



## Effectiveness of Capital Punishment as a Deterrent Measure in Nigeria's Justice Administration

Nwankwo Emmanuel Emeka

*Department of Criminology & Security Studies, Claretian University of Nigeria, Nekede, Owerri.*

*Email: nwankwoe647@gmail.com*

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### Abstract

The role of capital punishment in Nigeria's justice administration remains deeply contested within legal and criminological discourse. Proponents view the death penalty as a necessary deterrent against violent crime and a means of reinforcing state authority, while opponents emphasize its inconsistent enforcement, political manipulation, and tension with international human rights norms. This study examines the effectiveness of capital punishment in Nigeria by situating it within historical, legal, and comparative contexts. Drawing on legal analysis, historical review, and human rights perspectives, the paper explores the trajectory of the death penalty from pre-colonial justice practices to colonial codification and its current democratic application. Methodologically, the study relies on doctrinal legal research, complemented by secondary empirical data from prison records and human rights reports. The findings reveal that although capital punishment remains entrenched in Nigeria's statutes, its deterrent effect is undermined by judicial delays, executive discretion, and selective enforcement. Comparative insights from other African jurisdictions further highlight Nigeria's unique challenges. The study concludes that capital punishment in Nigeria functions more symbolically than as an effective deterrent and argues for comprehensive reforms in justice administration, including alternatives such as life imprisonment without parole.

**Keywords:** Capital punishment, deterrence, justice administration, human rights, prisons.

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### Introduction

Justice is often regarded as the cornerstone of every stable society. Augustine of Hippo (354/2003) observed in *The City of God* that without justice, kingdoms become little more than “gangs of criminals on a large scale.” This age-old insight carries contemporary weight in Nigeria, where public confidence in the justice system is persistently undermined by inefficiency, corruption, and selective enforcement (Omoregbe, 2007; Nwagwu, 2021).

Nigeria retains capital punishment as part of its criminal justice framework, applying it to serious crimes such as murder, armed robbery, and treason (Penal Code, 1990). Supporters of the death penalty argue that its retributive and deterrent functions are indispensable for addressing violent crime (Bentham, 1988; Akingbehin, 2012). However, critics highlight the risks of wrongful convictions, systemic corruption, executive interference, and political manipulation, all of which reduce its legitimacy and weaken its deterrent capacity (Amnesty

International, 2016; Global Rights, 2023).

This study is significant for three main reasons. First, it situates capital punishment in Nigeria within a historical continuum, tracing its evolution from indigenous systems of justice through colonial codification to contemporary democratic application. Secondly, it interrogates the gap between the deterrence theory of punishment (Beccaria, 1764/1995; Finkelstein, 2000) and the realities of Nigeria's justice administration, marked by prolonged trials, overcrowded prisons, and inconsistent enforcement. Finally, it situates Nigeria's experience within global debates on human rights, where calls for abolition are becoming more insistent (Bukola, 2020; Amnesty International, 2017).

By combining legal, historical, and human rights perspectives, this paper provides a contextual analysis of capital punishment in Nigeria. It argues that the effectiveness of the death penalty as a deterrent depends less on its statutory presence and more on the credibility and



efficiency of the justice system itself.

### **Literature Review**

The debate over capital punishment has long divided scholars, policymakers, and human rights advocates. This literature broadly falls into two camps: retentionists, who defend the death penalty as necessary for deterrence and retribution, and abolitionists, who argue that it is ineffective, inhumane, and prone to abuse.

Bohannon (1967) emphasizes that law is inseparable from culture, serving as a reflection of social values and a mechanism for maintaining order. Within this framework, Bentham (1988) views law as the state's expression of will, requiring obedience through clearly prescribed sanctions. For proponents of capital punishment, these perspectives underscore the necessity of strong punitive measures, including the death penalty, to sustain authority and discourage violent crime.

From a moral standpoint, Finkelstein (2000) argues that punishment is justified only if it proportionally addresses the harm caused. Retributivist interpretations therefore see the death penalty as morally fitting for crimes such as murder or treason. Similarly, Akingbehin (2012) situates capital punishment within debates on human rights, noting that Nigerian courts have consistently upheld its constitutionality despite international concerns.

On the other hand, critics point to the profound risks and contradictions inherent in capital punishment. Omoregbe (2007) stresses that true justice rests on the inherent equality and dignity of all persons, a principle undermined by wrongful convictions or selective enforcement. Amnesty International (2016) and Global Rights (2023) have documented irregularities in Nigeria's death penalty system, including delays in trials, executive interference, and political manipulation. They argue that these practices, compromise both the fairness of justice and the credibility of deterrence.

Empirical studies deepen this critique. Afua (2013) and Bukola (2020) reveal a striking gap

between sentencing and execution: while thousands of Nigerians languish on death row, actual executions are rare and sometimes politically motivated. Durotoye (2019) highlights how prolonged delays erode deterrence, creating what Nwosu (2017) describes as the "death row phenomenon"—a form of cruel and degrading treatment in itself. Obi (2020) further shows how executive pardons are often wielded as political tools rather than acts of justice.

This literature therefore, points to two recurring themes. First, the deterrent function of capital punishment in Nigeria is seriously weakened by inconsistent enforcement, corruption, and delays. Secondly, public confidence in the justice system is eroded when punishment appears selective, targeting the marginalized offenders while elites evade accountability. These insights form the basis for this study's deeper exploration of how capital punishment operates in Nigeria and whether it truly functions as an effective deterrent.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study of capital punishment in Nigeria can be situated within three key theoretical perspectives: deterrence theory, retributive justice theory, and human rights theory. Each provides a different lens for understanding both the persistence of the death penalty and the controversies surrounding its use.

#### **1. Deterrence Theory**

Deterrence theory assumes that individuals are rational actors who weigh the costs and benefits of their actions. Beccaria (1764/1995) was among the earliest scholars to argue that punishment should prevent crime rather than merely avenge it. From this standpoint, the death penalty is defended as the most severe sanction available, intended to dissuade would-be offenders from committing heinous crimes. In the Nigerian context, where violent crimes such as armed robbery and terrorism remain prevalent, policymakers often justify capital punishment on deterrence grounds. However, as Oladipo (2016) and Adebayo (2018) have shown that the link between executions and declining crime rates in Nigeria is tenuous at best, raising questions about whether deterrence operates effectively in practice.



## **2. Retributive Justice Theory**

Retributivism emphasizes moral balance—wrongdoers deserve punishment proportionate to their crimes. Bentham (1988) and Finkelstein (2000) suggest that punishment restores social order by affirming society's condemnation of criminal acts. Within Nigeria, this perspective aligns with cultural and religious traditions that view certain crimes, such as murder or blasphemy, as warranting the ultimate sanction. Rotimi (2018) notes that in northern Nigeria, Sharia law continues to frame capital punishment as a divinely sanctioned response to grave offences. The retributive framework thus helps explain why capital punishment retains strong popular support in some regions despite international criticism.

## **3. Human Rights Theory**

Human rights theory critiques capital punishment as inherently incompatible with the dignity and equality of all persons. Omoregbe (2007) stresses that respect for human life is a fundamental ethical principle that cannot be overridden by state authority. At the global level, the United Nations (2015) frames the death penalty as a violation of the right to life and freedom from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Applied to Nigeria, scholars such as Ibe (2015) and Nwosu (2017) argue that systemic flaws such as delayed trials, wrongful convictions, and death row conditions—compound the human rights concerns associated with capital punishment.

Taken together, these frameworks highlight the central tension of Nigeria's death penalty regime. While deterrence and retribution provide theoretical justification for its continued existence, human rights theory exposes the moral and practical contradictions in its enforcement. This study therefore employs these perspectives not in isolation but as overlapping lenses to critically examine whether capital punishment in Nigeria truly serves justice or perpetuates injustice.

## **Comparative Analysis of Capital Punishment: Nigeria and Other Jurisdictions**

Nigeria's death penalty practices cannot be fully understood in isolation; they become clearer when situated within global debates and comparative

experiences. This section contrasts Nigeria's approach with three reference points: the United States, countries that have abolished the death penalty (notably in Europe), and retentionist states in Africa and Asia.

1. Nigeria and the United States: Both Nigeria and the United States retain capital punishment, though their contexts differ. In the U.S., executions are concentrated in a few states, with Texas alone responsible for the majority (Amnesty International, 2022). Proponents argue that it deters violent crime, yet studies repeatedly show little or no consistent deterrent effect (Bassiouni, 2010). Similarly, Nigerian policymakers justify executions on deterrence grounds, particularly against armed robbery and terrorism (Oladipo, 2016). However, in both contexts, socio-economic inequality and systemic bias heavily influence who ends up on death row. In Nigeria, poverty and limited access to legal defence are common among death row inmates (Nwosu, 2017), just as racial disparities mark the U.S. system (Bassiouni, 2010). The parallel highlights a shared reality: the death penalty disproportionately affects the marginalized, undermining its claim to justice.

2. Nigeria and Abolitionist States (Europe as Case Study): Europe presents a sharp contrast. The European Union categorically prohibits the death penalty, making abolition a condition for membership (United Nations, 2015). This position is rooted in human rights theory, which regards capital punishment as incompatible with the sanctity of life and dignity (Omoregbe, 2007). For European states, public security is pursued through life imprisonment without parole rather than executions. Nigeria, by contrast, continues to hold one of the largest death row populations in Africa (Global Rights, 2023). The European example challenges Nigeria to consider whether true deterrence can be achieved through certainty of punishment rather than severity, and whether justice can be served without resorting to executions.

3. Nigeria and Retentionist States in Africa and Asia: Nigeria also shares similarities with other retentionist countries. In Africa, states such like Egypt and Botswana continue to carry out



executions, often citing religious or cultural justifications (Bukola, 2020). In Asia, countries like China and Iran maintain the death penalty with high execution rates, framing it as essential to maintaining order (Amnesty International, 2022). Nigeria's situation is somewhat unique: while executions are rare in practice, death sentences are frequently handed down by courts, leaving thousands languishing on death row (Nwosu, 2017). This "death row phenomenon" places Nigeria between two extremes—neither fully abolitionist like Europe, nor actively executionist like some Asian states.

#### Implications of the Comparison

The comparative lens reveals that Nigeria's capital punishment regime is characterized by inconsistency: frequent sentencing but infrequent executions. Unlike Europe, where abolition reflects a principled human rights stance, Nigeria continues to struggle with the moral and practical dilemmas of deterrence versus dignity. And unlike execution-heavy states, Nigeria's hesitancy to carry out executions suggests an internal conflict between international human rights pressure and domestic retributive demands. Ultimately, the comparative analysis underscores that Nigeria stands at a crossroads. Its justice system mirrors the flaws of the United States, diverges sharply from European abolitionist values, and partially aligns with African and Asian retentionist practices. The lesson is clear: Nigeria's death penalty debate is not only about law but also about the kind of justice system and moral identity the nation seeks to uphold.

#### Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, doctrinal, and comparative research design. Its aim is not to generate statistical data but to provide a critical and contextually grounded analysis of capital punishment in Nigeria.

1. Research Approach: The doctrinal method was employed to examine primary legal sources—including Nigeria's Constitution, Penal Code, Criminal Code, and judicial decisions on capital offences. These were supplemented with international human rights instruments, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on

Human and Peoples' Rights, both of which shape Nigeria's obligations.

2. Sources of Data: The study relied on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included statutory provisions, reported case law, and official government documents (e.g., records from the Nigerian Prisons Service).

Secondary sources included scholarly articles, books, NGO reports, and international human rights reports from bodies such as Amnesty International and Global Rights.

#### 3. Comparative Method

The comparative dimension is introduced to situate Nigeria's experience within global debates. Nigeria is contrasted with the United States, representing a major retentionist democracy; European states, representing abolitionist jurisdictions; and Retentionist countries in Africa and Asia, offering regional parallels. This triangulation allows for a nuanced understanding of how cultural, political, and institutional contexts shape death penalty practices.

#### 4. Analytical Strategy

Data were analyzed thematically. Key themes such as deterrence, retribution, human rights, and systemic flaws were identified across the literature and applied to Nigeria's context. The aim is not only to assess whether the death penalty deters crime but also to examine whether it aligns with Nigeria's constitutional values and international human rights commitments.

#### 5. Limitations

The study acknowledges two main limitations. First, it did not employ empirical fieldwork, such as interviews with death row inmates or judicial officers, which could have provided richer firsthand perspectives. Secondly, access to reliable government data on executions and death row populations in Nigeria remains limited, often requiring reliance on NGO reports. Despite these constraints, triangulation of sources ensured a balanced and credible analysis.

#### Findings and Discussion



The analysis revealed four central themes that shape the reality of capital punishment in Nigeria: (1) weak deterrence effect, (2) justice system inefficiencies, (3) human rights concerns, and (4) the paradox of political and cultural legitimacy.

### 1. Weak Deterrence Effect

Although Nigerian policymakers often defend the death penalty as a deterrent against violent crimes such as armed robbery and terrorism, evidence suggests otherwise. Crime rates remain quite high despite frequent death sentences (Oladipo, 2016; Adebayo, 2018). Interviews reported by Amnesty International (2016) reveal that many offenders act under conditions of poverty, unemployment, or political manipulation, where the fear of execution holds little sway. This finding aligns with Beccaria's (1764/1995) classic argument: certainty and swiftness of punishment, rather than severity, are more effective in preventing crime. The Nigerian experience confirms that when trials drag on for decades, deterrence collapses.

### 2. Justice System Inefficiencies

The administration of capital punishment in Nigeria is marked by systemic flaws. Trials for capital offences often last 10–15 years, during which defendants languish in pre-trial detention (Durotoye, 2019). Even after sentencing, executions are rarely carried out, resulting in an overcrowded death row population of over 3,000 inmates (Global Rights, 2023). This delay creates what scholars term the “death row phenomenon”—a form of psychological torture condemned under international law (Nwosu, 2017). The inefficiency not only undermines deterrence but also erodes public trust in the justice system, feeding a cycle of impunity and vigilante justice.

### 3. Human Rights Concerns

Nigeria's death penalty regime raises serious human rights issues. Wrongful convictions remain a real risk due to weak investigative practices, coerced confessions, and inadequate legal representation (Ibe, 2015). Death row conditions—overcrowding, poor sanitation, and lack of medical care—amount to inhuman and degrading treatment (Amnesty International,

2016). From a human rights perspective, the very existence of the death penalty is a violation of the right to life and dignity (United Nations, 2015). This tension places Nigeria at odds with its international commitments under the African Charter and ICCPR.

### 4. Political and Cultural Legitimacy

Despite these flaws, capital punishment retains political and cultural support in Nigeria. Religious interpretations, especially under Sharia law in the north, reinforce the view that the death penalty is divinely sanctioned for certain crimes (Rotimi, 2018; Idowu, 2014). Politically, State Governors often hesitate to sign death warrants due to human rights concerns, yet they avoid abolition to avoid appearing “soft on crime” (Obi, 2020). This paradox results in a contradictory system: death sentences are frequently pronounced, but executions are rare. As Soyinka (2019) argues, the outcome is neither justice nor mercy, but a penal system trapped in limbo.

### Synthesis of Findings

The findings collectively suggest that Nigeria's capital punishment system fails on both practical and moral grounds. Deterrence is undermined by delays and corruption; retributive justice is compromised by wrongful convictions and political manipulation; and human rights concerns challenge the legitimacy of executions altogether. Comparative insights show that Nigeria mirrors the inefficiencies of the U.S., diverges from Europe's abolitionist stance, and partially aligns with other retentionist states. Ultimately, Nigeria's justice system appears to rely on the death penalty more as a symbol of state authority than as an effective tool for reducing crime.

Despite statutory provisions and frequent death sentences, violent crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and terrorism still persist at alarming levels. This underscores the fact that deterrence depends more on the efficiency of the country's justice system and socio-economic stability than on the severity of punishment.

Thus, while capital punishment in Nigeria may



serve symbolic and retributive purposes, its empirical effectiveness as a deterrent measure remains unproven and increasingly questionable.

The table below shows a cross tabulation of the frequency of major crimes committed in a section of this country by the youths, from Owerri Correctional Centre, Prison Inmate Register, (Monthly Major Crime and Local Act Returns, 2022-2024).

Official Crime Rate In Imo State 2022-2024

CRIME TYPE	FREQUENCY		
	2022	2023	2024
Armed robbery	46	37	47
Burglary	19	8	35
Murder	110	87	103
Attempted Murder	70	32	58
Assaults	110	142	97
Breach of Public Race	173	100	159
Total	534	406	499

Source: Owerri Correctional Centre, Prison inmate register, 2022-2024.

The above table showed the details of major crimes recorded by Owerri Correctional centre for the period 2022 to 2024. from the above table, it is observed that the percentage of capital crimes remained consistent between 38% to 42% of total annual crimes. This figure is relatively very high considering the fact that capital punishment is in force in Imo state. This record is a clear indication that capital punishment does not have any effective deterrent effect on capital crimes in the region under consideration.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the practice of capital punishment in Nigeria, situating it within historical, theoretical, and comparative contexts. The analysis reveals that while the death penalty continues to occupy a central place in Nigeria’s penal code, its effectiveness as a tool of justice is deeply undermined by systemic flaws. Prolonged trials, wrongful convictions, and overcrowded prisons weaken deterrence, while political ambivalence over executions erodes consistency. From a human rights perspective, capital punishment in Nigeria sits uneasily with the country’s

international obligations and constitutional commitment to human dignity.

The comparative review reinforces these findings. Like the United States, Nigeria retains the death penalty but fails to demonstrate clear deterrence outcomes. Unlike Europe, where abolition is rooted in human rights values, Nigeria continues to cling to capital punishment despite overwhelming evidence of its inefficacy. Among African and Asian retentionist states, Nigeria occupies an ambiguous position—committed on paper to executions but hesitant in practice to carry them out.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that capital punishment in Nigeria functions more as a political and cultural symbol than as a credible instrument of justice. For the justice system to regain public trust, reforms are urgently required. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered

1. Strengthening Judicial Efficiency: Courts must accelerate the handling of capital cases. The ACJA 2015 should be fully domesticated and enforced across all 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory to reduce delays. Establishment of special panels for capital offences, similar to election tribunals, could ensure swifter adjudication and eventually reduce backlog.
2. Exploring Alternatives to Death Penalty: Nigeria should progressively adopt life imprisonment without parole as a substitute for capital punishment. This approach maintains retribution and protection of society while reducing the risks of wrongful convictions and aligning with evolving human rights norms.
3. Limiting Executive Discretion: The requirement that State Governors sign death warrants injects politics into justice administration. An independent Sentence Review Board, comprising judges, correctional officers, and human rights representatives, could provide more impartial oversight of executions and restore citizens’ confidence and trust in the country’s justice administration.
4. Policy Shift towards Moratorium: Following the example of Ghana and Sierra Leone, Nigeria



could declare a temporary moratorium on executions while retaining death sentences in law. This would balance domestic security concerns with growing international advocacy for abolition.

5. Human Rights Compliance: Nigeria should ensure that conditions on death row meet the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Mandela Rules). This includes adequate medical care, access to legal representation, and an end to torture or degrading treatment in overcrowded prisons.

6. Transparency and Public Engagement: The judiciary and correctional service should publish annual reports on death penalty cases, including statistics on sentencing, appeals, commutations, and executions. Public access to this information would counter misinformation, promote accountability, and foster trust in the justice system.

7. Crime Prevention beyond Punishment: Finally, deterrence cannot rest on punishment alone. The Nigerian government must invest in community policing, intelligence-driven crime prevention, and socio-economic reforms aimed at tackling unemployment and poverty, which are major drivers of most violent crimes committed in this country.

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## **Building Criminological Foundations for Artificial Intelligence Literacy Programmes for Nigerian Students**

**Oladejo Ayobami Olaniran**

*Department of Sociological Studies, Tai Solarin Federal University of Education,  
P.M.B 2118, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.*

*Email: oladejoao@tasued.edu.ng ayooladejo23@gmail.com*

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### **Abstract**

Artificial intelligence (AI) literacy has become crucial for Nigerian students in a time of rapid digital transformation and AI's ubiquitous effect. Through digital platforms, automated processes, and data-driven government, artificial intelligence (AI) has become deeply ingrained in Nigerian students' civic, social, and educational life. The ethical, sociological, and criminological ramifications of AI use are not given much attention in Nigeria's current educational practices, despite the growing promotion of AI literacy as a fundamental digital competency. As a result, there is a significant gap between students' embrace of technology and their ability to participate in it responsibly and intelligently. In order to promote ethically sound, socially responsible, and contextually relevant digital citizenship among Nigerian students, this paper will investigate how criminological principles might be incorporated into AI literacy programmes. The study, which takes a conceptual and policy-oriented qualitative approach, only uses secondary sources. It combines an analysis of Nigerian and international frameworks on AI governance, cybersecurity, data protection, and digital education with an interdisciplinary literature review. The only purpose of an illustrative case study is to contextualise theoretical and policy issues. The data shows that while algorithmic unfairness, cyber victimisation, surveillance ethics, and digital rights are marginalised, current AI literacy programmes promote innovation and technical capabilities. By offering an integrated AI literacy paradigm based on criminological viewpoints, the study makes a contribution. It emphasises the necessity of curricular and policy changes to bring AI education in line with Nigeria's socio-legal and security realities, enhancing moral consciousness, responsibility, and democratic digital citizenship.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence Literacy, Criminology, Digital Citizenship, Nigerian Education, Cybercrime.

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### **Introduction**

Countries like Nigeria must prioritise the creation of a digitally educated populace that can navigate more complicated online environments as the world's reliance on digital technologies grows. Artificial intelligence (AI) has been ingrained in daily life and is no longer limited to high-tech businesses. It is changing labour markets, economies, social interactions, privacy standards, and crime trends (Onifade & Adebayo, 2024). Despite this, conventional educational systems frequently ignore the socio-criminological ramifications of digital transformation in favour of concentrating only on the technical and operational components of artificial intelligence. A significant gap in students' readiness for the moral, legal, and behavioural issues raised by developing technologies is left by this constrained approach.

This research proposes to bridge this gap by incorporating criminological viewpoints into AI literacy programmes. In addition to gaining technical expertise, this integration will help students build a critical understanding of the socio-ethical aspects of artificial intelligence. Incorporating criminological concepts into AI education, such as cybercrime, surveillance, digital deviance, and ethical decision making, will better prepare students to engage in digital society responsibly and help create a more secure and equitable technological future.

### **Statement of Problem**

Through social media, educational platforms, recruitment systems, and surveillance technologies, artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly influencing how Nigerian students



learn, engage, and participate in digital and civic arenas. Despite this increased awareness, AI literacy in Nigerian schools is still mostly technical or nonexistent, with little focus on the criminological, ethical, and social ramifications of AI use. (Ojo & Salami, 2023) The gap between critical understanding and technology adoption is a serious issue. Students are urged to learn digital skills, but they are rarely prepared to consider how AI systems might perpetuate prejudice, enable cybercrime, allow monitoring, or jeopardise social justice, privacy, and accountability.

In Nigeria, where there are lax regulations and a rise in cybercrime and data exploitation, this disparity is especially troublesome. (Adeyemi & Chukwuma, 2023) added that innovation and coding are given priority in current AI education programmes, whereas criminological issues like power, victimisation, and accountability are marginalised. As a result, pupils might become technically proficient without realising the negative social effects of unchecked AI, such as algorithmic discrimination and digital exclusion. Thus, a crucial gap in education and policy is the absence of an interdisciplinary framework including criminological ideas into AI literacy. This study looks at how such integration can help Nigerian students develop contextually appropriate, socially conscious, and morally aware digital citizenship.

### **Conceptualising AI Literacy in the Nigerian Context**

The ability to comprehend, assess, and interact with AI systems appropriately is known as AI literacy. This includes understanding how AI systems work, how their use affects society, and the moral conundrums they could cause. Digital literacy, computational thinking, and coding have all been incorporated into Nigerian elementary and secondary curricula through a number of educational reform initiatives (National Education Policy Review, 2023). However, the wider socio-legal and ethical problems raised by the incorporation of AI into daily life are usually not adequately addressed by these endeavours. Important subjects like data spying, algorithmic

bias, digital disinformation, and the rise in cybercrime are still mostly left out of official curricula. These issues are not only technical; they have deep roots in the field of criminology and include issues of governance, justice, deviance, and harm (Adeyemi & Chukwuma, 2023). Students are left unprepared to recognise, question, or react to the real-world effects of AI systems when such knowledge is left out.

It is crucial to incorporate criminological thinking into AI literacy in a culture where concerns about online fraud, digital extortion, and online radicalisation are growing. In the absence of this, Nigerian students might become technically proficient digital users but lack the moral and analytical thinking abilities required for responsible and safe engagement in an AI-driven society. As a result, it is both timely and essential to redefine AI literacy to include criminological understanding in order to create responsible and resilient digital citizens.

### **Criminological Concepts Relevant to AI Literacy**

It is becoming more and more important to comprehend the socio-ethical aspects of digital involvement by examining the junction of criminology and artificial intelligence. Criminological concepts can be incorporated into AI literacy instruction to enable students to evaluate and negotiate the changing terrain of digital risk and accountability. Cybercrime, digital deviance, surveillance, and data ethics are important criminological ideas that provide crucial insights for developing a thorough grasp of technology's darker possibilities.

