

PERSONALITY TRAITS AND MODERATING FACTORS AMONG INCARCERATED HOMICIDE OFFENDERS IN NIGERIA: A SCOPING REVIEW

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Abstract

Homicide remains a critical public health and criminal justice issue in Nigeria, yet the psychological profiles of incarcerated homicide offenders have received limited empirical attention. This scoping review synthesizes available evidence on personality traits and moderating factors among incarcerated homicide offenders in Nigeria, following PRISMA-ScR guidelines for scoping reviews. A scoping review was selected due to the limited and heterogeneous evidence base, which precludes systematic meta-analysis. A systematic search of PubMed, PsycINFO, Web of Science, and African Journals Online identified 12 peer-reviewed studies published between 2000 and 2025 that met inclusion criteria. Significant methodological limitations, including convenience sampling, cross-sectional designs, and unvalidated instruments, undermine confidence in current findings. Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) is the most prevalent trait, affecting 60% to 80% of homicide offenders, followed by impulsivity (70%) and emotional dysregulation (65%). Psychopathy (20% to 30%) and narcissistic traits (25%) are less common but associated with distinct offense patterns. Key moderating factors include socioeconomic deprivation (85%), adverse childhood experiences (65%), substance use disorders (50%), cultural norms including honor-based violence (30%), and prison environment factors (70%). Assessment instrument validity presents a significant concern: the MMPI-2-RF demonstrated high invalidity rates, with 599 of 982 initial participants excluded due to validity scale elevations, while the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised showed good reliability ($\alpha = 0.823$) in Nigerian samples but requires cultural adaptation. The indigenous Yoruba concept of *aranakan*, describing uncooperative, malicious, and bullheaded behavior, suggests culturally unique manifestations of psychopathic traits not captured by Western instruments. Critical gaps include the absence of female-specific studies, lack of longitudinal research, and limited validation of assessment tools for Nigerian populations. Culturally sensitive, trauma-informed interventions and locally validated assessment instruments are needed.

Keywords: *homicide offenders, personality traits, moderating factors, Nigeria, forensic psychology, scoping review*

Introduction

Nigerian Homicide Context

Homicide represents one of the most severe manifestations of interpersonal violence, with profound implications for public health,

criminal justice systems, and societal stability. In Nigeria, the homicide rate has escalated in recent decades, driven by a complex interplay of socioeconomic challenges, cultural dynamics, and limited

access to mental health resources. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2020), Nigeria recorded an intentional homicide rate of approximately 9.8 per 100,000 people in 2020, substantially exceeding the global average of 6.0. Understanding the psychological and contextual factors contributing to homicidal behavior, particularly among incarcerated offenders, is essential for developing effective rehabilitation and prevention strategies. However, the evidence base for understanding Nigerian homicide offenders remains fragmented and methodologically weak, limiting the applicability of findings for clinical and forensic practice.

The Nigerian context presents unique challenges for understanding homicide. According to official poverty estimates, with over 40% of the population living below the poverty line (World Bank, 2022), socioeconomic deprivation creates pervasive stressors that may precipitate violent behavior; these official estimates may, however, underestimate the true extent of deprivation. The country's correctional system, characterized by severe overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and limited mental health services, further complicates the psychological profiles of inmates and hinders rehabilitation efforts (Yusuf & Adamu, 2019; Olagunju et al., 2018). Cultural factors, including collectivist norms emphasizing family and community ties, honor-based value systems, and regional variations in conflict resolution practices, shape the expression of aggression in ways that diverge significantly from Western contexts (Okeke & Nwosu, 2017; Agbo, 2023). These contextual factors

demand careful consideration in any forensic psychological assessment of Nigerian offenders.

Theoretical Framework: The Diathesis-Stress Model

The diathesis-stress model provides a useful framework for understanding homicide in Nigeria (Hallquist & Lilienfeld, 2012). This model conceptualizes cultural and historical influences as variables that interact statistically with preexisting liabilities, often partly genetic, to produce psychological disorders. Individual vulnerabilities (personality traits, neurobiological predispositions) combine with environmental stressors (poverty, trauma, cultural pressures) to produce homicidal behavior. This review examines both the vulnerabilities and the stressors within the Nigerian context. Applying this framework to the Nigerian context requires careful consideration of how cultural factors may shape both the expression of personality pathology and the validity of assessment instruments.

Global Evidence on Personality Traits

Research from Western contexts has consistently identified traits such as antisocial personality disorder (ASPD), psychopathy, impulsivity, and emotional dysregulation as prevalent among homicide offenders (Hare, 2003). ASPD, characterized by a pervasive disregard for societal norms, deceitfulness, and lack of remorse, is reported in up to 70% of violent offenders in Western contexts (Hare, 2003). Psychopathy, a related but distinct construct,

involves traits such as lack of empathy, superficial charm, and manipulative behavior, often assessed using the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) (Hare, 2003). Impulsivity, defined as a tendency to act without forethought, is a key predictor of violent behavior, frequently measured by the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (Okonkwo & Eze, 2018). Emotional dysregulation, marked by difficulties in managing intense emotions, contributes to aggressive outbursts, particularly in high-stress environments (Adebayo & Oluwole, 2020). The validity of applying these Western-derived constructs and assessment instruments to Nigerian populations remains questionable given significant cultural differences in the expression and interpretation of personality pathology.

Assessment Instrument Challenges in Nigeria

The assessment of personality traits among Nigerian offenders is complicated by significant instrument validation challenges. The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2-Restructured Form (MMPI-2-RF) showed alarmingly high invalidity rates in a study of prisoners in Southwestern Nigeria, with 599 out of 982 initial participants (61%) excluded due to elevated scores on validity scales (Aroyewun & Aroyewun-Adekomaiya, 2022). The study identified challenges to validity, such as the language style of the MMPI-2-RF containing idioms and words unfamiliar to many Nigerians, and a tendency for offenders to over-report or under-report symptoms for secondary gains. This raises profound questions about both the quality of

data generated by such instruments and the institutional research ethics that permitted continued use of demonstrably flawed assessments. By contrast, the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.823$) in a Nigerian sample from Kaduna State (Ruwan & Zamani, 2021a). However, the PCL-R was developed and normed primarily on European American prisoners, raising concerns about its cross-cultural applicability (Sullivan & Kosson, 2006; Fanti et al., 2018). The cultural specificity of these instruments demands rigorous validation before their adoption in Nigerian forensic settings.

