



Beyond Her Sentence

A Technical Analysis of Gender and Capital Punishment in Nigeria



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HOPE BEHIND BARS AFRICA

A Report of the Aisha Gender Justice Project

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A dark silhouette of a person, likely a woman, in a prayer or contemplative pose. The figure is centered in the background, with arms raised and hands clasped in front of the face. The silhouette is dark gray against a black background.

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We commend the extraordinary efforts of our data enumerators, who carried out interviews with women on death row across multiple correctional centers. Their work ensured that the voices, stories, and lived experiences of women on death row were captured with accuracy and sensitivity.

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We extend special thanks to the women whose stories form the core of this report, as well as their families and legal representatives, for their courage in allowing us to document their experiences. Their voices continue to illuminate the human cost of the death penalty and guide our advocacy.



Executive Summary

Nigeria retains the death penalty under statutory, customary, and Sharia legal systems, prescribing capital punishment for offenses such as murder, armed robbery, treason, terrorism, adultery, and same-sex relations in some jurisdictions. This pluralistic legal structure has produced inconsistencies in the application of justice. Women, in particular, remain disproportionately vulnerable within this system due to gendered biases, limited access to justice, and rigid societal expectations.

This report presents the findings of a comprehensive study on the death penalty and its unique impact on women in Nigeria. Although women constitute only a minority of those sentenced to death, their experiences reflect deep-seated gender, socio-cultural, and systemic inequalities within the country's criminal justice system. At the time of the research, official figures from the Nigerian Correctional Service revealed that Nigeria had 82 women on death row. Drawing on a combination of literature review, surveys with 60 female death row inmates across 10 states, and key informant interviews with state counsels, defense lawyers and NGOs, the study provides both quantitative and qualitative insights into these realities.

The socio-demographic profile of the women on death row reveals further layers of vulnerability. Nearly half (47%) were young women aged 18–35, with another 26% between 36–50 years. Education levels were strikingly low, with over one-third having no formal education and only 10 percent attaining tertiary education. A majority (70%) were mothers, highlighting the inter-generational consequences of incarceration, as their children were left in fragmented family care or vulnerable informal arrangements. Before their imprisonment, most of these women engaged in informal, low-income occupations such as trading, catering, hairdressing, and farming, reflecting their economic precarity.

The pathways that led these women to death row were largely shaped by structural vulnerabilities. More than a third (37%) had experienced gender-based violence, including domestic abuse, forced marriage, and child marriage. In some cases, the crimes for which they were convicted were directly linked to these histories of abuse or coercion by spouses. Patriarchal and cultural pressures also played a role, with women often criminalized in contexts involving infidelity, spousal disputes, infertility, or perceived failures to meet traditional gender roles. Additionally, poverty and economic dependency heightened their susceptibility to wrongful convictions, as many lacked the resources to secure proper legal defense.

Within the justice system, women's experiences were marked by limited awareness and systemic bias. A striking 75 percent of inmates were unaware of the specific laws under which they were charged, and 85 percent believed the law itself was unfair to women. More than half (57%) considered their trials non-transparent, while 62 percent reported not understanding the investigation or trial processes. Over a third explicitly noted that the male-dominated structure of the justice system had a direct impact on their cases, reinforcing systemic gender bias.

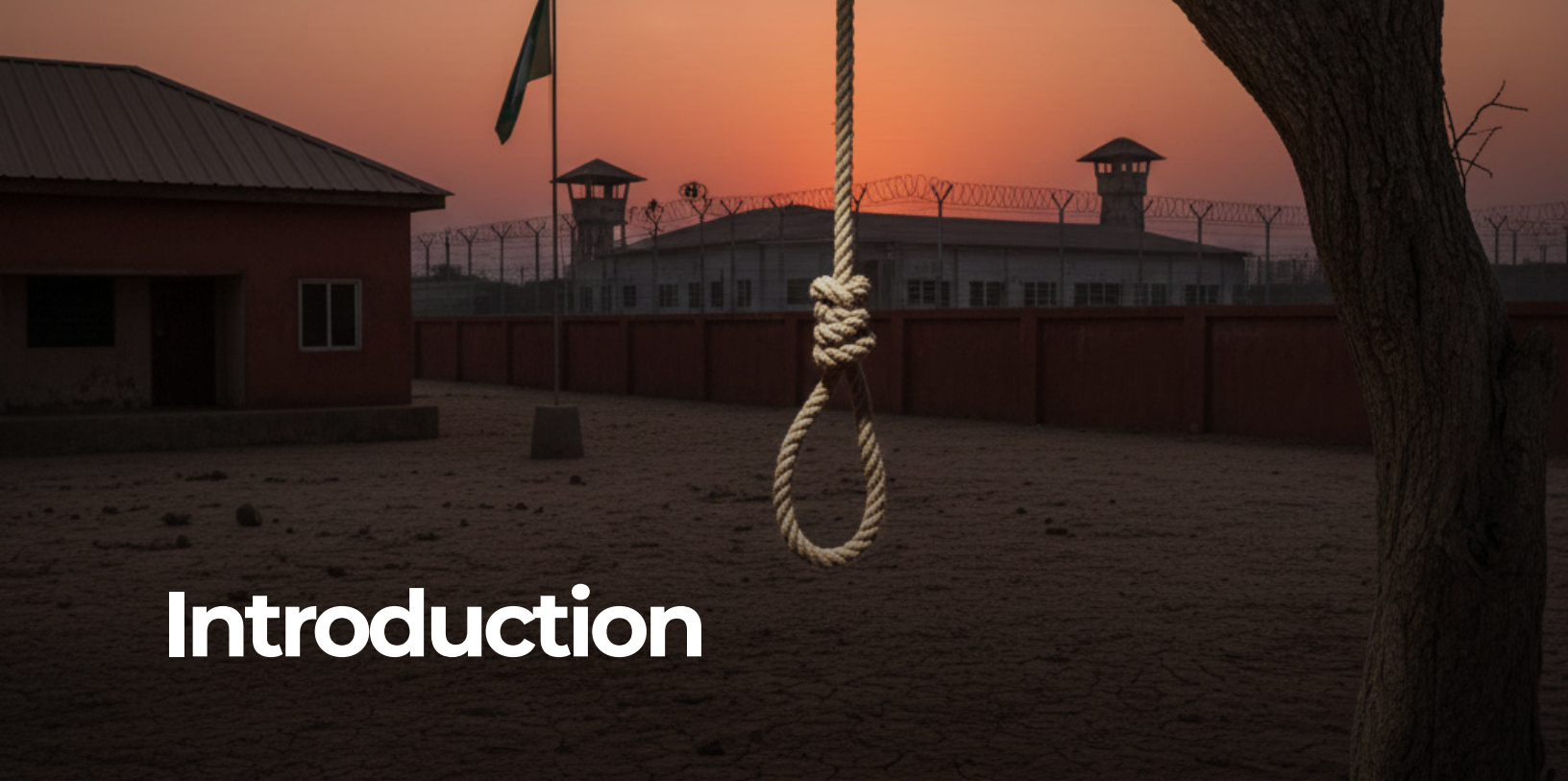
The stigma associated with women on death row was also profound. Many reported abandonment by spouses or family members following incarceration, while others faced widespread community rejection. This stigma was particularly acute in cases involving adultery or sexual offenses, where women endured harsher judgment compared to men. Beyond the inmates themselves, the children of incarcerated mothers experienced disrupted education, unstable care, and significant psychological trauma.

Perceptions of the death penalty among these women further underscored the sense of injustice. More than half believed the death penalty was unfairly applied, while over 80 percent believed rehabilitation was both possible and preferable. Suggested alternatives included imprisonment, vocational training, and restorative justice approaches. For many, the death penalty represented not justice but a discriminatory, irreversible, and dehumanizing punishment.

The study identified several key findings. Women on death row endure compounded vulnerabilities stemming from gender inequality, poverty, limited education, and histories of abuse. Legal processes frequently fail to provide adequate representation, transparency, or gender-sensitive considerations. The incarceration of mothers results in profound social consequences, including child neglect and family disintegration, while community stigma further isolates women and weakens their prospects for rehabilitation. Significantly, most women expressed a preference for rehabilitative approaches, which aligns with broader global abolitionist trends.

Based on these findings, the report makes a number of policy recommendations. These include declaring a moratorium on the death penalty as a step toward eventual abolition in line with international human rights standards; enacting legal reforms to review discriminatory evidentiary rules and integrate gender-sensitive sentencing; and improving access to justice through expanded legal aid, reduced court delays, and enhanced trial transparency. The report also calls for reforms in detention practices to guarantee reproductive healthcare, childcare, and mental health support, as well as investment in rehabilitation and reintegration programs such as vocational training and psychosocial support. Finally, broader cultural transformation is needed to address harmful practices such as child marriage, gender-based violence, and community stigma through public awareness campaigns and legal literacy initiatives.

In conclusion, the research underscores that women's experiences on death row in Nigeria are not isolated criminal incidents but rather outcomes of systemic gender discrimination, socio-economic precarity, and entrenched cultural oppression. The death penalty, instead of delivering justice, perpetuates cycles of trauma and inequality. Moving toward abolition supported by restorative justice, prevention-oriented systems and rehabilitation-centered policies is therefore both urgent and necessary.



Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The death penalty remains one of the most contested aspects of Nigeria's criminal justice system. Despite a global movement towards its abolition, Nigeria retains capital punishment across statutory, customary, and Sharia legal systems, applying it to offenses such as murder, armed robbery, treason, terrorism, adultery, and same-sex relations.

113

Abolitionist Countries

Countries have abolished death penalty for all crimes

Abolitionist for ordinary crimes

Countries have abolished death penalty for ordinary crimes, retaining it for exceptional circumstances

9

23

Abolitionist De Facto

Countries have not executed anyone in the past decade

Retentionist

Countries and Territories still used the death penalty

55

The co-existence of these legal systems reflects Nigeria's colonial legacies, cultural traditions, and religious pluralism. However, this pluralism has also produced inconsistencies in sentencing, procedural safeguards, and evidentiary standards, raising serious concerns about fairness and human rights. Women sentenced to death occupy a particularly precarious position within this system, as they confront intersecting layers of discrimination rooted in gender inequality, socio-economic precarity, cultural expectations, and systemic failures of justice.

The literature consistently highlights that women on death row represent more than legal cases; they embody the compounded vulnerabilities of patriarchy, poverty, and structural violence. Historical analyses of Nigeria's legal system trace how colonial-era penal codes, postcolonial constitutional frameworks, and the reintroduction of Sharia law in northern states have intersected to produce complex and often discriminatory legal outcomes. Studies have underscored that women are doubly victimized: first through social and domestic contexts marked by gender-based violence, child marriage, or economic dependency, and again by justice systems that are often blind to these realities. International and regional human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and FIDA, have documented cases where women faced wrongful convictions, harsh sentencing, or trials that lacked transparency and due process. Literature further points to stigma, family abandonment, and cultural rejection as persistent consequences for women accused of

capital offenses, consequences that extend beyond the prison walls to devastate children, families, and communities.

The empirical findings of this study reinforce and deepen these observations.

Survey data show that a majority of women on death row are young, poorly educated, and economically marginalized, with many employed in informal, low-income occupations prior to their incarceration. About 70 percent are mothers, underscoring the intergenerational impact of their imprisonment, as children are left in fragmented care arrangements and often face disrupted education. Data reveal that 36.7 percent of women had experienced gender-based violence, with some offenses directly linked to histories of abuse or coercion. A significant proportion of women also reported abandonment by spouses, family members, and communities, with stigma proving especially acute in cases involving adultery or sexual transgressions.

Women's experiences in the justice system further reveal systemic inequities. More than half of respondents considered their trials non-transparent, with many reporting confusion over legal proceedings or inadequate representation. A majority believed the justice system to be unfair, with some highlighting how male-dominated structures and cultural bias shaped the outcomes of their cases. Despite these challenges, over 80 percent of respondents expressed a belief in rehabilitation as a preferable alternative to execution, pointing to imprisonment, vocational training, and restorative justice as more just and constructive pathways.

By weaving together evidence from existing literature and the lived realities of women on death row, the introduction to this report situates the study within a broader framework of justice reform and gender rights in Nigeria. The death penalty is not merely a legal instrument of punishment but a mechanism that reproduces social inequalities, magnifies structural violence, and disproportionately harms already marginalized populations. This research, therefore, seeks to interrogate these realities by centering the voices of women on death row, assessing their experiences against broader scholarly and legal debates, and identifying pathways toward reform and eventual abolition.



Objectives of the Study

2.0 Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of this study is to interrogate the realities of women sentenced to death in Nigeria and to highlight how their experiences reflect broader issues of justice, gender, and human rights. Within this aim, several specific objectives guided the research.

First, the study set out to explore the lived experiences of women on death row, capturing their personal narratives and everyday realities within correctional facilities. This objective emphasizes giving voice to women who are often silenced or rendered invisible in policy debates, and situates their experiences within wider social and legal frameworks.

Second, the study sought to assess the socio-cultural, economic, and gendered factors contributing to women's criminalisation and sentencing. By examining issues such as poverty, gender-based violence, patriarchal norms, and cultural practices like child marriage, the research identifies how systemic vulnerabilities shape women's pathways into the criminal justice system and, ultimately, onto death row.

Third, the research aimed to analyse detention conditions and the unique impacts of incarceration on women and their children. Unlike men, many of the women are mothers whose imprisonment has severe ripple effects, disrupting family structures and

exposing children to long-term emotional and socio-economic instability.

A fourth objective was to evaluate gaps in access to justice and the provision of legal representation for women facing capital punishment. Many of the women interviewed lacked awareness of the laws under which they were charged, reported inadequate or absent legal defense, and considered their trials non-transparent. This aspect of the research highlights systemic weaknesses in Nigeria's justice system, including prolonged trials, evidentiary discrimination under Sharia, and corruption.

Finally, the study sought to develop evidence-based policy recommendations that propose alternatives to capital punishment, emphasizing rehabilitative, restorative, and rights-based approaches. By doing so, the research not only critiques existing practices but also provides actionable pathways for reform that align with global abolitionist movements and Nigeria's obligations under international human rights law.

Together, these objectives ensure that the study does more than describe women's experiences; it critically interrogates the structures that sustain their criminalisation, connects empirical evidence with existing scholarship, and advances concrete solutions to reform Nigeria's approach to justice.



Methodology

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to generate a comprehensive understanding of women's experiences on death row in Nigeria. The integration of multiple methods allowed for triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of findings, while also capturing the depth of lived experiences often overlooked in strictly quantitative studies.

3.1 Research Design

The research was organized around three major components that collectively ensured both breadth and depth in the analysis. The first component comprised a quantitative survey of women currently on death row, designed to obtain demographic, socio-economic, and attitudinal data. This approach allowed the study to generate measurable insights into the profiles of these women and the structural conditions that shape their encounters with the criminal justice system. By grounding the inquiry in statistical evidence, the survey provided a baseline for understanding broader trends and disparities within the administration of capital punishment.

Building on this statistical foundation, the second component centered on qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, including inmates, legal practitioners, and civil society organizations. These interviews offered deeper insights into the systemic

and gendered issues surrounding the death penalty, capturing perspectives and experiences that numbers alone could not reveal. Through personal narratives and professional reflections, this strand of the research highlighted the complexities of legal processes, the influence of social biases, and the challenges women face within penal and judicial structures.

Complementing both the quantitative and qualitative strands, the third component involved a comprehensive desk review of secondary sources. This included statutes, constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, academic writings, as well as reports from non-governmental and international organizations. The review situated the empirical findings within established legal frameworks and scholarly debates, ensuring that the study was anchored in both theoretical and practical contexts.

Taken together, these three interconnected components offered a rigorous and multidimensional framework for the study. The combination of quantitative data, qualitative insights, and documentary analysis ensured that the research was not only grounded in empirical evidence but also enriched by contextual depth and theoretical clarity. This integrative design was therefore essential for capturing the full complexity of the intersection between gender, justice, and capital punishment.

3.2 Sampling and Participants

The study focused on 60 women on death row across 10 correctional facilities in northern and

southern Nigeria, selected to ensure geographic, cultural, and religious diversity. Purposive sampling method was used, given the limited accessibility of death row inmates and the sensitivity of the subject matter. In addition, key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from NGOs working on justice and human rights, defense lawyers, state counsels, human rights advocates and subsequently the Nigerian Correctional Service. This ensured that perspectives from multiple stakeholders were captured.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The first method involved the administration of a structured questionnaire to female inmates. The survey instrument captured socio-demographic information as well as details of their experiences during arrest and trial, prison conditions, stigma, and perceptions of the death penalty. This allowed for the systematic collection of comparable data across respondents, forming a foundation for analyzing trends and variations in the lived experiences of women facing capital punishment.

To complement the survey, key informant interviews were conducted with defense lawyers, state counsels, and representatives of non-governmental organizations. These interviews provided institutional perspectives and collective observations on the challenges faced by women in conflict with the law. By using a semi-structured format, respondents were able to narrate their experiences and reflections in their own words. This approach generated nuanced accounts of gender-based violence, family abandonment, and systemic discrimination, thereby adding depth and human context to the patterns identified through the survey data.