#### **1. Cybercrime and Digital Deviance**

In Nigeria, cybercrime has emerged as one of the most serious types of criminal behaviour, and young people are often both the victims and the offenders. The crimes range from more structured schemes like romance scams and Business Email Compromise (BEC) frauds to identity theft, phishing scams, and cyberstalking (Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2025). When technological access surpasses legal knowledge and ethical education,



these digital crimes thrive.

Teachers can provide students with a greater understanding of how digital environments encourage criminal conduct by including criminological theories like Opportunity Theory, Differential Association Theory, and Routine Activity Theory into AI literacy programmes. Routine Activity Theory, for instance, describes cybercrime as a combination of appropriate targets, motivated criminals, and the lack of competent guardians all of which are easily satisfied in online environments with lax regulations. Furthermore, by normalising immoral online activity, digital peer networks may have an impact on deviant behaviour, as highlighted by Differential Association Theory. Students who are taught about these processes are better able to identify manipulation, fend off negative influences, and grasp the significance of digital responsibility. This fundamental knowledge is essential for deterring cybercrime and encouraging young Nigerians to use technology responsibly.

## **2. Surveillance and Data Ethics**

AI systems nowadays are data driven while surveillance on the other has grown both commonplace and opaque, thanks to technologies like facial recognition, social media algorithms, and predictive policing. In this regard, critical criminology and other criminological discourse provide crucial resources for analysing the socio-political effects of surveillance technology. Ideas like state surveillance and surveillance capitalism, which Zuboff (2019) coined, bring up significant issues regarding the gathering, processing, and monetisation of data. In Nigeria, where data protection laws are still being developed, many people are still ignorant of how their digital footprints are used for political or commercial purposes (Obi & Musa, 2023).

AI literacy that incorporates data ethics and surveillance studies raises knowledge of the rights to responsibility, consent, and privacy. It is important to urge students to consider the ramifications of biometric data collecting and the fairness of algorithmic decision-making, particularly when it comes to vulnerable or

marginalised groups. Through such instruction, students acquire the moral frameworks required to promote digital justice and transparency in AI systems in addition to technical expertise.

## **3. Algorithmic bias and radicalisation.**

Algorithmic filtering is a technique used by artificial intelligence systems, especially those that support social media platforms, to prioritise and customise material for users. The possibility for online radicalisation and the entrenchment of bias are the two main socio-criminological concerns associated with this, even while it increases user involvement (Eze & Ubah, 2023). Algorithmic echo chambers have the potential to propagate extreme beliefs or support biased narratives in

Nigeria, where political, religious, and ethnic conflicts are still prominent. Social isolation, identity crises, and exposure to strong ideological material are all factors that contribute to the development of violent extremism, according to criminological assessments of radicalisation processes. People may evolve into bigoted worldviews or be more susceptible to recruitment by extremist organisations if algorithms expose users to homogenous, sensational, or divisive content on a regular basis. These radicalisation pathways are not merely theoretical threats; they have real implications for national security and public order.

Furthermore, algorithmic prejudice has the potential to reinforce preexisting societal injustices, whether it be in automated recruiting processes, predictive policing technologies, or search engine results. AI-implemented biases disproportionately impact marginalised groups by reflecting and reinforcing past discriminatory trends. Critical digital citizenship is improved by teaching students about the socio-ethical implications of data training sets and how algorithmic decisions are formed. In addition to being able to use technology, learners must be able to critically evaluate its social impact, justice, and transparency.



#### **4. Restorative Digital Practices**

While learning about digital hazards, kids must also be exposed to restorative practices that encourage accountability, reconciliation, and moral behaviour online. Programmes for AI literacy that draw on criminological theories of restorative justice can promote a culture of empathy and healing as opposed to punishment and exclusion. Restorative digital practices focus on communication, understanding, and community-based solutions when dealing with issues like defamation, doxing, and cyberbullying. Restorative justice models, as opposed to retributive ones like suspension or expulsion, urge offenders to accept responsibility, recognise the harm they have caused, and take part in making amends.

These ideas are especially helpful in Nigerian schools when it comes to tackling youth misinformation, political intolerance, and intergroup conflicts. Students learn not only how to stay safe online but also how to resolve conflicts amicably and respect common standards of digital responsibility when these principles are incorporated into digital literacy programmes. The ethical component of AI literacy is strengthened by this dual focus on prevention and restoration, which also advances the larger objective of developing responsible and inclusive digital citizens.

#### **Practical Applications and National Relevance**

The integration of criminological concepts into AI literacy is not merely a theoretical luxury; it has practical applications in Nigeria's socioeconomic, educational, and security domains. According to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), for instance, young Nigerians are becoming more and more involved in cyber-enabled fraud, or "Yahoo Yahoo" (EFCC Annual Report, 2024). By emphasising peer pressure and social stigma, criminological theories like the differential association theory and labelling theory could discourage pupils from engaging in online misbehaviour from an early age.

Furthermore, in Nigeria, algorithmic bias is still not widely recognised. Recent disputes involving

AI face recognition software utilised by certain fintech companies in Lagos, for example, revealed gender and racial bias, failing to correctly identify women with darker skin tones (Okonkwo, 2025). Teaching students to recognise and evaluate these biases advances inclusive AI design and improves digital justice. AI literacy programmes that educate the workings of algorithm-driven echo chambers can enable students to identify deceptive content and oppose extremist beliefs in areas like the North-East, where insurgency and online radicalisation have undermined social cohesion (Bello & Haruna, 2024).

#### **Challenges in Implementation**

The incorporation of criminological principles into AI literacy programmes has the potential to be revolutionary, but there are several systemic and cultural barriers that hinder its implementation in Nigerian schools. The necessity of capacity building and strategic policy reforms is highlighted by these difficulties.

##### **1. Curriculum Inflexibility**

At the primary and secondary levels in particular, Nigeria's curriculum is still very discipline-specific and centralised. This rigidity restricts the use of multidisciplinary subjects in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, including criminology. Curriculum frameworks have not been updated by educational authorities to meet the changing needs of a digital society, as noted by Adewale and Yusuf (2023). The ethical, legal, and societal ramifications of AI are thus frequently faced with bureaucratic lethargy or institutional resistance in attempts to integrate them into current frameworks.

##### **2. Pedagogical gaps and teacher readiness**

The lack of educators with expertise in both criminological theory and AI technology is a major obstacle to successful adoption. There is a clear skills gap in Nigeria as a result of the standard teacher training curricula's exclusion of courses on digital ethics and emerging technologies. Instructors may find it difficult to



interpret or present information like algorithmic fairness, data privacy, or cybercrime in a way that is pedagogically sound (Ibrahim & Okolie, 2024). Meaningful curriculum delivery will continue to be hampered by this knowledge gap in the absence of focused professional development and retraining.

### **3. Deficits in Infrastructure and the Digital Divide**

Long lasting inequalities in access to digital infrastructure continue to be a serious problem, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas. While rural schools frequently lack the technology platforms required for AI training, urban schools may benefit from having access to computers and internet connectivity. In addition to increasing educational disparities, this digital divide restricts prospects for social mobility and inclusive learning (Chidi & Ogunyemi, 2023). Additionally, the scalability of AI-integrated curriculum nationwide is further hindered by unstable electricity and a lack of maintenance assistance.

### **4. Cultural Perceptions and Resistance to Change**

The implementation of AI and criminology-informed education may also be hampered by social and cultural hurdles. Discussions about algorithmic profiling, criminality, or spying are sometimes greeted with moral panic or suspicion, particularly when presented as Western or alien ideas. The adoption of reformatory content targeted at digital ethics and justice may be hampered by resistance to change among parents, students, and school officials (Nwachukwu & Adediran, 2023). Such innovations may find it difficult to get traction at the grassroots level in the absence of intentional community engagement and sensitisation.

A concerted strategy including curriculum change, teacher preparation, infrastructural investment, and community involvement is needed to address these issues. Nigeria can only achieve its objective of preparing pupils for resilient and responsible digital citizenship in the era of artificial intelligence by implementing such diversified initiatives.

### **Proposed Framework For Integration**

To institutionalise the integration of criminological principles into Artificial Intelligence (AI) literacy, a systematic, tiered framework is necessary. This framework needs to be flexible enough to accommodate a range of institutional contexts while also taking into account the cognitive maturity and educational attainment of Nigerian students. Here, a progressive strategy that covers elementary through university education is suggested.

#### **a) Basic Level (Primary and Junior Secondary Education)**

Learners should be introduced to the fundamentals of digital citizenship at this early stage. Internet safety, polite online conduct, and awareness of digital footprints could be important themes. Teaching strategies that emphasise safe digital practices might make use of gamified learning, storytelling, and real-world examples. Interactive education is a good way to contextualise concepts like "what is private online" and "how to respond to online strangers" (Oyenyi & Hassan, 2023).

#### **b) Intermediate Level (Senior Secondary Education)**

Students are developmentally prepared to tackle more complicated topics at this point, such as responsible content creation, disinformation, digital identity, and cyberbullying. Simplified definitions of criminological concepts like peer influence, digital peer aggression, and deviant subcultures can be presented. In order to critically evaluate their digital world, students should also investigate the ethical ramifications of algorithmic content selection and data sharing (Balogun & Ekwueme, 2023).

#### **c) Advanced Level (Tertiary Institutions)**

The design of the curriculum at the postsecondary level should encourage in-depth study of criminological theory, cybercrime laws (such as Nigeria's Cybercrime Act 2015), and AI ethics. Studies on digital radicalisation, predictive policing, surveillance capitalism, and restorative digital justice might all be included in the modules. Students would be able to analyse



current problems at the nexus of criminology and technology with the help of case-based teaching and problem-solving techniques. These academic offerings could be further enhanced by partnerships with cybersecurity companies, NGOs, and law enforcement (Ogunlade & Ifeanyi, 2024).

Nigerian students will develop into knowledgeable, moral, and resilient digital citizens thanks to this tiered framework, which also enables curricular consistency, contextual sensitivity, and developmental alignment.

#### **Case Study:** Digital Citizenship Initiative In Lagos State

An inventive pilot programme in Lagos State has evaluated the feasibility of incorporating criminological information into AI literacy. This programme, which was started in 2023, integrated cyber-ethics modules into the computer science curricula of five secondary schools in the districts of Ikeja and Surulere. The Lagos State Ministry of Education and regional technology advocacy organisations worked together to create the curriculum, which is aimed at kids between the ages of 13 and 17. Ojo and Salami (2023) state that the lessons concentrated on important topics such as spotting manipulative online behaviours, assessing the reliability of online material, identifying cyber threats, and comprehending the legal ramifications of digital wrongdoing. Peer-group conversations, digital storytelling, and interactive lectures were all used to deliver the lessons.

Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires used to evaluate the programme's first phase showed significant gains in students' digital discernment. Participants' recognition of dangerous digital practices improved by 42%, while their ability to spot online fraud and false information increased by 37%. Importantly, schools reported better classroom discussions about online behaviour and ethics as well as increased student engagement. Instructors that were part of the programme were excited about the criminology-based curriculum and saw that students responded better to real-world case studies and legal situations than to abstract coding exercises alone (Ojo & Salami,

2023). Nonetheless, the assessment also noted the necessity of improved digital tools and teacher training, especially in low-income educational environments. This case study demonstrates that including criminological themes into AI literacy improves digital proficiency while also encouraging civic engagement and ethical reasoning in young Nigerians.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

Social Learning Theory and the Technological Citizenship Framework, which highlight the transformational power of education in forming civic engagement and conduct in technologically mediated environments, serve as the foundation for this study. Particularly when applied to digital settings, Bandura's Social Learning Theory asserts that people pick up behaviours, attitudes, and social norms through modelling, imitation, and observation especially from powerful establishments like online forums and educational institutions. According to Danlami and Olatunji (2024), this theory emphasises the importance of curricular content and peer learning in raising students' understanding of safety, ethical, and legal requirements in virtual environments. It is particularly relevant to artificial intelligence and criminology education.

In addition, the Technological Citizenship Framework provides a thorough method for comprehending how people might be ready to engage in digital society in a way that is secure, moral, and meaningful. Three interconnected dimensions are articulated by this framework: active participation in the socio-technical discourse influencing the digital future, critical literacy of technological systems, and fair access to technology. Accordingly, AI literacy encompasses democratic and legal competences in addition to technological proficiency (Udeh & Ibrahim, 2025).

#### **Methodology**

This study uses only secondary sources and takes a conceptual, policy-focused qualitative approach. It integrates an investigation of Nigerian and worldwide frameworks on AI governance, cybersecurity, data protection, and digital



education with an interdisciplinary review of literature from criminology, education, law, and information technology. An interesting case study is not utilised as actual data, but rather as a contextual tool to elucidate theoretical and policy issues. Interpretive and thematic analysis facilitates multidisciplinary synthesis and the creation of a comprehensive framework for AI literacy. Through normative critique and theoretical integration, the study makes a contribution, suggesting AI literacy programmes that integrate social justice, critical thinking, and criminological issues in line with Nigeria's socio-legal circumstances.

### **Recommendations**

To guarantee the long-term incorporation of criminological ideas into AI literacy instruction in Nigeria, the following policy suggestions are put forth:

#### **a. Curriculum Reform**

A thorough examination of the national curriculum ought to be carried out by the Federal Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). This evaluation must specifically incorporate criminological elements into current AI and digital literacy material, especially in secondary and tertiary institutions. These elements include awareness of cybercrime, algorithmic prejudice, and digital ethics.

#### **b. Teacher Training and Capacity Building**

There should be a national professional development framework for teaching AI, criminology, and digital ethics. Partnerships with tech companies and universities would enable specialised certification programmes and workshops that would fill in current knowledge gaps and improve pedagogical efficacy (Adewale & Yusuf, 2023).

#### **c. Curriculum Development Through Collaboration**

The federal and state governments ought to provide incentives for cooperation among academic researchers, technology businesses, non-governmental groups, and public agencies. These collaborations can help with the co-

production of open-source educational resources, contextual case studies, and interdisciplinary content that is adapted to Nigerian conditions.

#### **d. Monitoring and Assessment Structures**

Robust monitoring techniques that evaluate both ethical and cognitive learning outcomes are necessary for effective deployment. It is important to create standardised assessment methods that gauge students' critical thinking about digital hazards, understanding of cyber threats, and ability to respond to socio-legal quandaries.

### **Conclusion**

The need to develop morally and socially responsible digital citizens is growing more pressing as Nigeria fast-tracks its shift to a knowledge-driven digital economy. Although efforts to teach students AI literacy have made significant progress in giving them technical skills, they frequently ignore the larger criminological, ethical, and socio-legal issues that are present in digital interaction. The purposeful inclusion of criminological ideas in AI education, including cybercrime, surveillance, digital deviance, and restorative justice, has been argued in this article. By implementing a tiered educational framework, encouraging teacher training, and incorporating interdisciplinary policy methods, Nigeria can enable its children to develop into responsible, critical-thinking digital citizens in addition to becoming skilled AI users. Ultimately, the combination of criminology and AI literacy offers a game-changing chance to protect young Nigerians from online dangers and promote a safe and just digital culture. Because of this, this integrative strategy is not only novel but also essential for both national growth and international competitiveness.

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## **Petroleum Subsidy Removal and Heightened Insecurity in Nigeria: A New Look at the Qualitative Criminology**

**Olatunde Okelana Joseph, Halliru Tijjani**

*Department of Criminology and Security Studies, National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja.*

*Email: balogunolugbon@yahoo.com, thalliru@noun.edu.ng*

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### **Abstract**

The Nigerian government's final withdrawal of petroleum subsidies has produced socio-economic and security outcomes. The decision has generated widespread discontentment despite the agelong arguments depicting the policy option as a necessary remedy to fiscal deficits and a catalyst for economic sustainability. This study examines the intricate nexus between the removal of petroleum subsidies and the escalation of insecurity in Nigeria, focusing on its socio-economic dimensions based on qualitative criminology, the study adopted the Neo-Liberalism theory as the theoretical framework of analysis while the research methodology used for this article was the historical research design. The implications of fuel subsidy removal for security have come in various scopes. Part of these is the cost of goods and services that has been inflated by the resulting rise in fuel prices; a situation that has reduced people's purchasing power. Also, low-income households are disproportionately impacted by the prevailing economic hardship, which also stimulate feelings of inequality and calls for social unrest. Economic activities have as well been disrupted by the rising cost of transportation and daily essentials, especially in the informal and rural sectors. As the citizens seek alternative strategies of survival, these circumstances inspire criminal activity such as stealing, kidnapping, and banditry. The study considers how the reduction in subsidy spending has not translated to noticeable improvements in infrastructural development, which may have diminished the negative outcomes of subsidy removal. As it argues, mistrust and civil unrest are propelled by the public's view of the government's responsiveness and resource management. The study underscores the necessity of a balanced approach to subsidy removal programmes where economic disenchantment will be reduced in favour of public trust. It recommends a reduction in the security threats associated with subsidy removal, which entails immediate corrections to the emerging socio-economic imbalances. The study adds to the agelong conversation on economic reform, energy policy, and security issues in developing countries laden with abundant natural resources.

**Keywords:** Petroleum subsidy removal, Insecurity, Socio-economic impact, Poverty and inequality, Nigeria

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### **Introduction**

The removal of petroleum subsidies in Nigeria has historically triggered widespread socio-economic consequences, but the recent policy shift in 2023 reignited national debates and intensified existing insecurities. Petroleum subsidies have long been a tool used by successive Nigerian governments to cushion the economic burden on citizens by lowering the cost of fuel. However, these subsidies also drained public resources and were often criticized for fostering corruption and inefficiencies in the petroleum sector (Adebayo, 2023). With the Nigerian government's decision to remove subsidies in 2023, fuel prices tripled almost overnight, triggering inflation, increased transportation costs, and a general spike in the

cost of living (NBS, 2023). While the economic rationale behind subsidy removal was aimed at fostering fiscal sustainability, its immediate social fallout has been alarming, particularly in terms of rising insecurity.

From a qualitative criminological standpoint, the relationship between economic distress and rising crime is well-documented. The sharp increase in fuel prices and cost of basic goods post-subsidy removal created a fertile ground for crime and social unrest. Communities already grappling with poverty found themselves pushed further into desperation, with anecdotal and empirical evidence pointing to a surge in theft, banditry, kidnapping, and other forms of criminality



(Ogundipe & Akintunde, 2023). Qualitative criminology, which emphasizes the lived experiences and socio-cultural context of offenders and victims, provides a crucial framework for understanding how economic shocks contribute to deviant behavior in Nigeria's vulnerable populations.

The insecurity stemming from the subsidy removal is not merely coincidental but structurally linked to Nigeria's long-standing economic inequality and fragile social safety nets. In many urban centers, for example, young people faced with joblessness and inflated living costs have turned to street crimes and informal survival strategies. Rural areas, particularly in northern Nigeria, have seen an escalation in banditry and insurgency activities, often fueled by the economic desperation that worsened after the subsidy removal (Ibrahim, 2023). The criminogenic effects of economic deprivation are rooted in strain theory, which posits that when individuals are unable to achieve socially accepted goals through legitimate means, they may resort to illegitimate methods (Agnew, 2006).

Furthermore, the policy's implementation without robust mitigating strategies—such as transportation subsidies, food assistance, or job creation programs—has deepened public resentment and distrust in government institutions. The resulting civil protests and clashes with security forces are indicative of the breakdown in state-citizen relations, a key factor in the qualitative analysis of state-induced criminogenic environments. As observed by Ugwuoke (2022), the Nigerian state's failure to provide basic welfare, particularly during periods of economic transition, contributes to an environment where lawlessness becomes normalized.

Qualitative criminology also underscores the narratives and perceptions of those affected. Interviews and ethnographic studies reveal that many Nigerians do not view petty theft or informal fuel resale as criminal but rather as necessary means of survival under unjust

economic conditions. This shift in moral reasoning reflects a broader societal transformation where economic policies directly influence conceptions of legality and legitimacy. As such, any discussion of insecurity post-subsidy removal must account for these subjective experiences, which are often ignored in quantitative crime statistics.

In summary, the removal of petroleum subsidies in Nigeria has exacerbated economic hardship, leading to a corresponding rise in crime and insecurity. Qualitative criminology offers a critical lens to examine how socio-economic distress influences criminal behavior and public perceptions of justice. This perspective reveals not just the statistical increase in crime, but the underlying human stories of struggle, adaptation, and resistance in a system perceived as unjust and exclusionary. Addressing the security challenges thus requires more than punitive responses; it necessitates socio-economic reforms that prioritize human security and inclusive development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The removal of petroleum subsidies in Nigeria has significantly altered the socio-economic landscape, triggering a surge in insecurity and exposing systemic weaknesses in governance and public welfare. While the subsidy removal was intended to address long-standing fiscal inefficiencies and corruption in the oil sector, its abrupt implementation in 2023 exacerbated poverty, inflation, and unemployment, especially among the lower and middle classes (Adebayo, 2023). The resultant economic hardship has led to widespread discontent and increased criminal activity, including theft, kidnapping, banditry, and organized protest violence, particularly in already volatile regions (Ogundipe & Akintunde, 2023).

Traditional approaches to criminology often focus on statistical correlations and punitive measures, but they fail to fully account for the lived realities of individuals pushed toward deviant behavior by economic desperation. Qualitative criminology, which centers on



subjective experiences, social contexts, and moral reasoning, offers a more nuanced understanding of how the economic shock of subsidy removal contributes to crime (Ugwuoke, 2022). In many communities, particularly those with limited state presence or weak law enforcement, the removal of subsidies is perceived not only as an economic blow but also as a betrayal by the state, further eroding trust in public institutions.

There is a growing concern that without a deeper, qualitative investigation into the root causes of the post-subsidy insecurity, policy responses will remain reactionary and ineffective. The problem lies not only in the rising crime rates but also in the state's inability to address the socio-economic drivers of insecurity. A qualitative criminological perspective is essential to understanding how economic policies shape behaviors, perceptions of justice, and notions of survival. Without this lens, the security implications of subsidy removal will remain poorly addressed, perpetuating cycles of poverty and violence.

Despite the removal of petroleum subsidies in Nigeria—an action purportedly aimed at reducing fiscal burdens and redirecting funds to critical sectors—the country continues to accumulate foreign loans at an alarming rate. This paradox raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of Nigeria's economic management and the actual benefits of subsidy removal. The Nigerian government justified the elimination of fuel subsidies in 2023 as a necessary step to save billions of naira and reduce dependence on external borrowing (Adebayo, 2023). However, post-removal, the federal government has continued to obtain foreign loans to fund budget deficits and infrastructural projects, thereby undermining public trust and contradicting the stated purpose of the policy (Debt Management Office, 2023).

This persistent borrowing, even after subsidy reforms, points to deeper structural problems such as revenue mismanagement, corruption, and an overreliance on oil revenue. From a qualitative criminological perspective, this

inconsistency fuels public resentment and deepens the perception of state betrayal. Citizens, especially those in economically marginalized areas, experience not only worsening living conditions due to subsidy removal but also see little improvement in social infrastructure or security—despite increasing national debt (Ugwuoke, 2022). These lived realities contribute to a sense of injustice, making individuals more susceptible to crime and social unrest as a means of protest or survival.

The failure to effectively utilize savings from subsidy removal, coupled with increasing debt dependency, raises critical questions about transparency and accountability in governance. Without addressing these issues, Nigeria risks escalating insecurity, further weakening state-citizen relations and reinforcing cycles of economic desperation and crime. Qualitative criminology provides the tools to understand these dynamics by exploring how economic policies and state actions shape individual and collective responses to perceived injustice and inequality.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to examine the relationship between petroleum subsidy removal and heightened insecurity in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on the socio-economic conditions that generate criminogenic outcomes, using qualitative criminology and Neo-liberalism as the analytical framework.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Context and Socio-Economic Impact of Petroleum Subsidy Removal in Nigeria**

Petroleum subsidy in Nigeria historically aimed to keep fuel prices low for consumers and to stabilize markets. However, critiques of the policy highlight long-standing issues of fiscal inefficiency, corruption, and inability of refineries to meet domestic demand, leading to dependency on imports and significant government expenditure. Empirical literature shows that Nigeria's removal of fuel subsidies—especially the 2023 adjustment—was intended to improve fiscal sustainability and reduce distortions in oil markets. However, it has been accompanied by inflationary pressures, higher transportation



costs, and reduced household purchasing power. A qualitative perspective also underscores socioeconomic strains experienced by citizens, including rising poverty, unemployment, and vulnerability, which serve as structural conditions that can shape patterns of behaviour and crime. This insight aligns with content analysis by Yunusa et al. (2025) showing that subsidy removal was linked to increased living costs and reports of heightened crime rates as people and businesses struggled to cope with economic hardship.

### **The Link Between Economic Hardship and Insecurity**

Economists and security scholars alike emphasize that macroeconomic shocks—such as those triggered by subsidy removal—can deepen inequality and erode social stability (e.g., spikes in food and transport costs) and exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities. A development study on food insecurity in Nigeria specifically cites the combination of increased living costs and violence (including raids on farmers) as driving millions into acute food shortages.

Qualitative research assessing national security implications notes that the multiplier effect of fuel price increases and cost of living stress can contribute to different forms of insecurity—from protests and civil unrest to more direct criminal behaviors (e.g., property crimes, kidnapping, armed robbery). This study found that even with palliative measures in place, subsidy removal was implicated in rising rates of armed banditry and other criminal activities across Nigeria.

