated that self-blame ( $\beta = -.208$ ,  $t = -1.489$ ,  $p > .05$ ) had no significant negative effect on suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. In other words, this hypothesis was not confirmed to be significant in this study.

**Hypothesis 3:** Perceived social support significantly predicts suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. This hypothesis was tested via linear regression analysis in Table 3



**Table 3: Influence of Perceived Social Support on Suicidal Ideation among Inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Centre Abuja**

Variables	B	T	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.
(Constant)	4.972	4.833	.893	.797	573.575	.000
Perceived Social Support	.734	23.949				.000

df= 1, 146

Table 3 presents the summary results of the linear regression analysis of the influence of social support on suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. The results revealed that social support has a significant influence on suicidal ideation ( $R = .893$ ;  $F = 573.575$   $P < .01$ ) which accounts for approximately 79.7% of the variance in suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. Additionally, the results indicate a significantly positive impact of social support ( $\beta = .734$ ,  $t = 23.949$ ,  $p < .01$ ) on suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. In other words, this hypothesis was confirmed to be significant in this study.

**Hypothesis 4:** Personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience), self-blame and perceived social support jointly predict suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. This hypothesis was tested via multiple regression analysis as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Summary Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis of Personality Traits, Self-Blame and Perceived Social Support on Suicidal Ideation among Incarcerated Inmates in Kuje Abuja**

Variables	B	t	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F
Extraversion	-.569	-8.282**			
Agreeableness	-.146	-2.532*			
Conscientiousness	.083	1.795			
Neuroticism	.154	4.506**	.970	.940	312.983**
Openness to experience	.164	2.074*			
Self-blame	-.009	-.238			
Perceived social support	1.030	21.785**			

Sig. Level: \* $p = .05$ , \*\* $p = .01$  (df= 7, 140)

Table 4 shows the summary results of the multiple regression analysis, which revealed that personality traits, self-blame and perceived social support jointly significantly predict suicidal ideation ( $R = .388$ ;  $F = 15.507$ ,  $P < .01$ ) among incarcerated inmates. This accounts for 94% variance in the suicidal ideation of inmates. Additionally, the results indicated a significant impact of extraversion ( $\beta = -.569$ ,  $t = -8.282$ ,  $p < .01$ ), agreeableness ( $\beta = -.146$ ,  $t = -2.532$ ,  $p < .05$ ), neuroticism ( $\beta = .154$ ,  $t = 4.506$ ,  $p < .01$ ), openness to experience ( $\beta = .164$ ,  $t = 2.074$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and perceived social support ( $\beta = 1.030$ ,  $t = 21.785$ ,  $p < .01$ ) on suicidal ideation, whereas conscientiousness ( $\beta = .083$ ,  $t = 1.795$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and self-blame ( $\beta = -.009$ ,  $t = -.238$ ,  $p > .05$ )

indicated no statistically significant influence on suicidal ideation among inmates. This implies that personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience), self-blame and perceived social support jointly predict suicidal ideation among inmates. However, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience and perceived social support were the major predictor factors of suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates. In other words, the hypothesis was confirmed in this study.

## **DISCUSSION**

This research focused on personality traits, self-blame and perceived social support as predictive factors of suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja.

Four hypotheses were tested in the study. Hypothesis one stated that personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) significantly predict suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. This hypothesis was tested via multiple regression analysis. The results show that personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience) significantly predict suicidal ideation. In support of this hypothesis, Daniel et al (2012) reported an inverse association between personality domains (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness) and suicidal ideation. These results are further confirmed in the earlier work of Singh and Joshi (2008) who deduced from their findings that personality factors significantly predict suicidal ideation among undergraduates. This result also agrees with other researchers who posited that personality traits are among the factors that predispose individuals to suicide or suicide attempts especially those specific personality traits that are more vulnerable to stress (Matsudaira & Kitamura, 2006; Benedictus et al 2008). Additionally, Brezo, Paris and Turecki (2006) performed a systematic analysis of the relationships among personality traits, suicide attempts, and suicide completions on suicidal ideation. They reported that individuals are more likely to engage in suicide than sociable or extroverted individuals. Brezo and colleagues, reported that neuroticism, and extroversion were mostly linked to increased risk screening and vulnerability to suicidal behaviour.