In addition, a systematic documentary analysis was undertaken to situate the primary findings within broader legal and policy frameworks. Legal documents, court rulings, policy papers, and NGO reports were reviewed to provide both national and international context. This strand of the research enabled the study to link empirical evidence with Nigeria's justice system and global best practices, thereby strengthening its analytical rigor and relevance.

Together, these three methods—survey instrument, key informant interviews, and documentary analysis offered a comprehensive framework for examining the intersection of gender, justice, and the death penalty. By triangulating different forms of evidence, the study ensured that its conclusions were robust,

contextually grounded, and sensitive to both individual experiences and systemic dynamics.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, frequencies tables and charts) to highlight demographic patterns and inmates' perceptions. Qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed to identify recurring themes such as gender-based violence, stigma, trial irregularities, and perceptions of justice. Thematic matrices were developed to align qualitative insights with quantitative findings, allowing for triangulated analysis that strengthened the credibility of conclusions.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitivity of working with death row inmates, strict ethical guidelines were followed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Data collectors were trained on trauma sensitive data collection processes. Pseudonyms were used in reporting qualitative data to protect identities. Access to prisons was facilitated by formal approval from the Nigerian Correctional Service, and care was taken to avoid re-traumatization of participants by employing trauma-informed interviewing techniques.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

The study encountered several limitations that should be acknowledged. Restricted access to some inmates due to stringent security protocols posed a challenge, reducing the scope of direct engagement with certain individuals on death row. In addition, a few participants expressed reluctance to fully disclose their personal experiences, largely as a result of fear, stigma, or mistrust, which may have limited the depth of some narratives. The initial reluctance of correctional officers to participate in interviews restricted access to vital information that could have provided clearer insights into the institutional operations and practices of correctional facilities.

Despite these challenges, the study employed triangulation of methods and incorporated the perspectives of multiple stakeholders to mitigate potential gaps. By drawing on quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and documentary analysis, the research was able to balance individual accounts with institutional and documentary evidence. This methodological breadth enhanced the reliability of

findings and ensured that the conclusions remained robust, even in the face of these constraints. Importantly, these limitations also highlight areas for future research, particularly the need for studies that can secure greater institutional cooperation and explore more deeply the internal dynamics of correctional facilities.

Interestingly, the Nigerian Correctional Service was present at the Validation Workshop of the draft report of the research and expressed commitment towards participating in the research and ensuring that the perspectives of the officers of the service regarding issues of gender and death penalty are captured in the report. Consequent upon this, 9 selected experienced officers from relevant departments of the National Headquarters of the Nigerian Correctional Service were interviewed. The analyzed responses of the officers are captured under Data Presentation and Analysis (5.0), specifically under Qualitative Insights (5.2.1) and enlisted as Nigerian Correctional Service' Perspectives on the Administration of Death Penalty in Nigeria (5.2.11)



Literature Review

4.0 Literature Review

The literature on the death penalty in Nigeria situates the issue at the intersection of law, culture, gender, and human rights. Nigeria retains capital punishment under statutory, customary, and Sharia legal systems, but the application of this punishment is inconsistent and often discriminatory (Alemika, 2019; Amnesty International, 2022). Scholars and human rights advocates consistently highlight that women, although a minority on death row, face compounded vulnerabilities that reflect broader systemic inequities (FIDA, 2021). This section reviews existing scholarship in relation to the study's objectives.

4.1 Lived Experiences of Women on Death Row

Studies show that women on death row are not only punished by the law but are also marginalized by their social and familial contexts. Amnesty International (2022) and the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA, 2021) documented cases where women experienced abandonment by families, loss of community ties, and stigmatization within correctional facilities. These findings echo the notion of “double victimization,” where women are first subjected to socio-economic and gender-based disadvantages, and then further penalized by legal systems that fail to account for their realities (Okafor, 2020).

4.2 Socio-Cultural, Economic, and Gendered Factors in Criminalisation

Gender-based violence, child marriage, and patriarchal cultural expectations are major drivers of women's pathways to capital punishment. According to Adepoju (2018), many women convicted of homicide acted in the context of prolonged domestic abuse, but such circumstances were rarely considered during trial. Under Sharia evidentiary rules, women often face harsher standards of proof in adultery or zina cases, which increases their exposure to death sentences (Ibrahim, 2019). Poverty and illiteracy further exacerbate these vulnerabilities, as women with limited resources are less able to secure legal representation or understand complex judicial processes (Oshio, 2021).

Case Study: Halima

Halima was arrested and incarcerated for homicide. At age 13, following the death of her father, she was married off to a man three times her age. During the marriage, she experienced spousal abuse, sexual violence, and frequent beatings, and she often attempted to escape. While married, she became pregnant but tragically lost the child at six months.

One day, upon returning home. She was accused of killing her stepdaughter by allegedly throwing the child into a well and was subsequently taken to the police station by the local vigilante group.



When the Hope Behind Bars Africa team met her, she had already spent about three years awaiting trial, with her legal representation unclear. Her uncle indicated that he had raised funds to secure a lawyer who did not show up after a few, and Aisha consistently maintained that she had no involvement in the child's death.

This case highlights the intersection of gender-based violence, child marriage, and systemic barriers within Nigeria's criminal justice system. Halima's prolonged pre-trial detention and limited access to legal support illustrate how women particularly those subjected to early and forced marriage face compounded vulnerabilities in the justice system.

4.3 Detention Conditions and Impacts on Women and Children

The conditions in Nigerian prisons are characterized by overcrowding, poor healthcare, and lack of

gender-sensitive facilities (Alemika, 2019). For women, these challenges are compounded by reproductive health needs and the fact that many are primary caregivers. Research by Odukoya (2020) shows that the incarceration of mothers has intergenerational effects, leaving children exposed to psychological trauma, disrupted education, and economic vulnerability. Feminist criminology literature underscores that women's incarceration has ripple effects on family and community life, making detention uniquely devastating for women compared to men (Chukwuma, 2021).

4.4 Access to Justice and Legal Representation

A recurring theme in the literature is the lack of access to justice for women facing capital charges. Studies reveal that many women are unaware of their legal rights, lack adequate representation, or endure prolonged pre-trial detention due to systemic inefficiencies (Amnesty International, 2022; Ibrahim, 2019). The justice system is marked by corruption, patriarchal bias, and male-dominated judicial structures that often disregard women's voices (Okafor, 2020). Socio-economic status plays a critical role: women from poor backgrounds are disproportionately represented on death row because they cannot afford competent legal defense (Oshio, 2021).

4.5 Reforms, Alternatives, and Global Context

Globally, the trend is toward the abolition of the death penalty, with many African countries adopting moratoriums or outright abolition (Amnesty International, 2022). For example, Rwanda, Burundi, and Sierra Leone have abolished the death penalty, while Ghana and Kenya have taken steps toward reform (Ibrahim, 2019). Scholars argue that Nigeria's continued retention of capital punishment places it out of step with international human rights standards (FIDA, 2021). Alternatives such as life imprisonment, restorative justice, and rehabilitation-focused programs are widely promoted as more humane and effective approaches (Chukwuma, 2021). Feminist legal scholars particularly stress the need for gender-sensitive sentencing frameworks that recognize histories of abuse, economic precarity, and the caregiving roles of women (Adepoju, 2018).

4.6 Synthesis with Research Objectives

The reviewed literature directly informs this study's objectives. Documenting lived experiences responds to the gap where women's voices are absent in legal and policy debates. Interrogating socio-cultural, economic, and gendered factors builds on existing evidence that links women's criminalisation to systemic inequalities. The focus on detention conditions underscores the gendered impacts of incarceration, particularly on mothers and their children. Literature on access to justice highlights structural barriers to fair trial and representation, while debates around abolition and alternatives provide a framework for the study's recommendations for reform.

Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1 Quantitative Analysis: Responses from the Surveyed Female Inmate Respondents

This section presents the findings obtained from responses of the surveyed female inmates, aimed at understanding their lived experiences on death row in Nigeria. The discussion is organised thematically to highlight patterns across respondents.

5.1.1 Survey Locations by State and Correctional Centres

The data on states shows the geographical reach of the survey, covering 10 states across Nigeria.

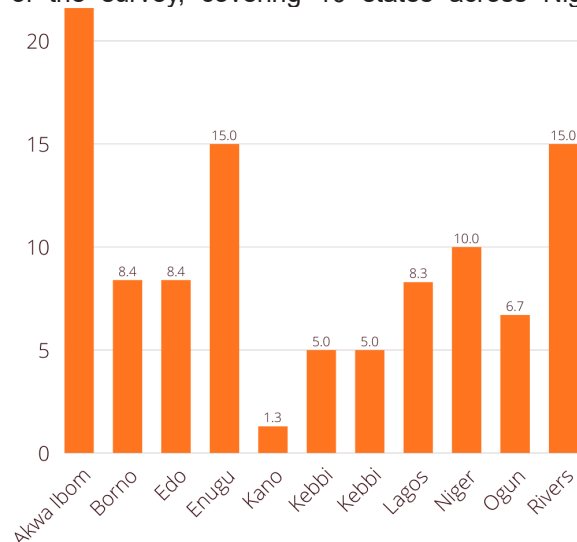


Figure 1: States of the Survey locations

On geographical spread, Figure 1 above visualizes the distribution of respondents. They are distributed across states in the North (Borno, Kano, Kebbi, Niger), South-East (Enugu), South-South (Akwa Ibom, Edo, Rivers State), and South-West (Lagos, Ogun). This broad geographical scope is valuable because it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the issues, considering that legal frameworks, such as the application of Sharia Law in some northern states, can differ significantly. By respondents' concentration, the state with the highest number of respondents is Akwa Ibom, with 13 inmates, representing about 21.6% of the total. This is followed by Enugu and Rivers State, each with 9 participants (15%). Kano had the lowest number of participants, with only 2 inmates.

The list of correctional centers shows the specific facilities where data was collected. By cleaning and consolidating this list, it is identified that the unique centers appeared in the raw data include: Old Benin Custodial Centre, Kirikiri Female Correctional Centre, Port Harcourt Maximum Security Correctional Centre, Ibara Custodial Center, Abeokuta, Kano Central - Medium Security Custodial Centre, Maximum Security Custodial Center Maiduguri, Enugu Maximum Security Custodial Centre, Medium Correctional Facility Birnin Kebbi, Old Minna Custodial Centre, Suleja Medium Custodial Centre and Medium Security Custodial Centre Uyo. This information can be a valuable starting point for further analysis of the specific conditions and resources available at each facility.

Overall, the geographical data is crucial for the research because it demonstrates that findings are not limited to one region but instead reflect a range of experiences across different socio-cultural and legal contexts. For instance, the inclusion of data from states like Kano and Kebbi (where Sharia Law is applicable) is particularly important for understanding how different legal systems impact women on death row. The significant number of participants from states like Akwa Ibom, Enugu, and Rivers State may provide insights into regional factors or patterns in the legal system within those areas.

5.1.2 Demographic and Socio-Economic Background of Respondents

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-35	29	46.7
36-50	16	26.2
51-70	13	21.7
Above 70	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0

Based on Table 1 above, a significant majority of the surveyed inmates are within the 18-35 age group, with 29 respondents, which represents 47.5% of the total. The second-largest group is the 36-50 age group, with 16 respondents (26.2%). The data shows that women on death row are predominantly young or middle-aged. This demographic finding can be significant for understanding the life circumstances and factors that led to their incarceration.

Table 2: Educational Background

Highest Education	Frequency	Percent
No Formal Education	21	35.0
Postgraduate	7	11.7
Primary	10	16.7
Secondary	16	26.7
Tertiary	6	10.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 2 above reveals that a substantial portion of the respondents have a low level of formal education. The largest group, 21 inmates (35%), reported having no formal education at all. This is followed by those with a secondary education, with 16 inmates (26.7%).

This finding suggests a potential correlation between low educational attainment and socio-economic vulnerability, which are key factors your study aims to investigate.

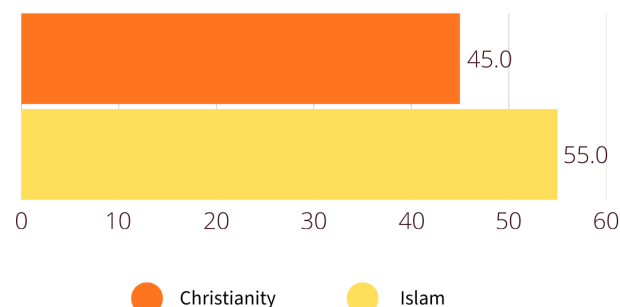


Figure 2: Religious Affiliation of Respondents

Figure 2 above depicts the religious breakdown of the respondents is straightforward, with a clear majority identifying as Christian. Out of the 60 inmates surveyed, 46 (76.7%) are Christian, while 14 (23.3%) are Muslim. This finding is important as religion can be a key socio-cultural factor influencing an individual's worldview, community support systems, and the application of legal frameworks, particularly in states where Sharia Law is in place.

Overall, the demographic data paints a picture of a population that is primarily young to middle-aged, with a significant lack of formal education, and a majority who are Christian. These findings are critical for understanding the "socio-cultural factors affecting women on death row" as stated in the study's objective. The high percentage of inmates with little to no formal education is a particularly salient point. This could be a contributing factor to the challenges they face, such as limited access to adequate legal counsel, and may be an indicator of underlying issues like poverty and marginalization. A further analysis can explore how these demographic characteristics intersect with other variables in the survey to provide a richer understanding of their lived experiences and access to justice.

Table 3: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Divorced/Seperated	15	25.0
Married	34	56.7
Single	11	18.3
Total	60	100.0
If married, has your conviction, sentencing and detention affected your marriage in any way?		
No	34	56.7
Yes	26	43.3
Total	49	100.0

Table 3 above shows that the majority of the women surveyed were in a marital or long-term relationship at the time of their incarceration. A significant portion, 56.7% (34), reported being married. A quarter of the respondents, 25.0%, were divorced/separated, and 18.3% were single. This high percentage of married individuals suggests that many of these women were not socially isolated prior to their conviction.

This finding underscores the importance of family and marital relationships in the lives of these women. The fact that a majority are married suggests that their legal and personal struggles are intricately linked to their family lives. It also raises questions about the roles of their spouses, and whether those relationships are a source of support or a contributing factor to their challenges.

On the impact of incarceration on marriage, the responses to whether their conviction and detention affected their marriage provide a critical look at the lived consequences of being on death row. While the data shows a 56.7% “No” and 43.3% “Yes” split, the qualitative explanations offer a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the devastating personal toll.

In terms of relational breakdown, the open-ended responses provide powerful evidence of the negative impact.

Key themes emerge, including abandonment and lack of support (“My husband has stopped looking for my whereabouts,” “My husband stopped talking to me”), and divorce or separation (“My husband divorce me,” “My husband left,” “My husband no longer considers me as his wife”). This highlights the severe emotional and psychological trauma that goes beyond the physical confines of prison. The data suggests that for many of these women, the death sentence is not just a legal ruling but also a sentence of social isolation and personal abandonment.

In linking to culpability, a particularly poignant response, “My husband’s actions led to my incarceration. He killed his father,” highlights a critical socio-cultural factor. It speaks to the possibility of coercion or duress in cases involving female offenders. This finding suggests that some women may have been convicted for crimes in which they were either victims of spousal abuse, acting under their partner’s influence, or were wrongly implicated in a crime committed by their male partners. This provides a direct link between the data and the broader issues of access to justice and gender-based violence.

The combined data shows that while a majority of the women were married, the conviction and detention have severely fractured their most significant personal relationships. For a substantial number of these inmates, their experience on death row is defined by the profound loss of spousal support and the breakdown of their family unit, which can make their journey toward rehabilitation and potential reintegration even more challenging.

Table 4: Means of Livelihood Before Incarceration

Did you have any means of livelihood before incarceration?		
No	21	35.0
Yes	39	65.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 4 above indicates that a significant majority of the surveyed inmates were economically active before their imprisonment. A substantial portion of the women, 65%, reported having a means of livelihood. Conversely, 35% did not. This indicates that while a majority of the women were economically active, a notable minority were not. The fact that a large percentage of the women were employed suggests they were not financially dependent in all cases. This is a crucial finding, as it challenges the potential assumption that all female inmates on death row are from the poorest and most marginalized backgrounds. However, a deeper analysis of the specific occupations is necessary to understand their socio-economic vulnerability.

The qualitative responses on the nature of their work provide valuable context for understanding their economic standing. The occupations listed are predominantly in the informal economy or small-scale business sector. The most frequently mentioned activities include: “Business woman,” “Provision

store,” “Trader,” “Selling of cooked food,” “Hair Stylist,” “Hairdressing,” “Tailoring,” “Catering,” “Farming” and “Farming and marketing.”