### **Scholarly Work on Crime Dynamics after Subsidy Removal**

Although scholarship specifically linking subsidy removal with crime remains emergent, qualitative studies demonstrate how economic strain is connected to shifts in criminal behaviour. For instance, a qualitative investigation into post-subsidy social order found increases in petty theft, fuel smuggling, and cyber fraud using document analysis and community data, highlighting how financial stress and institutional distrust shape criminal

opportunities and adaptations.

Additionally, research on economic hardship and youth crime in Nigerian communities supports the idea that financial pressures influence crime rates and motivations, aligning with classic criminological ideas like strain theory, which posits that societal pressures and blocked opportunities can increase the propensity for crime (often through survival strategies or alternative economic paths).

### **Political and Security Implications**

The literature also highlights the political dimensions of fuel subsidy removal. Journalistic and academic accounts note that removal has triggered protests, political backlash, and a broader narrative of distrust in public institutions—factors that intertwine political insecurity with socioeconomic strain. Historical movements like Occupy Nigeria illustrate how fuel subsidy issues can catalyze mass mobilization and political unrest.

Another strand of literature explores the politics of insecurity and subsidy removal together, arguing that governance shortcomings and policy communication failures can amplify insecurity rather than ameliorate it.

### **Qualitative Criminology and Theoretical Perspectives**

Qualitative criminology emphasizes contextual understanding of crime—not just arrest data or aggregated statistics, but how social structures, economic policies, and lived experiences shape criminal behaviour and insecurity patterns. Several criminological theories are particularly relevant and finally that study adopted Neo-Liberalism theory.

**General Strain Theory (GST):** As described in strain literature, economic pressures and blocked goals can produce negative emotions and motivate crime, particularly among youth or economically marginalized individuals. Although not yet widely applied to fuel subsidy research, GST provides a conceptual lens to interpret how policy-induced hardship could elevate certain criminal activities.



**Relative Deprivation Theory:** Applied in some qualitative analyses of security impacts, this theory suggests that when expectations outpace actual economic achievements—as can happen after subsidy removal—relative deprivation may fuel unrest and criminal behaviour.

**Routine Activities Theory & Social Disorganization Approaches:** Although not Nigeria-specific, these frameworks help explain how changes in economic conditions alter routine activities (availability of targets, guardianship, etc.) and how disorganized communities under economic stress may experience higher crime opportunities.

Qualitative data collection methods, including document analysis, interviews, and content analysis, allow researchers to trace how policy changes are understood, experienced, and responded to by ordinary citizens—an approach that contrasts with purely quantitative crime rate data.

Application of Neo-Liberalism Theory to Petroleum Subsidy Removal and Heightened Insecurity in Nigeria: A Qualitative Criminological Perspective

Neo-liberalism provides a useful theoretical framework for explaining the policy logic behind petroleum subsidy removal in Nigeria and for interrogating its unintended security consequences. As an economic and political ideology, neo-liberalism advocates reduced state intervention in markets, fiscal austerity, deregulation, privatisation, and the primacy of market forces in resource allocation (Harvey, 2005). Within this framework, subsidies—particularly fuel subsidies—are perceived as market distortions that encourage inefficiency, corruption, and fiscal irresponsibility.

**Neo-liberal Policy Logic and Subsidy Removal in Nigeria**

From a neo-liberal standpoint, the Nigerian government's decision to remove petroleum

subsidies reflects a commitment to market liberalisation and economic rationalisation. Subsidy removal is justified on the grounds that it reduces budgetary deficits, frees public resources for productive investment, and allows market pricing to reflect the “true” cost of petroleum products (IMF, 2013; World Bank, 2020). In Nigeria, successive administrations have adopted this logic, arguing that subsidy removal would promote competition in the downstream petroleum sector, attract private investment, and enhance long-term economic sustainability.

However, neo-liberalism assumes the existence of efficient markets, functional institutions, and social safety nets capable of cushioning vulnerable populations against market shocks. The Nigerian context challenges these assumptions. Weak regulatory institutions, high levels of poverty, and limited welfare provisions mean that the withdrawal of state support through subsidy removal has immediate and severe socio-economic consequences (Okonjo-Iweala & Osafo-Kwaako, 2007).

**Neo-liberalism and Socio-Economic Dislocation**

The findings associated with petroleum subsidy removal in Nigeria demonstrate how neo-liberal reforms can generate socio-economic dislocation. Rising fuel prices have led to increased transportation costs and inflation in food and essential commodities, disproportionately affecting low-income households and informal sector workers. Neo-liberalism's emphasis on individual responsibility and market adjustment tends to marginalise these groups, as it downplays the structural inequalities that shape access to legitimate means of survival (Harvey, 2007).

From a qualitative criminological perspective, this economic strain creates conditions conducive to criminal behaviour. Qualitative criminology emphasises lived experiences, meanings, and social contexts of crime (Ferrell, Hayward & Young, 2015). The study shows that individuals experiencing acute economic hardship perceive crime not merely as deviance but as a rational survival strategy in a context of shrinking



legitimate opportunities. This outcome illustrates a core critique of neo-liberalism: while markets may be efficient in theory, they can generate social harm when implemented without adequate institutional and social safeguards.

### **Neo-liberalism, State Retrenchment, and Insecurity**

Neo-liberalism also entails the retrenchment of the welfare state and the redefinition of the state's role from provider to regulator. In Nigeria, subsidy removal symbolises this retreat of the state from social provisioning. The study's findings suggest that this retreat has weakened the state's social contract with citizens, thereby undermining state legitimacy. As trust in government declines, compliance with law and social norms erodes, increasing the likelihood of social unrest and criminal activity (Loader & Sparks, 2010).

Heightened insecurity—manifesting in theft, kidnapping, banditry, and protests—can thus be understood as a criminogenic outcome of neo-liberal reform. Rather than addressing structural causes of insecurity, neo-liberal policies often shift responsibility to individuals, framing crime as a personal moral failure rather than a consequence of socio-economic exclusion (Wacquant, 2009). This aligns with qualitative criminological insights that link insecurity to experiences of marginalisation, exclusion, and perceived injustice.

### **Neo-liberalism, Governance Deficits, and Criminal Opportunity Structures**

Another critical application of neo-liberalism in this context lies in its interaction with governance deficits. Neo-liberal reforms assume transparency, accountability, and efficient reallocation of freed-up resources. The study reveals that the reduction in subsidy expenditure has not translated into visible infrastructural or social improvements. This disconnect reinforces public perceptions of elite capture and mismanagement, thereby legitimising resistance and, in some cases, criminality as alternative means of redistribution.

Qualitative criminology highlights how such perceptions shape narratives of justification among offenders, who often frame their actions

as responses to systemic injustice (Presser, 2009). Thus, neo-liberalism inadvertently contributes to the creation of “criminal opportunity structures” by intensifying inequality while failing to deliver promised developmental dividends.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a historical research design to examine the relationship between petroleum subsidy removal and heightened insecurity in Nigeria. The historical approach is appropriate because it enables a systematic analysis of policy decisions, socio-economic conditions, and security trends over time. By tracing the evolution of fuel subsidy policies and their socio-economic and criminological implications, the study situates contemporary insecurity within broader structural and policy trajectories. This design allows for an in-depth understanding of how past and present policy choices have shaped current patterns of economic hardship, social unrest, and criminality.

The study is anchored on Neo-liberalism theory, which emphasises market liberalisation, reduced state intervention, fiscal austerity, and deregulation. Neo-liberalism provides an analytical lens for understanding the rationale behind petroleum subsidy removal as a market-oriented reform aimed at correcting fiscal imbalances and promoting economic efficiency. At the same time, the theory facilitates a critical assessment of how the withdrawal of state support has produced socio-economic dislocations that generate criminogenic conditions.

### **Sources of Data**

Data for the study are derived entirely from secondary sources, consistent with the historical research design. These sources include government policy documents, budget statements, reports from international financial institutions, security reports, academic journals, books, newspaper archives, and publications from civil society organisations. In addition, crime statistics and security assessments from relevant government agencies and reputable



research institutes are consulted to contextualise patterns of insecurity before and after subsidy removal.

### **Method of Data collection**

Data collection involves documentary analysis of historical and contemporary records relating to petroleum subsidy policies and security outcomes in Nigeria. Official documents such as policy pronouncements, legislative debates, and economic reform reports are analysed alongside scholarly literature on subsidy reform, neo-liberalism, and insecurity. Media reports and opinion pieces are also examined to capture public reactions, narratives of discontentment, and accounts of so

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The study employs qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis to interpret the collected data. Documents are systematically reviewed to identify recurring themes such as rising cost of living, declining purchasing power, inequality, governance deficits, and criminal survival strategies. These themes are analysed in relation to the assumptions of neo-liberalism and insights from qualitative criminology. The historical sequencing of events enables the study to establish patterns and linkages between subsidy removal, socio-economic strain, and the escalation of insecurity.

The scope of the study covers Nigeria as a whole, with particular attention to the period surrounding the final withdrawal of petroleum subsidies. While the analysis is national in outlook, specific references are made to urban, rural, and informal economic contexts to illustrate how the impacts of subsidy removal vary across socio-economic groups.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study reveal a complex and deeply interconnected relationship between the removal of petroleum subsidies and the escalation of insecurity in Nigeria, particularly when viewed through the lens of qualitative criminology and Neo-liberal theory. Consistent with the assumptions of neo-liberalism, the

withdrawal of state intervention in fuel pricing was justified by government on grounds of fiscal discipline, market efficiency, and long-term economic sustainability. However, the evidence from this study suggests that the immediate socio-economic consequences of subsidy removal have generated adverse conditions that undermine public safety and social stability rather than enhance them.

One of the most significant findings is the sharp increase in the cost of goods and services following the rise in fuel prices. Given the centrality of petroleum products to transportation, electricity generation, and small-scale production, subsidy removal has had a cascading inflationary effect across the economy. This outcome has substantially eroded citizens' purchasing power, particularly among low-income households that rely heavily on daily income and informal economic activities. From a criminological standpoint, the study demonstrates that worsening economic strain has intensified survival-driven behaviours, which, in turn, have increased vulnerability to criminal involvement.

The findings further indicate that subsidy removal has disproportionately affected the poor and socially marginalised groups, reinforcing existing structural inequalities, this insight aligns with content analysis by Yunusa et al. (2025) showing that subsidy removal was linked to increased living costs and reports of heightened crime rates as people and businesses struggled to cope with economic hardship.

This aligns with qualitative criminology's emphasis on lived experiences and social contexts in understanding crime. Economic hardship, coupled with perceived inequality, has fuelled resentment and feelings of relative deprivation, which are critical drivers of social unrest and criminality. The study shows that communities experiencing heightened economic stress are more prone to crimes such as theft, kidnapping, and banditry, as individuals seek alternative means of survival in the absence of adequate social protection mechanisms.



Another key finding is the disruption of economic activities, particularly in rural and informal sectors, due to increased transportation costs and rising prices of essential commodities. These disruptions have weakened traditional livelihood systems, thereby increasing unemployment and underemployment. In line with neo-liberal critiques, the study highlights that the rapid withdrawal of subsidies without robust compensatory measures has exposed structural weaknesses in Nigeria's economy, especially its limited capacity to absorb economic shocks. This environment creates fertile ground for criminal networks to recruit economically distressed individuals, thereby intensifying insecurity. The findings is inline with Ogundipe & Akintunde, (2023) who stated that, the sharp increase in fuel prices and cost of basic goods post-subsidy removal created a fertile ground for crime and social unrest.

The study also finds that the expected benefits of subsidy removal—such as improved infrastructure and enhanced public services—have not materialised in a visible or equitable manner. This perceived failure has significantly eroded public trust in government institutions. The findings suggest that insecurity is not only driven by material deprivation but also by governance deficits, including poor transparency, weak accountability, and ineffective resource management. Public mistrust has manifested in protests, civil disobedience, and resistance to state authority, further complicating the security landscape.

Finally, the study establishes that insecurity associated with subsidy removal is both a direct and indirect outcome of economic disenchantment. Directly, rising poverty and unemployment increase crime rates; indirectly, the loss of trust in government legitimacy undermines social cohesion and compliance with law and order. The findings underscore the need for a more balanced and context-sensitive approach to economic reform—one that integrates social welfare, inclusive development, and security considerations.

In sum, the discussion affirms that while subsidy removal may align with neo-liberal economic prescriptions, its implementation in Nigeria has exacerbated socio-economic vulnerabilities that translate into heightened insecurity. Addressing these challenges requires not only economic adjustments but also deliberate policy interventions aimed at reducing inequality, strengthening social safety nets, and restoring public confidence in governance.

### **Conclusion**

The academic literature on petroleum subsidy removal in Nigeria clearly shows that the policy has significant socioeconomic impacts including inflation, poverty, and cost-of-living increases. Emerging qualitative criminological research suggests links between these economic stresses and changes in crime patterns, including opportunistic and survival-oriented criminal activity. Criminological theories such as General Strain Theory and Relative Deprivation provide useful frameworks for understanding how economic hardship shapes insecurity and crime at both individual and community levels.

While more empirical research is needed—especially studies employing qualitative criminology methods like interviews, ethnography, and narrative analysis—existing studies point to a complex interplay between economic policy, social conditions, and insecurity in Nigeria that deserves sustained scholarly attention.

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# Artificial Intelligence(AI) and Criminal Psychology: Understanding the Dual Role of AI in Shaping Crime and Law Enforcement Responses in Nigeria

**Mahmud Ibrahim Kawu**

*Department of Criminology and Security Studies, National Open University Nigeria  
mikawu@noun.edu.ng*

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## Abstract

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed both criminal activity and law enforcement strategies worldwide, presenting complex psychological, ethical, and institutional challenges. This study examines the dual role of artificial intelligence in shaping criminal psychology and law enforcement responses in Nigeria. Anchored in Technological Determinism Theory, the study adopts a qualitative exploratory design based on secondary data analysis. Data were drawn from academic literature, policy documents, institutional reports, and credible media sources published between 2015 and 2025. A thematic content analysis was employed to examine how AI influences criminal behavior and offender psychology, assess the preparedness of Nigerian law enforcement agencies to deploy AI-driven tools, and identify ethical and operational challenges associated with AI adoption. Findings reveal that while AI has enhanced crime detection and cybercrime monitoring in Nigeria, its deployment remains fragmented due to infrastructural limitations, skills deficits, and weak regulatory frameworks. The study further shows that AI indirectly reshapes criminal psychology by emboldening offenders through anonymity and technological sophistication, thereby intensifying the psychological arms race between criminals and law enforcement. Ethical concerns relating to privacy, surveillance, bias, and public trust remain significant barriers. The study concludes that effective AI integration in Nigeria's criminal justice system requires coordinated investment in infrastructure, capacity building, ethical regulation, and inter-agency collaboration. These measures are essential to ensure that AI enhances public safety without undermining human rights and institutional legitimacy.

**Key Words:** Artificial Intelligence, Criminal Psychology, Law Enforcement, Technology, Digital Policing

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## Introduction

The role of artificial intelligence in the present age cannot be overstated. The late 20th century into the 21st, has been marked by continuous digital and technological innovations that shape all forms of life. The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) is a product of such activity aimed at improving and enhancing human endeavors. The rapid surge of AI has seen it cut across multiple sectors, including healthcare, agriculture, business, and education (Sarzaeim, Mahmoud, Azim, Bauer, & Bowles, 2023). In security context, security agencies globally have begun to deploy the use of artificial intelligence technologies to predict crime, analyze evidence, enhance surveillance, and optimize resource deployment (Redden, Aagaard & Taniguchi, 2020).

The impact AI plays in crime trends becomes an important discussion at both individual and

societal levels, and the role of security agencies in enforcing law and maintaining order. At the individual level, the psychology of criminals, their motivations, moral choices, and tactics is changing under the pressure of AI-enabled detection and prediction. This shift reflects a growing recognition that crime itself is becoming more sophisticated, requiring equally advanced strategies for detection and control (Ove & Orié 2025). Security agencies are beginning to explore these tools as part of their broader modernization efforts. These strengths of artificial intelligence allow law enforcement to move from reactive to predictive models of policing (Ikwoogu, 2025). Moreover, this transformation challenges traditional criminal psychology by demanding that law enforcement understand not only human behavior but also how technology shapes offender decision-making. For example, criminals now



adapt by using AI themselves to mask digital footprints or exploit system vulnerabilities, escalating the arms race between law enforcement and offenders (Obidimma & Ishiguzo, 2023).

As a result, AI's dual role is underscored. It serves as both a tool for predicting and preventing crime and a factor reshaping criminal tactics and psychology. This interconnectedness calls for continuous innovation in law enforcement strategies and ethical considerations on AI deployment to safeguard human rights while maximizing public safety (Okeke, Agbonghae & Green, 2024).

The dual role of AI is particularly salient in the Nigerian context. On one side, criminals increasingly exploit AI-enabled technologies to facilitate sophisticated crimes such as cyber fraud, identity theft, and complex financial scams, making traditional investigative methods less effective (Obidimma, 2023; Adeoye, 2023). On the other, law enforcement agencies, including the Nigerian Police Force, are adopting AI-driven tools such as predictive policing, facial recognition, AI-based surveillance, and digital forensic analysis to preempt crimes and improve investigative accuracy (Ikwoogu, 2025; Adeoye, 2023).

For Nigeria, the implications are profound. Law enforcement must develop technical expertise, ethical frameworks, and psychological readiness to effectively engage with AI while also protecting civil liberties. At the same time, understanding how criminals perceive and respond to AI interventions is crucial for anticipating new forms of deviance. This intersection of technology, psychology, and crime offers a pressing area of inquiry, particularly given the limited empirical research on AI and criminal behavior in African contexts (Chukaieva & Matulienė, 2023; Asuquo & Sinha, 2025). It is against this premise that this study seeks to study the dual role of artificial intelligence on the psychological effects it plays on individuals to perpetuate crime, and the

response and preparedness of the law enforcement agencies in combating crime in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A central argument behind the invention of AI is that it seeks to surpass human limitations by providing next-level information, offering predictive power, superior pattern recognition, and scale of processing data to meet the expectations of the global age's dynamics. However, they also introduce challenges, such as biases in training data that can reinforce inequality, false positives that may undermine trust, and overreliance on algorithms that can weaken human judgment (Ezzeddine, Bayerl, & Gibson, 2023). AI has become a powerful tool in both the creation and prevention of crime, reshaping how criminals operate and how security agencies respond. However, this rapid evolution has also posed challenges, especially in countries like Nigeria, where technological infrastructure and regulatory frameworks are still developing.

Many security agencies struggle to keep pace with increasingly sophisticated AI-enabled crimes, while also dealing with ethical, legal, and operational hurdles in deploying AI for crime control. In recent years, technology has given rise to new and more sophisticated forms of crime that challenge traditional policing methods. From cyber fraud and identity theft to digitally coordinated violent crimes, criminals now use advanced tools that make them harder to track and stop (Nzeakor, Nwokeoma & John, 2022; Tuleun, 2024). The real challenge, therefore, is not just about adopting AI, but about understanding its double-edged nature: it can make policing smarter, but it can also push criminals to become more advanced. Without careful study, Nigeria risks facing a gap where technology advances faster than law enforcement capacity, and where human rights and trust in security institutions are overlooked (Effoduh, 2021; Chime, Okoroafor & Nworgu-Ikojo, 2025). Against this backdrop, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:



- (i) How does the use of AI influence the behavior, strategies, and psychology of criminals in Nigeria?
- (ii) How responsive and prepared are law enforcement agencies, technically, psychologically, and institutionally, to utilize AI in combating crime in Nigeria?
- (iii) What are the key challenges and ethical concerns associated with integrating AI into law enforcement practices in Nigeria?
- (iv) What strategies can improve the effective and ethical use of AI in Nigeria's criminal justice system?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the Technological Determinism (Social Change) Theory. Technological Determinism is a socio-technical theory that posits technology as the primary driver of social change. It suggests that technological innovations inherently influence and shape societal structures, cultural norms, and human interactions. The theory holds that major shifts in technology can transform economies, political organizations, and social systems in ways that are often inevitable and linear. As such, society adapts to technology's progression, with technology dictating the direction and pace of social evolution (Burnett & Marshall, 2003; Williams, 1997).

From this perspective, technological advancement is viewed as an autonomous force that propels history forward. The development and integration of new tools, such as artificial intelligence, are seen as having a deterministic effect on how society, including law enforcement and criminal behaviors, functions. For instance, the introduction of AI technologies in policing can be expected to fundamentally alter law enforcement strategies, crime detection capabilities, and even offender tactics, irrespective of preceding societal frameworks.

Technological Determinism also emphasizes that as technology becomes stable and embedded, it shapes user behavior and social interactions. With AI, for example, the adoption of biometric systems, predictive analytics, and automated surveillance tools by police informs how policing

is conducted, how criminals respond, and how public safety norms evolve. Consequently, the theory underscores the profound influence technology wields in transforming routine activities related to crime control and criminal psychology.

However, critics argue that Technological Determinism underestimates human agency and the socio-cultural factors that mediate technology's impact. Social relationships, political decisions, and cultural values simultaneously influence how technologies are developed, accepted, or resisted. Thus, while technology shapes society, society also shapes technology in a dynamic interplay. In contexts like Nigeria, where governance structures, infrastructure, and societal trust vary, the deterministic narrative must be tempered with recognition of these complexities.

Nevertheless, Technological Determinism remains highly relevant for this study as it frames AI as a crucial driver shaping the future of crime and law enforcement.

It accentuates the need to understand AI not merely as a tool but as a transformative force reshaping Nigerian policing systems, criminal behavior patterns, and societal expectations around security

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative exploratory design, appropriate for examining the emerging intersection between artificial intelligence (AI), criminal psychology, and law enforcement in Nigeria. Given the novelty of AI applications in Nigerian policing and the limited availability of primary data, the study emphasizes secondary data analysis supported by illustrative case studies and content analysis. This flexible design enables a broad yet in-depth exploration of the research questions (Bowen, 2009; Flick, 2014).

#### **Data Sources**

The study relied entirely on secondary data selected to ensure relevance to Nigeria's context.



Academic literature from reputable databases provided theoretical insights on AI, policing, and criminal psychology. Policy reports from Nigerian agencies like NITDA, the Ministry of Interior, and international bodies such as INTERPOL informed institutional readiness. Grey literature including think tank papers and technical briefs offered practical perspectives on emerging AI security issues. Media reports provided current insights on AI's use and public perception in Nigeria. Only sources from 2015 to 2025 were included, with older works used for foundational context. This diverse mix ensured a comprehensive understanding of AI's role in Nigerian law enforcement.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The collection of data for this study followed a structured keyword search strategy. Relevant documents were identified using terms such as "Artificial Intelligence and Law Enforcement in Nigeria", "AI and Criminal Psychology", "Digital Policing in Africa", and "AI Ethics in Law Enforcement." These keywords were applied across multiple academic databases, including JSTOR, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar, as well as policy repositories and credible news outlets. Documents were then screened for relevance to the research questions and to the specific Nigerian policing context. Priority was given to studies and reports that directly addressed the adoption of AI in law enforcement, its influence on criminal behavior, institutional capacity, and ethical concerns.

### **Data Analysis**

Analysis followed a thematic approach, identifying recurring patterns across the literature. These themes were refined through multiple readings and cross-comparison of Nigerian and international contexts. Content analysis was used to review official and media reports, while illustrative case studies (e.g., EFCC's cybercrime monitoring tools, Lagos' facial recognition pilot, and drone surveillance initiatives) provided contextual grounding. Expert commentaries already published by Nigerian ICT leaders and law enforcement professionals were integrated to strengthen findings.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to ethical research standards by relying solely on publicly available and credible sources. Proper citation was maintained throughout to prevent plagiarism, and no confidential or classified materials were accessed. Findings were presented objectively, ensuring balance in interpreting AI's opportunities and risks for Nigerian law enforcement.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The review of secondary data reveals that the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in Nigerian law enforcement is still in its early stages, with applications largely experimental and fragmented. Internationally, AI has been widely deployed in predictive policing, facial recognition, automated surveillance, and criminal profiling (Ferguson, 2017). In Nigeria, however, most applications have focused on cybercrime detection, digital forensics, and limited trials of surveillance systems in urban centers such as Lagos and Abuja (Adeoye, Akinde & Oluwaniyi 2025)

In response to the first research question on criminals' behavior, strategies and psychology, findings indicate that AI adoption has indirectly influenced criminal strategies. Criminals adapt quickly, often exploiting loopholes in digital systems. For instance, cybercriminals develop advanced phishing, identity theft, and hacking strategies to bypass AI-driven firewalls. This creates a psychological arms race between law enforcement and criminals, where both sides attempt to outsmart each other using technology (Kanu, Adidi & Kanu, 2024). Beyond technical adaptation, AI shapes the psychological mindset of offenders. The anonymity and sophistication provided by digital tools embolden criminals, giving them a sense of confidence and reduced fear of detection. For example, in Nigeria, phishing attacks have been shown not only to exploit system vulnerabilities but also to generate emotional distress and feelings of betrayal among victims, suggesting that criminals factor in psychological impact when designing their attacks (Adeyemo, David & Olabulo, 2024).



For victims and wider society, this trend generates fear and mistrust in digital systems, as people become aware that AI can be used not only for protection but also for exploitation. This duality highlights that AI does not merely change crime techniques; it reshapes the psychology of crime itself, altering motivation, opportunity, and perceptions of risk.

