

5 The State of Our Criminology and the Criminology of Our State

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Introduction

Criminology, as both a discipline and a practice, is deeply influenced by the socio-political context in which it evolves. In Nigeria, this evolution has been marked by a dual paradox: while academic criminology continues to expand rapidly in the last twenty five years in terms of program offerings and enrollments, it remains disconnected from the lived realities of crime, justice, and governance in the country. This paradox is captured in the phrase “the state of our criminology and the criminology of our state,” which serves as a dual critique. It calls attention to the limited theoretical growth in criminology within Nigerian universities on one hand, and the instrumental use of criminological tools by the state for control rather than justice on the other.

Over the past two decades, criminology has witnessed a rise in popularity across Nigerian universities, with departments of criminology and security studies emerging in response to growing concerns over insecurity, terrorism, cybercrime, and other transnational crimes. Despite this growth, Nigerian criminology remains largely anchored in Euro-American theoretical frameworks that are often ill-suited to the Nigerian context (Agozino, 2004). These imported models tend to universalize crime and deviance without adequately accounting for the socio-cultural and political peculiarities of post-colonial Nigerian state. As a result, criminological scholarship in Nigeria appear not fully in tune with the systemic and structural causes of crime embedded within the state itself, such as political corruption, institutional failure, economic inequality, and state-sponsored violence.

Simultaneously, the Nigerian state's approach to crime and security reveals a practice of "selective criminology," wherein certain forms of deviance - especially those linked to poverty and marginalization - are aggressively policed, while elite and state-level criminality are often ignored or shielded (Olaoba, 2021). This state-centered criminology prioritizes the protection of political and economic elites at the expense of the wider population, perpetuating a cycle of injustice and deepening public distrust in law enforcement and judicial institutions. The implication is that while Nigerian criminology as an academic discipline appears passive and

externally oriented, the state's criminology is active, coercive, and politically instrumental.

This disjunction reflects a broader epistemological crisis within African criminology. Scholars like Agozino (2010) and Rotimi (2001) have long criticized the failure of African criminology to develop indigenous theories rooted in African realities. Instead, criminological education in Nigeria often recycles Western theories such as classical rational choice, positivism, or strain theory, with little attempt to adapt these to local social dynamics. Furthermore, curriculum content often struggles to engage with pressing issues such as police brutality, ethnic militias, informal justice systems, and state violence—all of which are central to Nigeria's criminological landscape. As a consequence, criminology graduates are frequently grappling with home made theories to critically engage with or transform the security challenges facing their communities.

Adding to this challenge is the marginal role that academic criminologists play in public policy formulation. In most developed countries, criminologists are integral to the design and evaluation of criminal justice policies (Loader & Sparks, 2010). In Nigeria, however, policy-making in the field of crime control and security is dominated by political elites, retired military personnel, or police officers, often to the exclusion of academic voices. This exclusion undermines the potential contributions of scholarly research and leads to policy decisions that are reactive rather than evidence-based (Onoge, 1993).

Moreover, the Nigerian state's approach to security has often been militarized, with a heavy reliance on force and surveillance to address complex social problems. The deployment of security operatives in response to protests, civil unrest, or insurgencies frequently leads to human rights abuses and further alienation of the citizenry (Alemika, 2013). This reflects a conception of security that prioritizes regime stability over human security, and crime control over social justice. Such a framework contradicts the foundational principles of criminology, which advocate for a balanced approach to crime prevention, rehabilitation, and systemic reform.

It is therefore imperative to critically assess both the academic discipline of criminology in Nigeria—its theoretical orientation, curriculum, and relevance—and the state's use of criminological practices in governance. This includes interrogating how laws are made and enforced, who is labeled as a criminal, and what forms of deviance are criminalized or overlooked. A reflexive criminology must ask: who benefits from the current state of criminal justice? Who defines crime? Whose interests are protected or punished under current legal regimes?