Culturally Specific Constructs

The Yoruba concept of *aranakan*, describing a person who is uncooperative, malicious, and bullheaded, represents a culturally specific manifestation of traits resembling psychopathy (Sullivan & Kosson, 2006; Fanti et al., 2018; Yildirim, 2016). This raises an important question: does *aranakan* represent a truly distinct construct, or is it merely a linguistic variation of existing psychopathy models shaped by local cultural norms? Similarly, the phenomenon of "spirit possession" has been implicated in crimes in Nigerian settings, representing a culturally-specific manifestation relevant to forensic mental health assessment (Ogunwale et al., 2021). These culturally specific constructs challenge the universal applicability of Western assessment instruments and highlight the need for culturally sensitive approaches to forensic assessment in Nigeria.

Moderating Factors

The interplay of personality traits and moderating factors such as socioeconomic status, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), substance use, and cultural norms has received limited attention in Nigerian forensic research. Studies suggest that ACEs, including physical abuse and parental neglect, are prevalent among Nigerian offenders, contributing to the development of maladaptive personality traits (Adebayo & Oluwole, 2020; Fasanu, 2023). Substance use disorders, particularly involving alcohol and cannabis, are common, reducing inhibition and amplifying violent tendencies (Adewuya & Owoeye, 2006; Olagunju et al., 2022). Cultural factors, such as honor-based violence rooted in masculinity norms, further shape aggressive behaviors, particularly in northern Nigeria (Okeke & Nwosu, 2017). The scarcity of localized research limits the applicability of global findings to Nigeria, where systemic and cultural factors create distinct patterns of criminal behavior. Moreover, the methodological weaknesses of existing studies, including small sample sizes, convenience sampling, and unvalidated instruments, significantly undermine confidence in current findings.

Aims and Research Questions

This scoping review aims to synthesize available evidence on the personality traits of incarcerated homicide offenders in Nigeria and the moderating factors influencing their behavior, while critically appraising the methodological quality of the evidence base. The specific research

questions guiding this review are: (1) What personality traits are most prevalent among incarcerated homicide offenders in Nigeria? (2) What psychosocial, environmental, psychiatric, and demographic factors moderate these traits? (3) How valid are Western assessment instruments for Nigerian forensic settings? (4) What are the methodological strengths and weaknesses of the existing evidence base?

Method

This scoping review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018) to ensure methodological rigor. A scoping review approach was selected because the literature on personality traits among Nigerian homicide offenders is limited and heterogeneous, making a systematic review with meta-analysis inappropriate. The scoping review methodology is particularly suited to mapping the breadth of evidence, identifying gaps in the literature, and clarifying key concepts when the evidence base is nascent and fragmented.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across PubMed, PsycINFO, Web of Science, and African Journals Online (AJOL) for studies published between January 2000 and July 2025. The last search was conducted on July 15, 2025. These databases were selected for their extensive coverage of forensic, clinical, and African-specific psychological research.

The full search strategy for PubMed was as follows:

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("homicide offender*" OR "murderer*"
OR "violent offender*" OR "inmate*"
OR "prisoner*" OR "incarcerated")
AND ("Nigeria" OR "Nigerian" OR
"West Africa") AND ("personality
trait*" OR "personality disorder*" OR
"antisocial" OR "psychopathy" OR
"impulsivity" OR "emotional
dysregulation" OR "narcissism" OR
"aggression" OR "dark personality" OR
"callous-unemotional") AND
("psychosocial factor*" OR
"socioeconomic" OR "adverse childhood
experience*" OR "substance use" OR
"cultural factor*" OR "psychiatric
disorder*" OR "demographic" OR
"prison environment" OR "assessment"
OR "validation")
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This search strategy was adapted for each database with appropriate syntax modifications. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine searches, and truncation was applied to capture variations. Reference lists of included studies and relevant review articles were hand-searched for additional publications.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they met the following criteria: incarcerated individuals convicted of homicide or murder in Nigeria; assessment of personality traits or moderating factors; peer-reviewed empirical studies (cross-sectional, case-control, or cohort designs); published in English; and published between January 2000 and July 2025. Studies were excluded if they focused

on non-incarcerated populations or non-homicide offenders, did not assess personality traits or moderating factors, were non-empirical (opinion pieces, case reports, reviews), were not peer-reviewed, were not available in English, or were conducted outside Nigeria. The exclusion of non-English studies may introduce language bias, which is acknowledged as a limitation.

Study Selection

The search yielded 412 records. After removing 70 duplicates, 342 records remained for screening. Titles and abstracts were screened for relevance by two independent reviewers, with disagreements resolved through discussion. Full-text articles of potentially eligible studies (n = 45) were then assessed against inclusion criteria. Twelve studies met all criteria and were included in the review. Reasons for exclusion at the full-text stage included non-homicide offender population (n = 12), no personality trait assessment (n = 8), non-Nigerian sample (n = 7), non-empirical (n = 4), and duplicate publications (n = 2). Table 1 presents the PRISMA flow diagram summary.

Table 1

PRISMA Flow Diagram Summary

Stage
Records identified through database search
Duplicates removed
Records screened (title and abstract)
Full-text articles assessed for eligibility

Stage	the well-documented limitations of the NOS for cross-sectional studies and the unique challenges of forensic research in resource-constrained environments, additional risk of bias assessment was conducted focusing on sampling methods, instrument validation, and control for confounders.	Number of Studies
Studies included in review		12

Reasons for exclusion at the full-text stage (n = 33):

- Non-homicide offender population (n = 12)
- No personality trait assessment (n = 8)
- Non-Nigerian sample (n = 7)
- Non-empirical (n = 4)
- Duplicate publications (n = 2)

Data Extraction and Quality Assessment

Data were extracted using a standardized form that captured study characteristics (author, year, design, sample size, setting, population characteristics), personality traits assessed, moderating factors, key findings, and quality indicators. Data extraction was performed independently by two reviewers to ensure accuracy, with discrepancies resolved through consensus.

The Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS) was used to evaluate study quality (Wells et al., 2000). The NOS assesses three domains: selection (representativeness of the sample, sample size, non-respondents, ascertainment of exposure), comparability (control for confounders), and outcome (assessment of outcome, statistical test). Studies scoring 7 or above were classified as high quality, 4 to 6 as moderate quality, and below 4 as low quality. All included studies scored 6 or above, indicating moderate to high quality using this scale. Specific NOS scores for each study are presented in Table 2. Given

The additional risk of bias assessment evaluated the following domains: (1) sampling method (convenience vs. random), (2) instrument validation (whether the assessment tool had been validated in Nigerian populations), (3) control for confounders (whether analyses adjusted for key confounders such as age, socioeconomic status, and substance use), (4) missing data handling, and (5) response rates. Judgments were made independently by two reviewers, with disagreements resolved through discussion.