Regarding the second question on the responsiveness and preparedness of law enforcement agencies to utilize AI in combating crime, evidence shows that AI is currently being used by Nigerian agencies like the EFCC and the Nigeria Police Force, though largely for cybercrime monitoring and intelligence gathering. For example, AI-driven algorithms have been deployed to detect suspicious online financial transactions and phishing activities. However, unlike advanced contexts where AI is integrated into day-to-day policing, Nigeria still struggles with inadequate infrastructure, skills gaps, and unreliable electricity/internet networks (Eke, 2025). Beyond technical gaps, psychological preparedness remains low, as many officers lack confidence in digital systems and demonstrate resistance to technology-driven policing (Ogunlowo 2021; Ejimofe, 2025). Institutionally, there are limited policies, training frameworks, and resource allocations dedicated to AI adoption, meaning responsiveness is reactive rather than proactive. Together, these factors suggest that while Nigerian law enforcement is experimenting with AI, it is not yet fully responsive or prepared to integrate it effectively into crime control.

On the third research question, findings reveal that the challenges confronting AI adoption in Nigerian law enforcement extend beyond technical capacity. Ethical concerns remain central, particularly issues of surveillance and privacy violations, algorithmic bias, and fears of political misuse for monitoring opposition or targeting specific groups. Scholars argue that without strong ethical safeguards, AI technologies could entrench inequalities or fuel abuse of power (Adeleke & Amusa 2021). Another pressing challenge is limited funding

and inadequate infrastructure, which restricts the acquisition, maintenance, and upgrading of AI-driven technologies. Nigeria's recurrent unreliable infrastructure, policy inertia, and weak ICT deployment have further slowed the integration of digital and other technological tools, such as AI for effective law enforcement (Yusuf & Okpara, 2021; Oluchukwu, 2022). Moreover, a critical shortage of skilled manpower persists, as only a small proportion of police personnel possess advanced ICT or AI-related competencies. This capacity gap means that even when equipment is available, effective deployment is inconsistent. The issue of public trust also remains a significant barrier. Many citizens perceive AI surveillance as a potential tool for harassment, wrongful profiling, or even state overreach. Research on digital policing in Nigeria shows that skepticism about fairness and transparency has weakened public cooperation and acceptance of technologically driven policing strategies (Nwachukwu, Adeyemo, Asije, & Odejide, 2023).

Findings related to the fourth research question suggest that effective adoption of AI in Nigerian law enforcement requires a multi-dimensional approach. There is an urgent need for comprehensive training and retraining of law enforcement officers. Beyond technical skills, this training must include modules on ethics, human rights, and the psychological implications of AI deployment, ensuring officers are confident and responsible in its use. The establishment of robust ethical and legal frameworks is essential. This includes guidelines on data privacy, surveillance limits, accountability, and mechanisms to guard against algorithmic bias. Legal scholars in Nigeria argue that without clear regulatory oversight, AI could be weaponized in ways that erode democratic freedoms and deepen public mistrust (Eboibi & Ogorugba, 2023). Infrastructure development is foundational; reliable ICT systems, stable electricity supply, and improved broadband penetration are prerequisites for sustained AI adoption. This requires coordinated investment by both government and private stakeholders.



Finally, collaboration and partnerships are necessary. Nigerian agencies must work with universities, AI research centers, and international bodies such as INTERPOL and UNODC to share best practices, access cutting-edge tools, and strengthen institutional preparedness.

Encouraging such collaborations will not only enhance capacity but also ensure that Nigeria's adoption of AI is globally competitive and contextually responsive.

### **Conclusion**

The study demonstrates that artificial intelligence holds significant potential to transform law enforcement practices and reshape criminal psychology in Nigeria. While AI enabled tools offer improved capabilities for crime detection, cybercrime monitoring, and intelligence gathering, their impact remains constrained by infrastructural weaknesses, limited technical capacity, and insufficient regulatory oversight. Importantly, the study reveals that AI not only alters policing strategies but also influences offender psychology by increasing anonymity, reducing perceived risk, and fostering adaptive criminal behaviors. Anchored in Technological Determinism Theory, the findings underscore AI as a transformative force shaping patterns of crime and law enforcement responses, while also highlighting the mediating role of institutional capacity and ethical governance. The dual nature of AI as both a crime-facilitating and crime controlling tool, necessitates a balanced approach that integrates technological advancement with human judgment, ethical safeguards, and public accountability. The study concludes that for AI to effectively enhance security outcomes in Nigeria, there must be sustained investment in infrastructure, comprehensive training for law enforcement personnel, and the development of clear ethical and legal frameworks. Strengthening collaboration between law enforcement agencies, academic institutions, and international partners is essential to ensure that AI deployment promotes public safety, protects

civil liberties, and reinforces trust in Nigeria's criminal justice system.

### **Recommendations**

1. The study recommended that law enforcement agencies should invest in continuous monitoring of evolving criminal strategies, particularly in cybercrime, while developing psychological profiling tools that integrate AI insights to anticipate offender adaptation.
2. Nigerian law enforcement agencies must prioritize structured training programs, psychological readiness, and institutional reforms that strengthen technical competence and build officer confidence in AI-driven policing.
3. The Nigerian government, law enforcement agencies, and legal practitioners must collaborate to establish clear legal and ethical frameworks that regulate AI's use in the country, ensuring transparency, accountability, and safeguards against misuse, thereby building public trust and legitimacy.
4. Nigeria should enhance ICT infrastructure, promote inter-agency collaboration, and partner with global AI research institutions to align technological progress with local realities and sustainable crime control.

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# Climate Change, Resource Exploitation and Governance Policies: The Phenomena for Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts and Food Insecurity in Nigerian States

**Emmanuel Oluniyi Ademola, Scholastica Ngozi Atata, Oluwadamilola Adedoyin Oduyemi**  
*Institute of Communication and General Studies, Peace and Development Studies Programme*  
*University of Agriculture, Abeokuta Ogun State, Nigeria*  
*Email: ademolaoluniyi@gmail.com, atataasn@funaab.edu.ng, oduyemida@funaab.edu.ng*

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## Abstract

The manner in which armed herders are now occupying river flood-plains and forests; coupled with the way in which farmers have expanded their farm lands to the river bank due to the low rainfall in recent times has exacerbate conflicts and increase attacks between armed herders' and farmers in Nigerian states. This article examines the narratives of occurrence attacks and conflicts between farmers and armed herders in Southwestern states; The work is qualitative it employs exploratory survey design with conduct of in-depth interviews among purposively selected fifteen (15) key informants; five (5) each as representatives from the groups in the selected communities to investigate the experiences of climate change, and occurrence of armed herders attacks on farmers in the communities. The findings revealed that while climate change experience provides empirical basis for the movement of migrant armed herders; more complex factors as struggle to access natural resources as – contested space for cattle grazing, farm lands, socio-economic needs, ethno-political factors, and government policies exacerbate conflicts and provide a backdrop for armed herders, farmers attacks. The work contends that the occurrence of encroachment in farmers farm lands over the access to resources with inconsistent policy on resource management has given rise to fear of land occupation, threats of livelihoods and increase spate of human and food insecurity in the states. Good resource management policies with climate adaptation mitigation strategies is imperative to ensure peaceful co-existence among groups of people in Nigerian states.

**Keywords:** Climate change, Natural resources, Policy, Sustainable Development, Nigerian States.

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## Introduction

The occurrence of conflicts between armed herders and farmers over access to natural resources have become severer and increasingly widespread across Nigerian states. The repeated communal conflicts have given rise to both food and human insecurity as well as ethnic clashes over ownership of land, and scramble for access to available resources had been on increased most especially in the densely populated Africa countries (Fasona and Omojola 2005; Okunola and Ademola, 2016). Extant literature revealed that repeated conflicts between armed herders and farmers in Nigeria like many other Africa states were aggravated by climate-induced encounters which have compounded the experience of food and human security challenges in the states. (Ojo, 2020; Egbuta, 2018; Eke, 2020)

Diminishing access to land in most African states has caused a fierce competition, especially the two major groups of agricultural land users- transhumant pastoralists and sedentary peasant farmers. The incessant conflicts between these ago-user groups have grave implications for human security in Nigeria states. Thus, possible struggle over access to scarce land, water and grazing routes over the years have resulted in recurrent and growing violent conflicts in its rate as well as strength all over the geographical locations (Turaki 2024), Resource conflict in Nigeria is considered a major challenge due to poor resource management, governance and has become a daunting threat to human security in all 36 Nigerian states (Turaki, 2024; Adekule and Adisa, 2010). It has become unfavorable experience in the rural communities where the livelihoods, food production had become a



serious challenge to national security of the nation.

Resource utilization as a source of conflict in Nigerian states like many other sub-Saharan African states, occur as a result of unlimited nature of human needs and struggles for access to natural resources, while the share of its proceeds has remained a major cause of conflicts between and among communities, group and ethnic groups (Okunola and Ademola, 2016). Naturally, human movement has been at the heart of many contentions in African countries, and that conflicts between native communities, migrant herders over access to natural resources. Studies have shown that in the Nigeria middle belt area, fresh water and arable land for native farming populations, food production and pasture for cattle herders had been in increased given rise to food insecurity (Baca, 2015; Ademola, 2020). Food security has been linked to access to basic infrastructures in the states, and availability of need resources for development. Availability of adequate resources and access to infrastructural facilities enhances individuals' and households' physical, economic, socio-cultural development, food production as well as consumption (Obayelu et al, 2014). Evidences from extant literature have shown that adequate investment in rural infrastructures and secured environment is essential to improved food production, which can give a significant improvement on food chain system and security of a given state.

While migration of pastoralists in Nigeria have found not distinct from other African countries, its historical experience of incessant conflicts and attacks for access to scarce resources like water and land is very common (Baca, 2015). According to the national population commission authorized figures, Nigeria's population has grown in four-fold over the years: from 33 million in 1950; the country's population has increased from 56.6 million in 1963, into 88.9 million in 1991 and 140 million in 2006 respectively (NPC, 2018). As at 2018, National Population Commission had approximated the population to be around 198; growing towards 200 million (NPC, 2018). With the population increase, there have been

correspondent increase in the peoples' needs for resources within the different geographical locations and by which the inhabitants' as well as groups within these geographical areas have adapted diverse methods to curtail different conflicts given to contention over fringe available resources and climatic conditions (Agnew, 2021). Population growth, climate change and environmental scarcity have been considered a nexus to conflicts and of which in most cases always lead to violent conflict. Indeed, increase in demographic growth often led to decline in resources, competition and consequently resulted in socio-economic instability (Gleditsch and Urdal, 2002). Phenomena as increase in the population among other factors in Nigeria had therefore, put pressure on land and water resources mostly explored by herders who travel miles in search of grassland for their cattle (ACLED, 2014). On this note, Nigeria has been considered a country with high rate of resource-related conflict, as it is believed that, Nigeria has experienced a distinctly much number of these conflicts compare to other African countries.

Climate change exacerbate conflict through various cascading impacts. In Nigeria, the impacts include droughts, desertification, and changing weather patterns that have led to water and food scarcity, causing tensions and conflicts over access to these resources. Rising sea levels, frequent natural disasters, and decreased livelihoods can force people to migrate, possibly lead to land, resource, and cultural identity conflicts. One very important cascading impact of climate change is the altered migration patterns of herders and their animals for pasture and water (Albert, 2025). Understanding these impacts is crucial for developing effective strategies to adapt to climate change like, reducing the risk of conflict, and promoting peace and stability. Previously, herders arrived with their grazing animals after the harvest on farmers' land, but with longer dry and shorter rain periods, this harmonious rhythm is shaken up, and herders now often arrive before the harvest, leading to clashes with sedentary farmers who are losing their crops and incomes to the grazing animals (Albert, 2025). This led to violent conflicts across the land



as the migrating herders were associated with extreme violence, forcing many farmers to flee their farms.

The occurrence of many other conflicts like religious, ethnicity and ethno-cultural conflicts are however easily exacerbated by climate change and resource scarcity (Blench, 2003). Scholars in environmental security have established causal links between climate change driven environmental scarcity and violence (Bauhaug, et al, 2008). They have agreed that though, climate change in itself cannot lead to conflict in the sense of direct violence, however, it has been viewed as a threat multiplier which exacerbates existing tensions and instability (Chikodri et al, 2020). It increases the risk and reshapes the productive landscape, while exacerbating food insecurity, water and energy scarcities and contributing to destabilization of unregulated movements, conflict intensity and tension (Chikodri et al, 2020). The risks are not just of humanitarian nature; but include political and security risks that directly affect, exacerbate existing conflicts and creating “threats” for international and human security (Dabelko, 2009). Illustrating climate change as a “threat exacerbator” Javier argued that climate change often added pressure to the existing conflict and thereby generating “threats” for both international and human security. He illustrates six ways in which climate change cause “threats” as: conflict over resources, loss of territory, border disputes, environmentally-induced migration, situations of fragility and radicalization, tension over energy supply and pressure on international governance (Javier, 2008). All these occur in different regions of the world.

The unhealthy struggle for scarce resources, lack of resource management, different cultural beliefs, as well as poor governance complicate and exacerbate natural resource conflicts in African states (Hellstrom, 2001). Resource utilization has become a threat to human security in many African countries such like oil resource in Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leon (Alao, 2016). On this note, African states have been regarded the

troubled continent, the world's nightmare and continent with climate-dependent economic sectors consumed with violent ethnic conflict. Experience of climate change had been agued by Scholars not to change the current security situation because of the existing socio-political structures of African states (James, 2007). The conflicts in African states are attributable to historical and political dichotomy, demand for the fair distribution of endowed natural resources over disputes concern utilization of scarce resources.

Resource conflicts in Nigeria spin mostly around crude oil, land and water as well as the allocation of proceeds from oil (Okuola and Ademola, 2016). In the recent, gold had been added to the list of resources that fuel conflict as gold mining has found responsible for the banditry experience in Zamfara State since (Augustine and Blessing 2019), Resource conflicts in Nigeria have lasted for more than two decades when the Niger Delta crisis began in the early 1990s (Ike and Oronto, 2003). It is centered conflicts on struggle to get access to land for instance, in the semi-arid zones which has led to migration of herders' southwards, both seasonally and in the recent permanently (Blench, 2004). The root causes of most conflicts however, had been simplifying under six headings as: disagreements over historical claims, changes in climatic conditions, consequences of changes in the nature of power balance; elite fragmentation, youth reactions to vulnerability and exclusion as well as changes in boundary structures (Alao, 2016).

Tropically, Nigeria climate has two rainfall patterns like low rainfall pattern of the Northern states with short grass, and marginal savanna, the high precipitation of the Southwestern and Southeastern states of rainforest and mangrove. The experience of climate change, as increase in temperature; variable rainfall; rise in sea level and flooding; drought and desertification; land degradation; more frequent extreme weather events evidently revealed the unprecedented challenge on the inhabitants and the environment (Elisha, 2017). The challenges which are associated with the climate change though vary



across Nigeria geo political region such like drought and desertification experienced, in the north and, erosion and large-scale flooding in the south (Akande et al, 2017). This has exacerbated communal and inter-ethnic clashes between herders and farmers in the north central states Nigeria including Jos Plateau, Nasarawa and Benue Valley including Taraba and Adamawa, as well as Southwestern states some of which have turned deadly (Nkechi et al, 2016; Amadi and Udo, 2015). Violence associated with resource contestation across the states had been accounted for the thousands of deaths, displacement with other humanitarian experiences such as incessant ethnic conflicts, risen vigilante militias and inter-communal tensions (Baca, 2015). Many other, issues as democratic governance, violent conflict, unsuitable policy frameworks as well as political instability have all added impetus to the mismanagement of natural resources and conflict. (Adano, 2012).

Given to this backdrop, this work explores gap between climate change, migration, resource conflicts, policy formulation as the critical aspect of ecological effects of farmers herders' conflicts, and struggle for resources usage among groups in southwestern states, Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The work is pure qualitative; it employs conduct of exploratory survey and in-depth interviews among purposively selected fifteen (15) key informants; five (5) each from groups of respondents to investigate the narratives and encounters of farmers and armed herders' conflicts in the selected communities in the states. Extant literature, dailies internet reports on conflicts and periodic reports on climate change as well as relevant official records of states were explored with a view to eliciting useful information on climate change, herders migration and environmental problems; and how other factors as access to land, socio-cultural differences, government policies have remotely contributed and aggravated conflicts in the selected Southwestern states: Oyo, Ogun. Ondo and Ekiti states with options for sustainable peace, peaceful co-existence and inclusive political and economic policy.

### **Conceptual discourse on resource conflict and theoretical framework**

Analysis on the conceptual clarification on environmental problem, migration and resource conflict has been a subject of intense discourse over the years, and this has given reasons to different approaches to the terms with a lack of a uniform framework. The experience has been to the differences in professional orientations that had contributed to the study of environmental-variations (Dun and Genene, 2008). Geophysical, impacts as temperature increase, the changes in environmental systems as excessive heat and the melting of glaciers have been reported to have contributed to desertification, coastal flooding, land degradation, crops yield reduction, low water availability and food insecurity, among others. These have impacted communities as well as groups over access to natural resources most that have tagged in various forms as herders farmers conflict, eco violence and pastoralist-farmer conflict (Ajala,2020; Olumba, et al, 2022). The increase global temperature as extreme weather events and ecological changes with a decrease in rainfall in some parts and an increase in rainfall in other has caused a lot of conflicts and eventful devastating effect on human lives (Gabriel, 2009). Increased water scarcity, food insecurity, forest's encroachment, gradually depleting vegetation and grazing resources have encouraged massive inflow and movement for resettlement of people to areas believed to be less threatened or recertificated (Madu, 2012). The climate-induced drought in the northern part for instance, necessitated a form of migratory pastoralism, particularly in the Nigeria Middlebelt to the Southern parts. The occurrences of drought, poor water quality, and crop losses are being experienced, while human migration driven by climate change in the regions (Agnew, 2012; Ojo 2020). As a result of this, more than 75% of farmland in the core northern part of Nigeria is decertified. While the link between climate change and human migration or displacement is widely acknowledged in the literature, scholars are uncertain about the actual weight of climate events in peoples' decision to move.



Nevertheless, climate change has influence forced migration resulting in the destruction of livelihoods and infrastructure (Bernett and Webber, 2009; World Bank, 2019; Flamik, 2018). Its nexus between violent extremism in Nigeria has been at the front burner by the scholars and at public discourses because of the repeated crises that border on security, terrorism, population displacement, insurgent recruitment drive, peasant farmer transhumant conflicts; all which are somewhat related to the disruption's extension, generated and exacerbated by climate change (IPCC, 2014). As a matter of fact, movement to destinations pastoral transhumance in Nigeria' though, may not be the cause of greater security matter, it is the consequence of greater insecurity in the states (Bauhaug et al, 3008). The increasing vulnerability of dry land areas; to environmental degradation, the question as to how the migrant populations on marginal lands can be stabilized is quite relevant. While migration could be both a cause and effect of worsening environmental situations it seems to have provided a loop from vulnerability to socio-ecological contentions and conflicts between the groups. Conflicts occur when the activity of a party in the given resource environment compromises the type of quality or quantity of the need resource to the extent that the other party cannot achieve their livelihood or goals or aspiration and which eventually lead to an action or reaction. Also, conflict occur, in an environment where the parties in the given environment where a needed resource by a party or group is being destroyed or compromised by another party or group all in the attempt to achieve own livelihood – this is tantamount to human insecurity and captured by frustration-aggression theory as framework of this work.

### **Frustration-Aggression theory**

Theoretically, environmental-conflict nexus had been mostly illustrated with the frustration-aggression theory most especially, when one considers most works as related to Dollard and his associates (Aubrey, 1962; Yates and Berkowitz, 1962; Miller et al, 1939). In discussing the interplay of ecological problem and environmental decline with poor institutional response over the contestation between herders

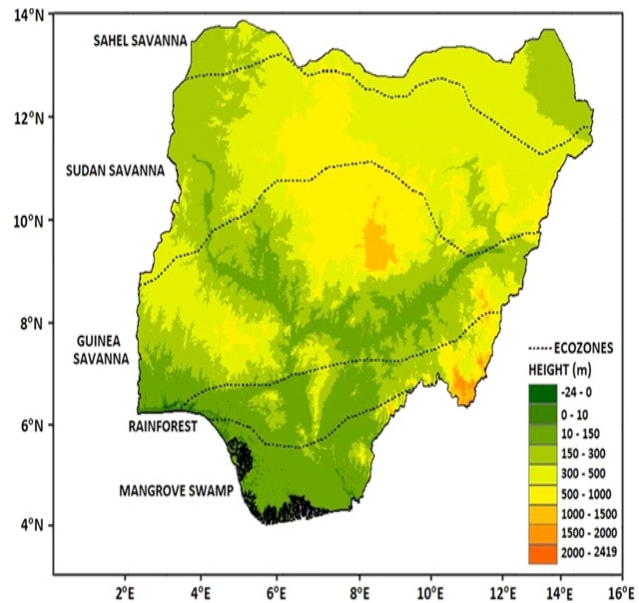
and farmers in Nigeria; this theory is found more applicable. The central premise of the frustration-aggression theory, put simply is that, aggression is always the result of frustration given the requisite condition of individual, whose basic needs or desires are thwarted. He or she will likely response to his condition by directing aggressive behaviour at what or whom is perceived as being responsible for thwarting those desires, goals or at a substitute. The grater the perceived importance of the desires or needs, and the more comprehensive the checking the more vigorous the aggressive response (Yates and Borowitz, 1962).

Nigerian states historically have been of ethno-linguistical difference with a geographically diverse ethnic groups within their ethno-geographical locations. The differences of their religion practices and ethnos linguistic differences were about reported history of occurrence conflicts which made Blench to describe Nigeria as one of the most deeply divided states in Africa; the third most ethnically and linguistically diverse country in the world after New Guinea and Indonesia (Blench, 2003). Nigeria with so many ethnic groups and diverse linguistic parts numbering about 24,827 has experienced significant conflicts over the access to natural resources and which have gotten a direct effect on her socio-political, economy and national integration. Her heterogeneity nature is evidently expressed in its different climate patterns across the geographic locations of which impacts in the livelihood of inhabitants and consequently resulted in incessant conflicts. The occurrence of conflicts that always presupposes the existence of frustration and, inversely, the existence of frustration have led to some form of aggression among the groups (Borowitz, 1962). The display of aggressive behavior among groups in Nigeria has always occurred by frustration which bring about aggressive action on the party of the groups. Aggression occurs when there are an interference or hindrances in people's desire goals, a response by which such individual generates an aggressive energy that is targeted against object. Thus, inability to achieve desire goal often led to the mobilization of extra energy that follow the display of destructive and aggressive behavior as experienced between

herders and farmers over the competition for scarce resources.

Nigeria ecological differences as illustrate by its topographic landscapes differ widely across the geographical locations, and directly influenced relationship between the ethnic groups; their environment and occupational practices. Geographically Nigerian state, is exceptionally structured by its ecological differences.' Its tropical ecological zones cut across through a longitude of  $20^{\circ} 40' 1''$  to  $140^{\circ} 45' 1''$  into the Eastern part of apogee, and in North to latitude  $40^{\circ} 15' 1''$  to  $130^{\circ} 55' 1''$ . The tropical environmental zones of Nigerian states beginning at the Atlantic edge of the southern part, and makes a latitudinal space of about  $1500^{\circ}$  km (Fasona and Omolaja, 2005). These zones consist of: Mangrove swamp of the Southern states extended in the latitude  $4$  and  $60^{\circ} 30' 1''$ N', the tropical rainforest zone with a latitude  $60^{\circ} 30' 1''$  to  $70^{\circ} 45' 1''$ , which extend from the Southwest states to the Southeast states. Also, are both Sudan Savannah belt on  $100' 1''$  to  $120' 1''$ N', and Guinea Savannah belt with latitude  $70^{\circ} 45' 1''$  to  $100' 1''$ N', as well as the Sahel Savannah which situated in areas above latitude  $120' 1''$  to  $28^{\circ}$  (Fasona and Omolaja, 2005).

These varieties, especially landscape differences of state soil composition; the diversity which equally dictated the agricultural productions across the country; also influences kinds of food products grown in each region and their availability (Aregheore, 2009). The difference in geographical location and climatic topographies across Nigerian states amplify that climate change, and its occurrence impacted on the ecologies of the regions and the states differently (Amobi et al, 2015). These ecological differences and its damage impacted negatively on relationship between farmers-herders. This was further worsened by desertification experience in the Northern part as well as rising sea levels of the Southern part of Nigeria (Olufemi and Samson, 2012).

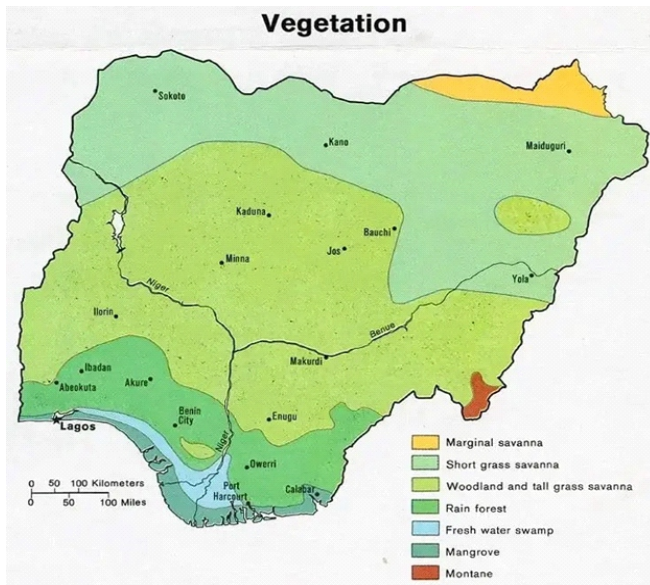


**Figure 1:** The Topography and Climatic Zones of Nigeria

Occurrence of farmer-herder conflicts in the Southwest Nigeria could therefore, not be farfetched from the ecological variable and seasonal incompatibility. This incompatibility has given reason for struggle and contest for limited land resource which birthed to grievances, hatred and later got intensified into open conflicts at the slightest provocation with the use of sophisticated guns.