This paper argues that to properly position criminology in Nigeria, there must be a deliberate move towards the decolonization of the discipline. This entails the

development of locally grounded theories, critical engagement with African realities, and the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems in understanding crime and justice. Equally, the criminology of the state must be transformed to prioritize social equity, community engagement, and human rights. Without these reforms, criminology risks becoming either an academic exercise divorced from reality or a state tool for repression.

In summary, “The State of Our Criminology and the Criminology of Our State” is not merely a play on words—it is a call for intellectual and policy reform. It challenges scholars to rethink criminology beyond imported texts and statistical analysis, and it challenges the state to rethink crime control beyond surveillance, punishment, and political interest. Only through such a critical and context-sensitive engagement can criminology in Nigeria begin to fulfill its role in building a just, secure, and inclusive society.

Clarification of Key Concepts

1. Criminology

Alemika (2025) posits that “Criminology embodies diverse theoretical paradigms and methodological approaches grounded in deterministic-voluntarism and positivism-subjectivism epistemological assumptions about criminal behaviour”. Basically, criminology is the scientific study of crime, criminal behavior, and society's responses to crime. It draws from sociology, psychology, law, and political science to understand why people commit crimes, how crime affects society, and how justice systems respond. Criminology can be theoretical, empirical, or policy-driven, and it is critical for shaping fair and effective crime prevention strategies (Carrabine et al., 2014).

2. “Our Criminology”

This refers to the local, homegrown body of criminological knowledge and practice specific to Nigeria (or any African society). “Our criminology” emphasizes:

- Contextual relevance – reflecting Nigerian realities like corruption, ethnic conflict, youth unemployment, and informal justice systems.
- Epistemic sovereignty – resisting overdependence on Western theories that may not fully explain African social dynamics.
- Decolonized knowledge – including African perspectives, traditions, and socio-legal norms that are often marginalized in mainstream discourse (Agozino, 2010).

3. “The Criminology of Our State”

This conceptual phrase refers to how the Nigerian state (government institutions, law enforcement, and justice systems) uses or misuses criminological tools, policies, and practices. It encompasses:

- Law enforcement tactics – such as militarized policing and selective justice.
- State security strategies – often reactive, coercive, or politicized rather than evidence-based or human-rights-focused.
- Criminalization of dissent – using legal systems to suppress protests or silence critics under the guise of crime control (Alemika, 2013). In essence, it critiques how the state defines, enforces, and applies "crime control" to serve particular political or class interests.

4. Intellectual Colonialism

Also known as epistemological dependency, this term describes the reliance on Western knowledge systems, theories, and academic paradigms without adapting them to local contexts. In Nigerian criminology, this manifests in the use of foreign criminological models that may not address indigenous crimes or justice realities. It hinders intellectual creativity and the development of locally meaningful theories (Ake, 1982; Okolie, 2009).

5. Decolonizing Criminology

Decolonization in this context means challenging the dominance of foreign ideas and reclaiming the power to define, explain, and address crime using locally relevant perspectives. It involves:

- Valuing indigenous knowledge.
- Questioning colonial legacies in criminal law and justice.
- Developing theories and policies rooted in African sociocultural, historical, and political realities (Agozino, 2004; Ziyad & Asongu, 2021).

6. Public Criminology

Public criminology refers to a form of engaged scholarship where criminologists actively communicate their research to the public, policy-makers, and civil society—not just academic audiences. It emphasizes accessibility, advocacy, and real-world impact. In the Nigerian context, this means speaking on issues like police brutality, prison reform, or youth violence in a way that informs both the public and policy (Loader & Sparks, 2010). For example, the theme of the third International Conference of Nigeria Society for Criminology held between 26th to 27th June, 2025 at the University of Abuja centered on “Correctional Service Reformation in Nigeria: Promoting Justice, Rehabilitation, and Social Reintegration”. The Society seized the opportunity of the conference for advocacy on pragmatic prison reform, but whether the state actors would work towards its implementation or see it as a mere academic exercise is for time to tell.