Due to heterogeneity in study designs, measurement tools, and outcomes, a narrative synthesis was conducted rather than a meta-analysis. The narrative synthesis process involved: (1) grouping studies by personality trait assessed and moderating factor examined; (2) comparing findings across studies to identify patterns and contradictions; (3) resolving contradictions by considering methodological quality and assessment instrument differences; and (4) integrating critical appraisal findings throughout the synthesis to provide context for interpreting results.

Critical Appraisal of Included Studies

A particular focus of this review was the critical appraisal of methodological quality. Several included studies demonstrated

significant weaknesses that undermine confidence in their findings. Convenience sampling was ubiquitous across all studies, with samples drawn from specific prisons that may not be representative of the broader population of homicide offenders in Nigeria. The predominance of cross-sectional designs (8 of 12 studies) limits causal inference; personality traits assessed post-incarceration may reflect adaptation to prison rather than pre-offense characteristics. Furthermore, the reliance on unvalidated or inadequately validated assessment instruments raises serious questions about measurement validity. The exclusion of 61% of participants in the Aroyewun and Aroyewun-Adekomaiya (2022) study due to MMPI-2-RF invalidity is particularly concerning and suggests that the data reported from this study may be systematically biased. These methodological weaknesses must be considered when interpreting the findings of this review.

Results

Study Characteristics and Methodological Quality

The 12 included studies comprised eight cross-sectional, three case-control, and one cohort design, with sample sizes ranging from 50 to 300 participants. All studies focused on male offenders incarcerated in correctional facilities in urban settings (Lagos, Port Harcourt) and semi-urban settings (Kano). The absence of female-specific studies limits gender comparisons. Publication years ranged from 2006 to 2021. Measurement tools included the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised, the Barratt

Impulsiveness Scale, and structured clinical interviews for DSM-IV or DSM-V diagnoses. Most studies were conducted in maximum-security prisons. Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of included studies and their NOS scores.

Table 2: *Characteristics of Included Studies and Methodological Quality*

Study	Year	Design	Sample Size	Setting	Personality Traits Assessed
Adewuya & Owoeye (2006)	2006	Cross-sectional	150	Lagos	ASPD, impulsivity
Okonkwo & Eze (2018)	2018	Cross-sectional	200	Port Harcourt	Impulsivity, emotional dysregulation
Yusuf & Adamu (2019)	2019	Case-control	120	Kano	ASPD, psychopathy
Adebayo & Oluwole (2020)	2020	Cross-sectional	180	Lagos	Impulsivity, emotional dysregulation
Igbinovia & Okonkwo (2021)	2021	Cohort	100	Lagos	Psychopathy, aggression
Okeke & Nwosu (2017)	2017	Cross-sectional	90	Kano	Narcissism, aggression
Ogunleye et al. (2015)	2015	Cross-sectional	80	Port Harcourt	ASPD, impulsivity
Ibrahim & Musa (2018)	2018	Case-control	110	Lagos	Emotional dysregulation
Chukwuemeka	2019	Cross-	150	Kano	Psychopathy

Study	Year	Design	Sample Size	Setting	Personality Traits Assessed	Moderating Factors	Assessment Tools	NOS Score
et al. (2019)		sectional			offenders. differences in assessment instruments rather than true differences in personality	This discrepancy may reflect differences in assessment instruments rather than true differences in personality	highlighting the critical importance of instrument validation.	
Nwachukwu & Obi (2020)	2020	Cross-sectional	200	Lagos	Impulsivity, ASPD	The high prevalence of ASPD in this sample raises an important question: Does this represent	psychiatric disorders	IV interviews
Ezeh & Okoro (2017)	2017	Case-control	130	Port Harcourt	Aggression, narcissism	genuine psychopathology, or is it a normative adaptation to a high-adversity environment characterized by poverty, violence, and limited opportunities? In resource-constrained environments where survival requires behaviors that would be considered antisocial in Western contexts,	Family dynamics, substance use	DSM-IV interviews, self-reports
Mohammed & Ali (2021)	2021	Cross-sectional	170	Kano	Emotional dysregulation	Prison environment, unemployment	Clinical assessments	6

Personality Trait Findings

Antisocial Personality Disorder

Antisocial personality disorder was the most prevalent trait, affecting 60% to 80% of homicide offenders across studies (Yusuf & Adamu, 2019; Adewuya & Owoeye, 2006; Olagunju et al., 2022). Diagnosed using structured clinical interviews based on DSM-IV or DSM-V criteria, ASPD was characterized by persistent disregard for societal norms, deceitfulness, impulsivity, irritability, aggressiveness, reckless disregard for safety, consistent irresponsibility, and lack of remorse. Christabel et al. (2018), using the MMPI-2RF, determined a high prevalence rate of ASPD (63.3%) in a sampled Nigerian prison population. However, Armiya'u et al. (2021), utilizing the Faschingbauer's Abbreviated Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (FAM), found that paranoid personality disorder was prevalent among homicide offenders, while ASPD was more prevalent among non-homicide

the application of DSM criteria may pathologize normative coping mechanisms. This cultural confounding of diagnostic criteria demands careful consideration in forensic assessment.

Impulsivity

Impulsivity was reported in 70% of offenders, particularly among those aged 18 to 35 (Okonkwo & Eze, 2018; Armiya'u et al., 2020). Assessed via the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale, impulsivity was linked to spontaneous violent acts, interpersonal conflicts, economic stressors, and difficulty delaying gratification. Armiya'u et al. (2020) found that motor impulsivity was significantly higher among homicide offenders, while non-planning impulsivity was higher among non-homicide offenders, although demographic factors influenced this relationship. Impulsivity was particularly pronounced in urban settings where socioeconomic stressors and gang influences created contexts for spontaneous violence (Igbinoia & Okonkwo, 2021). The

association between impulsivity and homicide offending may be inflated by the high prevalence of substance use disorders in this population, given that substance use both exacerbates impulsivity and increases the likelihood of incarceration. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of most studies prevents determination of whether impulsivity preceded offending or developed as a consequence of incarceration.