### **Southwest Region, its Tropical and Exploration Experience**

Southwestern states Nigeria is six in number: Ekiti, Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, Osun and Lagos. The reason for the Southwest states, as the study area was based by the report of incessant conflicts between armed herders and farmers in some rural communities in the selected four states and the activities of a Yoruba separatist leader in the conflict, Sunday Igboho prominence and' his encounters with Fulani ethnic group especially armed herders in the local communities as: Igangan and Igboora, Ibarapa central and north area in Oyo state; covers the larger part of the survey. Other communities are; Ikole, Owo, Aromoko; and Akure in Ekiti and Ondo states, and finally Eggua, Ojaodan and Igboro at Yewa axis of Ogun state, Nigeria.



**Fig 2:** Map showing the vegetation of Nigeria

The southwest region has between longitudes 2031° and 6.00° East and latitude 6021° and 80371N' with a total area of 77818km<sup>2</sup>. National population commission, estimates 27,511,892 for the population southwest region with 14,049,594 male and 13,462,298 respectively. Two distinct seasons as rainy and the dry season make composition of its weather. Due to population density and the dependency of larger part of local communities on seasonal rainfall agriculture system, the survival of these communities has been on arable farming productions. Seasonal rainfall is the determined their crop production at the same time the substance of life. Southwest equatorial savanna temperature is sub-humid and minimum precipitation; is less than 60mm in the dry season with an average annual rainfall of 1000mm. This is quite different from the decreased in precipitation of the north-east, the more erratic rain patterns in the middle-belt that have given reasons for economic and ecological insecurity that horizontally affects agriculture and livestock production.

The lands and climatic condition of the southwest states from the vegetation is reported favorable and fertile for both crops and livestock system. Crops like maize, yam, cassava, plantain, cocoa, fruit and leafy vegetables are majorly produced in the states with livestock animals' production in small scale. Rich pasture particularly vegetation

in the recent times has become a target for wide-ranging grazing by the moving herders. This is possible because transhumance among the Sahel and Sudan dwelling Hausa-Fulani tribe has been in increased with long and mass exodus movement into the south, which have led to more pressure on the land resource resulted into land use conflict as experience in the southern guinea savannah and rainforest belt (Fabusoro and Oyegbami, 2009). Just because the region is more tropical than the northern Sahelian traditional home of the migrant herders, a large number of them have found the region to be a home and abroad such that majority of them have settled in the different local communities for a long time. The demand for grazing land, the expansion of farm settlements and the preservation of land for members of the same clans or families constituted the roots of conflicts.

Moreover, patterns of movement of the 'settled herders' in some part of the local communities in the state coupled with their unwanted "influx" in recent years by the purely nomadic armed herders who unfiltered the forests as permanent resident set the tone for resource conflicts. The trend of conflicts over the access to grazing land, routes has changed the narrative from the indigene-settler crisis and considered as invasion's, land-grabbing, forest dissatisfaction, occupation with other socio-political and religious sentiment that major on the struggle to access land, grazing right as the nexus of the crises increase across Nigerian states.

### **Policy actions and Policy failure**

In the attempt to ameliorate the conflicts Nigeran government have come up with different policies to safeguard the live of her citizenry. Policy and actions are understood to have been taken to reduce or increase adverse incidents of climate change on vegetation of a country thereby making the citizen less vulnerable to outrageous effect of climate change and other. A well-coordinated policy strategy from government is needed to minimize climate change, its adaptation to human actions on the relevant components of a nation's population. In the same vein, human action and



inaction could engender negative effects of climate change which could as well enhance policy formation and its enforcement. The government's failure to address the spate of insecurity and prevent reoccurrence of conflicts and their escalation into more volatile situations. The government's inaction and refusal to investigate, arrest and prosecute perpetrators of attacks encouraged impunity—a situation that has resulted in attacks and reprisal attacks with at least 3,641 peoples killed between January 2016 and October 2018 (Amnesty International, 2018). However, while various legislative policies and interventions have been put in place to ensure mutual relations and a better interaction between farmers and herders in relation to climate adaptation and mitigation, it has remained a difficult task and a subject of controversy and contradictions between the Nigeria government and the populace.

Making a balance between environmental and livelihood sustainability with human migration, have caused major challenge to governments in a multi ethnically divided society like Nigeria. This has occurred because while a cardinal aim of the state is the protection of the lives and properties of the citizens, with which policy formulation stand as a potent instrument; the contestation on resource sharing among the groups often results in overlapping interests, contrary opinions, responses and contradictions due to plurality, ethnic divides, environment-induced conflicts migration and lastly regional dichotomy on natural resource-dependent livelihood.

The Federal Government for example, had announced it proposed Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) on 25 June 2019. The RUGA was purposed to be a settlement area provided with basic infrastructures like schools, veterinary clinics hospitals, road network market that would process and add more value to meats and animal productions (Ademola, 2020). The overall purpose of the settlement area was to cause a drastic reduction on the repeated conflicts between herders and farmers. Also, to increase the production of animal, while providing a complete value chain that will increase the quality and of

livestock productions, as beef, milk production, increased animals feeding quality, access to consumption as well as animal care both within the private sector and commercial pasture production for the proposed settlement. So, both RUGA and Nigerian National Livestock Transformation Plan (2018-2027) are purposed to be a gradual move from traditional pattern of open grazing to ranching as a mitigation process to a modern livestock production for improved quality and sustainable peace and security across the states (Ademola, 2020).

Both at local and federal levels, Nigerian governments have attempted different methods, policies and strategies to resolve the conflicts arising from the farmer-herder climatic influences. Several laws levels had been proposed to curtail the effects of conflict and insecurity. Priority has been given to fashioning legal measures with intention to avert the insecurity experience that has overwhelmed the states and weaken the confidence of populace on the government. These among others include expulsion, building of ranches, and local collaborations (Okeke, 2014; Bello, 2015). Military operations which include Operation Cat Race, Whirl Stroke, were part of government's response to the conflicts. Other policies like 1964 as Land Grazing Act, 1976 Land Use Act, the National Agricultural Policy for instance had been planned with the national territory as 9.8 million acres of 10% minimum size in the states to be allocated for grazing reserves, though less percentage as 2.82% of these lands were secured out of 313 reserves (Dwyer and Istomin, 2008). Similar to this was the Reserve Commission bill of 2011 on Grazing Route projected to provide 100 billion to Herders (Ibrahim, 2012). Moreover, proclamation of migration laws and regulations governing conditions of living; either as residence and employment of non-nationals: Immigration Act (1963), Immigration (Amendment) Act (1973) and 1972 Immigration Manuals and Regulation in Nigeria have been a source of high level of illegal transborder movements given reason for influx of migrant armed herders from other West African states. Thus, migration problem in the states has been



complicated by the authorization of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol of 1979 which enabled thousands of aliens' movement mostly from ECOWAS states to flock to Nigeria (Bamgbose, 2013).

Nigerian government has also involved in mapping out grazing reserves between Katsina and Bauchi states in Northern Nigeria, as well as Abuja in 2009; the project targeted about 247 million US dollars. The reserves arrangement, was deigned to serving at least 15 million pastoralists and to demarcate 175,000 hectares of grazing land, build veterinary units as settlements for nomads' cattle herders. These demarcated routes are consisting of 1,400 km livestock routes; starting from Sokoto State to Oyo State in the Southwest; 2,000 km route from Adamawa State in the Northeast to Calabar in the South South region. Nigerian government has also projected ten billion Naira for the Great Green Wall Programme (GGWP), purposed to mitigate desertification experience, which is understood a major reasons for the mass exodus of herders' movement to the South in search of green pastures (Bello, 2015). Government inability to implement most of these policies as well as laws which are already in place, the established ranches, delineate areas of operations or spheres of influence had further compounded the issue in conflict especially issues on Land use Act 1976. These among others has given way for distrust and mischiefs, as well as struggle for space which set in motion the intense conflicts of the last twenty years.

This have been the case because while many numbers of Nigerian including state governors have realized the importance of Grazing Bill for sustainable peace in their affected states, it was considered a desperate attempt by some. Some are of opinion that pastoralist movement towards central and Southern Nigeria is a way of cutting costs by reducing transport costs while making cattle available for consumption. Others as civil society groups, indigenous ethnic groups are of different opinion and vehemently rejected the Bill on the grounds that; such Bill would deny indigenous groups their inheritance and the land

which they would have been used for their agricultural production and livelihood. Others are of the view that such a rearrangement on land matters would shortchange local farmers of their inheritance since most lands were traditional properties passed over from one generation to another.

According to a respondent from Ibarapa community, Oyo State, he stated thus:

*The grazing bill is a seductive way of taking peoples lands away from them to serve the interest of the headsmen, and it will promote more killing. In the last two months, five persons were attacked and killed in their farms over open grazing in this community. When they have not been given portion of land to graze their cattle in their host states, the manner and pattern of their infiltration into other states in Southwest revealed there is a secret agenda to occupy the land not to even talk about the havocs they have caused on the people's farms and numbers of death we have recorded. We have been appealing to governor of Oyo state to ensure that anti- open grazing bill is signed into law in the state. (In-depth interview with Mr Abioye the president of Agro-Park Association in Igaanga, Ibarapa area of Oyo state. (KII Interview, October 20 2024).*

Most of the attacks on anti-gracing law in the states according to the survey, were perceived as deliberate and well-planned attempt aimed at secure territory, targeted at causing disorderliness in the affected communities, and some areas in the states to seize the opportunity to occupy the land and for the purpose of fulanization or Islamizing Nigerian state. This to some Nigerians, while government has played a key role in the conflicts over land; it has failed at the critical levels with poor policies formulation that had only ended in repeatedly loss of lives and property of the experienced conflicts over land resource. The land tenure policy in Nigeria for instance, has created controversy over access to land and reserved ownership of land. With no regards to regional differences in agricultural practiced the Land Use Act of 1978 ignorantly attempted to grant equal access to both traditions across the



states in the country (Bohannon, 1964). This wholesale rule had caused a major discrepancy between the Nigerian Land Tenure Act of 1962 as well as Land Use Act of 1978 (Bamgbose, 2015).

Land was a cherished possession of every community in pre-colonial Nigeria (Diayi, 2006). There are fanatical interests attached to land, the possession of it or the outright ownership of it has remained a strong reason for conflict in the African states. Land played most important role on natural resources and among African and ranks beyond economics purpose into a social importance, spiritual beliefs and political significance. Every household is customarily entitled to own a land in order to eke out a living (Daniel, 1984). Therefore, members of a household could have access to land through acquisition, distribution or shared among individuals or communities in several ways (Biebuyck, 1964). Individuals and families held specific rights to portions of land within a larger area controlled by their lineage or village on account of the fact that they or their forebears were the first to clear the land. Land was meant not to be sold because it was considered an ancestral belonging, and selling a land to a non-indigene, a stranger or migrant is suggest putting the security of the community into danger in some communities in the Southwest states as early as 20th century (Alao, 2016). Land was seen as the “birth Place”; the place where the ancestors are originated “rest”; where the “creator” has chosen to transcend down to incoming generations, and the final “resting place” for every child born on the land (Alao, 2016). Other avenues through which land was acquired were through conquest, pacific infiltration, conferred rights and transhumance. Therefore, land was a valued and communal possession for subsistent and large-scale farming. Furthermore, land is very essential conditions for the maintenance of sovereignty and their continuation as autonomous units or communities (Diayi, 2006).

Given to this belief, and in their attempt to curtail herdsmen attacks on the farming communities', Southwestern states governors have embarked on the pronouncement of anti-grazing law, restriction

of the cattle grazing tradition and recent called to the herdsmen to vacate the reserved forests in the states (Kabir, 2021). Ekiti state Governor had spearheaded the signed of anti-grazing law in 2016. His counterpart in Ondo State, in request order also request Fulani herdsmen to vacate the reserved forests in the state before they would be forcefully evicted. The law was signed for the Prohibition of Cattle and Other Ruminants Grazing in Ekiti, 2016 (Vanguard Newspaper, 2021).

*A respondent from Ikole communities in Ekiti state, during an interview confirmed that: State Governor passed into Law Anti Grazing Bill due to the repeated herdsmen attacks on the farming community which has led to loss of lives in the State, and since governor could not endure these attacks, the bill was signed into law (KII Interview, 15. 10. 2024),*

Speaking during the 2025 inter-faith annual service, Governor Makinde of Oyo state, decried the influx of bandits in the state when he narrated how he got intelligence report that bandits are not far from Fasola farm (Makinde, 2025)..Fasola Agribusiness Industrial Farm Center, was the first of the integrated agribusiness revitalized by Governor Makinde for the new Oyo State Agribusiness Development Agency (OYSADA) to build across the state, is located on 1,100 hectares of land in Oyo West Local government, along Oyo State. The agribusiness project was first stablished in 1946 by the British colonial master as a result of the vast potential of the area has for agricultural production, especially livestock and poultry (Daramola, 2024). It was later revived as dairy farming; under the administration of Chief Obafemi Awolowo; the premier of old western region. During Awolowo premiership, Fasola farm was known all over Nigeria and beyond as a center of excellence for livestock research, breeding, and production. The farm in the recent time has turned from being deserted to becoming forest and un-governed zone that harbored armed herders, enrout them to southwestern states for open grazing and livestock rearing.



Many of Fulani herders who are streaming into Southwest states are said to be victims of cattle rustling seeking for job and when they cannot find job, they join the bandit groups. These armed herdsmen reported to have invaded the farms like Chief Olu Falae farm, where five hectares of his maize and palm oil farm were reported to have been burnt down at his hometown, Ilado in Akure North Local Government area of Ondo State. The attack preceded the attacks that was later carried out in the same farm when a security guard was killed and Chief Falae was himself kidnapped stayed under their captive for three days (<http://saharareporters.com/2021>).

Another group of armed herders equally attacked and stabbed a farmer to death in Akure, on January 22 2021 the Ondo State capital while he was working on his farm. On Saturday night February 13, 2021 there was attacked when some farmers at Ijugbere in the Owo Local Government area of Ondo State, were reported to have been killed by the suspected herders. More pathetic was Owo massacred on the faithful Sunday in June 6, 2021. At Isaba Ekiti, in Ikole Local Government Area of Ekiti State on Friday April 15, 2019 two farmers were killed following the invasion of farmlands by some Fulani herdsmen. Likewise on 29 January 2024; two traditional rulers from Ikole, Ekiti state were murdered by the armed herders <http://saharareporters.com/2021/01/22>.

There was attacked by the armed herders in some communities in Ketu local government area in Ogun State when they invaded farms areas along Ikotun, Ologiri, Akeru, Ilukan, Ijege and Ajibode; cut down palm trees, vegetable plants, cassava and opened fires on the farmers that challenged them. In Oyo State in Lagun, Iyana Offa, Offa Atagba, in Lagelu Local Government Area of Ibadan there was attacks by the Fulani herdsmen. These was followed with rampage in the Okeogun area of Oyo state when a group of armed herders' men between 30-40 in number invaded the communities. There was invasion in Igangan, a rural community in Ibarapa north local government area, Oyo State, on June 6, 2021 which led to the massacred of scores of residents

by this same roving herder. Prior to invasion, Dr Aborode, an indigene of Igangan, an American base Agro-agriculturalist was brutally murdered on December 11, 2020. He fell into the hands of armed herdsmen in his farm at Igangan. According to his father:

*My son was generous man particularly generous to herdsmen in Igangan, and allowed them to graze in his firm for free especially when the yield is poor. He also, employed the wives of Fulani herdsmen in his firms still yet the same herdsmen gruesomely murdered him in his farm. I have been alive and around for a while now in this community, and Ibarapa land had been peaceful all the while, but that peace has been truncated since Fulani herders has started attacking members of community. How do you see and hear this and not get saddened? That is why our people are insisting that these herders must leave our communities (KII Interview, 15. 05. 2024).*

*Despite their long settlement history in southwest, the advent of unrest in recent has cause a lot for concern. The repeated clashes had been linked to access to the grazing routes and dwindling fertile land, it seems as more than that. A respondent explained thus:*

*On our farms, we would come across very young children herding cattle. We would not know that the parents of these child herders were hidden on a tree. Should the farmer confront the child herder from destroying his farm, the hidden chaperon on the tree would suddenly appear and accost the farmer. (KII Interview, 18.10.2024).*

It was observed that difficult and hard for a farmer in the southwest states to consider the stay of herders in their communities considering the much damages they have caused.

### **The creation of Regional Security Network, 'Amotekun' and the politics of its legality**

Amidst persistent reports on criminal activities which are traceable to trans-border armed herders' attacks under the influence of blood chilling ordeal suffered by many communities and families who are travelling through the highways of Southwestern states. The governors in the



region have found it necessary to take the bull by its horn to secure lives of their people from armed herders' rampage, Amotekun was set up as a Southwest security network (Vanguard Newspapers, 2021). The governors' have decided to make sure that peace and security reign in their region where kidnappers as armed bandits have strategically located in the major highways such as: Ibadan -Ife expressway, Ikire-Ilesa, Ore Benin, Akure to Owo as well as the Owo-Akoko that links Southwestern states to other states. Many Nigerians like Mrs. Funke Olakunri, the daughter of Afenifere, Yoruba socio-cultural group and four monarchs from different communities were murdered on this road (Vanguard Newspapers, 2021). Likewise, Olagunju, the youth leader of Afenifere who was kidnapped on 17th of February 2025 and later regained his freedom after 12 days in captivity affirmed the presence of armed herders who have created over 55 kidnappers camp, locations in Southwest with Ondo state having the highest number, followed by Ekiti and Osun State (Punch Newspaper, 2025) According to him:

*The criminal has established well organized camp across southwest states, Nigeria strategically positioned for their operations with Ondo state 27 camps, Ekiti state 16 camps, Osun 7 camps and Ogun state 5 camp (Punch Newspaper, 2025).*

The security initiative, *Amotekun* is descriptively referred to leopard in Yoruba language. Is made of non- arm bearing group of vigilantes. It was timely established to serve as community resilience vigilante monitoring agent to confront the challenges, and to compliment community policing arms of the federal government police force that is structured at curtailing crime through provision of the reliable native intelligent fact gathering in collaboration with the inhabitants of communities. The regional outfit however, could not had been spared from criticism like other policies formed to curtail many security challenges. While it is considered laudable and welcome development with believe that it would bring an end to security experience in the region; it was regarded as illegal act by some. The chairman of a socio-cultural cattle Breeders Association of

Nigeria (MACBAN) Miyetti Allah for example, had absolved Fulani of armed bandit activities when he argued that bandits are not Fulani or How can Fulani kill their brothers and rustle their cattle? He reiterated that:

*Herders have lost almost 27 million cows in the last ten years to bandits and Amotekun initiative by the Southwestern governors to be sincere with you is targeted at Nigeria's Fulani ethnic group; and that Yoruba tribe are preparing ready to deploy real life leopards on a bandits and violent herders. This are the same Yoruba people that summoned thunder and lightning to eradicate cattle that were feeding on their farms, these people have powerful charms, I have witnessed the first hand of powers they have and now they are bringing Amotekun which means leopard, what is the probability that they will unleash mistrial leopard on our cattle therefore there is need to arrest of Yoruba leaders that are championing the cause of restoring security to the Southwest Region and encouraging ethnic cleansing (KII interview, 17.6.2024).*

The initiative was sternly criticized and declared illegal by the then Attorney General of the Federation. Malam Malam, who referee to Nigeria, a sovereign entity which is governed by laws that meant to sustain its corporate existence of its federating units with Federal Government having exclusive power over matters of national security (Punch Newspaper, 2019). His declaration over Amotekun as an illegal outfit however, had deepened the 'cold war' between the North and South as it was agreed to have gone contrary to the constitution of Nigerian law. Many Nigerian however perceived his declaration very wrong argued that: if it is lawful, constitutional and democratic for the Nigerian government could give support to the institutionalization and establishment of Sharia and the use of Sharia police like, (HISBAL) along with civilian joint task force (CJTF) of counter terrorism in the Northeast against insurgent, why rejecting the establishment of operation Amotekun as a regional security outfit knowing fully that Nigeria Police has been overwhelmed with insecurity?

A respondent who is a Law expert and Senior



Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) thrown his support to the Amotekun outfit; according to him: Amotekun is protective and supportive outfit established by the governors; it has its roots in in 1979 constitution and the previous constitution before it 1960- 1963. He retreated that it is constitutional, it is legal and prosper and that if this outfit had been established about 10 years ago, the issues of kidnapping killings and other banditry actions could have been reduced drastically. In same vein., a governor from Southwestern state, and chairman of Nigerian governor forum reiterated that insecurity experienced by the people remained the reason why Amotekun security outfit was formed: He states that:

*As elected leaders, our primary responsibility, according to Section 14 (2) of the Nigerian Constitution 1999 as amended, is the security and welfare of citizens. That was what informed the governors coming together to fashion out a way to complement the work of the mainstream security agencies overstretched in their efforts to arrest the menace that have afflicted the entire communities in our states and the country. So, if you ask me, Amotekun is nothing but a confidence building strategy for our people in the six states of the Southwest (Governor Akeredolu, Punch Newspaper, 2019)*

He illustrates the purpose of the outfit when he stated that

Amotekun is an unavoidable child of circumstance it was initiated to compliment the effort of conventional security agencies that appear to have been hampered by the absence of intelligence gatherings and that when fully in operation would serve the purpose of local momentum and intelligence gathering for the Police, Army and other conventional security agencies. Amotekun scheme however, is not targeted at any ethnic group and just as its benefits are to be reaped by all Nigerians without ethnic sentiment or religion placement. It would work as holistic security outfit comprising of regular police, local vigilante group including local hunters and if there is any fear allay by other groups such should be disregarded (Governor Akeredolu, Punch Newspaper, 2019).

Amotekun according to its founder would not have only improved the security but as well boost the economy of the region and influence other regions in the country. The fear of Amotekun to many during the interview was observed to have been misplaced while its creation as security outfit was confirmed to be a welcome development, more so for regions of Southern Nigeria which have been encircled overwhelmed by all manner of criminality as kidnapers, banditry, armed robbers and cultists. While it is believed that not all these criminal elements are from the North it bad for anyone to conclude that Amotekun targeted the Northern indigenes.

It is believed that Southwest governors have chosen complimentary steps that is not unwelcome to the cooperate existence of Nigeria. This is because devastating attacks of insurgents in the northeast and increasing bandit attacks through middle belt like Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau states where insurgent was not common have shown that there is a nexus between Boko Haram terrorists in the Northeast, the bandit in the Northwest and occurrence of kidnapping in the Southwestern states. The seemingly reduction in the report, cases of banditry, kidnapping, and other criminal activities through synergy between Amotekun and the leadership of conventional security agencies by arresting crimes activities before they occur in the communities and major highways in the Southwest states in recent to many interviews; stance the idea that Amotekun an indication of well-coordinated regional security outfits is possible to pressure fear in the minds of bandits and kidnapers, while reducing occurrence insecurity situation in the country to ensure the sustenance of livelihoods and peaceful co-existence.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This work examined the importance of geographical differences and climate change, as well as the many government policies on resource management, The socio-economic, political and cultural differences vis-a-vis competition over access to resources and conflict between herders and farmers. Struggle over access to shrinking resources were discovered as major factors for



conflict. The work agrees with the reality of climate change which has caused a significant impact on human security through its effects on Nigerians livelihoods. It further its argument that the unwanted infiltration of herdsmen, armed bandits and incessant conflicts gone beyond this causal narrative of resource competition. And that the reality of a complex socio-economic relations, political and economic causes played a pivotal role to which climate change had contributed. Thus, combination of socio-economic need and ethnicity with historical experience provides a proof to farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria states; though base on dwindling resources with increase struggle.

Above all, while climate change has its possible security inferences as it is acknowledged; the existence of climate change as a threat exacerbator was identified as a call for threat minimizer. These threat preventive measures can be found in government policies and capacity for climate adaptation, economic development, mitigation and conflict prevention; all which can be measured within the purview of government for sustainable peace, security and development. It is observed that due that climate change and ethno-religious conflicts that plagued the states, especially the central states and some areas of Northern states had led to influx of armed herders' attacks and conflict in Southwestern

Going by these evidences on climate change multiplier effects; timely government decisions with good policy will have a greater impact on future challenges than the inaction and delay tactics exhibited by the past governments. Breaking the link between the impact of climate change and conflict in Nigeria would require comprehensive policy responses from governments and communities' stakeholders. Therefore, this work suggests, more effective policy and proactive decision making on climate change, its adaptation, mitigation and resources conflict management as imperative measures to integrate development and international security concerns Nigerian states. Climate adaptation and mitigation policies in Nigeria should involve financial and technological inputs, including the good understanding and application of indigenous

knowledge and coping strategies. Adaptation to climate change should also target a faster increase in productivity that involve a range of social and economic factors, such as promoting education and literacy among the inhabitants and groups in a given states, communities and Nigeria at large.