The second hypothesis states that self-blame significantly influences suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. This hypothesis was tested using linear regression analysis. The results show that self-blame has no significant influence on suicidal ideation. This finding was not in agreement with the findings of Egwonwu and. Olonade (2014) who reported that self-blame was significantly positively correlated with suicidal ideation among female tertiary students. They also reported that self-blame had a significant independent influence on suicidal ideation. Shirley and Ilene (2010) reported that suicide completers had significantly higher scores on blaming self/self-blame and suicidal ideation compared with deceased controls, concluding that those who eventually commit suicide may endorse a greater tendency towards self-blame. Additionally, Graham and Juvonen (2008) suggested that individuals who engage in self-blame cognitions tend to show a marked increase in suicidal thoughts often accompanied by cardiovascular diseases and substance abuse. Furthermore, the present result is not in tandem with the findings of Bulman and Wortman (1977) who stated that self-blame which is an individual's feeling, thought or act of holding responsible or making negative statements about self may also mediate the rate of suicidal thoughts among individuals. The disparity between the findings of the present study

and the others before this could be attributed to the sensitive nature of suicide in Nigeria. One explanation for this finding could be that self-blame is a cognitive process that starts from the individual, who blames himself or herself for the circumstances that they may be going through. For example, prison inmates who are convicted of crimes they have previously committed may feel some sense of remorse which results in them blaming themselves for their actions but does not lead them into suicidal ideation because they believe that there is life after they must have finished serving their sentences.

The third hypothesis states that perceived social support significantly influences suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. This hypothesis was tested via linear regression analysis. These results show that social support significantly influences suicidal ideation. This finding is consistent with previous studies that revealed high perceived social support strongly predicts suicidal ideation (Menon et al., 2019). While social support is the general availability of friends and family members who provide psychological and material resources (Kleiman & Riskind, 2012), a lack of social support increases the likelihood of developing suicidal ideation. According to Naila and Takwin (2018), perceived adequate social support is often a vital component of recovery from a variety of mental health problems, including suicidal ideation. This study also supported the view that social support may act as a buffer against suicidal thoughts. This can be explained by those who receive social support; it may help individuals change the meaning of life stressors to a more positive meaning by altering their circumstances, gaining control of the stressful situation, and altering their reactions to the stressful scenario (Barrera, 2000). This result is also in accordance with the findings of Lieberman et al (2005) who reported that perceived social support can be a predictor of suicidal ideation. These findings suggest that a high level of perceived social support can help prevent the emergence of suicidal ideation. This finding is consistent with that of Barrera's (2000) who stated that if an individual views their social support to be available and sufficient, they would be protected from the negative impacts of life stressors. Findings from systematic reviews (Gariépy et al., 2016; Santini et al., 2015) and meta-analyses (Rueger et al., 2016) have suggested that those who perceive more social support experience fewer depressive symptoms and that these symptoms reduce the risk of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. Kleiman and Liu (2013) reported that social support is a potential resiliency factor that can control the level of suicidal thoughts.

The fourth hypothesis states that personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience), self-blame and perceived social support jointly influence suicidal ideation among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. This hypothesis was tested via multiple regression analysis. The results show that personality traits, self-blame and perceived social support jointly predict suicidal ideation. The results also revealed that extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience and perceived social support were the major predictor factors of suicidal ideation. This finding is in line with Costa et al. (2008) who reported that extraversion, for example, sociability, assertiveness, and enthusiasm may be associated with better social integration and support from other individuals, which could serve as a protective factor against suicidal ideation. However, the results also show that individuals high in extraversion may also be more impulsive and sensation-seeking, which could increase their risk of engaging in risky behaviours, including suicidal behaviour (Rogers & Matthews, 2004). Costa et al. (2008) reported that individuals high in agreeableness such as altruism, trust, and cooperation may have more positive relationships with others, which could provide emotional support and reduce feelings of isolation. Conversely, individuals low in agreeableness may struggle to build

strong social connections, increasing their risk of suicidal ideation. (Costa et al, 2008). Individuals characterized by high conscientiousness traits such as organization, responsibility, and self-discipline may be better able to adhere to the rules and regulations, which could provide a sense of structure and routine. However, individuals high in conscientiousness may also experience higher levels of self-blame and guilt if they perceive themselves as failing to meet their own high standards, potentially increasing their risk of suicidal ideation. Individuals high in neuroticism may be more prone to negative emotions and rumination, which could contribute to the development of suicidal ideation. Moreover, individuals with high levels of neuroticism may struggle to cope with the stress and challenges of confinement, further increasing their vulnerability to suicidal ideation. In addition, findings by Costa et al. (2008) reflect that individuals high in openness to experience may be more inclined to engage in introspection and self-reflection, which could increase their awareness of their emotional struggles and lead to suicidal ideation. On the other hand, individuals low in openness to experience may be more resistant to change and less likely to seek help for their mental health concerns, increasing their risk of suicidal ideation.