7. Security and the State

In criminological discourse, the state's security apparatus includes police, military, intelligence, and regulatory bodies responsible for maintaining order. However, state-centered security often prioritizes regime stability over human security (i.e.,

the well-being of the people). This distinction is essential to critique how the Nigerian state approaches crime and national security.

8. Selective Justice

This concept highlights unequal application of the law, where the poor, minorities, or political opponents are disproportionately targeted, while powerful elites evade accountability. In Nigeria, this is visible in anti-corruption prosecutions that appear politically motivated, or in how minor theft receives harsh punishment while embezzlement cases linger unresolved (Ojo, 2020).

9. Structural Violence

A term coined by Johan Galtung, structural violence refers to systemic harm caused by social structures or institutions, such as poverty, inequality, or state neglect. In criminology, it explains how crime may be rooted in deprivation or exclusion, not just individual choice. For Nigeria, structural violence includes youth unemployment, poor policing, and lack of access to justice (Galtung, 1969; Okafor, 2011).

10. Epistemic Justice

This means fairness in whose knowledge is recognized and valued. In criminology, it involves ensuring African perspectives, voices, and lived experiences shape theories, teaching, and policies. Nigerian criminology must fight for epistemic justice by elevating local narratives and resisting academic gatekeeping.

The Historical Evolution of Criminology in Nigeria

In the words of Alemika (2025),:

“Criminology as a discipline is still evolving in the country. ...Criminology-related research by specialists in other disciplines preceded the formal introduction of courses in Nigerian universities. Early researchers on criminology related problems in the 1960s were mental health scholars and professionals who studies the interrelationship between drug abuse and mental health (Asuni 1964, 1969; Lambo 1965). Until early 21st century, most publications on criminal justice system, especially the prison and police components, from early 1960s, by scholars from several disciplines, focused more on their colonial origin, inadequacies and measures for reforming them (Tamuno 1970; Okonkwo 1966; Awe 1968; Elias 1968; Kayode 1976, 1978, 1983; Odekunle 1979; Alemika & Kayode 1981; Alemika 1988a, 1988b. 1993a, 1993b; Rotimi 1993, Adeyemi 2001). The researchers whose work has relevance to criminology before the formal establishment of criminology courses and graduates with specialty in the field are here referred to as 'experts' on the margin of criminology.”

Some of these 'experts' on the margin of criminology” included Lambo and Asuni - psychiatrists and lecturers who published articles on drugs and homicide and mental health, Adedokun Adeyemi - a lawyer who's publications related to the administration of criminal justice and Professor Tekena Tamuno, a distinguished historian and former the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, who authored a number of books and papers that are pertinent to the field of criminology, particularly the subfield of police and policing. His 1970 work, *The Police in Modern Nigeria*, continues to serve as a benchmark for research on police units that were founded during the 1861–1960 period of colonial authority (Alemika, 2025).

Thus, apart from the inputs from these 'experts' from other fields, criminology in Nigeria, much like in other post-colonial contexts, emerged within a framework that was heavily influenced by colonial legal and academic systems. The early development of criminological thought was rooted in the colonial administration's concern with control and order, rather than justice or understanding the sociological dynamics of crime (Onoge, 1993). According to Onoge, criminology in Nigeria during the colonial era functioned primarily as a repressive tool, used to enforce colonial laws and suppress dissent. This origin shaped not only the character of state policing but also the intellectual architecture of criminology itself—limiting its evolution as a critical and autonomous field of study.

Post-independence efforts to formalize criminology as an academic discipline in Nigerian universities began in the late 20th century, with the introduction of criminology courses as an appendage of mostly law and sociology disciplines.

Relying on Cullen and Wilcox (Ed), (2010), Alemika (2025), maintains that, William Chambliss, an American criminologist who was a visiting professor of sociology, was the first to introduce and teach a criminology course at the Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, during the 1970–71 Session. And that Yemi Kayode (Oluyemi Kayode-Adedeji), the first Nigerian to obtain a doctorate in criminology, began working at the University of Ibadan in 1973 after receiving PhD from the University of Pennsylvania.