While these women were employed, their livelihoods were largely informal, which often comes with a lack of job security, a reliance on limited capital, and vulnerability to economic shocks. This data aligns with the socio-economic reality of many Nigerian women. Their engagement in these types of work suggests that they may have faced significant economic precarity, which can intersect with other vulnerabilities to contribute to the circumstances that led to their incarceration. The women who reported no means of livelihood at all are likely to be even more susceptible to these systemic challenges. This analysis, when combined with the data on education and age, will help to create a more comprehensive picture of the economic and social factors that may have influenced the lives of these women before they were sentenced to death.



5.1.3 Motherhood and Incarceration

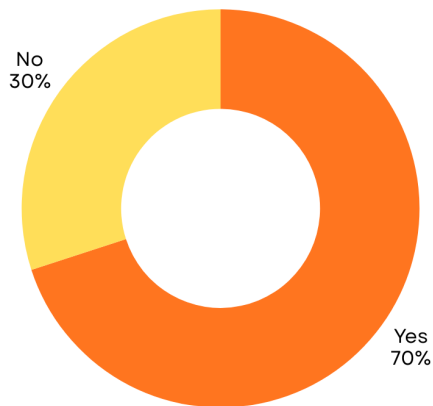


Figure 3: Distribution of Inmates with Children

Figure 3 above shows that the majority of the surveyed inmates are mothers, which highlights a critical and often overlooked aspect of female imprisonment. More than half (70% or 42) of the women on death row have children. This is a very significant finding. The fact that a large majority of these women are mothers means that their incarceration has a direct and devastating effect not only on them but also on a significant number of Nigerian children. The impact of the death penalty extends beyond the individual to affect the lives and well-being of the next generation. This finding is central to the study's objective of understanding the unique impact of the death penalty on women.



On children's well-being and care, the data on the children's ages and living situations reveals the challenges and disruptions caused by the mothers' imprisonment. The qualitative data shows a wide range of children's ages, from infants to adults. Several women indicated that their children lived with them in custody, often their lastborns who were breastfed in prison. This is a common practice in some correctional facilities in Nigeria for infants. However, the majority of the children, especially the older ones, are not living with their mothers. They are under the care of various individuals, including their parents (the mothers' own parents), their spouses, and in some cases, friends and neighbors. This highlights the fragmentation of families and the reliance on informal support networks to care for the children. Out of the 60 respondents, half (50%) receive regular updates on the welfare of their children. However, a third of them (33.3%) do not, which points to a significant information gap and source of distress.

Thus, the presence of young children in custody raises serious concerns about their well-being and development in a prison environment. For the older children living outside, the separation from their mothers, and in some cases the death of their mothers while they are in custody, can have severe psychological and emotional effects. The lack of regular updates for many of the mothers adds to their mental and emotional burden.

The data on the mothers' biggest concerns for their children provides a direct insight into their worries and fears. The most frequently cited concerns are education/schooling and daily upkeep. Other significant concerns include their children's training and general care, health status, and safety. The responses show that the mothers are acutely aware of the material and developmental needs of their children and feel helpless to provide for them.

This data highlights the enduring nature of their maternal identity and responsibility, even under the immense pressure of a death sentence. Their primary concerns are basic needs and future opportunities for their children, which are directly compromised by their incarceration. This speaks to the inter-generational impact of the death penalty, a key theme in human rights discourse.

5.1.4 Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence

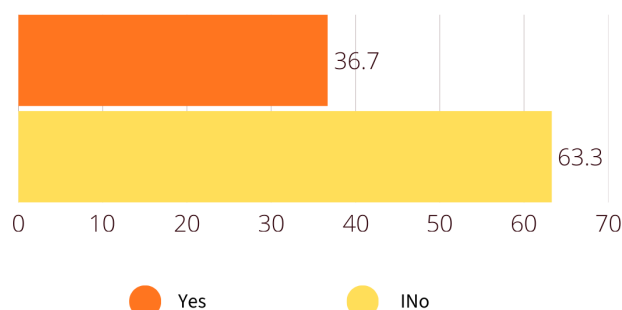


Figure 4: Inmates who Experienced Gender-Based Violence

Figure 4 above shows a substantial number of the respondents reported experiencing gender-based violence, highlighting the prevalence of abuse in their lives before incarceration. A notable 36.7% (22 out of 60) of the women surveyed answered "Yes" to experiencing GBV before their sentence. This is a

considerable proportion of the population. Similarly, the qualitative responses paint a grim picture of the types of violence experienced. Themes that emerged include physical abuse ("Abuse and beating," "Beating," "torture," "My husband use to treat me like an animal"), neglect, and psychological distress ("Abusive exchanges," "toxic environment"). The data also points to violence within the justice system itself, with mentions of being "beaten at the police station" and "torture at the police custody." The response "I was married at age 13" suggests that some of these women were victims of child marriage, a form of gender-based violence.

In fact, the high prevalence of GBV among the respondents is a crucial finding for the study. It indicates that the path to incarceration for many of these women is paved with a history of abuse and trauma. This prior victimization can significantly impact their mental state, decision-making, and ability to navigate a fair legal process.

5.1.5 Links Between GBV and Criminal Offence

Table 5: Showing Links between GBV and Offences

Is the offence you were alleged to have committed a reaction to your experiences of gender-based violence?			
No	47	78.3	
Yes	13	21.7	
Total	60	100.0	

Table 5 above indicates that while a majority of the women did not directly link their offense to a reaction to GBV, the data still suggests a complex, nuanced relationship. Only 21.7% (13) of the women said their offense was a direct reaction to their experience of GBV. This is a smaller number than those who reported experiencing GBV in the first place, suggesting that while abuse may be a background factor, it is not always perceived by the women as the direct cause.

In qualitative findings, the explanations for the "Yes" responses are varied. The most direct link is seen in the response, "due to the maltreatment I received in my husband's house," which explicitly ties the crime to a history of domestic abuse. Other responses like "She got into a fight with her co wife" point to violence within family structures, a common theme in GBV. However, many women simply stated they "commit the crime" or that it was "not related to gender based

violence.”

By and large, the discrepancy between the number of women who experienced GBV and those who directly link it to their offense highlights the complexity of the issue. Many women may not fully understand the legal or psychological connection between their past trauma and their actions. For those who do, their experiences with abuse and violence are clearly a fundamental part of the story that led to their conviction. This is a vital point for understanding how the legal system in Nigeria may fail to consider mitigating factors, such as a history of abuse, when sentencing women. The data strongly suggests that, for a significant portion of the population, a woman's journey to death row is not just about the crime itself but about a lifetime of victimization and vulnerability.

Case Study: Omonkhoise Osaru

Omonkhoise, a 22-year-old single mother, was taken into custody for the death of her 23-month-old daughter, Osato. Prior to the incident, she experienced significant psychosocial stress, including the loss of her university admission after becoming pregnant and a lack of financial and familial support.

Clinical assessment indicated that she exhibited symptoms consistent with postpartum psychosis, a severe mental health condition affecting approximately one in 1,000 women after childbirth. Symptoms can include delusions, hallucinations, emotional detachment from the child, irritability, confusion, and thoughts of harming the child. Experts concluded that earlier screening and intervention might have prevented the tragedy.

Omonkhoise had access to limited support, and the stressors associated with early motherhood, social stigma, and financial constraints contributed to her mental health deterioration. She voluntarily reported the incident to authorities, and her case is under criminal investigation.

5.1.6 Socio-Cultural Factors and Capital Offenses

The data reveals that complex socio-cultural factors, including abuse, economic pressures, and patriarchal norms, are seen as significant contributors to women's involvement in capital offenses and influence how they are perceived by society and the justice system. The data on the most common socio-cultural factors is a powerful indicator of the root causes of women's criminal involvement. The most frequently cited factor across the responses is domestic violence. This is followed by economic dependency, forced marriage, and cultural silence/obedience norms. A substantial number of responses combine several of these factors, indicating a complex web of pressures rather than a single contributing element. For instance, the combination of domestic violence and economic dependency is a recurring theme, suggesting that women may be trapped in abusive situations with no financial means of escape.

Thus, the data confirms a core hypothesis of the study: that women's pathways to capital offenses are often shaped by victimization and vulnerability. The respondents' answers directly link their actions to a history of abuse, a lack of financial autonomy, and societal expectations that can leave them with limited choices.

5.1.7 Cultural Beliefs and Perception of Offenders

The responses on how cultural beliefs influence the perception of women who commit capital offenses highlight a double-edged sword of judgment. A common response is that women are judged more harshly than men. This suggests that when a woman violates social norms of femininity, she is often met with greater societal condemnation. However, the data also shows seemingly contradictory perceptions, such as being “seen as victims rather than offenders” and “not taken seriously as offenders.” This paradox suggests that while society may recognize women as vulnerable, that recognition does not always translate into a fair legal process. They may be simultaneously seen as victims deserving of sympathy and as deviants who deserve harsher punishment for their transgressions against gender norms.

5.1.8 Traditional Expectations and Pressures

The responses on traditional pressures reinforce the findings on socio-cultural factors, providing specific examples of the patriarchal norms that contribute to a woman's path to crime. The most prominent pressures cited are pressure to remain in abusive marriages and a lack of autonomy in decision-making. Other factors like childbearing/infertility-related stress and expectations of loyalty to partner/family also feature prominently. The data confirms that women's actions are often a reaction to a loss of control over their own lives and bodies.

In sum, the findings highlight how traditional gender roles can create high-pressure environments where women feel trapped. The inability to leave an abusive marriage or make independent decisions can lead to extreme acts of desperation. This data is critical for advocating for legal reforms that consider these mitigating factors in capital offense cases.

5.1.9 Community Stigma

Based on the provided data, the level of community stigma toward women accused of capital offenses is overwhelmingly high, and some women believe specific cultural practices are contributing factors to their offenses. The responses show a clear consensus on the intense social stigma faced by these women.

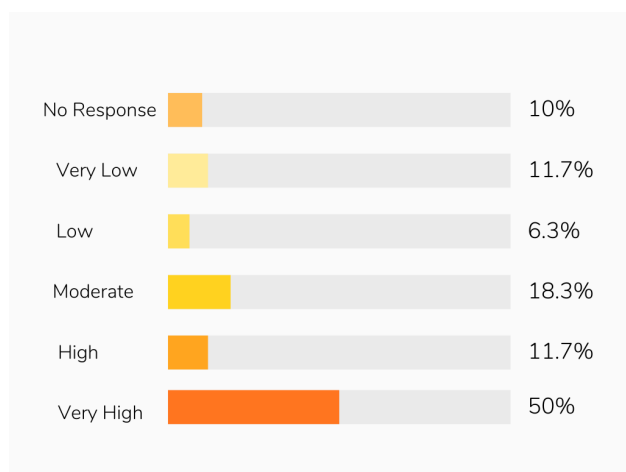


Figure 5: Level of Community Stigma

Figure 5 above shows a combined 61.7% of respondents (50% very high and 11.7% high) reported a significant level of community stigma. Only a small fraction (10%) reported a low level or no stigma at all. The 10% "No Response" rate is also notable,

suggesting that some may have found the question too difficult or sensitive to answer. This finding confirms that these women not only face legal and judicial challenges but also profound social isolation and condemnation. The community's perception of them as outcasts or pariahs adds an extra layer of punishment beyond their sentence. This is a critical factor in their lived experience and future prospects for rehabilitation.

5.1.10 Cultural Practices and Criminal Offenses

While the majority of respondents did not directly attribute their offenses to cultural practices, the minority who did offer specific examples that are significant to the study.

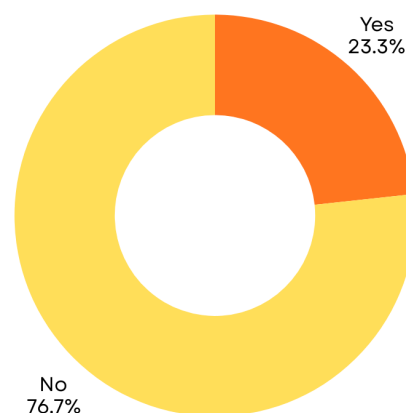


Figure 6: Inmates affected by cultural practices

Figure 6 above reveals that a minority of 23.3% (14) of the respondents said that cultural practices contributed to a woman's involvement in a capital offense. From qualitative Findings, the examples provided are powerful and include: "Economic status/poor economic status of women in marriages who are in abusive marriages." This highlights how a lack of financial independence, often a result of cultural norms, can trap women in dangerous situations. Infertility: "if the woman is unable to give birth to children." This points to the intense pressure on women to bear children, and the ostracization or abuse that can result from infertility. Patriarchal Systems: "inheritance of the husband property" and "staying married with domestic abuse." These responses suggest that patriarchal traditions can create conditions where a woman's livelihood and safety are entirely dependent on a system that may

fail to protect her.

Although the direct link between cultural practices and offenses was not widely reported, the specific examples given are highly relevant to the study. They reveal how systemic cultural norms can create the conditions for violence and desperation that may lead to a woman's involvement in a capital offense.

5.1.11 Impact of Cultural Practices on the Justice Process

Based on the provided data, the survey respondents hold mixed views on how religious and traditional beliefs affect the investigation and prosecution of women in capital offense cases.

Table 6: Effect of religious and traditional beliefs on investigation and Prosecution

How do religious or traditional beliefs affect the investigation and prosecution of women accused of capital offences?			
I am not sure	18	30.0	
Moderately affect the process	10	16.7	
No effect at all	8	13.3	
No Response	8	13.3	
Slightly affect the process	3	5.0	
Strongly affect the process and decisions	13	21.7	
Total	60	100.0	

Table 6 above shows a split in perceptions regarding the influence of religious and traditional beliefs on the legal process. A notable minority, 21.7% (13), believe that these beliefs strongly affect the process and decisions. This is the single largest affirmative response category. Another 21.7% (13) believe the effect is either moderate (16.7%) or slight (5.0%). Conversely, 13.3% of respondents believe there is no effect at all, and a significant 30% are not sure. The "Not sure" and "No Response" categories together account for a large portion of the data, suggesting that many women either don't know or cannot articulate the specific ways these beliefs impact their cases.

The finding that a substantial portion of women believe these beliefs strongly influence their prosecution is crucial. It suggests that factors beyond the law, such as cultural norms and religious interpretations, play

a role in their legal fate. The high number of "Not sure" responses could also indicate a lack of legal literacy or an inability to disentangle the legal process from the socio-cultural context in which it operates. This highlights a gap in understanding that can compromise a woman's ability to advocate for herself within the justice system.

5.1.12 Perceptions of Criminal Justice Handling

Based on the provided data, a significant portion of the respondents believe that cultural perceptions of women as non-violent do affect how their crimes are handled, with a notable minority feeling the effect is great.

Table 7: Cultural Perception of Criminal Justices Handling

Do cultural perceptions of women as non-violent affect how seriously their crimes are handled?			
I don't know	12	20.0	
No effect	13	21.7	
No Response	6	10.0	
Yes, greatly	16	26.7	
Yes, to some extent	13	21.7	
Total	60	100.0	

Table 7 above reveals that there's a strong belief among the surveyed women that gendered perceptions of non-violence influence their legal fate. A total of 48.4% of the respondents believe that cultural perceptions of women as non-violent affect how seriously their crimes are handled. This is split between those who believe it has a great effect (26.7%) and those who believe it has an effect to some extent (21.7%). The rest of the responses are divided among "no effect" (21.7%), "I don't know" (20%), and "no response" (10%). The high percentage of "I don't know" responses may indicate a lack of understanding of legal procedures, or an inability to perceive the subtle biases at play.

The finding that nearly half of the women surveyed believe their gender plays a role in how they are prosecuted is highly significant. This suggests a perception that the legal system is not gender-neutral and that the cultural stereotype of a non-violent woman can either work against them (e.g., if their crime is seen as a major deviance from the norm) or for them (e.g., if it leads to them being seen as less culpable).

The qualitative explanations further provide deeper insight into how these perceptions are understood by the women themselves. Some responses, such as “when women commit capital offences are punished strongly” and “it’s considered unacceptable,” suggest that when a woman acts in a way that contradicts her gender role as “non-violent,” the reaction from the community and legal system is one of shock and harsh punishment. Other responses, like “they believe that women should be weak” and “they believe women should take whatever happens without questions,” point to the pervasive belief that women are not supposed to be assertive or forceful. When they are, they are often seen as acting “abnormally,” as noted in the response “whenever they are violent, women are perceived as abnormal.”

These findings suggest a direct link between traditional expectations of female behavior and the justice system’s response. The data points to a reality where a woman’s crime is not just judged on its own merit but also through the lens of gendered stereotypes. This can create a unique set of challenges in the legal process, as the woman’s actions are often seen not just as criminal, but as a violation of deeply held cultural norms. This provides a clear avenue for further investigation into whether this cultural bias affects sentencing outcomes.

5.1.13 Perception of Victimization

Based on the data, a significant minority of the survey respondents believe they have observed cases where a woman accused of a capital offense was seen more as a victim of her circumstances than a criminal.