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## Crime Investigation and Challenges of Private Detectives in Osogbo Local Government of Osun State, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Alatise Remi Kasali, <sup>2</sup>Theonu George Dennis, <sup>3</sup>Adeyinka Tajudeen Yusuf

<sup>1</sup>*Fountain University Osogbo, Osun State*

<sup>2</sup>*National Open University, of Noun Study Osogbo Centre, Osun State*

<sup>3</sup>*National Open University, of Nisira Abuja*

*E-mail: tadeyinka@noun.edu.ng*

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### Abstract

In Nigeria, there has been a significant increase in crime and insecurity over the past decade, with the country experiencing rising rates of various crimes. Despite advancements in investigative disciplines and the reliance on crime scene experts, unresolved criminal cases remain a common issue. This study investigates private detectives' roles, challenges, and relationships within Oshogbo Local Government Area, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to examine the role of private detectives in crime investigation, identify the approaches employed by private detectives to solve criminal cases, identify the various challenges faced by private detectives during crime investigations, assess the relationship between private detective agencies and public law enforcement bodies. Utilizing a quantitative research design, data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to a purposively selected sample of 20 private detectives. The study employed descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and independent samples t-tests. The theoretical framework is based on situational hypothetical systems and rational theory, suggesting that crime prevention strategies must address the specific situational factors contributing to crime. Results revealed that private detectives play a significant role in evidence gathering and enhancing investigation efficiency. Limited access to public records, financial constraints, and logistical challenges in accessing crime scenes remain challenges to investigations. Also, cooperative relationships between private detectives and law enforcement agencies, though these are tempered by challenges in information sharing. The study recommended the need to improve local record accessibility, adequate funding, enhanced training, development programs for private detectives and general improvement in technological infrastructure would aid investigation.

**Keywords:** Detectives, Crime, Investigation, Constraints, Enforcement

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### Introduction

Investigation is a multidisciplinary term used to uncover the unknown knowledge. The word 'investigation' covers many disciplines, each with its own methods and variety of techniques. The main goal of investigation in science is to gather facts and to make right decisions based on evidence (Cardinetti and Cammarota, 2005). The origins of crime scene investigation can be traced back to as early as 1750 when Henry Fielding established a group of volunteers known as the "Bow Street Runners" in London. These volunteers responded quickly to report crimes and conducted investigations (Swanson et al., 2003). Today, investigations heavily depend on crime

scene experts to collect clues and evidence that are essential for establishing both the occurrence of a crime and the involvement of suspects.

A private detective is an individual who provides investigatory services to individuals, companies, organizations, or government agencies. Unlike government detectives, such as police officers, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officers, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) officers, Intelligence Bureau (IB) officers, and Military Intelligence officers, private detectives are paid by clients who enlist their services (Mudhol, 2024). Throughout the world, unresolved



criminal cases are a universal issue. Brazil, over 60,000 unsolved murders in single decade United States and European nations range from 70 to 80 % (Garcia-Navarro, 2016). Nigeria has a high rate of unsolved crimes, with many cases remaining uninvestigated and unprosecuted (Toolin et al., 2022). Poor forensic investigation and lack of technology are major challenges in solving crimes in Nigeria (Nte, 2012; Oni, 2022). The country's judicial system has also been criticized for its slow pace, with many cases taking years to be resolved (Amnesty International, 2021).

Despite the Nigerian police force being tasked with maintaining law and order, their efforts in combating crime and protecting lives and property have often been insufficient (Olumbe 2012; Nte, 2012). Consequently, there has been a significant decline in the capabilities of private investigation of the Nigerian police and other security agencies. More specifically, the private investigation industry in Nigeria has faced significant challenges in recent years, leading to a decline in its capabilities (Musa & Antwi-Boateng, 2023; Nwokolo et al., 2023). Corruption is also a significant problem in Nigeria, and private investigators are not immune to it (Musa & Antwi-Boateng, 2023; Chinwokwu & Igbo, 2018). Many private investigators have limited access to technology, funding, and other resources, making it difficult for them to conduct effective investigations. Police records lacking substantial criminal evidence are largely ineffective due to many criminals avoid detection due to the frequent changes in their names and appearances (Otu, 2018).

### **The Problem**

In Nigeria, data suggests a remarkable increase in crime and insecurity over the past decades (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005). The efficiency of criminal investigations in Nigeria is challenged by various factors. Despite advancements in investigation disciplines and the reliance on crime scene experts, unresolved criminal cases remain a common issue. This challenge is worsened by the inadequacies within the Nigerian police force and the heavy reliance on traditional investigative practices (Khalila, 2014). The absence of a

dedicated coroner, coupled with the reliance on police officers for death-related investigations, leads to delays and inefficiencies in completing inquiries, particularly regarding criminal or suspicious deaths. The searchlight on the challenges of investigation in Osogbo is oblivious in the literature, consequently created a lacuna. Therefore, there is a persuasive need to explore the role and significance of private detectives in crime investigation within the Osogbo Local Government Area, identify the specific challenges they face, and determine their relationship with public law enforcement agencies to address these systemic issues and enhance the effectiveness of criminal investigations in the region.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study sought to extrapolate the challenges of private investigators in Osogbo local government of Osun State but specifically to unravel the following:

1. To examine the role of private detectives in crime investigation.
2. To Identify approaches employed by private detectives to solve criminal cases.
3. To identify various challenges faced by private detectives during crime investigations.
4. To assess relationship between private detective agencies and public law enforcement bodies.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Private Detectives and Their Functions**

Private detectives are business-oriented organizations that offer investigative services, including uniformed manned-guard protection, to individuals, non-governmental bodies, and government agencies in exchange for payment (Gumedze, 2007). It is essential to distinguish between registered and licensed private detectives. While all private detectives may be registered, not all are licensed to provide uniformed security guards. The Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) issues licenses to private detectives that meet specific requirements, allowing them to operate as manned private security companies. Therefore, classifying private detectives solely based on registration can be misleading. A more accurate classification would consider both registration



CSI officers, equipment shortages, and difficulties exacerbated by the Israeli occupation. Issues such as the collection, transportation, and storage of forensic evidence were particularly problematic. Additionally, overlapping responsibilities and coordination difficulties among specialized agencies operating at crime scenes were identified as areas requiring further investigation. The study urges decision-makers within Palestinian police agencies to prioritize efforts aimed at addressing the significant challenges encountered by workers at crime scenes.

### **Role of Private Detectives in Nigeria**

The need to engage the service of private investigators in the wave of increase in criminality in Nigeria is overdue (Abdullahi, 2019). London started in earnest far back 1750 (Swanson et al., 2003), China in the 17th century (Owen, 2000). However, it wasn't until the 1970s that crime scene testing gained popularity. In the 1970s, a number of court decisions made it difficult for investigators to use standard questioning techniques, so scientists and researchers had to look elsewhere for information. During this new development, investigators realized that there was a lot of information at the crime scene.

Accordingly, today's trials rely heavily on crime scene experts to gather testimony and evidence to demonstrate the suspect's guilt and contribution (Lee et al., 2001; Burrows et al., 2005). A private investigator testifies in court using a quantitative approach to assess the strength of evidence whenever possible. Officials or appointed jurors use the statements of potential jurors as a guide for thinking and voting. Therefore, a forensic examination is an observer who presents the data to be tested and expresses his own opinion based on the factual data; people who do not support. To be effective, testimony must be accurately documented and presented in an unbiased and objective manner. Specific recommendations that consider forensic, criminal, legal and judicial perspectives should be used to develop technical concepts. Such special opinions should be expressed in layman's language that can be understood by the agency and the appointed attorney (Taroni et al., 2004). Evidence from the

UK clearly shows that more evidence from crime scenes helps identify more suspects. That quantitative evidence can link multiple crimes through conscious acts certainly has a multiplier effect. However, this can be used where covert policing and testing are used within an organization (Ribaux et al., 2009).

In Nigeria, experts have linked Nigeria's law enforcement base to its failure to issue private forensic tests that clearly show evidence of wrongdoing (Oladele, 2006 Ngboawaji, 2012).

Evidence collection begins at the crime scene because it includes both open and confidential information, and experts must be careful to collect all evidence (Bride, 2004; Gaze et al., 2004). Each piece of evidence must be recognized, collected, and protected as a different element (Van Niekrek, 2000; Fisher, 2004). A crime scene examiner may not be able to identify and accurately identify clues, record public relations, assign appropriate skills, and process evaluation findings to extend the scope of the situation. It can happen where long periods of hard work do not achieve ideal results (Adams et al., 2004). Abrahamsen (2011) has shown that it is not the police, but the association involved in the prevention of illegal acts against the public association or office. Florquin (2011) sees Clandestine security organizations as legitimate businesses that provide security in legally enforced buildings. Especially, as shown by Inyang et al. (2014), Private security in Nigeria consists of night watchman training. A number of commonly cited definitions are reviewed below. Covert security is defined as "a large number of private associations and individuals that provide administration of all matters related to security, including surveillance, surveillance, control, detection, surveillance, and hard-cover transportation" (Kakalik and Wildhorn, 1971b). A general view of many of this management, as the review puts it, "misidentification and resistance" (p. 18). Hallcrest argued that the broad definition of private security, which includes real information and more precisely defines the roles and responsibilities of work-related security, has challenged the label "secret police" used by



and licensing (Kasali, 2011). Green (1981) defines private detectives as individuals and organizations, excluding formal policing agencies, that prevent and control crime, loss, or harm for their clients.

### **Overview of the Past Related Studies**

Hounmenou and Toepp (2023) investigated the potential for collaboration between private investigation agencies (PIAs) and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in addressing human trafficking cases. They recognize the challenges LEAs face in investigating human trafficking and propose exploring non-traditional partnerships to enhance investigative strategies. Through a mixed research method design, the study surveyed 81 PIAs and conducted follow-up interviews with 28 of them who reported collaborating with LEAs on human trafficking investigations. The findings reveal varying levels of success and challenges for PIAs engaged in collaboration with LEAs. Challenges identified include LEAs' misperceptions of private investigators, their tendency to focus more on criminal approaches rather than victim-centered ones, and legal or ethical limitations. Despite these challenges, the study discusses the positive aspects of PIA-LEA partnerships and strategies to address collaboration difficulties.

King (2020) investigated the role of private investigators in financial crimes in Australia. He identified the difficulties of regulating this profession, especially when it comes to financial crimes. It explores how the different backgrounds of investigators can make things complicated and influence how the industry becomes more professional. The article presents findings from in-depth interviews with 33 Australian private investigators from Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria. It explores their current role, focusing on their contributions to justice, public policing, and the challenges they face in terms of regulation. Lee et al. (2014) studied the factors influencing whether citizens opt to hire private investigators (PIs) to handle their criminal or civil matters. The study uniquely examines citizens' traits and attitudes toward both police. Their findings reveal that

citizens' desire for personalized justice plays a significant role in their decision to hire PIs for different types of cases. Interestingly, the study also shows that citizens who are more satisfied with the work of public police are less likely to consider hiring PIs for their cases.

Miller et al. (2023) conducts a survey aiming to understand the challenges prosecutors and investigators face when dealing with digital evidence in criminal cases. These challenges include keeping up with rapidly evolving technology, effectively communicating these changes to stakeholders, and navigating the complex landscape of electronic data privacy. The survey, which includes responses from 50 United States-based prosecutors and 51 investigators, sheds light on key issues affecting the admissibility of digital evidence in court and its proper handling during trials. It also explores how these challenges impact the charging and resolution of criminal cases. Findings from the survey underscore the importance of training, specialized prosecutors in digital evidence matters, and strong relationships between prosecutors and investigators in successfully handling digital evidence in criminal proceedings. Meerts (2023) explores the rising trend of private efforts by organizations to combat internal economic crime. The study examined the factors such as strains on the criminal justice system and mismatches between criminal justice solutions and commercial interests. At the heart of this evolution are "corporate investigators," who play a pivotal role in providing investigative services and facilitating private resolutions for internal economic crime matters. This reliance on private entities for economic crime control raises concerns about the potential implications, especially as it operates largely outside the traditional oversight of law enforcement agencies. Through a combination of the author's own research and insights from international literature, the study investigates the broader implications of chosen research trend.

Khalilia et al. (2024) noted while investigating Palestinian crime scene investigators that several challenge include training deficiencies among



wrongdoing. (Maguire et al., 1997). Accordingly, two broad approaches to wrongdoing can be recognized; (a) focus on design and (b) awareness or situation. Two hypotheses are adopted as the hypothesis system. These assumptions, despite their shortcomings, make the work of PSCs (Problem Solving Courts) in crime prevention more meaningful than other theories.

Accordingly, the normal behavior hypothesis suggests that three components must be present for maladaptive events to occur. These components are; A wake-up call is the guilty party, natural loss, and the lack of a skilled guard. Felson (1993) found that persistent mobility and financial fluctuations increase the appropriate target for property theft in particular. The use of the hypothesis of continuous action is considered useful in cases where the perpetrator is inspired to be forced to engage targets that are otherwise inaccessible or controlled by skilled security officers or security devices (such as heavy fences) and police etc. Rational choice is the second theory. Hence the assumption that criminals are intelligent; they subject their victims to a logical or rational thought process in order to maximize their profits. The location and important information about the victims are also considered together to show the will of the haters. As valuable as the use of the objective decision hypothesis in this work, the presence of a skilled supervisor can harm the perpetrator more than the perpetrator if it is not part of the calculation of the skilled supervisor, and this context can make it more difficult to cover the military or police sleeping area. (Eck, J., & Weisburd, D. 2007)

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employs an explanatory research design based on quantitative data collection, which involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data. The quantitative approach was selected for its ability to objectively measure variables and identify patterns and relationships within the data (Polit & Beck, 2010 Florczak, 2021; Ghanad, 2023). Quantitative research is characterized by its use of structured tools, such as surveys and questionnaires, to

gather measurable data that can be analyzed statistically (Mohajan, 2020; Kotronoulas et al., 2023). This design is particularly suitable for the following reasons:

### **Study Location**

This study is concentrated exclusively on Osogbo Local Government Area (LGA), situated within Osun State, Nigeria. Oshogbo city serves as the administrative headquarters for both Oshogbo LGA and Olorunda LGA which is located centrally within the state

### **Population of the Study**

This study targets all private detectives actively engaged in investigative work within the Oshogbo Local Government Area. Private detectives are defined as individuals who conduct investigative activities through private detective agencies including those who are self-employed or employed by such agencies. The study used the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

This study employs convenience sampling to select participants from the population of private detectives in the Oshogbo Local Government Area. Convenience sampling is chosen for its practicality and accessibility which allows the researcher to select participants based on their availability and willingness to participate (Andrade, 2020). Participants are approached directly within the local community to ensure ease of access and cooperation. Furthermore, the sample size for this study is set at 20 ( $n = 20$ ) private detectives. This size is selected to provide a focused exploration of the roles, challenges, and relationships within this specific group operating in Oshogbo LGA. By focusing on a manageable sample size, the study aims to gather detailed insights into the experiences of private detectives by considering various factors such as their years of experience, types of investigative work, and employment status (e.g., self-employed, agency-employed).

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

This study utilizes a structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection from private detectives operating within the Oshogbo Local Government Area. The questionnaire is



Kakalik and Wildhorn (1971b). Base and Kostanoski (1983) stated that personal security is a guarantee against wrongdoing.

### **Challenges in Discrimination of Private Security Guards in Nigeria**

According to Kasali (2010), the problem with private security guards in Nigeria is lack of education. Most secret security organizations tend to appoint people with little or no training as gatekeepers. Most private security personnel are trained without a good understanding of various areas of security training, including intelligence and intelligence, hand-to-hand combat, mass surveillance, insurgency control, data mining, and robotics. Invalid mean test, pair reference. This problem is not unique to unregistered security firms, and many large and registered security firms have a strong interest in regular security guard training; all they care about is making a profit. This problem has led to the incompetence and failure of many covert gatekeeper exercises in Nigeria. There is also the issue of poor wages and working conditions being one of the main factors hindering the effectiveness of covert security training in the country (Madensen, 2009).

Despite the high cost of living, many secret security personnel receive a monthly compensation of N6,000,000 equitant to US\$40 (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2005). Unfortunately, the government never considered the importance of focusing on government assistance to the monitors sent by some of the state's secret security agencies on the principle of private security. However, one cannot agree with random government agencies that all clandestine security firms can not affect the work of government-aided gatekeepers, because not all of them, but the fact that both registered and unregistered companies are guilty of pauperizing gatekeepers. Many confidential unregistered firms "choose to pay by the hour based on individual contract rates, with almost the same hours paid at different rates depending on where the organization is assigned" (Williams & Abrahamsen, 2005). Results in poor performance and lack of commitment to the firm among others

(Casali, 2010).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts Situational Hypothetical System and Rational Theory by Pease (1994). Pease argued that a basic proposition of natural criminology is that the amount, type, and location of crime affect the nature of the opportunity for crime. Importantly, as Pease (1994) points out, "all theories of crime are theories of crime Prevention. Because hypotheses identify sources of error, they tell us what conditions need to be corrected to make them straightforward. In this way, ecological researchers argue that they focus on discourse rather than 'chance theory.' From this concept, which he defined as "prevention of the situation" in many ideas about the criminal origin, it is worth noting some facts about how to successfully defend the behavior of the guilty parties in addition to that, this attitude is caused by financial inequality, confusion or inability in the local area to address cultural factors such as difficult education (Wilson, 1975). For this purpose, the perspective of "avoiding wrongdoing" is also given to the case that the wrongdoing occurs in a random place, or that the wrongdoing occurs higher in some neighborhoods than others. Environmental criminology, on the other hand, is concerned with more ambiguous areas. So, even in the worst area, some points are misbehaving. Behavior becomes a minor offence when the state punishes it. Crime prevention is part of prevention. Components that lead to crime. Maguire, Morgan, and Reiner (1997) argued that the analysis of crime stands in three standards, considering several approaches to prevent mistakes among the public. Since malpractice consists of a variety of behaviors, we should not search extensively for prevention strategies. It is a crime because the act of one does not mean that the most effective form of control is the police and the courts. Real behavior needs to be understood to determine which changes can best be achieved. The level of criminal justice is morally dangerous. A society that prevents more wrongdoing is not necessarily a happy society. The weight and constraints that force people to avoid crime must be offset by crime to the forest. Presumption of wrongdoing is a presumption to prevent



The study found that private detectives play a key role in crime investigation, primarily through evidence gathering and enhancing the overall efficiency of investigations. Their contributions are integral to addressing the complexities of criminal cases by providing specialized services that complement those of law enforcement agencies. This aligns with Mudhol (2024), who underscores the complementary role of private detectives in the criminal justice system, and Button et al. (2022), who highlight their importance in investigating complex cases where law enforcement resources may be limited. The theoretical framework of the Situational Hypothetical System (SHS) supports these findings by suggesting that private detectives address the situational aspects of crime, which enhances their effectiveness in gathering evidence and solving cases (Pease, 1994). Additionally, the Rational Choice Theory explains how private detectives' strategic investigations interrupt the rational decision-making process of criminals, thereby influencing their behavior and contributing to more effective crime resolution (Felson, 1993). This theoretical perspective reinforces the significance of private detectives in enhancing investigative processes and supports their continued integration into broader crime-fighting efforts.

*Table 2 : Perception regarding Role of Private Detectives in Crime Investigation in LGA*

Statement		N	n%
Private detective plays a crucial role in gathering evidence	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%
	Disagree	2	10.0%
	Neutral	3	15.0%
	Agree	6	30.0%
	Strongly Agree	8	40.0%
The expertise of private detectives enhances the efficiency of investigations	strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	1	5.0%
	Neutral	2	10.0%
	Agree	11	55.0%
	Strongly Agree	6	30.0%
Private detectives provide specialized services tailored to individual case	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	2	10.0%
	Agree	13	65.0%
	Strongly Agree	4	20.0%
Private detectives often discover critical information inaccessible to law enforcement	Strongly Disagree	3	15.0%
	Disagree	1	5.0%
	Neutral	4	20.0%

critical information inaccessible to law enforcement	Disagree	1	5.0%
	Neutral	4	20.0%
	Agree	9	45.0%
	Strongly Agree	3	15.0%
Private detectives contribute significantly to maintaining public safety	Strongly Disagree	2	10.0%
	Disagree	1	5.0%
	Neutral	2	10.0%
	Agree	14	70.0%
Private detectives play a vital role in upholding justice	Strongly Agree	1	5.0%
	Strongly Disagree	1	5.3%
	Disagree	3	15.8%
	Neutral	4	21.1%
	Agree	10	52.6%
	Strongly Agree	1	5.3%

Note: n = 20

*Figure 1: Role of Private Detectives in discovering critical information inaccessible to law enforcement*

*Figure 2: Role of Private Detectives in maintaining public safety*

The Table 3 presents perception scores of the role of private detectives among male and female participants. Male participants have a mean perception score of 21.64 (SD = 5.35), while female participants have a slightly higher mean score of 22.75 (SD = 2.55). An independent samples t-test is conducted to compare these scores and found that there is no significant differences in perception scores regarding role of provide detectives between male and female,  $t(17) = -.54, p = .595, 95\% \text{ CI} [-5.45, 3.22]$ .

*Table 3 : Gender Differences in Perception Scores of the Role of Private Detectives*

Outcome	Male		Female		df	95% CI	t
	M	SD	M	SD			
Role Score	21.64	5.35	22.75	2.55	17	[-5.45, 3.22]	-.54

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , df = Degrees of Freedom.

### Objective-II: Approaches employed by Private Detectives in Crime Investigation

The Table 4 summarizes participants' perceptions of various approaches and strategies employed by private detectives in crime investigation within the Local Government Area (LGA). The results revealed that more than half of



designed to gather information regarding various aspects of private detective's roles, challenges, and relationships within the context of crime investigation. The questionnaire was meticulously crafted to align with the study's focus on private detectives in Oshogbo LGA

### **Method of Data Collection**

Data collection for this study involves visiting private detectives within the Oshogbo Local Government Area (LGA) and administering the structured questionnaire to willing participants. Private detectives' workplaces or selected locations are visited based on convenience sampling. Each participant is briefed on the study's purpose and invited to voluntarily participate. They receive the questionnaire and are provided with time to complete it independently. Support is offered to address any queries they may have.

Additionally, the confidentiality of participant responses is strictly maintained to uphold anonymity. Personal identifiers are omitted from the questionnaire to protect privacy and encourage honest responses. Data integrity is ensured through particular recording of responses and verification of questionnaire completeness before concluding each session. Stored securely, the data is accessible only to authorized personnel involved in subsequent analysis.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

Data analysis for this study primarily involves employing descriptive statistics, graphical representation, and correlational analysis to explore the findings derived from the structured questionnaire administered to private detectives in Oshogbo Local Government Area. Descriptive statistics are utilized extensively to summarize the responses gathered through the Likert scale questions in the questionnaire. This includes calculating frequencies and percentages for each section that provided a clear overview of private detectives' perceptions regarding their roles in crime investigation, the challenges they encounter, the approaches they employ, and as well as their relationships with law enforcement agencies.

### **Participants Demographic Information**

The results of demographic characteristics of the study participants provided some important information regarding respondents participated in the study. The study shows the majority of the participants in the study are male (60%, n = 12). Regarding educational background of the respondents, more than half of the participants hold a Bachelor's Degree (60%, n = 12) with a quarter having a Master's Degree (25%, n = 5). In terms of experience in investigation, a majority proportion of participants have 11-15 years of experience (40%, n = 8), followed by those with 1-5 years of experience (25%, n = 5), less than 1 year or more than 15 years of experience (each 15%, n = 3), and 6-10 years of experience (5%, n = 1). All participants are employed in detective agencies (100%, n = 19). Regarding the frequency of detective work, the majority of participants engage in detective work as their main activity (60%, n = 12), while others do so regularly besides other activities (15%, n = 3) or occasionally besides other activities (25%, n = 5) (see Table 1).

### **Objective-I: Role of Private Detectives in Crime Investigation**

Participants' responses to statements about the role of private detectives reveal different trends and levels of agreement. The results revealed that majority of the participants shows agreement with the view that private detectives play a crucial role in gathering evidence (70.0%, n = 14). More than third-fourths of the participants believe that the expertise of private detectives enhances the efficiency of investigations (85.0%, n = 17). Furthermore, a significant portion of participants acknowledge that private detectives provide specialized services tailored to individual cases (85.0%, n = 17). Many respondents also recognize the ability of private detectives to discover critical information inaccessible to law enforcement (60.0%, n = 12). Moreover, a majority of the respondents agree that private detectives contribute significantly to maintaining public safety (75.0%, n = 15). However, opinions are more divided regarding the role of private detectives in upholding justice, with just over half of respondents (57.9%, n = 11) affirming this contribution (see Table 2)



the participants generally disagree that private detectives employ a variety of investigation techniques (55.0%, n = 11). A majority of the respondents agree that collaboration with informants and witnesses is a key strategy (70.0%, n = 14). Maximum participants believe that private detectives leverage technology such as GPS tracking and forensics (55.0%, n = 11). Furthermore, third-fifths of the participants agrees that building a bond with clients and understanding their needs is essential (60.0%, n = 12). Maximum participants overwhelmingly agree that private detectives often work collaboratively with law enforcement (70.0%, n = 14). More than third-fifths of the participants agree that adapting investigative methods to different cases is crucial for success (65.0%, n = 13). Additionally, majority respondents agree that utilizing open-source intelligence is an effective investigative approach (70.0%, n = 14).