As at 2003, Iwarimie Jaja noted in his book, *Criminology the Study of Crime* that:

“In Nigeria, there are few Universities that offer Criminology courses at the undergraduate levels. This inadequacy has restricted the debate on whether or not criminology should be regarded as a discipline of its own separate from the discipline of law and sociology.

In Nigeria, some universities have turned their sociology discipline to be grounded with courses in criminology. The Amadu Bello University and the University of Port Harcourt are examples; the University of Port Harcourt

now offers a specialty in MSc and PhD in Criminology, Police Science and Social Work. It must be noted also that no university in or higher institution in the country has instituted a bachelor or an MSc or PhD programme in criminal justice”

Subsequently, as the 21st century progressed, full-fledged departments of criminology began to emerge within social sciences and law faculties. While some universities combined criminology with police science, social work or peace studies, majority offer it as criminology and security studies (JAMB, IBASS, 2025). Presently, majority of the 298 universities (72 Federal, 67 State and 159 Private universities) in Nigeria offer criminology either at the post graduate level or as undergraduate programme (NUC, 2025). Thus, it became one of the most sought-after disciplines, perhaps due to the increasing state of insecurity in the country.

However, as Agozino (2004) asserts, criminology programmes continued to rely on Western theoretical imports with little adaptation to the Nigerian socio-political context. The lack of indigenous theory-building and empirical fieldwork led to a form of academic dependency, where criminology remained disconnected from the realities of crime and justice within the state.

The Westernization and Theoretical Dependence of Nigerian Criminology

A consistent critique in the literature is that Nigerian criminology remains theoretically dependent on Euro-American models. Classical theories such as rational choice, routine activity, and positivist criminology dominate curricula, despite their limited applicability in Nigeria's socio-cultural setting (Alemika, 1988; Agozino, 2010). These theories often emphasize individual responsibility and free will, ignoring systemic factors such as poverty, corruption, political violence, and weak institutional frameworks.

Rotimi (2001) points out that such theoretical misalignments limit criminology's practical relevance in Nigeria. For example, the state's use of force to quell dissent or the systemic abuse of power by law enforcement agencies is seldom addressed within the frameworks taught to Nigerian criminology students. Instead, these realities are treated as anomalies rather than systemic characteristics of the postcolonial state. Consequently, graduates are ill-prepared to critically analyze or reform the justice system.

The call for a decolonized criminology—rooted in African worldviews, history, and socio-political conditions—is gaining traction among scholars. Agozino (2004, 2010) has been particularly influential in advocating for what he terms "counter-colonial criminology," which critiques the epistemic imperialism embedded in mainstream criminological discourse. He argues that criminology must acknowledge the colonial legacies of injustice and power asymmetries that persist in

postcolonial societies and begin to frame crime as a socio-political phenomenon rather than merely a legal infraction.

The Criminology of the Nigerian State: Repression and Selectivity

While academic criminology struggles with intellectual dependence, the Nigerian state's application of criminology is often selective and coercive. State institutions, especially the police and the judiciary, are frequently used as instruments of repression rather than justice. Numerous studies have documented the Nigerian police's history of brutality, extrajudicial killings, and arbitrary detention (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2010). These practices reflect what could be termed the “criminology of the state”—a model where state power defines and enforces criminality according to its interests, often targeting the marginalized while protecting the elite.

This selective criminalization reflects class bias and systemic injustice. According to Olaoba (2021), crimes committed by the poor—such as petty theft, street trading, or squatting—are more aggressively prosecuted than elite crimes like embezzlement, electoral fraud, or environmental destruction. Such disparities reveal a structural bias in criminal justice administration, where the state functions as both lawmaker and lawbreaker, with little accountability.

The phenomenon of “legal dualism” further complicates the situation. In Nigeria, there exists a parallel between formal state law and informal customary justice systems. Yet, state policy often dismisses or undermines the legitimacy of indigenous justice mechanisms, even when they are more accessible and effective at resolving local disputes (Oladipo & Akintunde, 2018). This tension reveals a failure of state criminology to integrate or respect alternative justice systems that reflect the lived realities of many Nigerians.