Table 8: Perception of women victimization

Have you observed any cases where the woman accused was seen more as a victim of her circumstances than a criminal?			
No	31	51.7	
Not sure	7	11.7	
Yes	22	36.7	
Total	60	100.0	

Table 8 above shows a split, with a notable portion of the women feeling that an accused woman’s circumstances are sometimes recognized as a mitigating factor. A total of 36.7% (22) of the women answered “Yes,” indicating they have observed cases where the accused woman was perceived as a victim. While a majority (51.7%) answered “No,” this finding

still points to a notable perception that not all women on death row are viewed as simply “criminals.”

While the qualitative responses provide context for these perceptions, highlighting themes of powerlessness and lack of agency. Responses like “accused for what they didn’t do,” and “Just like in my own case I had no person to defend me” speak directly to a sense of injustice and helplessness within the legal system. The data also points to cases where women were a part of a larger, often spousal, conflict, such as “There was a case of a husband and wife. The wife stabbed the husband.”

In short, the data suggests that within the prison community, there is an understanding that some women’s criminal actions are a direct result of their personal circumstances, such as abusive relationships or a lack of legal support. The high number of “No” responses may reflect a general feeling of being unfairly judged or a perception that the justice system rarely sees women through the lens of victimization. This is a critical finding for the study as it demonstrates that while legal and societal systems may label these women as criminals, their lived experiences and the observations of their peers often paint a more nuanced and tragic picture.

5.1.14 Cultural Norms and Sympathy

Based on the data, the influence of cultural norms on public and judicial sympathy is divided, while family support for women accused of capital offenses is highly varied. These findings highlight the complex social dynamics surrounding women on death row.

Table 9: Influence of Cultural Norms on Judicial and Public Sympathy

How do cultural norms around family/marriage roles influence judicial or public sympathy toward women on death row?			
Decrease sympathy significantly	14	23.3	
Decrease sympathy slightly	4	6.7	
Increase sympathy significantly	17	28.3	
Increase sympathy slightly	8	13.3	
No influence observed	11	18.3	
No Response	6	10.0	
Total	60	100.0	

Table 9 above shows a split in perception regarding how cultural norms around family and marriage roles influence sympathy toward women on death row. A combined 41.6% of respondents believe that these cultural norms increase sympathy, with 28.3% stating it increases sympathy “significantly” and 13.3% saying it increases sympathy “slightly.” Conversely, a combined 30% believe these norms decrease sympathy, with 23.3% stating a “significant decrease” and 6.7% a “slight decrease.”

The divided responses suggest a complex and contradictory public perception. On one hand, some women may be seen as victims of patriarchal norms, especially if their actions are perceived as a desperate response to an abusive marriage or unfulfilled family role. This could lead to an increase in sympathy. On the other hand, a woman who commits a capital offense is seen as a major violator of her expected role as a non-violent, nurturing individual, which can significantly decrease sympathy and lead to harsher judgment. This highlights the dual and often opposing views on women who deviate from societal expectations.

5.1.15 Family and Community Support

The data on family and community support shows a wide range of experiences, from strong support to complete hostility.

Table 10: Whether Family and Communities are supportive for women on Death Row

How supportive are families/communities toward women accused of capital offences? (During arrest/trial/conviction)		
Hostile	5	8.3
I don't know	10	16.7
Not supportive	15	25.0
Somewhat supportive	13	21.7
Very supportive	17	28.3
Total	60	100.0

Table 10 above shows that responses are spread across the spectrum. A notable portion of women (28.3%) reported having very supportive families, while another significant group (25.0%) reported that their families were not supportive. The remaining women experienced a level of support that was either “somewhat supportive” (21.7%) or “hostile” (8.3%). The high percentage of “not supportive” responses is

particularly striking.

Furthermore, qualitative insight provides the explanations in a crucial context. For those who reported support, the help was often practical, including financial assistance, securing legal representation for appeals, and most importantly, caring for their children. Conversely, those who lacked support spoke of being abandoned, blamed, and ostracized by their families and communities. The responses show that while some women have a crucial support system, many are left to “carry your cross alone,” a profound emotional burden that exacerbates the hardship of their incarceration. This data underscores that the experience of a woman on death row is not monolithic; it is deeply personal and dependent on the strength and resources of her family network.

5.1.16 Class and Gender Bias

Based on the data, the survey respondents’ perceptions of class and gender biases in the justice system are mixed. However, there’s a strong belief that certain cultural issues significantly increase women’s vulnerability to capital crimes and wrongful convictions.

Table 11: Class and Gender Bias Against Women on Death Row

Is there a difference in how lower class and upper class women accused of capital offences are treated?		
I don't know	6	10.0
No difference in treatment	31	51.7
Yes, lower class women are treated more harshly	21	35.0
Yes, upper class women are treated more harshly	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0
Do you think societal double standards affect sentencing or treatment of women compared to men?		
I don't know	10	16.7
No difference	25	41.7
Yes, women are judged more harshly	14	23.3
Yes, women are judged more leniently	11	18.3
Total	60	100.0

Table 11 above indicates responses on class and gender treatment with lack of consensus, suggesting complex and varied experiences within the justice system. While a majority (51.7%) of respondents believe there is no difference in how lower-class and upper-class women are treated, a significant 35% believe that lower-class women are treated more harshly. This finding is crucial, as it suggests a perception of class-based inequality within the justice system, where financial status can influence legal outcomes. Similarly, the views on gender-based double standards are also divided. A plurality (41.7%) believes there's no difference in treatment between men and women. However, the remaining responses are split between women being judged more harshly (23.3%) and more leniently (18.3%). This mixed perception may reflect individual experiences, with some women feeling their gender worked against them, while others feel it had no effect or a minimal positive effect.

5.1.17 Cultural Vulnerabilities

The data on cultural issues provides a clear consensus on the factors that make women more susceptible to capital crimes or wrongful convictions. The most frequently selected cultural issues are not isolated but rather form a chain of vulnerabilities. The responses highlight the combined impact of low educational attainment, child marriage, economic dependency, cultural obedience norms, and male-dominated judicial systems. This indicates that women's vulnerability is a multifaceted issue rooted in systemic inequalities. For example, a woman with low education and economic dependency may be forced into an abusive marriage (child marriage), where cultural norms of obedience prevent her from seeking help, leaving her with no agency in a male-dominated legal system.

This data is critical to the study's objective. It moves beyond individual blame to show how societal and cultural structures can trap women in circumstances that increase their risk of being involved in a capital offense or being wrongly convicted. The acknowledgment of a male-dominated judicial system as a contributing factor is especially significant, as it points to a lack of fairness and a systemic bias against women within the legal process.

5.1.18 Cultural/Community Challenges

The data shows a consensus that investigators face a range of interconnected issues that hinder their work. The most frequently selected factors are: community resistance to police questioning, which indicates a lack of trust in the police or a desire to protect the suspect; cultural taboos around discussing crime because in many cultures, issues of crime, especially involving women, are considered private matters and not to be discussed openly with outsiders; lack of cooperation due to stigma because the community's negative perception of women accused of capital offenses (as noted in previous data) leads to a reluctance to cooperate with investigators; and threats or intimidation from families. This is a particularly serious issue, as it suggests that investigators may be intimidated by the family or community of the accused, which can compromise the integrity of the investigation. The fact that many respondents selected a combination of these factors highlights that the challenges are not isolated but rather form a complex web of cultural and social barriers.

Overall, this data is crucial for understanding the potential for wrongful convictions or flawed investigations in cases involving women. The responses from the inmates suggest a breakdown in the investigative process due to external, socio-cultural pressures. When investigators face resistance, taboos, and intimidation, they may resort to less thorough methods or rely on incomplete information, which could lead to unjust outcomes. This analysis supports your study's objective of examining how socio-cultural factors affect access to justice, as it shows that a woman's journey to death row can begin with a biased or compromised investigation, influenced by the very community she comes from.

5.1.19 Perceived Impact of a Male-Dominated System

Based on the data, a significant portion of the women on death row believe that the male-dominated criminal justice system has a notable influence on their journey.

Table 12: Perception of Male Dominated Criminal Justice System

What is the impact of the male dominated system on your journey so far in the Criminal justice system?			
High influence	15	25.0	
I don't know	19	31.0	
Little or no influence	11	18.3	
Moderate influence	7	11.7	
Very high influence	8	13.3	
Total	60	100.0	

Table 12 above shows a variety of perceptions regarding the influence of a male-dominated system, with a substantial number of women feeling its effect is strong. A combined 38.3% of respondents (25% “high influence” and 13.3% “very high influence”) believe that the male-dominated system has a significant impact on their experience. Another 11.7% see it as a “moderate influence.” This indicates that for a substantial portion of the women, gender inequality in the justice system is a felt reality. Conversely, 18.3% of the women believe there was “little or no influence,” while a large group (31%) answered “I don’t know.” The high number of “I don’t know” responses may suggest that some women are either unaware of the systemic gender biases or are unable to articulate their experiences in that context. This could be due to a lack of legal literacy or a feeling of powerlessness within the system.

In fact, the finding that over a third of the respondents feel that the male-dominated system has a strong or very strong influence on their legal journey is a critical point for the study. This perception points to a fundamental issue of access to justice. A system composed primarily of men in positions of power—judges, lawyers, and police—may not fully understand or account for the unique socio-cultural and economic factors that lead to women’s involvement in capital offenses.

The data suggests a possible disconnect between a woman’s lived experience of abuse, coercion, or economic vulnerability and the legal framework used to prosecute her. This could lead to a lack of gender-specific considerations in legal proceedings and sentencing, potentially resulting in harsher outcomes for women. This finding supports the study’s objective of highlighting the unique impact of the death penalty on women and how gender biases within the legal system may affect their fate.

5.1.20 Offense and Legal Awareness

Based on the provided data, a significant majority of the female inmates on death row were convicted of offenses involving violence, particularly murder. The analysis also reveals a stark lack of legal awareness among the respondents and a widespread perception that the law is not fair to women. The circumstances of their crimes are often rooted in personal conflicts, economic pressures, or are the result of alleged wrongful accusations.

The offenses for which the women were convicted are primarily crimes of violence, and most of the respondents had a limited understanding of the legal charges against them. The most common offenses were murder, culpable homicide, and child trafficking/kidnapping. The list includes specific cases like “I was accused of killing my step son” and “My husband brother wife provoke me.” The prevalence of these offenses suggests that women on death row are not just accessories to crimes but are convicted of directly causing harm to others.

Table 13: Legal Awareness of Female Inmates on Death Row

Are you aware of the criminal law under which you were charged?			
No	45	75.0	
Yes	15	25.0	
Total	60	100.0	
Do you consider that law is fair to women?			
No	51	85.0	
Yes	9	15.0	
Total	60	100.0	

However, in terms of lack of legal awareness, Table 13 above shows a striking 75% (45) of the women were not aware of the specific criminal law under which they were charged. This is a crucial finding, as it points to a significant deficit in legal literacy and a potential inability to effectively participate in their own defense. While a perception of unfairness shows an overwhelming majority, 85% (51) of the women, believe that the law is not fair to women. This perception, combined with their lack of legal knowledge, suggests a deep-seated feeling of powerlessness and injustice within the legal system.

5.1.21 Circumstances of the Offense

The qualitative data on the circumstances of the offenses reveals a complex mix of personal conflict, external pressures, and alleged wrongful convictions. A large number of responses describe the offenses as a result of domestic violence, spousal infidelity, family disputes, and co-wife conflicts. This directly links their crimes to a lack of autonomy, abuse, and patriarchal family structures. For example, one woman recounts how she fought with a woman she found her husband with, who later died, and her husband “told them I kill her.”

Moreover, several women describe their actions as accidental or the result of provocation. One woman states she “stabbed her by mistake” during a fight over land, while another claims to have killed her husband by pushing him during a fight on a farm. Incidentally, many women claim they were wrongly accused, stating, “I didn’t commit the offense,” or were implicated due to someone else’s actions. Responses like, “My boyfriend implicated me for robbery,” or “My friend brought a child to my beer Parlour...and I was arrested instead” highlight themes of manipulation, lack of legal representation, and being in the wrong place at the wrong time. This data is critical to the study’s objective of understanding the unique paths of women to a death sentence, which are often shaped by their relationships and socio-economic vulnerability. While some responses specifically mention a lack of due process, such as, “I was not asked to give evidence or statement,” which directly points to systemic failures in the justice system.

5.1.22 Trial Transparency and Understanding

Based on the data, a significant majority of the female inmates on death row have a negative perception of their trial process, citing a lack of transparency and understanding. While most had legal representation, a large number of those who could not afford a lawyer were not provided with one by the government. This highlights a critical issue of access to justice for this vulnerable population.

Table 14: Perception of Transparency and Understanding of Trial

Do you consider your trial process transparent?			
	No	34	56.7
	Yes	26	43.3
	Total	60	100.0
Did you understand the process of investigation and trial that led to your conviction?			
	No	37	61.7
	Yes	23	38.3
	Total	60	100.0

Table 14 shows a majority of the women surveyed believe their trial process was not transparent and that they did not understand the legal proceedings. More than half (56.7% or 34) of the respondents said their trial process was not transparent. This perception of opacity can erode trust in the justice system and lead to a feeling of being unfairly judged. In the same vain, an even greater number, 61.7% (37), said they did not understand the investigation and trial process. This lack of comprehension is a major barrier to a fair trial, as a defendant cannot effectively participate in a process they do not understand.

5.1.23 Legal Representation

The data reveals a concerning trend regarding legal aid for those who cannot afford it.

Table 15: Access to Legal Representation by Female Inmates on Death Row

Were you able to provide your own legal representative during your trial?			
	No	20	33.3
	Yes	40	66.7
	Total	60	100.0
If you were unable to provide your own lawyer, were you offered one by the government?			
Valid	No	25	62.5
	Yes	15	37.5
	Total	40	100.0

Table 15 above shows, while 66.7% (40) of the women were able to provide their own legal representative, a third of the respondents (33.3%) were not. For the women who could not afford a lawyer, a staggering 62.5% (25) were not offered one by the government. This finding is a strong indicator of a systemic failure

to provide legal aid, which is a fundamental right to a fair trial.

5.1.24 Timing of Legal Representation



The data on when legal representation was secured further highlights the potential for flawed proceedings in terms of late intervention. The most common time a lawyer was retained was during the trial itself (36.7%), followed by during remand at the magistrate court (26.7%). Only a small portion of women (28.3%) had legal representation at the crucial early stage of police detention and investigation. The combined total of women who received legal representation after initial police investigation is 71.7%.

It is most likely that the lack of early legal representation can have devastating consequences. The initial stages of an investigation are when key evidence is collected and statements are made, and without a lawyer present, an accused person is vulnerable to coercion or may not know their rights. The data suggests that many of these women were already at a legal disadvantage before their trial even began. This is a critical point for understanding how the legal system may fail to protect the most vulnerable.

5.1.25 Torture in the Justice Process

Based on the data, a significant majority of the female inmates on death row have been subjected to torture, and the criminal justice system has largely failed to address their mental health.

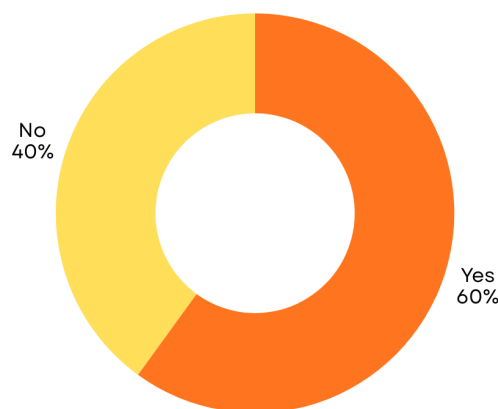


Figure 7: Distribution of Inmates with Tortured Experiences

Figure 7 above reveals a shocking and widespread issue within the Nigerian criminal justice system. A large majority of respondents, 60% (36), reported being subjected to some form of torture. This is a critical finding that points to a serious human rights violation. Furthermore, the qualitative responses describe a range of brutal and dehumanizing acts, including severe beating, threats, hunger, and physical abuse with objects like a “knife” or “matches.” Some responses specifically mention police officers as the perpetrators, citing reasons like the inability to pay a bribe. This underscores the potential for corruption and violence in police custody.

This data directly contradicts the principles of a fair and just legal process. Torture can coerce confessions, compromise evidence, and severely impact a person’s physical and mental health. This finding is crucial for the study, as it suggests that the path to a death sentence for many of these women may have begun with a violation of their fundamental human rights serious enough to cast a negative shadow on the justice of their conviction considering that evidence obtained through torture is not admissible by law and cannot be relied upon by the court for conviction.

5.1.26 Mental Health and Psychological Assessment

The survey results indicate a significant lack of mental and psychological support within the justice system.