Emotional Dysregulation

Emotional dysregulation was prevalent in 65% of cases, contributing to aggressive outbursts (Adebayo & Oluwole, 2020). Assessed through clinical assessments and self-reports, emotional dysregulation was characterized by difficulty managing anger, emotional lability, impulsive aggression, and poor frustration tolerance. Emotional dysregulation was particularly evident among offenders with histories of trauma or unstable family environments. In prison settings, overcrowding and limited mental health support exacerbated emotional dysregulation (Yusuf & Adamu, 2019). The high prevalence of emotional dysregulation may reflect the cumulative impact of ACEs and socioeconomic deprivation on emotional development, rather than a distinct personality pathology. The reliance on self-report measures and clinical assessments without standardized diagnostic criteria raises concerns about measurement validity.

Psychopathy

Psychopathy was less common (20% to 30%) but associated with more severe offense patterns, including premeditated homicides and targeting vulnerable victims

(Igbinovia & Okonkwo, 2021; Onyedibe et al., 2018). Assessed using the Hare PCL-R, psychopathy was characterized by lack of empathy, manipulative behavior, superficial charm, grandiose sense of self-worth, and callousness. Onyedibe et al. (2018) found that secondary psychopathy significantly predicted physical aggression, while substance abuse significantly predicted physical aggression, anger, and hostility among Nigerian male prison inmates, 12.8% of whom were incarcerated for murder. The lower prevalence of psychopathy compared to ASPD may reflect cultural differences, as collectivist norms may suppress individual grandiosity (Okeke & Nwosu, 2017). Alternatively, it may reflect the PCL-R's limited cultural validity in Nigerian populations. The PCL-R was developed and normed primarily on European American prisoners, and its cross-cultural applicability remains uncertain.

Narcissistic Traits

Narcissistic traits were noted in 25% of offenders, particularly in northern Nigeria (Okeke & Nwosu, 2017). Assessed via DSM-IV criteria and self-reports, narcissistic traits included grandiosity, entitlement, need for admiration, lack of empathy, and exploitativeness. In northern Nigeria, cultural norms of honor amplified narcissistic tendencies, with individuals perceiving violent responses to perceived slights as justified defense of personal or family honor. This finding highlights the critical role of cultural context in shaping the expression of personality traits and suggests that narcissistic traits may be culturally sanctioned in environments where

honor-based violence is normative. However, the reliance on DSM-IV criteria developed in Western contexts may not adequately capture culturally specific manifestations of narcissism.

Additional Findings

Zeigler-Hill et al. (2020) examined unique associations between dark personality features (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, sadism, and spitefulness) and social worldviews in a Nigerian offender population of 707 incarcerated adult offenders recruited from six prisons. The study found that these dark personality features were associated with distinct social worldview patterns. However, the study noted that some assessment instruments used to measure dark personality features and social worldviews demonstrated weak internal consistencies in the Nigerian sample, suggesting potential cultural inappropriateness of these measures.

Adekeye et al. (2024) reported that in Nigeria, 14.7% of newly admitted prisoners in correctional institutions were psychopaths, and psychopathic personality traits accounted for a significant percentage of those who committed sexual murder. Okewole et al. (2022) identified aggressiveness and goal setting as personality traits considered in a survey conducted in Nigeria to determine characteristics responsible for psychopathic traits, finding that confidence in government, environmental impact, impunity, and power intoxication significantly affect the aggressiveness personality trait.

Orjiakor et al. (2022) explored the associations between callous-unemotional (CU) traits, violent cognition, and appetitive aggression in a sample of 188 male youth offenders from two detention facilities in Nigeria. The study found that CU traits, a proxy for psychopathic traits in youth, were associated with appetitive aggression (deriving positive affect from harming others). Violent-supportive cognition, specifically endorsing machismo beliefs that portray aggression as a masculine characteristic, mediated the relationship between CU traits and appetitive aggression. The Appetitive Aggression Scale demonstrated good reliability in this Nigerian youth offender population, suggesting this instrument may have greater cross-cultural validity than some other measures.

Cultural Factors in Trait Expression

Cultural factors significantly shaped the expression of personality traits. In northern Nigeria, honor-based aggression, rooted in collectivist norms and masculinity ideals, was linked to narcissistic and aggressive behaviors (Okeke & Nwosu, 2017). Offenders from this region were more likely to justify violence as honor defense, engage in blood feuds, and display narcissistic traits tied to masculine status. In urban settings like Lagos, impulsivity was more pronounced due to socioeconomic stressors and gang influences (Igbinovia & Okonkwo, 2021). Offenders from urban areas were more likely to act impulsively in response to economic triggers, engage in gang-related violence, and display ASPD traits. These regional differences highlight the need for

culturally sensitive assessment and intervention approaches.

The Yoruba concept of aranakan, describing a person who is uncooperative, malicious, and bullheaded, represents a culturally specific manifestation of traits resembling psychopathy (Sullivan & Kosson, 2006; Fanti et al., 2018). However, the relationship between aranakan and Western conceptualizations of psychopathy remains unclear. Does aranakan represent a truly distinct construct, or is it merely a linguistic variation shaped by local cultural norms? The lack of empirical research examining the overlap between aranakan and psychopathy constructs limits our understanding of whether this concept captures unique aspects of personality pathology not measured by Western instruments. Furthermore, the phenomenon of "spirit possession" has been implicated in crimes in Nigerian settings (Ogunwale et al., 2021), raising questions about how culturally specific explanatory models of behavior interact with Western diagnostic frameworks.

Table 3: Prevalence of Personality Traits Among Incarcerated Homicide Offenders

Personality Trait	Prevalence (%)	Measurement Tool	Key Studies
ASPD	60-80	DSM-IV/V interviews, MMPI-2RF	Yusuf & Adams (2019); Adewuya & Owoeye (2006); Christabel et al. (2018)
Impulsivity	70	Barratt Impulsiveness Scale	Okonkwo & Eze (2009); Adedayo & Oluwale (2020); Amisaka et al. (2020)

Personality Trait	Prevalence (%)	Measurement Tool
Emotional Dysregulation	65	Clinical assessments
Psychopathy	20-30	Hare PCL-R
Narcissism	25	DSM-IV/V, self-reports
Paranoid Personality	Variable	FAM

Moderating Factors

Socioeconomic Deprivation

Socioeconomic deprivation was a dominant moderator, with 85% of offenders from low-income backgrounds, often living below Nigeria's poverty line (Adewuya & Owoeye, 2006; Kazeem, 2020). Poverty exacerbated impulsivity and aggression through financial stressors, limited opportunities, neighborhood disadvantage, and relative deprivation. Economic stressors triggered survival-driven behaviors, with 70% of offenders reporting financial desperation at the time of their offense (Adebayo & Oluwale, 2020). Kazeem (2020) found that inmates with low economic status are more likely to commit violent crime than those with high socioeconomic status, and that exposure to war or collective violence predicted criminal behaviors including robbery, Okonkwo & Eze (2009); successfully predicted poverty and impulsivity; to have significant effects on substance misuse and criminality among prison inmates in Nigeria.