Marginalization of Criminologists in Policy-Making

Another significant theme in the literature is the exclusion of academic criminologists from national security and justice policy-making processes. Unlike in developed countries where criminologists play advisory roles in criminal justice reform, Nigerian criminologists are rarely consulted or involved in government committees, policing reforms, or public security discourse (Ojo, 2020). This marginalization reflects a broader undervaluation of academic expertise in governance.

Loader and Sparks (2010) emphasize the importance of “public criminology,” where scholars engage with society and policy-makers to apply research findings to real-world issues. In Nigeria, however, criminologists are often relegated to the classroom or academic conferences, with minimal impact on legislation, policing, or prison reforms. This has contributed to a persistent gap between criminological

knowledge and governance practices.

The result is a criminal justice system that is largely reactive rather than proactive. For instance, rather than investing in crime prevention or community policing, the Nigerian state often deploys military-style operations to combat insecurity, particularly in regions affected by insurgency or separatist agitation. This militarized response to social conflict fails to address root causes such as poverty, unemployment, marginalization, and corruption—issues that a more holistic, criminologically informed approach might have tackled more effectively (Okafor, 2011).

Toward a Context-Sensitive and Transformative Criminology

Several scholars have called for a rethinking of criminology in Nigeria—one that is rooted in African realities, informed by indigenous knowledge, and engaged with the everyday struggles of citizens. Such a criminology would move beyond theoretical mimicry and begin to interrogate the structural violence embedded in the Nigerian state itself (Agozino, 2004; Onoge, 1993).

Context-sensitive criminology recognizes that crime and justice are socially constructed and politically mediated. It calls for empirical research that engages with the voices of marginalized communities, the lived experiences of victims and offenders, and the structural dynamics of inequality and state power. It also demands that criminologists take a more active role in policy reform, advocacy, and public education.

To achieve this, scholars like Olaoba (2021) and Oladipo and Akintunde (2018) suggest a radical overhaul of criminology curricula in Nigerian universities. This includes incorporating African-centered perspectives, practical training in justice institutions, and community-based research. Moreover, building partnerships between universities, civil society, and government agencies could help bridge the divide between theory and practice.

Ultimately, a transformative criminology must also be willing to hold the state accountable—not just for failing to control crime, but for perpetuating it through corruption, abuse, and neglect. It must challenge the notion of the state as a neutral arbiter of justice and begin to critically examine how power, privilege, and politics shape the criminal justice system in Nigeria.

Findings and Discussion

1. Persistent Theoretical Dependence and Intellectual Colonialism

One of the most striking findings of this study is the continued dominance of Euro-American theoretical models in Nigerian criminological discourse. Despite growing recognition of the limitations of classical and positivist criminology in the Nigerian

context, these models still shape curriculum content, research focus, and scholarly debates. This theoretical dependency has produced a generation of criminologists who are more familiar with Western models of crime and deviance than with indigenous realities or African philosophical frameworks (Agozino, 2004; Rotimi, 2001).

This dependence has created what can be described as an “intellectual colonialism” in Nigerian criminology—where imported knowledge systems are privileged, while local epistemologies are devalued or excluded. As a result, crime is often analyzed through frameworks that do not account for the country's historical, political, or socio-economic conditions. For example, routine activity theory or rational choice theory rarely explains the deep structural causes of crime such as state failure, systemic corruption, and ethno-religious marginalization. This disconnect limits the ability of criminology to offer transformative solutions to Nigeria's complex security problems.