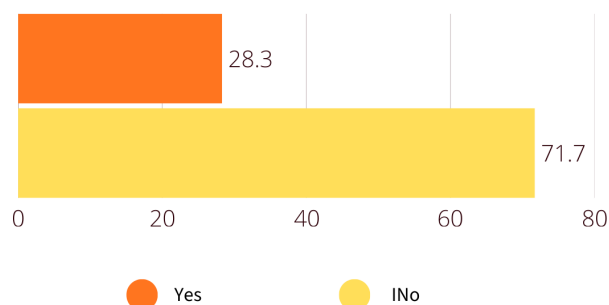


Figure 8: Distribution of female inmates subjected to mental psychological assessment

Figure 8 shows a staggering 71.7% (43) of the women were not subjected to any form of mental or psychological assessment during their investigation and trial. Even for those who were assessed, the results were overwhelmingly disregarded by the court. Only 13.3% of the total respondents stated that the results of the assessment were taken into consideration during their sentencing.

The failure of the justice system to conduct and consider mental health assessments is a major concern. It implies that judges and investigators are not taking into account potential factors like trauma, abuse, or psychological distress when determining guilt or sentencing. This is a critical gap in the justice system, especially given that many of these women have a documented history of gender-based violence. The legal system's failure to consider their mental state suggests that these women are being judged solely on their alleged crime, with no regard for the mitigating circumstances of their lives.

5.1.27 Sentence Given and Perceptions of Justice

Based on the provided data, all surveyed inmates were given death sentences. A significant majority believe their sentence was unjustified, and they express a strong desire for alternative, non-capital punishments.

The data shows that all surveyed women are on

death row, yet a majority feel their sentences are not proportional to their crimes given their circumstances. The qualitative responses confirm that all respondents received a death sentence, described using various terms such as "Death by hanging," "Condemned to death," and "Death penalty." This confirms their status as women on death row.

Table 16: Perception of Justification of Sentencing

How best can you describe the sentencing you received considering the circumstance under which the offence was committed?

I don't Know	17	28.4
Justified	6	10.0
Not justified	37	61.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 16 shows a striking 61.7% (37) of the women believe their sentence was "not justified." Only a small minority (10%) felt their sentence was justified. This finding is critical as it highlights a widespread perception of injustice and a lack of proportionality between the crime and the punishment.

5.1.28 Desired Alternative Sentencing

The women's responses on alternative sentencing provide crucial insight into what they believe would have been a fairer outcome. The most common alternative punishments mentioned are "discharged and acquitted," "imprisonment for a term of years," and "rehabilitation." Many women suggested specific short-term sentences, ranging from 2 to 15 years, indicating a belief that their actions warranted punishment but not the ultimate penalty.

In sum, the data shows that the women are not necessarily seeking to be absolved of responsibility for their actions. Instead, they are advocating for a system that considers mitigating circumstances and offers alternative forms of justice. The data also highlights the effect of mandatory punishment for especially offences that are capital in nature because the Judge is not allowed the opportunity to exercise his discretionary powers in determining each case according to its peculiar circumstances because the discretionary powers have been legislated away. The strong desire for non-capital sentences such as rehabilitation and imprisonment for a term of years is consistent with a growing global movement to abolish the death penalty and replace it with more humane

and rehabilitative alternatives. This information is vital to the study as it provides a voice to the women who are directly impacted by Nigeria's capital punishment laws, highlighting their desire for a more just and proportional legal system.

5.1.29 Time on Death Row

Based on the provided data, a significant majority of the female inmates on death row have been incarcerated for over five years, believe that the death penalty affects women differently than men, and perceive the legal system as unfair and biased.

Table 17: Period Spent by Female Inmates on Death Row

How long have you been on death row?		
1 year – 3 years	13	21.7
Above 3 years – less than 5 years	16	26.7
Above 5 years	25	41.7
Less than 1 year	6	10.0
Total	60	100.0
Do you think the death penalty affects women differently than men?		
I don't know	2	3.3
No	16	26.7
Yes	42	70.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 17 shows that a large proportion of the surveyed women have been on death row for a prolonged period. A combined 68.4% of respondents have been on death row for three years or more, with the largest group, 41.7%, having been incarcerated for over five years. This finding underscores the reality of long-term incarceration and the psychological toll of living under a death sentence for an extended period. The extended stay on death row, often referred to as “death row phenomenon,” is considered by many human rights organizations to constitute a form of cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment, a critical factor for your study. In terms of the unique impact of the Death Penalty on women, the data strongly suggests that the surveyed women believe the death penalty affects them in a way that is unique to their gender. A large majority, 70% (42) of the women, answered “Yes” to the question of whether the death penalty affects women differently than men.

The qualitative explanations are centered on their roles as mothers and caregivers. The provide themes

such as: Separation from Children: “Our children need mother care,” “I have my children to think of,” “I left my children all alone.” Emotional and Biological Differences: “women are soft hearted,” “women are prone to infection and disease,” “women are quite emotional.” Trauma and Harm: The women who could answer the question on trauma overwhelmingly pointed to the inability to tend to their children as the primary harm.

The women's responses highlight that for them, a death sentence is not just about their life but about their identity as mothers. The profound psychological and emotional burden of being separated from their children and knowing they can't care for them is a unique form of punishment not typically experienced by men. This finding directly supports the study's objective of understanding the unique impact of the death penalty on women.

Case Study: Agnes

Agnes has been incarcerated at Suleja Custodial Centre since 1998, spending 28 years in custody following a homicide conviction. Before her incarceration, she had no formal education and struggled to survive, engaging in informal means to make ends meet. During a period of vulnerability, she was introduced to drugs, which compounded the challenges she already faced and contributed to a trajectory that ultimately led to her conviction.

While in prison, Agnes has taken steps toward transformation. She learned tailoring through vocational programs and has consistently maintained a good record. Engaging in this craft has provided her not only with practical skills but also with a sense of purpose, discipline, and hope. She reflects that her time in detention has been a period of personal growth, allowing her to reconsider her past choices and chart a new path for the future.

Agnes looks forward to the possibility of being pardoned and reintegrating into society, where she hopes to continue her tailoring work and build a stable, independent

life. Her story highlights the importance of rehabilitation programs, access to vocational training, and support systems that address the specific needs of women in custodial settings. It demonstrates that with structured opportunities and guidance, women who have faced educational deprivation, early vulnerability, and exposure to drugs can regain agency, skills, and hope for meaningful reintegration.

5.1.30 Perceptions of Fairness and Wrongful Conviction

The data reveals a deep-seated feeling among the women that the justice system is not fair and may be biased against them.

Table 18: Perception of Whether Death Penalty is Fairly Applied

From your personal experience do you believe the death penalty is applied fairly and without bias?			
I don't know	6	10.0	
Not fair	33	55.0	
Yes, it is fair	21	35.0	
Total	60	100.0	
Do you believe that women are more likely to be wrongly convicted or sentenced to death due to biases in the justice system?			
I don't know	8	13.4	
No	26	43.3	
Yes	26	43.3	
Total	60	100.0	

Table 18 shows a majority of the women, 55%, believe the death penalty is "Not fair." The reasons provided include a lack of proper investigation and the belief that the sentence is too harsh for the crime. Similarly, the perception of wrongful convictions is split. While 43.3% believe women are more likely to be wrongly convicted due to bias, an equal number of respondents disagree.

However, the qualitative explanations from those who believe wrongful convictions are more likely point to societal norms, such as the expectation for women to obey and the lack of financial resources. Equally, the women's responses on how society views them are overwhelmingly negative. They believe they are seen as "bad mother, wife and women," "outcast," and "bad

people" who "don't deserve mercy." This perception reinforces the idea that their punishment is not just legal but also social, rooted in a judgment that they have failed to live up to societal expectations of femininity.

5.1.31 Belief in Rehabilitation

Based on the responses, a significant majority of the female inmates on death row believe that rehabilitation is possible, advocating for alternative sentences and systemic changes to address the root causes of women's criminal behavior. The belief in the possibility of rehabilitation is a powerful and unifying theme among the respondents.

Table 19: Perception of Possibility of Rehabilitation for Women on Death Row

Do you think rehabilitation is possible for women who have committed crimes punishable by death?			
No	11	18.3	
Yes	49	81.7	
Total	60	100.0	

Table 19 shows an overwhelming optimism as a large majority, 81.7% (49), believe that rehabilitation is possible for women on death row. This high percentage shows a strong collective belief in human change and redemption. The explanations for this belief center on the idea that everyone is capable of change. Respondents mention that "learning is an everyday process" and that they have already changed their behavior, citing their participation in vocational skills programs as proof. This indicates that their belief in rehabilitation is not merely theoretical but is grounded in their personal experiences of transformation within the correctional facility.

5.1.32 Alternative Sentencing and Justice

The women's suggestions for alternative sentences and reforms to the justice system are pragmatic and focus on proportionality, social support, and addressing systemic issues. The most common alternatives to the death penalty are short-term imprisonment (ranging from "a few years" to "5 years") and pardon. This shows a desire for punishment that is not final but rather offers a second chance. They also identify a wide range of root causes that the justice system should address. The most frequently cited suggestions include: Pardon for women on death row: This is a direct appeal for mercy and clemency; Provision of

social intervention/welfare: This highlights the need for social safety nets to address poverty and other forms of vulnerability; Elimination of the death penalty: This is a call for a fundamental reform of the justice system itself; and Promotion of equal opportunity for all genders/classes: This acknowledges the role of societal inequality in their criminal behavior.

Overall, the data shows that these women do not see themselves as irredeemable. They believe that their crimes are a result of a complex interplay of personal circumstances, socio-cultural pressures, and a flawed legal system. Their recommendations for alternative sentences and systemic reforms demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the root causes of their situation and offer a clear path forward for a more just and humane approach to criminal justice.

5.1.33 Contact with Relatives

Based on the provided data, a significant majority of the female inmates on death row have been able to contact their relatives upon arrival at the correctional facility. However, the ease and frequency of this contact vary, and the most common theme is a reliance on the prison welfare system, which can be costly and limited.

Table 20: Female Inmates on Death Row and Contact with Relatives

When you arrived at the correctional facility, were you able to contact your relatives?			
No	9	15.0	
Yes	51	85.0	
Total	60	100.0	
Have you ever been prohibited from contacting members of your family?			
No	50	83.3	
Yes	10	16.7	
Total	60	100.0	

Table 20 shows that most inmates were able to contact their families, but a closer look reveals that this process is not always smooth. The majority (85%) of the women were able to contact their relatives upon arrival. This indicates that the prison system generally allows for this initial contact. While the majority of women have not been prohibited from contacting their families, a notable 16.7% have been.

The qualitative responses show that while some women find it “very easy” to contact their families, others find it “not easy” due to issues like lack of

personal phones, distance, and the high cost of using prison phones. The most frequently mentioned method of communication is through the “welfare office” or “welfare phone,” suggesting that inmates’ access to communication is largely controlled and mediated by the facility.

The frequency and quality of family visits vary widely, with a recurring theme of emotional distress and financial burden. The frequency of visits ranges from weekly to “every six months” or “never.” Many women’s families visit “once in a while” or “not often” due to financial constraints and distance. The emotional toll of these visits is evident, with some women mentioning that their relatives “usually cry to see me here.” Interestingly, a majority of the women who were caregivers to children prior to their incarceration were able to make arrangements for them, primarily through relatives. The responses indicate that sisters and parents often take on the responsibility of care. However, one response points to a child being placed in an orphanage, highlighting the devastating impact of a mother’s incarceration on her children’s well-being.

This data is critical to understanding the lived experiences and challenges of these women. While the prison system provides some avenues for communication, they are often insufficient or costly, placing an additional burden on the women and their families. The findings confirm that the death penalty’s impact extends far beyond the individual to create a ripple effect of emotional and financial strain on the entire family unit. The women’s concerns about their children’s welfare (as noted in earlier data) are directly tied to these challenges in maintaining contact and ensuring their care.

5.1.34 Proximity to Home and Family Contact

Based on the data, the location of the correctional centers is often far from the inmates’ homes, posing a barrier to family contact. While most inmates have their hygiene needs met, this is largely dependent on NGOs, family, and charity. Access to healthcare and education is limited, but vocational training is widely available, which is seen by the women as a key part of their rehabilitation.

The data indicates a significant geographical distance between the correctional facilities and the inmates’ homes, which is a major obstacle to family relationships. The responses show a wide range of distances, from a few kilometers to locations “very far”

and in different states like Ebonyi, Owerri, and Cross River. Several women mention that their homes are a “four hours journey” or that they are from “another state.” This geographical barrier makes family visits difficult and costly.

This finding underscores the profound social and emotional isolation experienced by the women. The distance, coupled with the financial burden of travel (as noted in previous data), places a severe strain on family relationships, which are a vital source of support for these women.

5.1.35 Hygiene, Health, and Well-being

The data on hygiene and healthcare reveals a reliance on external support and a lack of access to critical medical services. While most women report that their hygiene needs are met, the qualitative data shows that this is primarily due to the efforts of NGOs, families, and churches. The prison administration, as a sole provider, is rarely mentioned, suggesting a systemic shortfall in the provision of basic necessities.

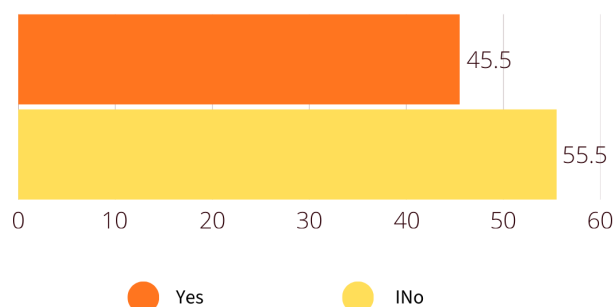


Figure 9: Distribution of female inmates who had screening in custody

Still, Figure 9 shows a significant 55% of the women have not received any health care screenings, and only a minority have access to mental health care, even though a number of women have mentioned suffering from psychological issues. The reliance on charity for basic needs and the lack of comprehensive healthcare, particularly mental health services, highlights the severe neglect these women face. This is particularly concerning given the trauma they have endured prior to and during incarceration. The lack of mental health care is a major gap in the system and directly impacts their well-being on death row.

5.1.36 Education and Vocational Training

The data shows a strong emphasis on vocational training within the correctional facilities, which the inmates view as a crucial part of their rehabilitation. An overwhelming majority (83.3%) of the women have access to educational and/or vocational activities. The qualitative responses show a wide variety of skills being taught, including tailoring, bead making, catering, and hairdressing. Several women also mention having access to formal education through the National Open University (NOUN).

The women’s embrace of these vocational activities and their belief in rehabilitation (as shown in previous data) indicates that they are not just serving time but are actively seeking personal and professional transformation. They see these skills as a way to “stand on my own” if they are released, which is a powerful message of hope and resilience in the face of a death sentence. The provision of these activities is a positive aspect of the correctional system, but the data on health and legal access suggests that these programs are not enough to address the full scope of challenges the women face.

5.1.37 Perceptions of the Death Penalty as a Tool of Patriarchal Control

Based on the provided data, a significant portion of the women on death row do not directly see the death penalty as a form of patriarchal control. However, their qualitative responses reveal an understanding of how their gender influences their experiences with the justice system, including their vulnerability to trauma and their perception of unfairness. While most women do not label the death penalty as a form of “patriarchal control,” their explanations point to its gendered impact.

Table 21: Perceptions of Death Penalty as a Tool of Patriarchal Control

Do you think the death penalty is a form of patriarchal control over women's bodies and lives?		
No	42	70.0
Yes	18	30.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 21 above shows that a majority, 70%, answered “No” to the question of whether the death penalty is a form of patriarchal control. This may be due to a lack of familiarity with the term or a perception that the law is a neutral entity. Despite the “No” response, the qualitative explanations offer a more nuanced perspective. Responses like “it is just oppressive to women” and “they are treating women badly” indicate a clear perception of gender-based injustice. The response, “it gives a man a way out,” points to a belief that the system is more lenient on men, while “women should be protected” suggests a sense of a societal and legal failure to do so. This reveals that while the women may not use the specific term “patriarchal control,” they understand its effects on their lives.

5.1.38 Gender Bias and Wrongful Convictions

The data shows a strong perception among the women that their gender makes them more vulnerable to injustice.

Table 22: Whether women are likely to be wrongly convicted due to bias

Do you believe that women are more likely to be wrongly convicted or sentenced to death due to biases in the justice system?			
No	38	63.3	
Yes	22	36.7	
Total	60	100.0	

Table 22 shows a notable 36.7% of the women believe they are more likely to be wrongly convicted or sentenced to death due to justice system biases. While a majority (63.3%) do not, the reasons for the “yes” responses are particularly insightful. While the qualitative explanations point to a feeling that the justice system can be “biased towards women.” This perception is rooted in their experiences with a system that may not adequately have considered the socio-cultural factors that contributed to their criminal behavior.

5.1.39 The Death Penalty’s Impact on Gender Roles

The data also reveals how the death penalty both reinforces and challenges traditional gender roles. Most of the qualitative explanations for the death penalty’s effect on gender roles highlight the belief that “women are less aggressive than men” and are

“socialized to be nurturing and submissive.” When a woman commits a capital offense, her actions are seen as a severe violation of these roles, leading to societal condemnation and stigma. One respondent notes that the death penalty “stigmatizes women,” which is seen as “not good.” Moreover, the responses on trauma and harm are particularly poignant. The most common themes are fear, depression, and a loss of sanity. The women describe their experience as a constant state of anxiety and overthinking, and for those with children, the “fact that I am not able to see my child is traumatic.” This emotional and psychological burden is linked to their roles as mothers and caregivers.