In another vein, Olivier, et al. (2022) reported that individuals who engage in high levels of self-blame are more likely to experience suicidal ideation and engage in self-harming behaviours. In the context of incarceration, where individuals may face stigma, isolation, and limited access to mental health services, self-blaming can exacerbate feelings of hopelessness and despair, increasing the risk of suicide. Similarly, findings from Tangney (1999) show that individuals may experience heightened levels of self-blame due to their criminal behaviour, which could contribute to feelings of guilt, shame, and worthlessness. Self-blame has been consistently linked to an increased risk of suicidal ideation and behaviour among incarcerated populations (Smith, et al. 2014). Kleiman and Liu (2013) revealed that individuals with a higher level of social support are approximately 30% less likely to attempt suicide in their lifetime than those with a lower level of social support, even after accounting for a variety of established risk and protective factors for suicidal thoughts.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Some of the limitations encountered in this study, which can influence the outcome of the present study include the following;

1. The sample size of this study might be considered small for a study involving inmates. This may limit the generalizability of the results; thus, future studies should apply a more representative sample of the population.
2. The research was restricted to only the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja. The results from similar investigations in other medium security custodial centres may or may not confirm the present findings.
3. The research was survey research, and the participants may not have responded to the questionnaire as expected. This may limit the generalizability of the results; thus, future studies should apply other types of research.
4. Finance was a major limitation of the study, with a lack of funds restricted to conducting the research in only one medium security custodial centre. The findings of other medium security custodial centers may or may not confirm the present results.

### **Implications of the findings**

This study enhances the management of suicidal ideation within and across the population. Understanding the different personality sub domains traits, self-blame and perceived social support with suicidal ideation among inmates will enable clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, health workers and correctional service center staff to develop a psychotherapeutic regimen that will enable inmates to live and cope better.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

In view of future studies, researchers who are interested in replicating or conducting similar studies should consider the limitations of the study and take caution to obtain generalizable results. Therefore, more research should be conducted with a larger number of samples to obtain an in-depth understanding of these constructs. Other studies should be widened beyond the scope of this study; thus research should be replicated in other areas such as industries, public sectors and adults. Future studies should also consider the use of qualitative methods and quantitative methods when gathering data. This approach provides more room for better information.

### **Conclusion**

The role of personality traits, self-blame and perceived social support among incarcerated inmates of the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja has been highlighted by the findings of this study. Research has shown that personality traits and perceived social support significantly predict suicidal ideation among inmates. Self-blame did not predict suicidal ideation among inmates. The researcher concluded that while treating or assessing suicidal inmates, the clinician or therapist should look out for these factors and treat/manage them to enable a positive psychotherapeutic outcome.

### **Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings of this study, the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja should try as much as possible to engage in therapeutic programmes and clinical interventions that will help them to gain self-awareness and enhance their psycho-emotional development. However, the following are hereby recommended;

1. Inmates in penal institutions should be adequately and continuously trained using psychological principles and behavioural modification techniques to best address suicidal ideation from a behavioural standpoint. This would change the overall perception of suicide attempt in making value judgments.
2. Inmates should be encouraged through therapy and counselling to exhibit personality characteristics that promote wellbeing and regulate the activities of inmates to reduce the prevalence of suicide attempt.
3. Symposiums and seminars including workshops should be organized to sensitize and equip inmates on best practices to reduce ideation towards suicide. Motivational vocations should be organized to engage in meaningful vocations (artisans) to be reintegrated into society.
4. Inmates' personality characteristics and level of social support should be monitored during counselling to reduce suicide risk.

5. More research should be conducted in other medium security custodial centers with respect to personality traits, self-blame, perceived social support and suicidal ideation among inmates.
6. The present research should be replicated, keeping its limitations in view of testing the accuracy of the findings or the research can be conducted in other settings to compare the results obtained from other environments with the present study results.

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