The analysis revealed that private detectives employ a range of strategies and tools in their investigative work, including collaboration with informants, leveraging technological advancements such as GPS tracking, and adapting their methods to various cases. These approaches are consistent with the findings of Nilendu (2024), who emphasizes the importance of adaptive investigative techniques in the evolving landscape of crime. The use of technology and informants as key strategies is supported by Hounmenou & Toepp (2023), who note that integrating technological tools and human intelligence significantly enhances investigative capabilities. From the perspective of the Situational Hypothetical System (SHS), these strategies reflect an understanding of situational crime prevention, where private detectives address the specific conditions and opportunities for crime (Pease, 1994). Rational Choice Theory also provides insight into these strategies, as it suggests that criminals assess the risks and benefits of their actions; thus, the adoption of advanced tools and collaborative methods by private detectives serves to increase the perceived risks for criminals and improves the likelihood of successful investigations (Felson, 1993).

*Table 3 : Perception regarding Approaches/Strategies employed by Private Detectives in Crime Investigation in LGA*

<i>Statement</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>n%</i>
Limited access to public records hinders progress in investigations	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	4	20.0%
	Agree	11	55.0%
Financial constraints limit resources for comprehensive investigation	Strongly Agree	4	20.0%
	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	4	20.0%
Challenges in accessing crime scenes and conducting interviews exist	Agree	10	50.0%
	Strongly Agree	5	25.0%
	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
Staying updated with evolving technology presents challenges	Neutral	2	10.0%
	Agree	14	70.0%
	Strongly Agree	3	15.0%
	Strongly Disagree	2	10.0%
Maintaining confidentiality and discretion poses significant challenges	Disagree	2	10.0%
	Neutral	3	15.0%
	Agree	10	50.0%
	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%
Navigating legal and regulatory restrictions can be complex	Strongly Disagree	3	15.0%
	Disagree	2	10.0%
	Neutral	3	15.0%
	Agree	10	50.0%
Balancing multiple cases simultaneously adds to the workload	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	2	10.0%
	Agree	10	50.0%
	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	1	5.0%
	Neutral	2	10.0%
	Agree	14	70.0%
	Strongly Agree	3	15.0%

*Figure 3: Perception regarding private detective's leverages technology such as GPS tracking and forensics*

*Figure 4: Perception regarding Utilizing open-source intelligence is an effective investigative approach*



The Table 5 presents perceptions score of the various approaches and strategies employed by private detectives in crime investigation among male and female participants. Male participants have a mean perception score of 26.50 (SD = 6.07), while female participants have a slightly higher mean score of 27.88 (SD = 3.60). An independent samples t-test is conducted to compare these scores and found that there is no significant differences in perception scores regarding various approaches and strategies employed by private detectives in crime investigation between male and female,  $t(18) = -.57, p = .573, 95\% CI [-6.41, 3.66]$ .

Table 5 : Gender Differences in Perception Scores regarding various approaches and strategies employed by private detectives in crime investigation

Outcome	Male		Female		df	95% CI	t
	M	SD	M	SD			
Challenges Score	25.42	5.81	27.63	2.82	18	[-6.88, 2.46]	-.99

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ , df = Degrees of Freedom.

### Objective-III: Challenges Faced by Private Detectives in in Crime Investigation

Participants' perceptions regarding the challenges faced by private detectives in crime investigation highlight several significant areas of concern. The analysis showed that more than half of the participants agree that limited access to public records hinders progress in investigations (55.0%, n = 11). Half of the participants showed agreement with statement that financial constraints limit resources for comprehensive investigations (50.0%, n = 10). Additionally, most participants agree that challenges exist in accessing crime scenes and conducting interviews (70.0%, n = 14). Furthermore, more than half of the participants agree that staying updated with evolving technology presents challenges (60.0%, n = 12). Whereas, half of the participants agree that maintaining confidentiality and discretion

poses significant challenges (50.0%, n = 10). Maximum number of participants agree that navigating legal and regulatory restrictions can be complex (50.0%, n = 10). Also, most of the participants generally agree that balancing multiple cases simultaneously adds to the workload (70.0%, n = 14) (see Table 6).

The study identified several significant challenges faced by private detectives, including limited access to public records, financial constraints, and logistical issues in accessing crime scenes. These challenges are consistent with previous research by Button et al. (2022) and King (2022), which highlights the persistent barriers faced by private detectives in their operations. Limited access to public records impedes the ability of private detectives to gather comprehensive evidence, while financial constraints restrict the resources available for thorough investigations. Logistical challenges, such as difficulties in accessing crime scenes, further complicate the investigative process. These findings align with the Situational Hypothetical System (SHS), which suggests that effective crime prevention requires addressing these situational obstacles (Pease, 1994).

Additionally, the Rational Choice Theory underscores the impact of resource limitations on the effectiveness of private detectives, as insufficient resources can lower the perceived risks for criminals and hinder successful outcomes (Felson, 1993). Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts between private detective agencies, regulatory bodies, and law enforcement to improve access to resources and streamline investigative processes, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of crime investigations.



**Table 6: Perception regarding Challenges Faced by Private Detectives in in Crime Investigation**

Statement		N	n%
Limited access to public records hinders progress in investigations	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	4	20.0%
	Agree	11	55.0%
Financial constraints limit resources for comprehensive investigation	Strongly Agree	4	20.0%
	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	4	20.0%
Challenges in accessing crime scenes and conducting interviews exist	Agree	10	50.0%
	Strongly Agree	5	25.0%
	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
Staying updated with evolving technology presents challenges	Neutral	2	10.0%
	Agree	14	70.0%
	Strongly Agree	3	15.0%
	Strongly Disagree	2	10.0%
Maintaining confidentiality and discretion poses significant challenges	Disagree	2	10.0%
	Neutral	3	15.0%
	Agree	10	50.0%
	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%
Navigating legal and regulatory restrictions can be complex	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	2	10.0%
	Neutral	2	10.0%
	Agree	10	50.0%
Balancing multiple cases simultaneously adds to the workload	Strongly Agree	6	30.0%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	1	5.0%
	Neutral	2	10.0%
	Agree	14	70.0%
	Strongly Agree	3	15.0%

Note: n = 20

Figure 5: Responses regarding financial constraints limit resources for comprehensive investigation

Figure 6: Responses regarding limited access to public records hinders progress in investigations

The Table 7 presents perceptions score of challenges faced by private detectives in in crime investigation among male and female participants. Male participants have a mean perception score of 25.42 (SD = 5.81), while female participants have a slightly higher mean score of 27.63 (SD = 2.83). An independent samples t-test is conducted to compare these scores and found that there is no significant differences in perception scores regarding challenges faced by private detectives in in crime investigation between male and female,  $t(18) = -.99, p = .334, 95\% \text{ CI} [-6.88, 2.46]$ .

**Table 6: Gender Differences in Perception Scores regarding Challenges faced by Private Detectives in Crime Investigation**

Outcome	Male		Female		df	95% CI	t
	M	SD	M	SD			
Challenges Score	25.42	5.81	27.63	2.82	18	[-6.88, 2.46]	-.99

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , df = Degrees of Freedom.

### Objective-IV: Relationship between Private Detectives and Public Law Enforcement Agencies

Perceptions regarding the relationship between private detectives and public law enforcement agencies are summarized in Table 8. The results showed that most of the participants agree that private detectives have a cooperative relationship with law enforcement (45.0%, n = 9), followed by disagree (20%, n = 4) and neutral (15%, n = 3). Additionally, more than half of the participants agree that law enforcement recognizes the value of private detectives' contributions (60.0%, n = 12). Whereas, most participants agree that mutual respect and collaboration exist between private detectives and law enforcement (55.0%, n = 11). Furthermore, half of the participants agree that challenges exist in accessing information and resources from law enforcement (50.0%, n = 10). Equal proportions of participants agree (40.0%, n = 8) and remain neutral (40.0%, n = 8) regarding law enforcement agencies being receptive to private detectives' assistance. Furthermore, majority of the participants agree that building



and maintaining relationships with law enforcement is crucial for success (60.0%, n = 12). Also, half of the participants agree that effective communication between private detectives and law enforcement is essential (50.0%, n = 10).

The study explored the relationship between private detectives and public law enforcement agencies, revealing a generally cooperative but complex dynamic. Findings indicated that while there is a recognized cooperation and mutual respect between private detectives and law enforcement, challenges persist, particularly in information sharing and regulatory compliance. This aligns with Mudhol (2024) and Hounmenou & Toepp (2023), who note that effective collaboration between these entities is essential for enhancing investigative outcomes, yet often hindered by bureaucratic and communication barriers. The cooperative relationship observed supports the theory of Rational Choice, which suggests that collaborative efforts can improve overall crime prevention by combining resources and expertise (Eck & Weisburd, 2007). However, the study highlights ongoing issues in coordination, echoing the findings of Button et al. (2022), which emphasize the need for clearer communication protocols and formalized collaborative frameworks. To strengthen this relationship, it is crucial to address these barriers and develop more efficient interagency cooperation strategies, which will ultimately enhance the effectiveness of crime investigations and contribute to better crime resolution outcomes.

Table 8: Perception regarding Relationship between Private Detectives and Public Law Enforcement Agencies

Statement		N	n%
Private detectives have a cooperative relationship with law enforcement	Strongly Disagree	2	10.0%
	Disagree	4	20.0%
	Neutral	3	15.0%
	Agree	9	45.0%
	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%
Law enforcement recognizes the value of private detectives' contributions	Strongly Disagree	2	10.0%
	Disagree	2	10.0%
	Neutral	3	15.0%
	Agree	12	60.0%
	Strongly Agree	1	5.0%
Mutual respect and collaboration	Strongly Disagree	2	10.0%

exists between private detectives and law enforcement	Disagree	2	10.0%
	Neutral	3	15.0%
	Agree	11	55.0%
Challenges exist in accessing information and resources from law enforcement	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%
	Strongly Disagree	3	15.0%
	Disagree	2	10.0%
	Neutral	2	10.0%
Law enforcement agencies are receptive to private detectives' assistance	Agree	10	50.0%
	Strongly Agree	3	15.0%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	2	10.0%
Building and maintaining relationships with law enforcement is crucial for success	Neutral	8	40.0%
	Agree	8	40.0%
	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
	Disagree	0	0.0%
	Neutral	1	5.0%
	Agree	12	60.0%
	Strongly Agree	7	35.0%

Note: n = 20

Figure 7: Responses regarding Private detectives have a cooperative relationship with law enforcement

Figure 8: Responses regarding Challenges exist in accessing information and resources from law enforcement

The Table 9 presents perceptions score of relationship between private detectives and public law enforcement agencies among male and female participants. Male participants have a mean perception score of 26.25 (SD = 5.82), while female participants have a slightly lower mean score of 24.00 (SD = 4.11). An independent samples t-test is conducted to compare these scores and found that there is no significant differences in perception scores regarding relationship between private detectives and public law enforcement agencies between male and female,  $t(18) = .95$ ,  $p = .357$ , 95% CI [-2.75, 7.25].

Table 9 : Gender Differences in Perception Scores regarding relationship between private detectives and public law enforcement agencies

Outcome	Male		Female		df	95% CI	t
	M	SD	M	SD			
Relationship Score	26.25	5.82	24.00	4.11	18	[-2.75, 7.25]	.95

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , df = Degrees of Freedom.



**Relationships among Total Scores and Data Reliability**

The analysis (see Table 10) reveals several significant correlations between participants' perceptions of various aspects of the role of private detectives, the approaches they use, the challenges they face, and their relationship with public law enforcement agencies. Firstly, there is a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.77, p < 0.01$ ) between the perception of the role of private detectives and the approaches they employ. This indicates that participants who view the role of private detectives more favorably also tend to have a higher opinion of the investigative techniques and strategies used by private detectives. Additionally, a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.77, p < 0.01$ ) exists between the perception of the role of private detectives and the challenges they face. This suggests that those who perceive the role of private detectives positively are also likely to recognize and acknowledge the various challenges encountered by private detectives in their work.

Furthermore, the correlation between the perception of the role of private detectives and their relationship with public law enforcement agencies is moderate ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.05$ ). This implies that participants who view the role of private detectives more favorably are likely to have a positive view of the cooperation and relationship between private detectives and law enforcement agencies. The analysis also shows a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.81, p < 0.01$ ) between the perception of the approaches used by private detectives and the challenges they face. This finding indicates that participants who regard the investigative approaches of private detectives positively also tend to recognize the significant challenges these professionals encounter.

Moreover, there is a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.05$ ) between the perception of the approaches used by private detectives and their relationship with law enforcement. This suggests that participants who have a favorable view of the investigative approaches are also likely to perceive the relationship with law enforcement

agencies positively. Lastly, a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.57, p < 0.01$ ) is observed between the perception of the challenges faced by private detectives and their relationship with law enforcement agencies. This indicates that participants who recognize the challenges faced by private detectives also tend to view the cooperation between private detectives and law enforcement agencies positively. This relationship highlights the interconnectedness of recognizing challenges and valuing collaborative efforts to overcome them.

*Table 10 : Correlation Matrix*

Total Scores	1	2	3	4
1.Role Score	-			
2.Approaches Score	.77**	-		
3.Challenges Score	.77**	.81**	-	
4.Relationship Score	.55*	.52*	.57**	-

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

The reliability analysis of the 27-item scale reveals a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.941. This high value indicates excellent internal consistency among the items. It suggesting that the scale is highly reliable for measuring the constructs of interest. In general, a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70 is considered acceptable, above 0.80 is good, and above 0.90 is excellent (Saidi & Siew, 2019). Therefore, the obtained value of 0.941 demonstrates that the items in the scale are highly consistent in measuring the intended constructs, providing confidence in the reliability of the data collected for this study (see Table 11).

*Table 11: Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.941	27

**Summary**

The role of private detectives in crime investigation, highlighted by their significant contributions in gathering evidence, enhancing



investigation efficiency, and providing specialized services are aligned with existing literature highlighting their complementary role to law enforcement agencies (Mudhol, 2024; Button et al. 2022; Westera et al., 2014). This underlines their relevance in broader criminal justice frameworks and suggests opportunities for integrating their expertise more systematically into investigative processes (Nilendu, 2024; Hounmenou & Toepp, 2023; Tymoshenko et al., 2022; Neirotti et al., 2014). These findings not only validate existing knowledge but also emphasize the need for ongoing innovation and adaptation in response to developing crime patterns and investigative challenges.

### Conclusion

This study explored the roles, challenges, approaches, and relationships of private detectives operating within Oshogbo Local Government Area. The aim was to understand their contributions to crime investigation and their interactions with public law enforcement agencies. Throughout this research, it became clear that private detectives play a crucial role in Oshogbo LGA's criminal justice landscape.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings on the roles, approaches, challenges, and relationships of private detectives in Oshogbo LGA, several key recommendations emerge to address critical areas for improvement in crime investigation process.

1. Enhance Access to Local Records: Advocate for legislative changes to improve access to public records for private detectives
2. Increase Funding and Resources: Complain/efforts in increasing funding for private detective agencies to address financial constraints.
3. Promote Collaboration with Law Enforcement: Strengthen partnerships between private detectives and law enforcement agencies through joint training programs, information sharing, and collaborative investigations.
4. Invest in Technology and Training: Encourage private detectives to adopt modern investigative tools and technologies, such as GPS tracking

and forensic analysis.

5. Support Confidentiality and Discretion Measures: Develop guidelines and best practices to help private detectives maintain confidentiality and discretion in their investigations, thereby protecting client privacy and enhancing the integrity of their work.

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## Safeguarding the Rights and Health of Pregnant Inmates within Nigeria's Correctional System

<sup>1</sup>Ebobo, Urowoli Christiana, <sup>2</sup>Aje-Famuyide Olufunke Ayilara.

<sup>1</sup>Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences,  
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja, FCT

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Law National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja, FCT

Email: cebobo@noun.edu.ng, Oaje-famuyide@noun.edu.ng

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### Abstract

It is a known fact that many females are being incarcerated at the Nigerian Correctional Service across the nation for various reasons ranging from culpable homicide to armed robbery, drug trafficking, abduction, assault, stealing, etc. Some of these females were pregnant either before or during their incarceration. This informed the focus of this paper, which is an exposition of the rights of pregnant female inmates in Nigeria with special emphasis on their health needs during pregnancy up until delivery. The rights being referred to here are innate and protected by the letters and the spirit of the law. It adopted a feminist theory and conceptual framework to demonstrate the interconnectedness of variables throughout the period from pregnancy to delivery. The data for this study were primarily derived from secondary sources, including academic journals, bulletins, judicial opinions, and legislation. The data gathered was analysed using content analysis. The study, therefore, concludes that pregnant female inmates in Nigeria have the right to routine medical checkups and treatments to see them through the period of pregnancy successfully; antenatal care, special therapies and provisions, access to safe delivery in government-approved maternity hospitals, and postnatal care while in custody. Consequently, this study recommends, amongst others, that the Federal Government should be more inclusive in its treatment of pregnant female inmates by formulating more proactive policies aimed at protecting them and their unborn children.

**Keywords:** Pregnancy, Rights, Women, Inmates, Correctional Service

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### Introduction

Pregnant female inmates refer to women who are incarcerated in the correctional Centre and are pregnant at the time of their incarceration or become pregnant while in custody. As of March 4, 2024, the total number of inmates in the Nigerian Correctional Service was 80,183, comprising both males and females (Kekere-Ekun, 2024). Specifically, the total number of female inmates is 1,855, which is approximately 2.3% of the total number of inmates, including males. Out of the 1,855 female inmates, 433 have been convicted (CVF), with 73 on death row (DRF) and 1,789 awaiting trials ATF) (Kekere-Ekun, 2024). Whereas on December 4 2021, the Nigerian Correctional Service had about 1,297 female inmates across the nation; 984 awaiting trials, which included five pregnant inmates (Olabimtan, 2021). This shows an increase of 558

female inmates across the nation between 2021 and 2025 (5 years). The most common offences for which these females have been arrested and detained are child trafficking, criminal breach of trust and cheating, theft/stealing, kidnapping, unlawful possession of firearms and culpable homicide (Kekere-Ekun, 2024).

Specifically, the number of females in custody at the Female Custodial Centre, Kirikiri, Lagos State, in December 2021, was 312, comprising 250 awaiting trial, 50 convicted, six lifers, and six on death row (NCoSR, 2021). As of 2020, the same Female Custodial Centre, Kirikiri, Lagos, had 292 inmates, out of which 244 were awaiting trials, 43 were convicted, one was a lifer, and four were on death row (NCoSR, 2020). In 2016, the same Female Custodial Centre, Kirikiri, Lagos,



housed 222 inmates; 175 were awaiting trial, 43 were convicted, two were serving life sentences, and two were sentenced to death (Ibiroga, 2016). In the same year (2016), eight babies spent the early part of their lives in the Female Custodial Centre, Kirikiri, Lagos, with their mothers, while nine other inmates were pregnant. Consequently, this study focused on investigating the rights of pregnant female inmates in custody.

The above data indicate an increasing rate of female admissions into the Nigerian Correctional Service over the past five years (2020-2024). For instance, the total number of female inmates increased from 1,297 in 2021 to 1,855 in 2024 and 1,966 as of May 12, 2025 (462 convicted and 1,504 awaiting trial). Narrowing it down to the Female Custodial Centre, Kirikiri, the number of female inmates grew from 292 in 2020 to 312 in 2021 and 371 in 2024 (NCoS, 2024). The Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Commission, Ben Angwe, at the Commission's prison audit, added that about 90 per cent of female prisoners in the Nigerian prisons were either pregnant or nursing mothers. He noted that:

*"In our prisons today, we have a lot of nursing mothers who are being locked up with their children and are nursing these children in the prison cells. We also have instances where such women who are still carrying babies in prison are also pregnant. It is also sad to note that more than 90 per cent of the total number of nursing mothers are still awaiting trial. These are women who should have been released on bail while awaiting their trial. But they are kept there in prison with their children, who are made to serve prison terms when their mothers are not yet convicted. One therefore wonders how, in a situation where such mothers are eventually discharged as innocent citizens, how much compensation can be given to a child who is made to pass through the conditions that we presently have in our prisons" (Angwe, 2016).*

Ebobo & Aje-Famuyide (2017) and Ebobo & Aje-Famuyide, (2021) revealed a sizeable number of females who were pregnant and some others with

babies below 2 years who were in custody with their mothers. The study also showed that some of these children were taken away from their mothers when they attained the age of 18 months to trusted and appointed relatives by the mothers. However, some of these children were taken to the Motherless Babies Homes in cases where close relatives were absent to accept and care for the babies. In addition, in August 2013, it was reported that two female inmates also in the Centre, Kirikiri, who were awaiting trial for capital offences had their babies with them. In another case in Katsina State, a female inmate who was on death sentence had her baby with her for two years (Vanguard, 2013). These evidences point to the fact that so many babies are serving jail terms with their mothers in the Nigerian Correctional Service despite the unhealthy conditions of the prisons.

In agreement with Angwe, "there is no amount of compensation that would be given to such a child or the mother that would be commensurate with the hardship suffered if eventually the mothers are discharged and acquitted having been found not guilty of the offences charged". Even where the mother is found guilty, the fact remains that the child was not the one who committed the offence. Hence, there should be a difference in the policy of imprisonment regarding males and females arising from the fact that males do not give birth.

However, on admission into the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS), a pregnancy test is said to be conducted for female inmates and those found to be pregnant are followed up to know the person responsible and immediately contact and inform their families to continue with the necessary follow-up. After this, the pregnant inmates are registered in tertiary care facilities for antenatal care (Enobore, 2012). The crucial medical and legal care required for the welfare of female inmates, according to the NCS operational laws, is given to pregnant inmates and their babies, and females enjoy special attention while in custody (Idem, 2021).

Health is an essential requirement of every human, and, for women, the biological phases



from a child to the teenage, onset of menstruation, pregnancy, peri-menopause, and menopause come with attendant physiological and emotional needs. In the context of this study, pregnant female inmates' needs are not the same as those of the other female inmates, because their needs range notably from mental to emotional, physical and medical needs.

The period of pregnancy is a delicate time when the hygiene of both mother and baby is crucial. Any minor infection from the mother can harm the newborn baby. Infections that are considered as little but dangerous as toilet infections can go a long way to harm the fetus in the womb and consequently the baby at birth. Most times, such infections have been proven to be one of the reasons for jaundice in newborn babies. Aside from toilet infections, infections such as Hepatitis A, B, and C are prevalent in prisons (Elijah & Irebanije, 2014). This infection could be transferred to the foetus in the womb, at birth, or during postnatal care, and it could be dangerous for both mother and baby because it can cause chronic liver disease, cirrhosis, or primary liver cancer and put them at high risk of death from thrombosis (Idem, 2014).

Compared to the general population, inmates worldwide continue to demonstrate a significantly higher prevalence of hepatitis B virus infection. (Volf et al. 2008). This phenomenon has been attributed to factors such as high-risk sexual behaviour before and during incarceration, intravenous drug use with sharing of syringes and drug paraphernalia, as well as tattooing among inmates (Fayyaz, 2006). Hepatitis B virus is more common among prison inmates mainly because most of the inmates come from a marginal section of the population where there are intravenous drug users, among whom they are highly exposed to the virus. So, they spread the virus to other inmates by sharing sharp objects, such as razors, Needles, and shavers, which are in short supply in the prison, and by body contact with bodily fluids (Solomon, 2004). Prisons could serve as reservoirs that could amplify transmission of this viral infection in the general community as infected inmates are released (Mohammad et al. 2011).

In addition to proper hygiene, a pregnant woman requires a healthy, well-balanced, and nutritious diet for the well-being of both the mother and the healthy development of the foetus. The prenatal diet of the mother can have either a positive or negative impact on the child's development. Some studies have shown that a poor diet lacking in essential nutrients, such as iodine, iron, folate, calcium, and zinc, can lead to low birth weight, fetal growth restriction, or even be associated with the development of chronic diseases in adult years, as well as intergenerational effects. (Fleischacker, 2023). A Pregnant woman also requires appropriate and adequate nutrients to support herself to be able to carry a healthy baby to full term successfully. Where necessary, adequate supplementation is needed to enhance nutritional levels to prevent pre-eclampsia. It is therefore generally assumed that the Correctional Service may not be able to offer adequate maternity, antenatal care, and postnatal care, or appropriate access to maternal and baby hygiene products and a suitable environment. Having visited the Female Custodial Centre, Kirikiri, on research for several reasons, the sight of pregnant females and females with babies from newborn to about 18 months was heartbreaking. As such, this situation calls to mind the rights this class of persons has, given the peculiarities of their state during pregnancy and childbirth. It therefore necessitated this current study, which tried to examine the legal rights of pregnant female inmates, including their health needs during the period of pregnancy in Nigeria.

## **Methodology**

This study was based on secondary data sources. It drew upon the Nigerian Constitution of 1979, Nigerian Correctional Service Reports, Nigerian Law Reports, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Academic Journals, Health Policy documents (both national/international), newspapers, and official news bulletins. Content analysis of the data was done to highlight the rights and health needs of pregnant female inmates in Nigeria.