Therefore, this data demonstrates that the death penalty, regardless of whether it is explicitly labeled as patriarchal, operates within a system of gendered expectations. By punishing women who deviate from traditional roles, it perpetuates stereotypes while simultaneously inflicting unique forms of emotional and psychological harm. This is a critical finding that aligns with the study’s objective of examining the unique impact of the death penalty on women’s lives.

5.1.40 Alternative Sentencing

Based on the data, the female inmates on death row have a strong belief in rehabilitation over punishment and advocate for systemic reforms that address the root causes of women’s criminal behavior. The women’s responses show a clear preference for alternative sentences that do not involve the death penalty, focusing instead on reform and reintegration. The most common alternative punishments mentioned are “imprisonment for a term of years” and “rehabilitation.” Many women suggested specific short-term sentences, such as 5 to 10 years, and some even mentioned “pardon” and “restorative justice.” This shows a strong desire for a legal system that is not solely punitive but also offers a chance for change and a return to society.

This data is critical because it demonstrates that the inmates do not see their actions as a reason to be condemned to death. Instead, they believe their crimes could be addressed through a proportional, time-bound punishment that focuses on genuine change.

5.1.41 Addressing Root Causes of Crime

The inmates' responses on how to address the root causes of crime reveal a sophisticated understanding of their own vulnerabilities and the systemic issues that led to their incarceration. The most frequently mentioned solutions revolve around socio-economic empowerment. The women advocate for "free education," "job opportunities," and a focus on poverty alleviation as a way to prevent women from getting involved in criminal activities. They also suggest a more fundamental change in the legal system, calling for "honest and fair" investigations and "gender-responsive programs" that are tailored to the specific needs of women.

Thus, the women's insights go beyond simple punitive measures. They propose a holistic approach that tackles the interconnected issues of poverty, lack of education, and gender inequality, highlighting the need for a justice system that is not just reactive but also preventive.

5.1.42 Life After Release

The women's ideas for post-release programs show a pragmatic focus on skill-building and social support to prevent recidivism. The most common suggestion is "vocational training," with specific skills like tailoring, knitting, and baking being mentioned. The inmates see these skills as a way to gain financial independence and avoid a life of crime due to poverty. They also advocate for a comprehensive approach that includes "psychosocial support," "behavioral therapy," and "government assistance" after release. This demonstrates their understanding that overcoming the psychological trauma of their past and the challenges of reintegration requires more than just a learned skill.

Succinctly, the responses suggest that for these women, a life after prison is not just about avoiding crime but about finding a way to rebuild their lives and contribute to society. They see a reformed justice system as one that helps them get back on their feet, not just one that punishes them.

5.1.43 Prevention Over Punishment

The women's views on societal prevention methods are powerful and well-articulated, calling for fundamental changes in social norms. The most

common suggestions are "reduction of gender discrimination" and "equal opportunity." This shows a deep awareness that social inequalities can drive women into desperate circumstances. They also call for "societal re-orientation" and "robust literacy" to address cultural issues at their root. They believe that changing societal attitudes and empowering women through education can reduce crime and the need for severe punishments.

Clearly, the data shows that the inmates are not just thinking about their own situation but are proposing a broader societal transformation. Their insights are invaluable to the study's objective of understanding how to create a more just and equitable system that prevents, rather than just punishes crime among women.

5.1.44 Key Recommendations for the Justice System

Based on the data, the female inmates on death row have several key recommendations for policymakers and justice system stakeholders, which are directly tied to the themes of unfair trials, lack of legal representation, and the need for a more humane approach to justice.

The women's recommendations focus on fundamental reforms to the criminal justice process, emphasizing fairness, mercy, and proportionality. The most common recommendation is for "proper investigation" before sentencing. The women call for honesty and fairness, with specific mention of judges not relying solely on police testimony. This directly addresses the perception of a flawed legal process where statements are fabricated, especially when bribes are not paid. They repeatedly ask for mercy, imploring stakeholders to "temper justice with mercy" and to "have the fear of God." This highlights a desire for compassion from the legal system, especially for those who feel their sentences were not justified.

Similarly, several responses directly call for judicial staff to "stop taking bribe" and to "be helpful in addressing the system." This points to a perceived culture of corruption that prevents justice from being served. The women also advocate for a shift away from the death penalty towards "a lesser penalty" and "rehabilitation." This reinforces their belief that they can change and contribute to society if given the chance.

5.1.45 Using Research for Advocacy

The women have a clear vision of how this research can be used to advocate for change and support their plight. The most powerful theme is the idea of using the research to “speak on our behalf” and to “help the women that cry for justice.” The inmates see this study as a vehicle to communicate their suffering and experiences to stakeholders who can effect change. They also believe the research can be used to create “awareness” and combat the “stigma” around women on death row. They hope the findings will make people realize that not all inmates are guilty and that a proper investigation is crucial to prevent wrongful convictions.

Finally, the women see the research as a tool to pressure the government to “look into the affairs of inmates,” provide social welfare, and “eliminate the death penalty.” They hope that by shedding light on the root causes of their criminal behavior such as poverty, lack of education, and gender discrimination the justice system will be compelled to change its approach from a punitive one to a rehabilitative one.

5.2.1 Qualitative Insights: Responses from NGOs, State Counsel, Defense Lawyers,

This section presents the findings of key informant interviews with NGOs, state counsel, defense lawyers, and other justice actors, aimed at understanding the lived experiences of women on death row in Nigeria. The discussion is organised thematically to highlight patterns across respondents, while the conclusion and policy implications draw broader lessons for justice reform and abolitionist advocacy.

5.2.2 Profile of Respondents of KIIs

The respondents for the key informant interviews were professionals with legal backgrounds, working in various organizations related to law and human rights. Their profiles provide a blend of gender, age, and experience from both government and non-governmental sectors. The group is diverse, with a balanced mix of both male and female respondents. The age of the respondents range from 35 to 59, with one person’s age not specified. Their professional experience is substantial, spanning from as little as 9 months to as much as 28 years, indicating a wide range of career stages and perspectives.

All respondents have a legal background, with the minimum qualification being an LL.B/B.L (Bachelor of Laws/Barrister at Law). Several also hold an LL.M (Master of Laws), and one has a general Masters Degree.

Additionally, the respondents are from a variety of organizations, including Legal Aid Council of Nigeria (LACON) and Human Rights protection focused NGOs and INGO like The Inclusion Project, Hope Behind Bars Africa, ASF France in Nigeria and LEDAP, as well as a government body, the State Judiciary. This mix of backgrounds is crucial for a study on the justice system, as it provides both civil society and government perspectives. The interviews were conducted in key locations across Nigeria, including Lagos, Imo, FCT, and Zamfara, providing a geographically diverse sample. This blend of perspectives from different genders, levels of experience, and sectors (NGOs and government) is valuable for the study, as it ensures a comprehensive and well-rounded analysis of the legal and socio-cultural factors influencing women on death row.

5.2.3 Access to Justice and Legal Representation

A consistent finding is the limited access to quality legal representation for women facing capital charges. Poverty and illiteracy prevent many from hiring competent counsel. NGOs frequently reported that “many women cannot afford legal representation, and they only get support when NGOs intervene” (NGO respondent, Abuja).

Another barrier is the delay in judicial processes. Respondents described “lengthy delays due to backlogs and inefficient court administration,” which not only prolong incarceration but also worsen psychological distress. A state counsel reflected: “Most of the delays we face are not from the women themselves but from systemic bottlenecks — adjournments, investigations dragging for months, or lack of evidence properly presented” (State Counsel, Zamfara).

5.2.4 Legal Frameworks, Gender Bias, and Evidentiary Rules

Respondents highlighted the discriminatory application of legal frameworks. Under certain Sharia provisions, pregnancy can serve as evidence of Zinah for women, while men require four witnesses. One legal practitioner explained: “It is a situation where

the law itself becomes biased. A man can deny, but a woman's body becomes her evidence" (Defence Lawyer, Kano).

The failure to account for histories of abuse and trauma was another concern. NGOs stressed that many women sentenced to death were survivors of domestic violence. "I know women who were killed after years of abuse, but when the court looks at the case, none of that background is considered" (NGO respondent, Lagos). Without gender-sensitive sentencing guidelines, judges rely on rigid laws, resulting in inconsistent outcomes (Amnesty International, 2022).

5.2.5 Detention Conditions and Custodial Needs

Conditions in correctional facilities were widely described as harsh and neglectful of gender-specific needs. Women lack menstrual products, reproductive healthcare, and adequate childcare support. "Some of them are caring for infants while being shackled. Even pads are not provided; they depend on family or NGOs" (Correctional Officer, Abuja).

Psychosocial services remain minimal. NGOs explained: "We sometimes refer them to hospitals outside, but inside the prison, there is no mental health specialist dedicated to these women" (NGO respondent, Enugu).

Restricted access also hampers support. As one organisation noted: "We cannot enter correctional centres as often as needed. Sometimes the process of permission itself becomes an obstacle" (NGO respondent, Abuja).

5.2.6 Mental Health, Trauma, and Pathways to Offending

The interviews confirmed that gender-based violence and trauma are major pathways into capital offences. "One client killed her husband after years of beating. It was survival, not malice" (Defence Lawyer, Kaduna). Such contexts are often ignored in court, despite their central role in women's cases.

Mental illness was also raised, including postpartum psychosis. A state counsel shared: "We once discussed cases like Andrea Yates abroad — postpartum psychosis. We have similar realities here, but our courts don't recognise them properly" (State Counsel, Abuja).

The psychological toll of death row was repeatedly

emphasised. "They live every day as if tomorrow could be their last. Anxiety, nightmares, depression — it is constant" (NGO respondent, Lagos).

5.2.7 Rehabilitation, Reintegration, and Alternatives to Capital Punishment

Many respondents argued that rehabilitation is both possible and necessary. "We run vocational training for women. Even those convicted of serious crimes can rebuild if given the chance" (Hope Behind Bars Africa staff).

Alternatives such as life imprisonment with rehabilitation or restorative justice were strongly supported. "Community service, probation, skills acquisition — these can serve society better than executing a mother" (NGO respondent, Abuja).

Yet reintegration opportunities remain limited. "We have proposed safe houses and halfway homes, but funding is not there. When women are released, they face stigma and isolation" (NGO respondent, Lagos).

5.2.8 Socio-Cultural Drivers, Stigma, and Family Impacts

The stigma surrounding women on death row often leads to family abandonment. "Families usually walk away, especially if the victim was a husband. Society sees her as evil, not as someone who may have been suffering" (NGO respondent, Kano). Cultural practices such as child marriage also act as drivers of criminalisation. "We see girls married at 14 or 15, abused, and later involved in violent incidents. The root is in early marriage and lack of protection" (Hope Behind Bars Africa staff).

5.2.9 NGO Approaches and Advocacy

NGOs play an indispensable role. On the service side, they provide legal aid and psychosocial support. On the advocacy side, they use storytelling and coalition-building. "We gather stories — carefully, respecting confidentiality — and use them in parliament to show why laws must change" (TIP staff, Abuja). But they face barriers: "Funding is irregular, and access to correctional centres is restricted. In some places, religious leaders oppose even the discussion of abolition" (ASF France Abuja).

5.2.10 Data, Research, and Monitoring Challenges

The lack of reliable, gender-disaggregated data was a recurring theme. “We don’t even know the exact number of women on death row at any given time. Accessing prison records is like pulling teeth” (NGO respondent, Lagos). FIDA Nigeria cited official data of 72 women compared to 3,341 men on death row in December 2023, but most respondents stressed under-reporting and access restrictions.

5.2.11 Nigerian Correctional Service’ Perspectives on the Administration of the Death Penalty in Nigeria

1. Demographic and Background Information

The respondents are officers of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS), mostly males aged between 39 and 54 years, with ranks ranging from Senior to Deputy Command roles (CSC, DCC, SC). The majority possessed tertiary education, including bachelor’s and master’s degrees, and had served in the system for between 13 to 29 years.

Their roles cut across key departments such as Human Resources, Planning, Research and Statistics, Non-Custodial Directorate, and Public Relations, indicating a diverse institutional representation and deep professional experience.

2. Personal Experience

While some officers had direct experience working in custodial centers, others provided insights from administrative or oversight roles.

Those who had worked directly with death-row inmates shared emotional and psychological challenges associated with managing individuals awaiting execution. Respondents emphasized that inmates often experience severe emotional breakdowns, fear, and hopelessness, requiring special psychological care.

Officers noted that gender-sensitive considerations are lacking, as female inmates face additional emotional and social burdens that are often overlooked.

3. Policy and Administration Oversight

Respondents identified significant policy gaps in the administration of the death penalty, particularly the disconnect between existing correctional policies and their implementation.

Most agreed that funding shortfalls, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and a male-centric system undermine effective management. They also cited delays in judicial processes and inconsistent government directives as contributing to the stagnation of death penalty cases, leading to overcrowding and prolonged detention of condemned inmates.

4. Training and Capacity Building

Training emerged as a central concern across all interviews. Officers emphasized the need for continuous and specialized training, particularly in psychosocial support, gender sensitivity, and human rights-based management of death-row inmates.

Respondents recommended capacity-building programs for officers to better balance discipline with empathy, improve emotional resilience, and manage the ethical dilemmas associated with executions.

5. Welfare, Safety, and Rehabilitation

Most officers noted that while rehabilitation and welfare programs exist in the correctional system, they are inadequate for condemned inmates.

There were references to educational and vocational initiatives that help inmates prepare for reintegration, but respondents expressed that these are not consistently available in maximum-security settings.

They also mentioned poor officer welfare, inadequate safety measures, and the need for improved psychological support both for inmates and correctional staff handling capital punishment cases.

6. Institutional Learning and Challenges

Institutionally, the Nigerian Correctional Service has learned that correction cannot be effective without addressing gender biases, welfare, and funding. Respondents cited lessons such as:

The importance of humane treatment and non-

discriminatory policies.

The need for advocacy on non-custodial measures and reforms toward abolishing or reforming the death penalty system.

However, challenges remain around infrastructure, budget constraints, and public misconceptions about the correctional system's role in rehabilitation.

7. Personal Insight

When asked for personal reflections, most respondents described the death penalty as “sad,” “pathetic,” and “emotionally draining.”

They stressed the moral and emotional toll it takes on both inmates and staff. Many advocated for alternatives to capital punishment, increased psychosocial interventions, and a more restorative approach to justice.

Respondents also called for policy reforms, community sensitization, and public engagement to promote empathy and understanding of human rights principles.

8. Conclusion

The interviews revealed a strong institutional recognition of the psychosocial, ethical, and administrative burdens associated with the death penalty.

Respondents collectively advocated for a shift toward rehabilitation-centered correctional practices, emphasizing the importance of policy reform, officer training, and gender sensitivity in shaping a more humane justice system.

Discussion of Results

6.0 Discussion of Results

The findings of this study shed critical light on the lived realities of women on death row in Nigeria, reinforcing but also challenging aspects of the existing literature. The discussion below integrates the empirical evidence with scholarly and advocacy sources, highlighting convergences and divergences that have significant implications for justice reform.



6.1 Lived Experiences and Double Victimization

The data show that women on death row are disproportionately young, poorly educated, and economically marginalized, with many working in low-income informal sectors prior to incarceration. About 70 percent were mothers, which emphasizes the intergenerational consequences of their imprisonment. These findings are consistent with the literature on women's "double victimization" where gender inequality and poverty shape criminalisation and are further compounded by discriminatory justice processes (Okafor, 2020; Amnesty International, 2022). The personal narratives of stigma, abandonment, and isolation captured in the study strongly support FIDA's (2021) observation that women are not only criminalized but socially ostracized, particularly in cases involving sexual offenses.

6.2 Socio-Cultural and Gendered Drivers of Criminalisation

A striking 36.7 percent of respondents reported experiencing gender-based violence, with several cases linking their offenses directly to histories of abuse or coercion. This aligns with Adepoju's (2018) argument that domestic abuse and patriarchal control are critical but neglected factors in women's involvement in capital offenses. Patriarchal norms and cultural expectations were repeatedly cited

as influencing women's cases, mirroring Ibrahim's (2019) findings on the harsher evidentiary standards women face under Sharia provisions in zina-related cases. The research therefore reinforces the scholarly consensus that socio-cultural contexts cannot be divorced from women's pathways to death row, and indeed suggests that gender-sensitive considerations are systematically disregarded in Nigerian criminal justice processes.

6.3 Detention Conditions and Impacts on Families

The study revealed that most women perceived detention conditions as harsh, with inadequate healthcare, poor hygiene, and lack of gender-sensitive facilities. As many were mothers, imprisonment disrupted family cohesion and left children in vulnerable circumstances. These findings corroborate Odukoya's (2020) work on the intergenerational impacts of maternal incarceration, and Chukwuma's (2021) feminist criminological analysis which emphasizes that imprisonment of women has broader social costs than male incarceration. The evidence therefore underscores the urgent need for gender-sensitive reforms in correctional facilities.

