SUMMARY

Imprisonment is a major life event and a psychosocial stressor of a severe and enduring nature. The prevalence of some psychiatric disorders has been shown to be higher among prisoners than the general population. This study was necessitated by the paucity of information on the prevalence and pattern of psychiatric morbidity among prison population in Northern Nigeria. Considering the diverse nature of the country and the social, cultural and religious differences existing between the various geo-political zones it became necessary to study what the situation is in the north since earlier studies were mostly conducted in the southern and western parts of the country.

The study was aimed at determining the prevalence of major depression among convicted inmates in Kaduna prison, describe their socio-demographic and forensic characteristics and assess if any, their association with major depression.

It was a cross sectional and descriptive study of convicted inmates in Kaduna Maximum security prison. It was a two staged designed study. In the first stage, all inmates who gave consent to participate were administered a Data Collection Questionnaire designed by the author to elicit information on socio-demographic
and forensic variables and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) to screen for probable psychiatric morbidity. In the second stage, subjects who scored 4 and above on GHQ were interviewed with the depression section of the Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI-WMH). A questionnaire was also designed to elicit information about medical facilities in the clinic and the quality of psychiatric services available to the inmates. This was administered to the Head of Prison Clinic. Data collected was analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS-15).

The total number of inmates in the prison compound at the time of the study was 960, out of which 255 were convicts. Two hundred and thirty seven of them constituted subjects for the main study. Majority of the subjects were young adults, with a mean age of 36.08 (SD±11.03) years. Majority of them (63.3%) were Moslems, 57.4% were never married and 23.2% of them had no formal education. Although 75% of them were employed prior to incarceration, they were mostly semi skilled or low skilled workers. Majority of them (65.4%) were from polygamous family background. Violent crimes such as murder and armed robbery were commoner (74.3%) than non violent crimes and about 45.6% of them were on death penalty. Psychiatrists’ opinion were not sought for in over 80% of subjects during trial and majority of them (60.3%) assessed the prison welfare condition as
unsatisfactory while 95% expressed desire to return back to their community. Majority of the subjects (64.6%) had GHQ scores of 4 and above and the prevalence of major depression was 30.8%

Socio-demographic variables were not significantly associated with the prevalence of depression but some forensic variables such as nature of sentence, length of stay in prison and poor perception of prison welfare condition were significantly associated with depression.

The findings of the study were compared to reports from similar studies conducted in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Conclusions were made and appropriate recommendations advanced on how to improve the physical, social and psychological wellbeing of convicted inmates of Kaduna prison. Finally, the need for urgent reforms in our prison system was also stressed.