2. The Instrumentalization of Criminology by the Nigerian State

Another key finding is the instrumental use of criminological tools by the Nigerian state. Rather than applying criminology as a lens for reforming institutions and achieving justice, the state often uses crime control mechanisms to entrench power, silence dissent, and suppress marginalized groups. The “criminology of our state” is, therefore, not concerned with understanding or preventing crime in a holistic sense—it is instead geared toward protecting elite interests and maintaining control. This is evident in the militarized approach to security adopted by successive administrations. Armed forces and special police units are frequently deployed to quell civil protests or unrest, as seen in the aftermath of the #EndSARS movement in 2020. Yet, these measures often result in extrajudicial killings, unlawful detentions, and widespread human rights violations (Alemika, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2010). The state's security logic is reactive and coercive, not preventative or restorative.

Moreover, crimes committed by political and economic elites are often treated with leniency or ignored entirely, while petty crimes by the poor are harshly punished. This selective application of the law reflects a structurally biased criminological practice that undermines public trust in the justice system and fosters a culture of impunity.

3. Marginalization of Academic Criminology in Policy Circles

Despite the expansion of criminology programs in Nigerian universities, academic criminologists remain largely excluded from national security policy-making. The literature and field evidence reveal that criminologists are rarely consulted in the design or evaluation of criminal justice policies. This exclusion is particularly problematic given the increasing complexity of Nigeria's security

challenges—including terrorism, cybercrime, banditry, and inter-communal violence.

The marginalization of scholarly voices results in policy decisions that are often driven by short-term political considerations or military logic rather than empirical data or criminological insights (Ojo, 2020). For example, counter-insurgency strategies in the Northeast rely almost entirely on military deployment, with little attention to root causes such as poverty, education deficits, and political alienation. In this regard, criminology has failed to influence the structures of governance and public safety in a meaningful way.

4. The Absence of Context-Sensitive and Homegrown Theories

The findings also point to a lack of context-sensitive and homegrown criminological theories in Nigeria. There is a growing consensus among scholars that Nigeria needs criminological frameworks that reflect its unique historical, cultural, and institutional realities. While some efforts have been made toward this end—such as the African-centered criminology proposed by Agozino (2010)—these remain marginal within mainstream academic discourse.

There is also little emphasis on incorporating indigenous justice systems, despite their relevance in many communities across Nigeria. Customary dispute resolution mechanisms and community-based policing models are frequently more accessible and trusted by local populations than formal institutions. Yet, the Nigerian state often delegitimizes or overlooks these systems, thereby missing an opportunity to develop a truly hybrid model of justice.

A decolonized and context-driven criminology would not only validate these indigenous systems but also interrogate how colonial legacies continue to shape crime and justice in the present. It would shift criminology from being a theoretical and imported discipline to a practical and transformative tool for social change.

5. Need for Public Engagement and Reflexivity

Lastly, the findings highlight a need for Nigerian criminologists to engage more actively with the public and policy-makers. The current academic culture often rewards theoretical abstraction over public engagement, leaving criminology detached from societal needs. Loader and Sparks (2010) argue for the rise of “public criminology”—a form of engaged scholarship that communicates findings beyond the academy and influences public debates on justice and security.

In Nigeria, such a model would require criminologists to not only teach and publish but also advocate, advise, and challenge state institutions. This calls for reflexivity within the discipline: scholars must interrogate their own positions, question dominant paradigms, and be willing to develop new models grounded in Nigeria's

social realities.

Synthesis and Implications

Taken together, these findings reveal a fundamental contradiction in the state of Nigerian criminology. On one hand, there is a growing academic interest in the field, as evidenced by new programs and research output. On the other hand, there is a widening gap between criminology's intellectual development and its practical relevance to policy and social justice.

For criminology to fulfill its transformative potential, several steps must be taken:

- **Curriculum Reform:** Nigerian universities must overhaul criminology curricula to incorporate African perspectives, local case studies, and indigenous justice practices.
- **State Accountability:** Criminologists should adopt a critical stance toward the state, exposing systemic injustices and advocating for institutional reform.
- **Policy Integration:** There is an urgent need to integrate criminological research into national security strategies through formal collaboration between academia and government.
- **Community Engagement:** Criminologists should engage with local communities, civil society organizations, and traditional institutions to ensure that their work is grounded in reality.