6.4 Access to Justice and Trial Fairness

A majority of respondents considered their trials non-transparent, with 62 percent reporting limited understanding of proceedings and 75 percent unaware of the laws under which they were charged. These findings resonate strongly with the observations of Amnesty International (2022) and Oshio (2021), who note systemic barriers to fair trial, including lack of competent legal representation and corruption within the justice system. However, this study goes further by quantifying the extent of women's disempowerment in legal processes, providing stronger empirical grounding for claims that women's rights to due process are routinely violated. The evidence both supports and expands upon existing scholarship, illustrating the structural injustices embedded within Nigeria's plural legal systems.

6.5 Perceptions of the Death Penalty

More than half of the women interviewed believed the death penalty was unfairly applied, while 81.7 percent expressed a preference for rehabilitation. This

perspective aligns with global abolitionist discourses documented by Amnesty International (2022) and mirrors the growing trend in African countries such as Sierra Leone and Rwanda that have abolished the death penalty (Ibrahim, 2019). The findings also challenge the deterrence-based justification for capital punishment, showing that inmates themselves view it as discriminatory, irreversible, and dehumanizing. In this respect, the study contributes to literature by foregrounding women's voices as critical evidence in debates about the legitimacy of the death penalty.

6.6 Stigma and Reintegration Challenges

The data further show that women experience acute stigma, abandonment, and rejection from families and communities, especially in cases involving adultery or culturally sensitive crimes. These findings are consistent with FIDA (2021) and Chukwuma (2021), who highlight that cultural perceptions of "honour" and morality shape punitive responses to women. The alignment of empirical findings with these studies reinforces the argument that successful rehabilitation and reintegration cannot be achieved without addressing deep-rooted social stigma and cultural norms.

6.7 Synthesis

Taken together, the findings strongly support the dominant themes in the literature: women's pathways to death row are mediated by structural inequalities, gender-based violence, and patriarchal cultural frameworks; detention exacerbates vulnerabilities for both women and their children; and systemic failures in access to justice undermine due process. Where this study extends the literature is in its quantitative demonstration of these patterns across multiple states and its documentation of women's strong preference for rehabilitative alternatives. By directly linking empirical evidence with scholarship, the discussion highlights both the persistence of known issues and the urgent need for gender-sensitive, abolitionist reforms in Nigeria.



Summary of Key Findings

7.0 Summary of Key Findings

This study set out to interrogate the experiences of women on death row in Nigeria, with specific objectives that explored lived realities, socio-cultural and gendered drivers of criminalisation, detention conditions, access to justice, and alternatives to capital punishment. The findings, drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data, are summarized below.

7.1 Lived Experiences of Women on Death Row

The study found that women on death row are disproportionately young, poorly educated, and economically disadvantaged. Almost half of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 35, with the majority having no or only basic education. Prior to incarceration, most worked in low-income, informal occupations such as trading and farming. Many were mothers, and their imprisonment disrupted family cohesion, leaving children vulnerable to neglect, disrupted education, and psychological trauma. These findings underscore that women's lived experiences are deeply shaped by structural inequalities and confirm that their incarceration has far-reaching social consequences beyond the prison walls.

7.2 Socio-Cultural, Economic, and Gendered Factors in Criminalisation

The pathways that led women to death row were closely linked to systemic vulnerabilities. Over one-third of respondents had experienced gender-based violence, including domestic abuse and child marriage, and in some cases, the crimes for which they were convicted were directly connected to these experiences. Patriarchal cultural expectations — such as women's subordination in marriage, the burden of family honour, and stigma associated with sexual transgressions — played significant roles in shaping women's cases. Poverty and lack of economic independence further compounded their vulnerability, leaving many without resources to pursue effective legal defense.

7.3 Detention Conditions and the Impact on Families

The study revealed that detention conditions for women on death row are harsh and inadequate, with poor healthcare, overcrowding, and absence of gender-sensitive facilities. As most women were mothers, imprisonment not only punished them but also fractured families, with children left in precarious arrangements. This intergenerational impact is one of the most striking findings of the study, highlighting that the consequences of the death penalty extend well beyond the individuals sentenced.

7.4 Access to Justice and Legal Representation

Findings show serious gaps in access to justice. A majority of respondents were unaware of the laws under which they were charged, while over half considered their trials to be non-transparent. Many described confusion during legal proceedings and reported inadequate or absent legal representation. The male-dominated nature of the justice system, coupled with systemic corruption and inefficiencies, left women at a distinct disadvantage. These findings confirm that due process rights are routinely violated, and that socio-economic status significantly shapes trial outcomes, with poor women facing the greatest risks.

7.5 Perceptions of the Death Penalty and Alternatives

More than half of the women interviewed believed the death penalty was unfairly applied, while over 80 percent expressed a belief in rehabilitation as a preferable option. Suggested alternatives included imprisonment, vocational training, psychosocial support, and restorative justice approaches. These findings demonstrate that women on death row overwhelmingly view the death penalty as discriminatory, irreversible, and inconsistent with human dignity. Their preference for rehabilitation reflects both their personal aspirations and alignment with global abolitionist trends.

7.6 Overall Synthesis

In summary, the study confirms that women on death row in Nigeria face compounded vulnerabilities that combine socio-economic precarity, gender-based violence, patriarchal cultural expectations, and systemic failures in justice delivery. Detention exacerbates these challenges, particularly for mothers, while stigma and abandonment further isolate women and hinder their reintegration. The women's strong preference for rehabilitation and alternatives to capital punishment reflects both their resilience and the possibility of more humane, gender-sensitive approaches to justice. By meeting its objectives, the study underscores the need for comprehensive legal and policy reforms that move Nigeria toward abolition of the death penalty and the adoption of rights-based, rehabilitative alternatives.



Conclusions

8.0 Conclusions

This study has provided critical insights into the complex realities of women on death row in Nigeria, revealing that their experiences are shaped by an intersection of gender inequality, socio-economic precarity, cultural expectations, and systemic failures within the justice system. Although women constitute a small fraction of Nigeria's death row population, their cases illuminate broader structural injustices that extend far beyond individual circumstances.

One major conclusion is that women's pathways to death row are not isolated criminal events but outcomes of deep-seated structural vulnerabilities. The prevalence of gender-based violence, poverty, child marriage, and patriarchal control demonstrates that many women arrive at the justice system already marginalized. Their criminalisation often reflects survival responses to abuse or the consequences of systemic disempowerment rather than deliberate criminal intent.

A second conclusion is that the justice system, far from protecting vulnerable women, compounds their disadvantages. Many women lacked awareness of their legal rights, faced inadequate or absent legal representation, and perceived their trials as opaque and biased. The male-dominated structures of Nigeria's legal and judicial institutions, combined with discriminatory evidentiary rules and systemic corruption, mean that women are often denied fair trial guarantees. The persistence of these injustices reveals not just individual failings but institutionalized

patterns of exclusion.

Third, the study concludes that the impact of capital punishment extends beyond the condemned women to their families and communities. With most women being mothers, their incarceration has intergenerational consequences that disrupt family cohesion, fragment child care arrangements, and expose children to economic vulnerability and psychological trauma. This finding reinforces feminist criminological arguments that women's imprisonment produces social costs that far exceed those of male incarceration.

Another key conclusion is that the death penalty in Nigeria is widely perceived by women themselves as discriminatory, irreversible, and inconsistent with human dignity. More than half of respondents considered the penalty unfairly applied, and over 80 percent expressed a preference for rehabilitative alternatives such as imprisonment, vocational training, or restorative justice. These perspectives undermine arguments for the deterrent effect of capital punishment and instead highlight its role in perpetuating inequality and injustice.

Finally, the study concludes that abolition of the death penalty and the adoption of gender-sensitive reforms are urgent and necessary. Nigeria's continued use of capital punishment places it out of step with regional and global trends, as more African countries adopt moratoriums or move toward abolition. Aligning with these trends is not only a matter of international reputation but also a domestic necessity for advancing justice, protecting vulnerable populations,

and breaking cycles of trauma and marginalisation.

In sum, this research demonstrates that women on death row embody the failures of Nigeria's justice system and the weight of cultural, social, and economic inequalities. The death penalty does not deliver justice; instead, it reinforces systemic oppression and inflicts lasting harm on women, their families, and their communities. Addressing these issues requires bold reforms, including abolitionist policies, gender-sensitive legal frameworks, and the strengthening of rehabilitative and restorative justice mechanisms. Only through such measures can Nigeria begin to replace cycles of violence and exclusion with justice, dignity, and equality.



Policy Implications and Recommendations

9.0 Policy Implications and Recommendations

9.1 Policy Implications:

The findings of this study carry significant implications for Nigeria's justice system, correctional services, and broader human rights framework.

Abolitionist Momentum: Women's strong rejection of the death penalty and preference for rehabilitation aligns with global abolitionist movements. This suggests that continued retention of capital punishment risks isolating Nigeria internationally and undermining its human rights commitments under treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Gender and Justice Reform: The documented experiences of gender-based violence, child marriage, and cultural stigma reveal that the justice system currently fails to incorporate gender-sensitive perspectives. Legal reforms must therefore embed considerations of women's lived realities, ensuring that histories of abuse and socio-economic precarity are recognized in trial and sentencing.

Fair Trial and Access to Justice: The widespread perception of biased and opaque trials highlights systemic failings in Nigeria's judiciary. This raises

concerns about the credibility of the justice system and underscores the need for procedural reforms, expansion of legal aid, and reduction of court backlogs to uphold constitutional guarantees of fair trial.

Correctional Policy and Social Protection: Poor detention conditions, coupled with the fact that most women are mothers, suggest that current correctional policies do not adequately protect the rights of women or children. There is a need for child-sensitive justice policies and improved prison services that meet the reproductive, health, and psychosocial needs of incarcerated women.

Community Reintegration and Social Transformation: The stigma and abandonment experienced by women on death row illustrate broader societal attitudes that perpetuate exclusion and discrimination. Without targeted social interventions, reintegration of women post-incarceration will remain limited, perpetuating cycles of marginalization.

9.2 Recommendations:

Drawing on both primary evidence from inmates' experiences and secondary sources from literature and human rights reports, the study proposes the following actionable recommendations:

Legal and Judicial Reforms

As a first step towards abolition, Nigeria should adopt a moratorium in line with global human rights standards.

Reform evidentiary rules under Sharia and statutory

laws that disproportionately affect women, particularly in cases of adultery (zina) and gender-based offenses.

Expand the Legal Aid Council's capacity and partnerships with civil society to ensure poor women have access to competent defense.

Establish specialized review panels to address prolonged trial delays and appeals, reducing overcrowding and miscarriages of justice.

Correctional and Detention Reforms

Provide adequate reproductive healthcare, menstrual hygiene, psychosocial counseling, and vocational training for women in prisons.

Establish frameworks for the care of children of incarcerated mothers, including education and foster care support, to mitigate intergenerational trauma.

Address overcrowding, poor sanitation, and lack of basic amenities to meet international minimum standards of detention.

Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Scale up rehabilitation programs that equip women with employable skills to facilitate reintegration post-incarceration.

Explore community-based alternatives to incarceration, including restorative justice and reconciliation mechanisms, especially for women convicted in contexts of domestic abuse.

Partner with NGOs to establish safe houses, halfway homes, and reintegration programs for released women.

Socio-Cultural Transformation

Institutionalize community-based campaigns to address stigma, promote legal literacy, and challenge harmful cultural practices such as child marriage and gender-based violence.

Work with community leaders to reinterpret cultural and religious norms in ways that promote justice, equity, and compassion.

Strengthen platforms for women's rights organizations to engage policymakers on the gendered dimensions of criminal justice reform.

Overall Recommendation

Ultimately, the findings of this study reinforce the urgent need for Nigeria to move toward abolition of the death penalty while simultaneously reforming justice and correctional policies to be more gender-sensitive, children-interest focused, and rights-based. By addressing systemic failures in law, detention, and social reintegration, Nigeria can begin to dismantle the cycles of trauma and inequality perpetuated by capital punishment and instead promote justice that restores dignity and protects human rights.

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Appendix 3

FEMALE INMATES ON DEATH ROW QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent

This questionnaire is part of a research study aimed at understanding the lived experiences, challenges, and socio-cultural factors affecting women on death row in correctional facilities across Nigeria. The information collected will help in gaining deeper insights into issues such as access to justice, rehabilitation opportunities, detention conditions, and the unique impact of the death penalty on women.

Your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will be used solely for research purposes. You are encouraged to answer honestly and feel free to skip any question you are uncomfortable with. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point.

We sincerely appreciate your time and contribution to this important research.

STATE:

NAME OF CORRECTIONAL CENTER:

TYPE OF CORRECTIONAL CENTER:

DEMOGRAPHIC AND BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

NAME

SEX

1. What is your age?

- a) 18-35
- b) 36-50
- c) 51-70
- d) 70 & Above

2. What is your level of education?

- a) Primary
- b) Secondary
- c) Tertiary
- d) Postgraduate
- e) Other

3. Where are you from?

4. What is your religion?

5. What is your marital status?

- a) Single

b) Married

c) Divorced /seperated

6. If married, has your conviction, sentencing and detention affected your marriage in any way

7. Did you have any means of livelihood before incarceration?

8. Do you have any children?

YES/NO

9. If yes, what is their age bracket and did any of them ever live with you in custody?

10. Do you receive regular updates on the welfare of your children while in custody?

11. Under whose care is/are your children currently living?

12. What is your biggest concern regarding the welfare of your children?

13. Did you experience gender-based violence at any point in your life?

If yes, can you recount your previous experiences?

14. Is the offence you were alleged to have committed a reaction to your experiences of gender based violence?

Socio-Cultural Factors and Capital Offences by Women on Death Row

15. What are the most common socio-cultural factors that contribute to women's involvement in capital offences? (Select all that apply)

Domestic violence

Forced marriage

Polygamy

Cultural silence/obedience norms

Economic dependency

Family honor pressures

Other (please specify):

16. How do cultural beliefs or gender roles influence the perception of women who commit capital offences?

They are seen as victims rather than offenders

They are judged more harshly than men

They are not taken seriously as offenders

Cultural beliefs have little or no influence

- Other (please specify): _____
17. Which traditional expectations/pressures contribute most to women committing capital offences? (Select all that apply)
- Pressure to remain in abusive marriages
 - Expectations of loyalty to partner/family
 - Childbearing/infertility-related stress
 - Lack of autonomy in decision-making
 - Inheritance or land disputes
 - Other (please specify): _____
18. How would you describe the level of community stigma toward women accused of capital offences?
- Very high
 - High
 - Moderate
 - Low
 - No stigma observed
19. Have you encountered cases where cultural practices contributed to a woman's involvement in a capital offence?
- Yes
 - No
 - If yes, which practices? _____
20. How do religious or traditional beliefs affect the investigation and prosecution of women accused of capital offences?
- Strongly affect the process and decisions
 - Moderately affect the process
 - Slightly affect the process
 - No effect at all
 - I am not sure
 - Explain your choice _____
21. Do cultural perceptions of women as non-violent affect how seriously their crimes are handled?
- Yes, greatly
 - Yes, to some extent
 - No effect
 - I don't know
22. Have you observed any cases where the woman accused was seen more as a victim of her circumstances than a criminal?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
 - If yes, what were the circumstances? _____
23. How do cultural norms around family/marriage roles influence judicial or public sympathy toward women on death row?
- Increase sympathy significantly
 - Increase sympathy slightly
 - Decrease sympathy significantly
 - Decrease sympathy slightly
 - No influence observed
24. How supportive are families/communities toward women accused of capital offences? (During arrest/trial/conviction)
- Very supportive
 - Somewhat supportive
 - Not supportive
 - Hostile
 - I don't know
 - Explain your choice _____
25. Is there a difference in how lower class and upper class women accused of capital offences are treated?
- Yes, lower class women are treated more harshly
 - Yes, upper class women are treated more harshly
 - No difference in treatment
 - I don't know
26. Do you think societal double standards affect sentencing or treatment of women compared to men?
- Yes, women are judged more harshly
 - Yes, women are judged more leniently
 - No difference
 - I don't know

27. Which of the following cultural issues increase women's vulnerability to capital crimes or wrongful convictions? (Select all that apply)

Low educational attainment
 Child marriage
 Economic dependency
 Cultural obedience norms
 Male-dominated judicial systems
 Other (please specify): _____

28. What cultural/community challenges do investigators face when handling cases involving women suspects? (Select all that apply)

Community resistance to police questioning
 Cultural taboos around discussing crime
 Threats or intimidation from families
 Lack of cooperation due to stigma
 Other (please specify): _____

29. How much influence do male-dominated institutions have on outcomes of capital offence cases involving women?

Very high influence
 High influence
 Moderate influence
 Little or no influence
 I don't know

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

30. What was the offence for which you were charged and convicted?
31. Are you aware of the Criminal Law under which you were tried.
32. Do you consider that law fair to women.(Explain)
33. What was the circumstance under which the offence was committed?
34. Do you consider your trial process transparent?
 If no, explain.
35. Did you understand the process of investigation and trial that led to your conviction?
36. Were you able to provide your own legal representa-

tive during your trial?