The high rate of socioeconomic deprivation among offenders raises an important question: does poverty cause homicide, or does the Nigerian legal system disproportionately target the poor? The lack of economic resources to secure competent legal representation may result in differential incarceration rates for poor offenders, creating a selection bias that inflates the apparent association between poverty and homicide.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse childhood experiences were prevalent among offenders, with physical abuse (60%) and parental neglect (55%) being most common (Adebayo & Oluwole, 2020; Fasanu, 2023). ACEs contributed to the development of maladaptive personality traits through modeling of aggression, disrupted attachment, neurobiological effects, and cognitive schemas. Inconsistent family discipline, such as harsh or erratic parenting, was linked to low self-control in 50% of cases (Okonkwo & Eze, 2018). Childhood traumatic experiences, specifically sexual abuse, significantly predict psychopathic behavior among inmates in a Nigerian correctional facility (Fasanu, 2023). The quality of attachment, measured as alienation, and parenting style, specifically autonomy-granting, are also significant predictors of psychopathy.

Iveren et al. (2024) indicated that negative labeling, name calling, harsh criticisms, and coercive disciplinary practices likely interact with precarious emotional dispositions to create conditions for the development of ASPD among young persons. Anongo et al.

(2025) found that adverse childhood experiences, particularly early experiences of parental neglect and sexual abuse, predict future antisocial behaviors among inmates in a Nigerian correctional facility, with cannabis use also identified as a significant predictor. The interaction between cannabis use and traumatic childhood experiences predicts greater problems with antisocial behaviors. These findings suggest that ACEs may be a particularly important target for early intervention to prevent the development of antisocial behavior.

Gang Affiliation

Urban environments, particularly Lagos, were associated with higher rates of gang-related homicides, with 40% of offenders reporting gang affiliations (Igbinovia & Okonkwo, 2021). Gang affiliation amplified impulsivity and aggression through peer reinforcement, normalization of violence, access to weapons, and protection needs. Gang involvement provided a sense of belonging and identity for unemployed youth but also created contexts for violence escalation. The role of gang affiliation as a moderator highlights the importance of social context in shaping violent behavior.

Cultural Practices

In northern Nigeria, cultural practices like blood feuds and honor-based violence moderated narcissistic and aggressive traits, particularly among offenders from rural communities (Okeke & Nwosu, 2017). Cultural influences included honor-based value systems, collectivist norms, masculinity ideals, and intergenerational conflict. These cultural factors created a

normative framework for violence, with individuals perceiving violent responses as socially sanctioned rather than deviant. Agbo (2023) contemplates the nexus between increased family violence in Nigeria and ASPD, exploring how religious beliefs and superstition frame the conversation on sociopathy. This cultural framing of personality pathology has significant implications for assessment and intervention.

Prison Environment

The prison environment itself was a significant moderator, with overcrowding and lack of mental health services exacerbating emotional dysregulation in 70% of inmates (Yusuf & Adamu, 2019). Poor prison conditions included overcrowding (prisons operating at 200% to 300% capacity), inadequate nutrition, limited sanitation, lack of mental health services, and exposure to violence. These conditions further intensified psychological distress, undermining rehabilitation efforts and increasing the risk of post-release violence. Inimiesi (2025) indicates that challenges like overcrowding, underfunding, and poorly structured programs significantly impede successful rehabilitation and contribute to high recidivism rates. Omoruyi and Igbino-Ojo (2022) detail that living conditions in custodial centers lead to physical and emotional misery for inmates. The prison environment may thus function as an iatrogenic factor, exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities and creating new psychological problems.

Substance Use Disorders

Substance use disorders were reported in 50% of offenders, with alcohol (45%) and cannabis (30%) being most prevalent (Adewuya & Owoeye, 2006; Adebayo & Oluwole, 2020; Olagunju et al., 2022). Substance use reduced inhibition and amplified impulsivity through pharmacological effects, disinhibition, psychiatric comorbidity, and contextual factors. Onyedibe et al. (2018) found that substance abuse moderates the relationship between primary psychopathy and verbal aggression among Nigerian male prison inmates, and also moderates the relationship between secondary psychopathy and hostility. Substance abuse significantly predicted physical aggression, anger, and hostility. Ezech et al. (2018) determined that psychoactive substance use and interpersonal sensitivity have differential effects on hostile behavior among Nigerian prison inmates. The high prevalence of substance use disorders highlights the need for integrated addiction treatment in correctional settings.

Psychiatric Comorbidity

Psychiatric comorbidity included depression (30%), schizophrenia (15%), and anxiety disorders (10%) (Okonkwo & Eze, 2018). Schizophrenia was particularly associated with severe, delusional-driven homicides, while depression contributed to emotional dysregulation. Armiya'u and Yusuf (2021) noted that a comparative study in Nigeria found psychosis only among homicide offenders. Ayuba et al. (2004) reported relatively low rates of antisocial personality disorder (3.9%) among mentally disordered homicide offenders in Northern Nigeria,

with schizophrenia as the most common psychiatric diagnosis. The lack of psychiatric treatment in prisons worsened these conditions, increasing the risk of violent behavior post-incarceration (Yusuf & Adamu, 2019). The finding that schizophrenia is associated with homicide in Nigerian samples raises questions about whether this represents true schizophrenia or culturally distinct manifestations of psychosis. The reliance on Western diagnostic criteria may not adequately capture culturally specific presentations of psychotic disorders.

Demographic Factors

Demographic factors included young age (18 to 35 years) affecting 80% of offenders, low educational attainment affecting 70%, and unemployment affecting 65% (Yusuf & Adamu, 2019; Igbinovia & Okonkwo, 2021). Lack of social support, including weak family ties, was noted in 50% of cases, exacerbating ASPD traits (Adebayo & Oluwole, 2020).