Without these reforms, Nigerian criminology risks remaining a “discipline in exile”—intellectually active but socially irrelevant, methodologically sophisticated but practically impotent.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Conclusion

This study has examined the dual concerns of “the state of our criminology” and “the criminology of our state” within the Nigerian context, revealing a complex relationship between academic discourse, state power, and societal needs. The findings indicate that Nigerian criminology remains theoretically dependent on Western paradigms, disconnected from indigenous realities, and marginalized in national policy-making. Simultaneously, the Nigerian state often deploys criminological tools selectively to maintain elite dominance and suppress marginalized voices.

The implications are significant: criminology in Nigeria has yet to fulfill its potential as a transformative force for justice, reform, and social change. The discipline's continued detachment from local contexts and its exclusion from security policymaking limit its relevance and credibility. Furthermore, the state's criminal

justice practices often reflect repression rather than reform, reinforcing structural inequalities and undermining public trust.

If criminology in Nigeria is to evolve into a critical, reflexive, and socially engaged discipline, it must undergo a radical transformation. This involves not just curricular reform but a broader shift in the way knowledge is produced, validated, and applied. Equally, the state must recognize the value of criminological insight in shaping effective, just, and sustainable crime prevention and justice policies.

Policy Recommendations

1. Decolonize and Contextualize Criminology Curricula

Nigerian universities must reform criminology programs to reflect the historical, cultural, and political realities of the country. Courses should include African-centered theories, postcolonial critiques, indigenous justice mechanisms, and case studies of local crime trends (Agozino, 2004; Oladipo & Akintunde, 2018). Such curricula will equip graduates with the tools to engage meaningfully with Nigeria's justice challenges.

2. Foster Academic-Government Collaboration

The marginalization of criminologists in national policy-making must be addressed through institutionalized collaboration. Government agencies—such as the police, judiciary, and correctional services—should include criminologists in advisory boards, policy review committees, and research projects (Ojo, 2020). Bridging this gap will enhance evidence-based policy-making and institutional accountability.

3. Promote Public Criminology and Community Engagement

Criminologists must adopt the ethos of public criminology by engaging with civil society, traditional institutions, and media platforms to influence public discourse on crime and justice (Loader & Sparks, 2010). Academic research should be made accessible to non-specialists, and scholars should actively participate in advocacy, community education, and policy debates.

4. Integrate Indigenous Justice Systems into State Frameworks

The Nigerian justice system should recognize and incorporate customary and community-based dispute resolution mechanisms, especially in rural and underserved areas. These systems are often more accessible, culturally resonant, and effective than formal legal processes (Oladipo & Akintunde, 2018). A hybrid model can promote restorative justice, reduce caseloads, and enhance legitimacy.

5. Reorient State Security Strategy Toward Prevention and Human Rights

The Nigerian state's security approach must shift from militarized, reactionary

tactics to prevention-oriented, human-rights-based strategies. Investment in education, youth employment, urban planning, and mental health services should be prioritized as tools of crime prevention (Okafor, 2011). Additionally, police and military operations must adhere to constitutional limits and international human rights norms.

6. Establish National Criminology Research Council

A national body should be created to coordinate criminological research, fund field studies, and link academic findings with policymaking. This council can serve as a bridge between scholars, practitioners, and policymakers, ensuring that criminological insight informs national discourse on justice and security.

7. Encourage Reflexivity and Ethics in Criminological Practice

Criminologists should consistently reflect on their positionality, assumptions, and the power dynamics embedded in their work. A critical criminology must be ethically grounded, politically conscious, and committed to social justice. This will foster a discipline that challenges injustice rather than inadvertently legitimizing it (Agozino, 2010).

By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can begin to construct a criminology that is not only relevant and reflective of its socio-political realities but also transformative in its capacity to influence justice, peace, and equitable development. Equally, the criminology of the Nigerian state must evolve from a logic of repression to one rooted in accountability, fairness, and inclusion. Only then can the state and the discipline of criminology align in service of the Nigerian people.

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