If no, please explain why

37. If you were unable to provide your own lawyer, were you offered one by the government?

YES/ NO

38. At what point in the process of your criminal justice journey did you get a lawyer to represent you?

a) Early, at the stage of police detention and investigation
 b) During remand at the magistrate court, awaiting trial
 c) During the period of trial
 d) After conviction

39. From the point of your detention at the Police station till date, have you been subjected to any form of torture?

YES/NO If yes, please describe the nature of the torture.

40. In the process of investigation and your trial, were you subjected to any form of mental/psychological assessment?

41. If your answer is yes, was the result of the assessment put into consideration by the court during sentencing?

YES/NO/DON'T KNOW

42. What sentence were you given?

43. How best can you describe the sentencing you received considering the circumstance under which the offence was committed?

Justified / Not justified

44. What kind of alternative sentencing did you expect from the court given the circumstances under which the offence was committed and your personal circumstances.

EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE DEATH PENALTY

45. How long have you been on death row?
46. Can you describe your experience being on death row?
47. Do you think the death penalty affects women differently than men?

YES/ NO (Please explain how)

48. From your personal experience do you believe the death penalty is applied fairly and without bias? Why or why not?
49. Do you believe that women are more likely to be wrongly convicted or sentenced to death due to biases in the justice system? Why or why not?
50. Can you think of any ways in which the death penalty might be particularly traumatic or harmful for women, especially those with histories of gender- based violence, trauma or abuse?

REHABILITATION AND ALTERNATIVES TO THE DEATH PENALTY

51. Do you think rehabilitation is possible for women who have committed crimes punishable by death? Why or why not?
52. What alternative sentences or forms of punishment do you think would be more effective and just for women who have committed serious crimes?
53. How do you think the justice system could better address the root causes of women's criminal behavior, such as poverty, gender- based violence, trauma, or lack of education?

DETENTION CONDITIONS

54. When you arrived the correctional facility, were you able to contact your relatives.
55. Have you ever been prohibited from contacting members of your family?
56. How easy is it to contact your family? How often are you able to contact your family?
57. How often do you see your family? If you do get visits from your family members , what are these visits like? Do the staff respect such visits?
58. If you were responsible for care of children prior to coming to the facility, were you able to make arrangements for those children.
59. If your answer is yes, what types of arrangements were you able to make for the children?
60. How far is the correctional center to your home?
61. Are you able to maintain your hygiene needs?(bathe , brush, have sanitation supplies)
62. If yes, who provide for the hygiene needs? _____
63. Do you have access to health services? (Please tick the boxes of the services and products you have access to)

- General medical care
- Sexual and reproductive health care
- Sanitary pads or other menstruation products
- Mental health care
- Other (specify) _____

64. Have you received any health care screenings in custody, including mental health screening?

65. Are you protected from sexual and gender-based violence in this facility?

- Yes (explain)
- No (specify)
- Partially (specify in the comment column)

66. Have you been a victim of violence and abuse since you were admitted in this facility?

YES/NO

If your answer is YES,

67. Were you able to (or did you) report the violence or abuse?
68. If you reported violence or abuse, what happened after?; Did you face any negative consequence?; Was there an investigation?; Did you receive counselling?
69. If you did not report the violence can you explain why?
70. Were you a victim of violence before you entered the facility?
71. Do you have access to educational and/or vocational activities just like men in your correctional center?
- Yes (specify which kind of activities)
 - No (specify)
 - Partially (specify)
72. How can women facing the death penalty (either before trial or after they are sentenced to death) stay connected with family and the outside world?
73. If possible, please provide a comparison to men facing the death penalty in terms of rules and practice. Please consider:
- Visitation policies
 - Access to mail
 - Access to lawyers
74. Do children remain with their mothers who are under sentence of death? If yes (specify until what age ?)

75. Please describe the environment in which these children live (housing, education, health care, etc.)

EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE DEATH PENALTY

76. Have you ever been on death row or faced a death sentence? If so, can you describe your experience?
77. How do you think the death penalty affects women differently than men?
78. Do you believe the death penalty is applied fairly and without bias? Why or why not?
79. Have you witnessed or experienced any forms of discrimination or bias within the prison system? If so, can you describe?
80. How do you think society views women who are on death row or have been executed?

GENDER AND THE DEATH PENALTY

81. Do you think the death penalty is a form of patriarchal control over women's bodies and lives? Why or why not?
82. How do you think the intersection of gender, race, and class affects women's experiences with the death penalty?
83. Do you believe that women are more likely to be wrongly convicted or sentenced to death due to biases in the justice system? Why or why not?
84. How do you think the death penalty perpetuates or challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes?
85. Can you think of any ways in which the death penalty might be particularly traumatic or harmful for women, especially those with histories of trauma or abuse?

REHABILITATION AND ALTERNATIVES TO THE DEATH PENALTY

86. Do you think rehabilitation is possible for women who have committed crimes punishable by death? Why or why not?
87. What alternative sentences or forms of punishment do you think would be more effective and just for women who have committed serious crimes?
88. How do you think the justice system could better address the root causes of women's criminal behavior, such as poverty, trauma, or lack of education?
89. Can you think of any programs or services that could help women inmates prepare for life after release, and reduce recidivism rates?
90. How do you think society could work to prevent crimes and reduce the need for punishment, rather than relying solely on punitive measures?

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

91. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or perspectives on the death penalty?
92. What recommendations do you have for policy-makers, judges, or other stakeholders in the justice system?
93. How do you think this research could be used to advocate for changes in the justice system or to support women inmates?

Appendix 4

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STATE COUNSEL IN THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Introduction

This guide has been carefully crafted to facilitate a productive and insightful conversation with you, a State Counsel within the Ministry of Justice. Your expertise and experience are invaluable in understanding the complexities surrounding female defendants in capital offense cases. We recognize the sensitive nature of these cases and appreciate your willingness to share your professional perspectives. The following questions are designed to explore your experiences with charging, prosecuting, and sentencing women in these critical legal situations. Your insights will contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of the challenges and potential areas for improvement within our justice system. The aim is to create a space for open and honest dialogue, allowing us to collaboratively examine the legal processes and ensure fairness and equity for all individuals within the legal framework. Your thoughtful contributions are highly valued.

STATE:

DEMOGRAPHIC AND BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

- SEX
- AGE
- GRADE LEVEL
- QUALIFICATION
 - a. Primary
 - b. Secondary
 - c. Tertiary
 - d. Other (Please indicate): Specify the nature of the qualification and its relevance to your current role.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1. How long have you worked as a State Counsel?
2. How often have you given legal opinion on cases involving women suspects or prosecuted female suspects? If possible, provide an approximate number of such cases.
3. Have you given a legal opinion on a capital offence involving a woman before? If yes, please share your experience. Specifically, what were the unique challenges or considerations you faced?
4. What are the common offences women accused of

capital offence are alleged to have committed?

Probe: How often have you found that the women did not have case to answer?

Where they have a case to answer what are the laws under which they were commonly charged? Were they legally made aware of the status of their offence?

5. How often are these women represented by a lawyer before being charged? If rarely, what are the common reasons for the lack of legal representation?
6. What are the major challenges of access to justice you have observed among women facing capital offences charge?
7. How much of family/social support to these women have you observed?
8. What are the basic challenges you face as a state counsel in giving legal opinion timeously and how does this affect women particularly? Can you provide specific examples of how delays in legal opinion disproportionately affect women?

CHARGING AND PROSECUTION DECISIONS

9. What factors do you consider when deciding whether to charge a female accused with a capital offence? Are there any gender-specific factors you consider?
10. How do you determine whether to pursue the death penalty in cases involving female accused? Are there any specific guidelines or policies that inform your decision?
11. Are there any specific challenges or considerations that arise when prosecuting female accused of capital offenses? How do societal biases or stereotypes affect the prosecution of Women?
12. How do you ensure that you're charging, and prosecution decisions are fair and unbiased, particularly in cases involving female accused? What specific steps do you take to mitigate personal biases?
13. In your opinion, are there any alternative sentencing options that you believe could be considered when prosecuting female accused of capital offenses? From your perspective, how often do you think these alternatives are considered, and what criteria do you feel should guide their application?

EVIDENCE AND INVESTIGATION

14. What types of evidence do you consider most important when building a case against a female accused of a capital offence? Are there any types of evidence that are particularly challenging to obtain in cases involving female defendants?
15. How do you ensure that evidence you rely on is gotten from thorough and unbiased investigation, partic-

ularly in cases involving female accused? What specific mechanisms are in place to ensure impartiality?

16. Are there any specific investigative techniques or strategies that you recommend when handling cases involving female accused of capital offenses? Are there any specific training programs that address the unique aspects of investigating cases involving female defendants?
17. How do you handle cases where the female accused may have been a victim of domestic violence, trauma, or other forms of abuse? How does the legal system address the intersection of being both a victim and an accused in these cases?
18. Are there any challenges or limitations in gathering evidence in cases involving female accused of capital offenses? Are there any cultural or social barriers that impede evidence gathering?

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

19. How do you consider mitigating circumstances, such as mental health issues or history of abuse, when prosecuting female accused of capital offenses?
20. Are there any specific mitigating circumstances that you think are particularly relevant for female accused of capital offenses? How are cultural or societal factors considered as mitigating circumstances?
21. How do you weigh the importance of mitigating circumstances in relation to the severity of the crime especially regarding women accused of capital offence? Can you provide examples of how this balance is achieved?
22. Are there any challenges or limitations in considering mitigating circumstances in cases involving female accused of capital offenses? What are the legal or procedural limitations?
23. How do you ensure that mitigating circumstances are thoroughly investigated and presented during the trial? What role do expert witnesses play in presenting mitigating circumstances?

DEATH PENALTY AND PUNISHMENT

24. Do you think the death penalty is an effective deterrent for female accused of capital offenses? Why or why not?
25. How do you think the death penalty impacts female accused, particularly in terms of their mental health and well-being? Are there any support services provided to female defendants facing the death penalty?
26. Are there any alternative sentencing options that you think would be more effective or just for female accused of capital offenses? How are these alternative options perceived within the legal system and by the

public?

27. How do you balance the need for punishment with the need for rehabilitation and restorative justice in cases involving female accused of capital offenses? How are the principles of restorative justice applied in these cases?
28. Are there any initiatives or reforms that you think could help address the disproportionate impact of capital punishment on women? What are the potential obstacles to implementing these reforms?

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES AND INSIGHTS

29. What do you think are the most significant challenges facing female accused of capital offenses in the justice system?
30. How do you think your own experiences and perspectives influence your approach to prosecuting female accused of capital offenses? How do you manage potential emotional or ethical conflicts?
31. Are there any cases or experiences that have shaped your views on prosecuting female accused of capital offenses? How did these experiences alter your understanding of the legal system's impact on women?
32. How do you think the justice system could better address the unique needs and experiences of female accused of capital offenses? What specific training or resources would be beneficial for legal professionals?
33. Are there any lessons or insights you would like to share from your experiences prosecuting female accused of capital offenses? What recommendations do you have for future state counsels dealing with such cases?

Appendix 5

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DEFENSE LAWYERS ON GENDER PERSPECTIVES TO DEATH PENALTY

Introduction

This guide is to facilitate a productive and insightful conversation with you, as a defense lawyer, regarding your representation of female clients facing capital charges. Your expertise and experience are invaluable in understanding the complexities surrounding these critical cases. We recognize the sensitive nature of your work and deeply appreciate your willingness to share your professional perspectives. The questions are designed to explore your strategies in client representation, investigation, mitigation, and advocacy, while also looking into your personal insights and collaborative efforts. Your insights will contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of the challenges and potential areas for improvement within our justice system, particularly concerning the unique needs of female clients. The aim is to create a space for open and honest dialogue, allowing us to collaboratively examine the legal processes and ensure fairness and equity for all individuals within the legal framework. Your thoughtful contributions are highly valued.

CLIENT REPRESENTATION AND EXPERIENCE

1. How often do you offer legal representation to female clients facing capital charges?

Probe: What are the common factors that influence whether a female client seeks or is assigned legal representation in these cases?

2. Can you please specify types of capital offences for which these female clients facing capital charges are accused?
3. Are there any noticeable patterns or trends in the types of offenses committed by female clients?
4. What can you say about the socio-cultural background of these accused female clients? Probe on history of possible violence/abuse.
5. How do these socio-cultural factors impact on the client's understanding of the legal process and their ability to participate in their defense?"
6. How do you ensure that you provide effective representation to female clients facing capital charges, considering their unique experiences and challenges?

Probe: What specific strategies do you employ

to build trust and rapport with female clients who may have experienced trauma?"

7. Can you describe your experience in representing female clients in capital cases, and how you have addressed gender-related issues in these cases?
8. Are there specific legal precedents or case laws that you find particularly relevant when addressing gender-related issues?"
9. How do you assess the impact of trauma, abuse, or mental health issues on your female clients' cases, and how do you incorporate this into your defense strategy?

Probe: "What are the challenges in accessing and presenting expert testimony related to trauma or mental health in these cases?"

INVESTIGATION AND EVIDENCE COLLECTION

1. What role does investigation play in preparation for defense?
2. How do you tailor your investigative approach to account for potential gender-based biases in law enforcement investigations?"
3. How do you investigate and gather evidence in capital cases involving female clients, particularly regarding gender-based violence or trauma?

Probe: What are the specific challenges in gathering evidence related to historical abuse or trauma?

4. What strategies do you use to ensure that evidence of gender-based violence or trauma is properly documented and presented in court?
5. How do you address potential skepticism or resistance from the court regarding evidence of gender-based violence or trauma?
6. Can you describe any challenges you have faced in collecting and presenting evidence in capital cases involving female clients?

Probe: Are there any systemic barriers that hinder the effective collection and presentation of such evidence?

MITIGATION AND SENTENCING

1. How do you present mitigation evidence in capital cases involving female clients, particularly regarding their background, experiences, and

character?

2. How do you address potential judicial biases or misconceptions when presenting mitigation evidence related to female clients?
3. Can you describe your approach to sentencing advocacy in capital cases involving female clients, and how you consider their unique circumstances and needs?

Probe: What alternative sentencing options do you typically advocate for, and how effective are they?

4. How do you balance the need to present mitigation evidence with the need to avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes or biases against women?
5. What ethical considerations do you weigh when deciding what mitigation evidence to present?

2. Can you describe any personal experiences or insights that have shaped your approach to representing female clients in capital cases?
3. How has your understanding of gender dynamics and the legal system evolved over your career?
4. How do you think your own biases or assumptions may impact your representation of female clients, and how do you work to overcome these biases?

Probe: What specific self-reflection or professional development practices do you engage in to mitigate potential biases?

DEATH PENALTY AND GENDER

1. Do you think the death penalty disproportionately affects women, and if so, why? Probe cultural and religious factors that are responsible for this disproportional effect.
2. Are there specific legal arguments or challenges that can be used to address this disproportionate impact?
3. Can you describe any experiences you have had with female clients who have been sentenced to death, and how you have advocated for their rights and interests?

Probe: What are the specific challenges in advocating for female clients on death row?

4. How do you think the death penalty should be reformed or abolished to address the unique needs and experiences of women?
5. What are the potential legal and social implications of these proposed reforms or abolition?

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES AND INSIGHTS

1. What do you think are the most significant challenges facing female clients in capital cases, and how do you address these challenges in your practice?

Probe: How do you navigate the emotional toll of representing female clients in these high-stakes cases?

HOPE BEHIND BARS AFRICA is a social justice organization dedicated to transforming Nigeria's criminal justice system by expanding access to justice, promoting human rights, and strengthening institutions through evidence-based advocacy. The organization works to bridge critical gaps in legal representation, prison welfare, and data availability, particularly for individuals who are marginalized or in contact with the law.

Hope Behind Bars Africa provides timely legal aid, supports pretrial detainees and incarcerated individuals, and generates transparent, data-driven insights through its flagship Criminal Justice Tracker, which monitors trends, challenges, and systemic failures across Nigeria's justice ecosystem. The organization also publishes research reports, policy briefs, and manuals on issues of practical relevance to justice sector actors, civil society organizations, and policymakers addressing criminal justice reform.

The organization's advocacy focuses on improving access to justice, strengthening compliance with human rights standards, and addressing the unique vulnerabilities of women, juveniles, and minority groups within the justice system. Through its Inside-Out Hubs, prison support programs, and community-centered interventions, Hope Behind Bars Africa works to uphold dignity, ensure fair processes, and promote rehabilitation.

In addition, the organization delivers training and capacity-building to lawyers, paralegals, correctional officers, and activists in areas such as freedom of peaceful assembly, anti-torture compliance, and criminal justice monitoring. These efforts help nurture a growing network of justice advocates equipped to drive systemic change.

More information is available at

www.hopebehindbarsafrica.org

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