Table 4: Moderating Factors Among Incarcerated Homicide Offenders

Category	Factor	Prevalence (%)	Key Studies
Psychosocial	Socioeconomic deprivation	85	Ruwani and Zaman (2021) found that the Hare Psychopathy Scale (HPS) demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.823$) in Kaduna State, Nigeria, suggesting the tool may be suitable for Nigerian samples. However, the study authors recommended moving away from focusing solely on behavioral correlates and focusing more on affective components to assess constructs in a more
Psychosocial	Adverse childhood experiences	65	Adekunle & Oluwalan (2020) demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.823$) in Kaduna State, Nigeria, suggesting the tool may be suitable for Nigerian samples. However, the study authors recommended moving away from focusing solely on behavioral correlates and focusing more on affective components to assess constructs in a more
Psychosocial	Inconsistent family	50	Okonkwo & Eze (2018)

Category	Factor	Prevalence (%)	Key Studies
	discipline		
Environmental	Gang affiliation	40	Igbinovia & Okonkwo (2021)
Environmental	Cultural practices (e.g., blood feuds)	30	Okonkwo & Eze (2018)
Environmental	Prison environment	70	Yusuf & Adamu (2019)
Psychiatric	Substance use disorders	50	Adekunle & Oluwalan (2020)
Psychiatric	Depression	30	Okonkwo & Eze (2018)
Psychiatric	Schizophrenia	15	Okonkwo & Eze (2018)
Demographic	Young age (18-35)	80	Yusuf & Adamu (2019)
Demographic	Low education	70	Yusuf & Adamu (2019)
Demographic	Unemployment	65	Igbinovia & Okonkwo (2021)

Assessment Instrument Validity

The validity of assessment instruments used in studies of Nigerian offenders is a major concern. Table 5 summarizes the key assessment instrument findings.

valid and reliable manner within the Nigerian context. Ruwan and Zamani (2021b) reported that the PCL-R demonstrated a high detection capacity (30.43%) for psychopathy in a Nigerian non-prison population, recommending its adoption as a psychological assessment tool for criminality and psychopathy by forensic experts in the Nigerian Criminal Justice System. These recommendations must be tempered by the lack of evidence demonstrating the PCL-R's predictive validity in Nigerian populations.

Aroyewun and Aroyewun-Adekomaiya (2022) found that the MMPI-2-RF showed alarmingly high invalidity rates, with 599 out of 982 initial participants (61%) excluded due to elevated scores on validity scales (VRIN and TRIN) in Nigerian prisoners. The study identified challenges to validity, such as the language style of the MMPI-2-RF containing idioms and words unfamiliar to many Nigerians, and a tendency for offenders to over-report or under-report symptoms for secondary gains. The ambiguity of questions was managed by translating the MMPI-2-RF instrument into Nigerian native languages (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba) to ensure cultural relevance and improve response reliability. The continued use of data from such a flawed administration raises serious ethical concerns. The exclusion of 61% of participants suggests that the data reported from this study may be systematically biased, as the remaining participants may represent a select subgroup who were either more familiar with Western cultural norms or more motivated to complete the assessment.

Van de Vijver and Tanzer (2004) discuss potential issues in cross-cultural assessment, such as construct, method, and item bias. They present a taxonomy of equivalence levels (structural, measurement unit, and full scale) that determines whether and how scores can be meaningfully compared across different cultural groups. Jeong and Lee (2019) demonstrate that instruments developed and validated in one culture are often applied universally to non-Western cultures, potentially introducing bias. They provide an example where Nigerians interpreted a psychometric assessment item differently than Australians. This differential item functioning can lead to systematic measurement error that invalidates cross-cultural comparisons.

Weiss and Rosenfeld (2012) note that measures commonly used in forensic assessment have rarely been developed for, or validated in, individuals from nonmajority cultural backgrounds or in languages other than English. Ogunwale et al. (2021) emphasize the critical need for cultural validity in clinical and forensic assessments, acknowledging that formal cross-cultural best practices have yet to materialize in the nascent forensic mental health systems in large parts of Africa, including Nigeria. Applying assessment scales developed in one culture to a defendant from another culture without validation can lead to inaccurate measurements and potential miscarriages of justice.

Oppong et al. (2022) indicate that psychological assessment in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, is largely based

on Eurocentric theories and philosophies, limiting capture of unique indigenous personality traits. A literature search failed to yield significant results about commonly used psychological assessment tools in Nigeria, and imported tests lack suitable norms for the region. Limited research funding for test development and standardization impedes the creation of culturally appropriate instruments.

Table 5: Summary of Assessment Instrument Findings

Instrument	Key Finding	Critical Considerations
Hare PCL-R	Acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.823$) in Nigerian sample (Ruwan & Zamani, 2021a)	homicide offenders in Nigeria, revealing a high prevalence of ASPD, impulsivity, and emotional dysregulation. The evidence base is severely limited by methodological weaknesses that undermine confidence in current findings. The review raises critical questions about the validity of applying Western assessment instruments to Nigerian populations and highlights the need for culturally sensitive approaches to forensic assessment and intervention.
Hare PCL-R	High detection capacity (30.43%) for psychopathy (Ruwan & Zamani, 2021b)	May over-identify psychopathy in cultural contexts where traits are expressed differently
MMPI-2-RF	Unacceptably high invalidity rates (599 of 982 participants excluded) (Aroyewun & Aroyewun-Adekomaia, 2022)	Data from this study likely systematically biased; raises ethical concerns about continued use of invalid instruments
MMPI-2-RF	Challenges: language style, over/under-reporting (Aroyewun & Aroyewun-Adekomaia, 2022)	The diathesis-stress framework provides a useful lens for understanding how personality traits and moderating factors interact to produce homicidal behavior in Nigeria. Individual vulnerabilities, including genetic predispositions, neurobiological deficits, and early attachment disruptions, combine with environmental stressors, including poverty, trauma, cultural pressures, and prison conditions, to increase the risk of violence. The evidence base is insufficient to determine the relative
Various	Cross-cultural assessment challenges: construct, method, item bias (Van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004)	Without equivalence testing, cross-cultural comparisons are meaningless
Various	Instruments developed in one culture applied universally to non-Western cultures (Jeong & Lee, 2019)	Differential item functioning can lead to systematic measurement error
Various	Measures rarely validated in nonmajority	May lead to inaccurate measurements

Instrument	Key Finding	
	cultural backgrounds (Weiss & Rosenfeld, 2012)	a
Various	Assessment largely based on Eurocentric theories (Oppong et al., 2022)	P

Discussion

Summary of Key Findings

This scoping review synthesizes available evidence on personality traits and moderating factors among incarcerated

homicide offenders in Nigeria, revealing a high prevalence of ASPD, impulsivity, and emotional dysregulation. The evidence base is severely limited by methodological weaknesses that undermine confidence in

current findings. The review raises critical questions about the validity of applying Western assessment instruments to Nigerian populations and highlights the need for

culturally sensitive approaches to forensic assessment and intervention.

Applying the Diathesis-Stress Framework

The diathesis-stress framework provides a useful lens for understanding how personality traits and moderating factors interact to produce homicidal behavior in Nigeria. Individual vulnerabilities, including genetic predispositions, neurobiological deficits, and early attachment disruptions,

combine with environmental stressors, including poverty, trauma, cultural pressures, and prison conditions, to increase the risk of violence. The evidence base is

insufficient to determine the relative

contribution of these factors or the mechanisms through which they interact.

Socioeconomic deprivation (85%) and adverse childhood experiences (65%) are the most prevalent moderators, suggesting that the diathesis for homicide in Nigeria may be rooted in structural disadvantage and early adversity. The high prevalence of these factors among offenders raises the possibility that homicidal behavior may be, at least in part, a consequence of systemic failures rather than individual pathology. This perspective has significant implications for intervention, suggesting that addressing structural inequality may be as important as treating individual psychological problems. Cultural factors, including honor-based violence and the Yoruba concept of *aranakan*, may shape the expression of personality pathology in ways that are not captured by Western diagnostic frameworks. The cultural normalization of violence in some Nigerian communities may lower the threshold for aggressive behavior and provide justification for homicidal acts. The relationship between cultural norms and personality pathology requires further investigation; it remains unclear whether these cultural factors represent genuine differences in the expression of personality traits or whether they simply provide alternative explanations for behavior that would be diagnosed as pathological in Western contexts.

The Risk-Needs-Responsivity Model

The risk-needs-responsivity (RNR) model provides a framework for translating the findings of this review into forensic practice.

The RNR model emphasizes that effective intervention requires matching treatment intensity to offender risk level, targeting criminogenic needs, and delivering interventions in a manner that is responsive to offender characteristics. The personality traits identified in this review (ASPD, impulsivity, emotional dysregulation, psychopathy, and narcissism) represent significant criminogenic needs that should be targeted in intervention. ASPD and impulsivity represent needs related to self-regulation and prosocial behavior; emotional dysregulation represents a need related to emotional management; and psychopathy and narcissism represent needs related to empathy and interpersonal functioning. The lack of validated assessment instruments for Nigerian populations limits the ability to assess these needs accurately. The moderating factors identified in this review suggest that effective intervention must address socioeconomic deprivation, adverse childhood experiences, substance use disorders, and cultural factors. Interventions that focus solely on individual personality traits without addressing these contextual factors are unlikely to be effective. Similarly, interventions that are not responsive to cultural norms and values are unlikely to engage offenders meaningfully. Interventions should be responsive to collectivist values by incorporating family and community involvement, and should address culturally specific manifestations of personality pathology such as honor-based violence and *aranakan*.

Cultural Considerations: Aranakan and Indigenous Assessment

The Yoruba concept of *aranakan*, describing a person who is uncooperative, malicious, and bullheaded, represents an important opportunity for developing culturally appropriate assessment instruments. Several questions remain unanswered. Does *aranakan* overlap with Western constructs of psychopathy, or does it represent a distinct form of personality pathology shaped by local cultural norms? The limited research on this concept prevents a definitive answer. The phenomenon of "spirit possession" as a culturally specific manifestation relevant to forensic mental health assessment (Ogunwale et al., 2021) similarly challenges the universal applicability of Western diagnostic frameworks. The development of culturally validated assessment instruments should be a priority for forensic psychology research in Nigeria. This requires careful attention to construct equivalence, ensuring that the same psychological constructs are being measured across cultures. It also requires attention to item bias, ensuring that assessment items are interpreted similarly across cultural groups. The high invalidity rate of the MMPI-2-RF in Nigerian samples (Aroyewun & Aroyewun-Adekomaiya, 2022) suggests that simply translating instruments into local languages is insufficient to ensure cultural validity.

Assessment Instrument Validity

The assessment instrument findings in this review represent perhaps the most concerning aspect of the evidence base. The MMPI-2-RF demonstrated unacceptably high invalidity rates in Nigerian prison samples, raising serious questions about both the quality of data and the ethics of

continued use of such instruments. The exclusion of 61% of participants in the Aroyewun and Aroyewun-Adekomaiya (2022) study is particularly troubling; the remaining 39% may represent a systematically biased sample that is not representative of the broader offender population. The continued reporting of data from such studies without appropriate caveats about the limitations of the data is a serious concern. The Hare PCL-R demonstrated acceptable reliability in Nigerian samples but requires further validation. The PCL-R was developed and normed primarily on European American prisoners (Sullivan & Kosson, 2006; Fanti et al., 2018), and its cross-cultural applicability remains uncertain. The finding that manifestations of psychopathy may differ across cultural groups suggests that the PCL-R may not capture culturally specific expressions of personality pathology. The Yoruba concept of *aranakan* suggests that there may be culturally unique manifestations of traits resembling psychopathy that are not captured by the PCL-R.

Cross-cultural assessment challenges, including construct, method, and item bias (Van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004; Jeong & Lee, 2019), must be addressed before Western instruments can be confidently applied to Nigerian populations. The application of assessment scales developed in one culture to a defendant from another culture without validation can lead to inaccurate measurements and potential miscarriages of justice (Weiss & Rosenfeld, 2012; Ogunwale et al., 2021). The exclusion of 61% of participants due to instrument

invalidity raises serious ethical concerns. If an instrument is invalid for 61% of participants, the data from the remaining 39% are likely systematically biased, and the continued use of such data in research and clinical practice is ethically problematic. The institutional research ethics that permitted continued use of demonstrably flawed assessments must be scrutinized. Researchers and clinicians have an ethical obligation to ensure that assessment instruments are appropriate for the populations with which they are used, and to discontinue use of instruments that demonstrate systematic bias or invalidity.

Methodological Limitations of the Evidence Base

The evidence base for personality traits among Nigerian homicide offenders suffers from significant methodological limitations. The ubiquity of convenience sampling across all studies limits generalizability; samples drawn from specific prisons may not be representative of the broader population of homicide offenders. The predominance of cross-sectional designs (8 of 12 studies) prevents causal inference; personality traits assessed post-incarceration may reflect adaptation to prison rather than pre-offense characteristics. The reliance on unvalidated or inadequately validated assessment instruments raises serious questions about measurement validity. The heterogeneity of measurement tools and study designs complicates synthesis and prevents meta-analysis. The quality of the included studies varies considerably. Studies that used structured clinical interviews based on DSM criteria (e.g., Yusuf & Adamu,

2019; Adewuya & Owoeye, 2006) may have greater diagnostic validity than studies relying on self-report measures alone. Even structured interviews may be affected by cultural factors that influence symptom presentation and reporting. The use of translated instruments without appropriate validation introduces additional measurement error.

The small number of studies ($n = 12$) reflects the nascent state of forensic psychology research in Nigeria. The absence of female-specific studies is a critical gap, as female homicide offenders may exhibit distinct traits and moderators due to cultural stigma or lower incarceration rates. The lack of longitudinal research prevents understanding of personality development and change over time. The complete exclusion of studies examining female offenders reflects systematic barriers to data collection rather than actual absence of female homicide.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Despite these limitations, several implications for policy and practice emerge from this review. Personality assessments should be integrated into sentencing and rehabilitation to tailor interventions to specific traits. The lack of validated assessment instruments for Nigerian populations limits the ability to conduct such assessments accurately. Investment in the development and validation of culturally appropriate assessment instruments should be a priority. Mental health services in prisons are urgently needed to address substance use disorders and psychiatric

conditions, which are currently underserved (Yusuf & Adamu, 2019). The high prevalence of psychiatric comorbidity, including schizophrenia and depression, suggests that many offenders have unmet mental health needs that may have contributed to their offending behavior. Prison conditions, characterized by overcrowding and lack of mental health services, may exacerbate these conditions and increase the risk of recidivism.

Socioeconomic interventions, such as vocational training and job creation, could mitigate poverty-driven crime (Adewuya & Owoeye, 2006). The high rates of unemployment and socioeconomic deprivation among offenders suggest that economic factors play a significant role in driving criminal behavior. Early intervention programs targeting ACEs, such as parenting workshops and trauma-informed care, could prevent the development of maladaptive traits (Adebayo & Oluwole, 2020). Culturally sensitive interventions, particularly in northern Nigeria, should address honor-based violence through community-based education programs (Okeke & Nwosu, 2017). Interventions that challenge cultural norms that justify violence may be more effective than purely individual-focused approaches. Community engagement and the involvement of religious and traditional leaders may be essential for effective intervention.

Interventions should be evaluated using rigorous study designs, including randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental designs, with appropriate outcome measures and considerations for

cultural adaptation. Currently, there is little evidence on the effectiveness of specific interventions for Nigerian offenders. Outcome measures should include recidivism rates, psychological functioning, and reintegration success, with attention to cultural appropriateness of outcome assessment. Mental health legislation reform is needed to ensure that mentally ill offenders receive appropriate treatment rather than punishment. Nigeria's outdated legal framework for mental health, which still reflects colonial practices, must be updated to align with international standards (Ogunwale & Liebreinz, 2021; Ogunlesi & Ogunwale, 2021).

Future Research Directions

The findings of this review highlight several priorities for future research. Longitudinal studies are urgently needed to understand causal relationships and long-term outcomes. The current reliance on cross-sectional designs prevents understanding of personality development and change over time. Research examining recidivism and rehabilitation outcomes among homicide offenders would inform evidence-based practice. Gender-specific studies are critical to understanding female offenders, who have been systematically excluded from existing research. Female homicide offenders may exhibit distinct traits and moderators due to cultural differences in gender roles and violence. Research on female offenders would also address the current gender bias in the evidence base.

Validation of personality assessment tools for Nigerian populations is essential. The

high invalidity rate of the MMPI-2-RF in Nigerian samples (Aroyewun & Aroyewun-Adekomaiya, 2022) suggests that existing instruments are not culturally appropriate. The development of culturally validated instruments should be a priority for forensic psychology research in Nigeria. This includes validation of the PCL-R for Nigerian populations, development of culturally appropriate measures of ASPD and impulsivity, and exploration of the *aranakan* construct. Mixed-methods approaches, combining quantitative assessments with qualitative interviews, could provide deeper insights into cultural moderators like honor-based violence (Okeke & Nwosu, 2017). Qualitative research could explore offenders' perspectives on their own violence, as well as the cultural meanings attached to violence. Research on prison-based interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy or substance use treatment, could inform evidence-based rehabilitation strategies. The current evidence base provides little guidance on what interventions are effective for Nigerian offenders. Research on the impact of prison conditions on offender outcomes is also needed. The prison environment appears to exacerbate existing psychological problems, but the specific mechanisms through which this occurs require investigation. Research on the effectiveness of prison reform initiatives would inform policy.

Conclusion

This scoping review demonstrates that Nigerian forensic psychology is at a critical

juncture. The current evidence base is too weak to support confident clinical or legal decision-making. Antisocial personality disorder, impulsivity, and emotional dysregulation are prevalent traits among incarcerated homicide offenders in Nigeria, amplified by socioeconomic deprivation, adverse childhood experiences, substance use disorders, and cultural norms. The prison environment exacerbates these issues, highlighting systemic gaps in Nigeria's correctional system. The evidence base remains severely limited by methodological weaknesses that undermine confidence in current findings. The unacceptably high invalidity rate of the MMPI-2-RF in Nigerian prison samples (61% loss of participants) raises serious concerns about the quality of data generated by Western instruments in Nigerian settings. The Yoruba concept of *aranakan* suggests culturally unique manifestations of personality pathology not captured by Western instruments, highlighting the need for culturally validated assessment tools. Investment in instrument validation, longitudinal research, and gender-specific studies is essential to develop an evidence-based forensic psychology that serves Nigerian populations appropriately. Culturally sensitive interventions, enhanced mental health services, and socioeconomic reforms are critical for rehabilitation and prevention. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies, gender-specific research, cultural validation of assessment tools, mixed-methods approaches, intervention research, and studies of prison environment impacts. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria can reduce homicide

rates and promote a safer, more equitable society. This requires sustained investment in research infrastructure, training of mental health professionals, and collaboration between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. The current evidence base provides a starting point, but much work remains to be done to develop an evidence-based approach to forensic assessment and intervention in Nigeria.

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