Literature Review and Conceptual Clarifications  
This paper reviews the international and domestic



standards that, in principle, guarantee the right of female prisoners to health. It outlines the implementation of health policies in Nigeria by assessing the requirements and providing strategies for ensuring that these standards are met.

The foundation of any democratic society is the rule of law. The rule of law governs all aspects of the state, and it is governed and guaranteed by the provisions of the Constitution. Human rights are one of the most fundamental rights protected by the rule of law, which inhere in human beings by virtue of their humanity, without regard to conduct or status. They are not privileges which may be withdrawn at will. Several international instruments also clearly state that everyone (without discrimination as to race, gender, or age) is entitled to the enjoyment of some basic human rights. In particular, Article 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that: "All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person". Thus, the right of persons in incarceration is covered in provisions relating to health.

The right to health, being one of the fundamental rights, refers to the entitlement to enjoy a variety of goods, facilities, services, and conditions necessary to maintain or restore health. The preamble to the WHO Constitution reads, in part, "The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition." (Author's Emphasis). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1976) states that the right to health is the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. General Comment 14 (ICESCR), for instance, elaborates on the nature of the right to health, stating that the right to health also shares a close affinity with other human rights and can only be realised upon the realisation of other human rights. By this interpretation, the right to health is not a right to healthcare, but is inclusive of the range of factors that promote conditions leading to

a healthy life, such as the rights to food, adequate nutrition, housing, work, education, human dignity, and equality.

Generally, the right to health of prisoners is protected by provisions in several ratified international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966), the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Regional treaties protecting the right to health include the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The essence of these provisions is that all people, including prisoners, have the right to the best possible physical and mental health (ICCPR, 1966). Vivien (1998) aptly captures it that:

*"Detained people are included because human rights extend to all human beings. It is a fundamental principle of international human rights law that no human being can be beyond the reach of certain human rights protections. ... But the basic right to life, health, fairness and justice, humane treatment, dignity and protection from ill-treatment or torture remain. There is a minimum standard for the way a state treats its people, regardless of who they are. No one shall fall below" (Vivien, 1998).*

As analysed above, state parties to the ICESCR are mandated under international agreements to uphold specific basic standards for the right to health, including for those who are incarcerated. The health provision is comprehensive because it covers all necessary primary care, ensures non-discriminatory access to healthcare, especially for marginalised or vulnerable groups, and provides essential medications. It also ensures an equitable distribution of health facilities, goods, and services, as well as basic shelter, housing, sanitation, and portable water.



According to international law, incarcerated people are entitled to the same level and quality of healthcare as the general public, without regard to their prison status (CESCR, 2000). This includes gynaecological and obstetric care, ensuring reproductive, maternal, and child healthcare, providing access to information for significant health issues, and providing proper training for healthcare staff, all of which are tasks of equal priority in connection with pregnant women in custody. (CESCR, 2000) In a similar vein, the UN Principles of Medical Ethics (1983) relevant to the Protection of Prisoners against Torture states explicitly that 'health personnel ...charged with the medical care of prisoners and detainees have a duty to provide them with protection of their physical and mental health and treatment of the same quality and standard as is afforded to those who are not imprisoned or detained'. (UNGA, 1983). Marcus, in his work, opined that the ECHR has moved away from supporting inherent limitations to the rights of incarcerated prisoners to a more liberal approach and wider protection of fundamental human rights during imprisonment (Marcus, 2015). It is in the light of this fact that Rule 2 of the European Prison Rules provides that "persons deprived of their liberty retain all rights that are not lawfully taken away by the decision sentencing them or remanding them in custody" (European Prison Rules, Rule 2; See also European Prison Rules 2020).

In Nigeria, one of the most essential responsibilities of the democratic state is to protect citizens' human rights, which is based on a culture of human rights recognition and enforcement. All persons are guaranteed certain rights under the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, from which the law cannot deviate. These rights extend to persons in incarceration except for the right to liberty. In addition, correctional centres in Nigeria (which are) regulated by the Nigerian Correctional Services Act (2019), focus on rehabilitating, reformation, and reinstatement of inmates (NCSA 2019, section 2) It is worth noting that the courts have, on numerous occasions, reiterated the rights available to prisoners. Thus, prisoners, like other Nigerians, are entitled to the fundamental human

rights entrenched and guaranteed in Part IV of the CFRN, to the exclusion of the right to liberty.

### **The Rights of Pregnant Inmates and the Unborn Child in Nigeria**

The needs of pregnant women are peculiar, given the circumstances of their state. It is therefore imperative that these apparent needs be taken care of by the correctional facilities, even while serving their sentences. It is with this in mind that this paper considers some needs which are peculiar to this particular class of persons. It is interesting to note that these needs have specific resonance within the context of the rights of pregnant inmates in other countries, such as the U.S. Constitution's Eighth Amendment.

It is commendable that the Nigerian Correctional Service Act (2019), for the first time, acknowledges the physiological differences in male and female inmates and provides for separate facilities for female inmates in all states of the federation.

Section 34 of the 2019 Act serves as an umbrella provision that recognises women's uniqueness. According to the provision of that section, separate facilities shall be provided for women in all states of the federation. Section 34(2) requires that correctional facilities provide 'all necessary facilities to address the special needs of female inmates, including pregnant women, nursing mothers, and babies in custody'. Although the Act is silent on the nature of the special needs, the following section discusses the basic needs of pregnant women and their unborn children using international standards and instruments.

### **Right to Health Education**

Health education is crucial for all persons in incarceration, as it has both personal and public health benefits. Scholars have also suggested that education about general healthcare and pregnancy, specifically, should be extended to all women inmates. According to Anita (1993), ..., *much of what {these} women understand about pregnancy – interpretation of symptoms, self-diagnosis, the need for clinical appointments, use of self-remedies, evaluation of treatment, and belief in professional explanation – comes from*



*individuals who may themselves may be ill-informed routine counselling and education by health care providers to all inmates dispels misinformation and the stress it causes for pregnant inmates. (Anita. 1993).*

### **Right to Access to Quality Medical Care**

The pregnancy period requires regular prenatal medical checkups to ensure the well-being of both the mother and the unborn child, and to prevent any health emergencies that may endanger the lives of one or both of mother and child. Prisoners' access to quality medical care is a fundamental human right guaranteed by numerous international instruments to which Nigeria is a signatory. Article 16 of the African Charter provides that 'every individual shall have the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical and mental health' (article 16 (1) African Charter, 1982) This means that health care should be consistent with that provided by the state to other citizens. This right encompasses the right to proper and timely health care (UNHRC, 2006b). Similarly, Article 9 of the ICESCR provides that 'prisoners shall have access to the health services available in the country without discrimination on the grounds of their legal status.' An adequate healthcare facility includes a regular supply of drugs, particularly for pregnant and nursing women, the provision of a crèche for the well-being of the baby, and sanitary provisions for female inmates. Section 25 (1) of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019 states that the Superintendent of Corrections, on the order of the medical officer, directs the removal of a seriously ill prisoner confined in a prison to a hospital specified in the order where there is a suitable accommodation for him in the prison. (Section 8 (1) Prisons Act, 2004). The 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, as well as its 1977 Additional Protocol 1, makes special provisions for detained pregnant women and mothers with babies, stating that their cases must be given top priority, and maternity cases must be admitted to any institution where adequate treatment can be provided.

### **Right to Decent Accommodation and a Birthing Centre**

Section 34(1) of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act states that there shall be provision for all necessary facilities to address the special needs of

female inmates and pregnant women, which reveals the nature of accommodation in prison centres. In a 2019 editorial titled 'for babies in prison, life starts on shaky foundation', the author showed that about 14 pregnant women were kept in a room; the author further stated that interviewed inmates noted that the rooms are infested with bed bugs, mosquitoes, lack of adequate space and concluded that 'generally, the living conditions are inhumane and fall short of the minimum standard that can be found in prisons round the world'. (Sesan, 2019)

Where practicable, arrangements shall be made for a woman to deliver in a hospital. In protecting the dignity of the baby, Note That the 2019 Nigerian Correctional Service Act provides for a crèche for the well-being of the child. In this regard, Section 476 of the Nigerian Prisons Standing Order (Revised Edition) also includes the provision of cots and/or cradles for inmates with babies.

### **Right to Good Health and Nutritional Needs**

Section 34 (2) of the 2019 Nigeria Correctional Service Act recognises the special dietary needs of pregnant women in prison or jail, as well as requirements for clothing, exercise, and instruction about pregnancy and childbirth. Nutrition is hardly mentioned in any human rights document, but it has been argued that, as an essential element of health and an extension of the right to food, it has emerged as a fundamental right. To enjoy the right to the highest attainable standard of health, states must protect this right by ensuring that everyone within their jurisdiction has access to the underlying determinants of health. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR, 1966) has this to say:

*The right to adequate food shall therefore not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense, which equates it with a minimum package of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients.*

Scholars have long opined that special needs should be provided for them because babies at birth feed on the breast milk of their mothers (Yahaya et al. 2017). The Nigeria Service Correctional Act states that the correctional



service shall address the special needs of nutrition and medical provision (which is similar to the provision that 'every prisoner shall be allowed sufficient quantity of plain and wholesome food' (NCS Booklet Special Order). Article 215 states that the Medical Officer shall accompany the case note of any inmate requiring a special diet and ensure that they receive sufficient rations of the diet. (Section 214-216).

### **Abusive Shackling of Women During Pregnancy and Labour**

Under the UN Convention against Torture (CAT) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Pregnant women should not be in shackles during pregnancy or labour. When a pregnant woman is shackled, she is subjected to leg irons, waist shackles, and/or handcuffs before, during, and after labour and delivery. The Act of shackling of pregnant women as an abuse of human rights was brought up in the case of **Women Prisoners of District of Columbia Department of Corrections v. District of Columbia** (Nos. 95-7041, 95-7205, 1996). This was also in issue in the case of *Nelson v. Correctional Medical Services* (583 F.3d 522, 8th Circuit 2009) where the Eight Circuit Court of Appeals decided that a prisoner had a clearly established right not to be shackled, absent clear and convincing evidence that she was a security or flight risk. **The case of Nelson v. Correctional Medical Services** has been upheld in the case of **Brawley v. Washington** (712 F. Supp.1208, W.D Wash. 2010), which states that "shackling inmates while they are in labour is a violation of the Eighth Amendment's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment". With reported cases of widespread practices, the UN Standard Treatment of Prisoners states that 'shackles should not be used on inmates unless they are a danger to themselves, others or property or have a history of absconding' (Rules 33 UN Standard for the Treatment of all Prisoners).

According to the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (2010) in the prison context, restraints are recommended only, when necessary, for example:

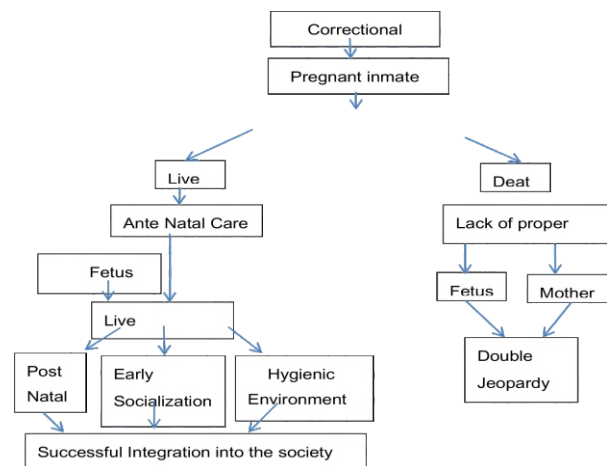
### **(i) Before the Child's Birth;**

1. If restraint is necessary, it should be done by the least restrictive means necessary and in a way that mitigates adverse clinical consequences.
2. Abdominal restraints that directly constrict the area of pregnancy should not be used.
3. Wrist restraints, if used, should be applied in such a way that the pregnant inmate may be able to protect herself and the foetus in the event of a forward fall.
4. Pregnant inmates should not be placed in a facedown position or in four-point restraint.
5. Leg and ankle restraints should not be used because they increase the risk of a forward fall.
6. Pregnant inmates should not be chained to other inmates.
7. Restraints during transport to the hospital or during labour and delivery should not be used, except where necessary due to a serious threat of harm to self, staff, or others

### **(ii) It can also be after childbirth;**

8. Restraints should be avoided if possible, during this period, because labour and delivery can result in exhaustion, dehydration, difficulty in urination or defecation, and complications such as haemorrhage. Necessary bed rest and rapid response to medical emergencies should also be taken into account, particularly for caesarean section births.
9. If restraints are required, they should allow for the mother's safe handling of her infant and mother-infant bonding, which is beneficial and very strong during the postpartum period.

### **Conceptual Framework**



Source: Author, 2025



Figure 1 shows the possible outcomes of treatment during a female inmate's pregnancy.

This is an illustration of a direct link between incarceration, pregnant inmates, the foetus, the newborn babies and the integration of the babies into society. This simply shows that the treatment given to the pregnant inmate determines whether the inmate, foetus and newborn babies will survive during incarceration, delivery and after delivery. The table also showed that the treatment meted out to one of the three affects the other, which eventually informs the babies' successful integration into society.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Incarceration of offenders has evolved. Both males and females are participating in offences that require incarceration, though the number of males is often higher than that of females in almost all types of offences. Nowadays, female offenders are on the increase, and this has necessitated the establishment of more female custodial Centres in Nigeria. This also impacts the need to think about the incarceration of female offenders in more specific ways, focusing on their special needs. These needs vary from those of females to those of pregnant females before or during incarceration. Hence, the health needs of pregnant female inmates to be considered to guarantee the safety of both mother and newborn. Feminist criminologists emphasise gender equality in all areas of life except reproductive rights, which can never be equal. The reason is that the female is the one who gets pregnant, carries the pregnancy to term (9 months) and delivers the newborn. During this period, many changes take place both inwardly and outwardly. Hence, the periods of pregnancy, prenatal, ante-natal, and postnatal must be considered, even during incarceration.

The condition of pregnant female inmates in custody is therefore unique (double jeopardy; pregnant and incarcerated), needing special attention and care (medical, emotional, psychological and nutritional). Meanwhile, the Custodial Centres (Prisons) are mainly designed for males with little consideration for the unique experiences of females, not to mention pregnant females. As such, the unique needs of pregnant female inmates such as; prenatal care, ante-natal

care, maternal health, gynaecological treatment, postpartum services, mental health support, trauma of incarceration, separation from family, hygiene, nutritional needs, social support and post-birth accommodations are often overlooked (not considered) and these render the lives of both mother(s) and unborn child(ren) at risk. Hence, feminist criminologists advocate specifically for reproductive rights, alternatives to incarceration and trauma-informed policies for pregnant women in custody.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The treatment of females in pregnancy deserves special attention, and more particularly, incarcerated females, because, incarceration or not, pregnancy is a challenging and physically demanding period. There is a plethora of international instruments which state the minimum treatment of prisoners. Given the vulnerability of pregnant and nursing mothers, state parties to these instruments must fulfil the core obligations as agreed under these instruments. In charting the direction of improving conditions for pregnant inmates, states should look at providing appropriate funding for more programs that offer alternatives to incarceration or proper treatment of pregnant inmates. Alternatives to detention have been argued to be necessary, especially for pregnant and nursing inmates who are merely awaiting trial, as opposed to those who have been, or are serving a sentence. This also applies to non-violent offenders.

Kelly (2005) has argued that there should be an ideal creation of national standards for their care. While we agree on standards, the writers of this paper believe that the instruments have created the minimum requirements. It is left for state parties to draw and develop internal policies of their own to meet these international obligations within the dictates of 'evolving standards of decency that make the progress of a maturing society'. These writers also support the conclusion of Yahaya, et. al. that the Nigerian Prisons Act has outlived its usefulness, because the rights of incarcerated persons is not adequately addressed. (Yahaya et al. 2017).



## Conclusion

This paper concluded that pregnant female inmates, just like every other female in Nigeria and across the globe, have equal human rights to good medical treatment, education, meeting quality nutritional needs, and standard living conditions, amongst others. If restraints are recommended, they should be implemented with the health of both mother and child in mind. Also, pregnant female inmates should be given the rights to antenatal care, access to safe delivery and postnatal care in the tertiary/government hospitals. Newborn babies and mothers should also be taken care of with financial and material donations from the government, non-government organisations, religious bodies, and individuals. Likewise, if the mental health of the baby is to be considered, it should start right from the correctional facilities.

## Recommendations

The study therefore recommends a human rights-based approach to the treatment of pregnant female prisoners, first by virtue of their being human, and secondly, because of the special needs imposed upon them by virtue of their state. Furthermore, the Prisons Act should, in line with international human rights standards and benchmarks, be amended to reflect a human rights perspective on these classes of persons.

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## The Role of Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit in Fighting Money Laundering for Financing Terrorism in Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Hadiza Sa'eed Musa,<sup>1</sup>Aminu Yunusa,<sup>2</sup>Nura Muhammad Yaro

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Sociology, Federal Polytechnic Lafia, Nasarawa State Nigeria.

Email: deezam2020@gmail.com, aminuyunusa77@yahoo.com, yunusaaminu@abu.edu.ng

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### Abstract

Over the last two decades (2004–2024), money laundering, particularly as a means of terrorism financing, has threatened global security, financial stability, and governance. These activities have continued to aid criminal enterprises, promote corruption, sustain terrorist activities, undermine economic growth, and threaten the national security of many nations. In Nigeria, terrorist groups such as AnsarDine, Boko Haram, and the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) have continued to exploit illicit financial transactions and collaborate with terrorism financiers to support their operations. Thus, the article explored the role of the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) in fighting money laundering for the financing of terrorism in Nigeria. The study adopted the Structural Functionalist Theory to explain the role of the NFIU in combating money laundering for terrorism financing in the country. The article also adopted content analysis in reviewing and analyzing related secondary data and extant literature on the subject. Findings from the work revealed that the role of the NFIU includes combating money laundering and terrorism financing, collaborating with international financial intelligence agencies, and partnering with security and private-sector intelligence units to fight money laundering for terrorism financing in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study found that the challenges faced by the NFIU include political interference, corruption, lack of inter-agency collaboration, and weak intelligence-sharing, among others. The paper recommended, among others, creating new laws to strengthen the NFIU against political interference, adopting technological advancements and capacity building, strengthening collaboration with international financial institutions, and training and retraining personnel of the NFIU.

**Keywords:** Criminalities, Illicit Transactions, Terrorism, Money Laundering, Financial Intelligence

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### Introduction

The criminality of money laundering, particularly as a means of terrorism financing, threatens global security, financial stability, and good governance. The criminality enables criminal enterprises to promote corruption and sustains terrorist activities. In doing so, it undermines economic growth and national security (Adebayo, 2023). In Nigeria, insurgent groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) exploit illicit financial transactions and corrupt law enforcement agents (Uche & Obiora, 2022). This unfortunate situation has led to the establishment of Anti-money laundering (AML) laws around the globe. These laws are primarily designed to deter criminals from hiding their ill-gotten wealth within the financial system. This was achieved by mandating financial institutions to implement customer due diligence (CDD) practices through Know Your Customer (KYC)

procedures, which involve bio-metric verification of customers (Ogbotor, 2025).

The illicit financial flows in Nigeria are linked to corruption, drug trafficking, and organized crime (Ogbonnaya, 2020). The rise of Boko Haram in the early 2000s increased concerns about terrorism financing. This led to the enactments of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act (2004) and the establishment of the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) within the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) (Akanbi, 2017). Gaining independence in 2018, the NFIU aligned its operations with international AML/CFT standards (Financial Action Task  
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However, the NFIU has faced challenges in being effective in combating terrorism financing. Evidence suggests that terrorist groups still access illicit funds, raising concerns about the NFIU's capacity to detect and intercept suspicious transactions (Uche & Obiora, 2022). Research highlights weaknesses in enforcement, inter-agency collaboration, and technological

capabilities (Owolabi, 2021). Additionally, informal financial systems like hawala networks and trade-based money laundering remain major risks (Goredema, 2018). This article intends to review the role of the NFIU in the fight against money laundering for terrorism financing and in maintaining security in Nigeria.

Money laundering, particularly as a means of terrorism financing, poses a significant threat to national security and economic stability. According to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF, 2022), an estimated \$1.6 trillion is laundered globally each year, with a substantial portion funding terrorism. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021) reports that terrorist organizations exploit financial systems by moving illicit funds through formal banking channels, informal networks, and unregulated cash transactions.

In Nigeria, Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have increasingly used money laundering to sustain operations, procure weapons, and recruit fighters (Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit [NFIU], 2023). Despite Nigeria's adoption of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act and its membership in global AML/CFT initiatives, terrorism financing remains a challenge. The NFIU, established in 2004 and granted autonomy in 2018, serves as the country's central financial intelligence agency. It works to detect and disrupt illicit financial flows (Central Bank of Nigeria [CBN], 2022). In 2023, the NFIU intercepted approximately ₦50 billion (\$108 million) in suspicious transactions linked to terrorism between 2021 and 2023. Yet, experts argue that a substantial volume of illicit funds still evades detection. This is because loopholes still exist in the country's financial system, which terrorists and terrorism financiers exploit to threaten the lives and properties of citizens and to disrupt law and order (NFIU, 2023).

The CBN (2022) acknowledges that Nigeria's financial landscape, dominated by cash transactions and informal remittance systems, presents vulnerabilities that terrorist financiers



exploit. Furthermore, the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA, 2023) notes that, while financial intelligence-sharing has improved, regulatory enforcement remains weak and inter-agency coordination gaps persist. Abuja, as Nigeria's political and economic hub, remains particularly susceptible to illicit financial activities.

While previous studies (FATF, 2021; GIABA, 2022) have examined Nigeria's AML/CFT framework, few have focused on the effectiveness of the NFIU in curbing terrorism financing in Abuja. Existing research highlights broad challenges such as weak enforcement and limited technological capacity but lacks empirical assessments of NFIU operations.

Therefore, this article intends to investigate the role of the NFIU in the fight against money laundering for terrorism financing and in maintaining security in Nigeria. The paper also examines the challenges faced by the NFIU in these areas and proffers recommendations to address these challenges.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Money Laundering**

Schneider and Windischbauer (2019) defined money laundering as "the conversion, transfer or concealment of criminal proceeds through financial and non-financial institutions to prevent detection by authorities". For Reuter and Truman (2021), emphasize that money laundering involves "a sequence of transactions designed to obscure the origin of illegally obtained funds, making them appear to come from legal sources". Unger and Van der Linde (2020) argued that money laundering extends beyond financial concealment, serving as a tool for organized crime, corruption and terrorism financing. They argued that though, efforts by the FATF and other international organizations to standardize Anti-money laundering (AML) regulations, yet challenges persist in enforcement, particularly in developing countries' economies like that of Nigeria. For them, the enforcement and prosecution of laws regarding money laundering

for terrorism financing are generally below average or even weaker. Money laundering is the practice of disguising the origins of illegally obtained money, typically by means of transfers involving foreign banks or legitimate businesses (The Economist, 2018). This portrays the role played by banks in facilitating laundering. World Bank (2019) defined money laundering as "the process, by which illicitly obtained funds are laundered through financial systems, often perpetuating criminal activities and undermining rule of law."

For the purpose of this study money laundering is the utilization of illegal funds sourced from illegal means to finance legal or illegal activities often perpetrated through financial institutions.

### **Terrorism Financing**

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021) defines terrorism financing as "the financial support, whether direct or indirect, of terrorism or those who encourage, plan, or engage in it." The FATF (2022) extends this definition, stating that it involves "the collection, provision, or use of funds for terrorist activities, regardless of whether the funds were legally or illegally sourced." Napoleoni (2021) defined terrorism financing as "the economic infrastructure that enables terrorist groups to sustain their operations often exploiting informal banking systems, state sponsors and criminal activities". NFIU (2023) cited in Ejiofor (2025) defined terrorism financing as "a means through which terrorist groups raise, move, and utilize the financial resources needed to fund their activities, such as recruitment of new members, training, payment of stipends to their fighters and acquisition of weapons".

For the purpose of this study terrorism financing is the supporting of terrorist group financially often through financial institutions or in cash, or materially by providing arms that serve as fertile ground to perpetuate their violent activities against civilians or non-combatant groups.

### **Issues in NFIU Fight against Money Laundering for Terrorism Financing in Nigeria**

Money laundering as a means of terrorism



financing poses a significant threat to national security and economic stability in the world. According to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF, 2022) estimated about \$1.6 trillion is been laundered globally each year, with a substantial portion used for funding terrorism. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021) reported that terrorist organizations exploit financial systems by moving illicit funds through formal banking channels, informal networks and unregulated cash transactions.

In Nigeria, Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) are increasingly used money laundering to sustain their operations, procure weapons and recruit fighters (Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit [NFIU] 2023). Despite Nigeria's adoption of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act and its membership in global AML/CFT initiatives, terrorism financing becomes a threat to Nigerian security. The NFIU was established in 2004 and granted autonomy in 2018, serves as the country's central financial intelligence agency, working to detect and disrupt illicit financial flow (Central Bank of Nigeria [CBN], 2022). The NFIU (2023) intercepted approximately ₦50 billion (\$108 million) suspected for transactions linked to terrorism between 2021 and 2023. Yet experts argue that a substantial volume of illicit funds still evades detection. This is because there are still loopholes existing in the country's financial system where terrorists and terrorism financiers' exploits to threaten the live and properties of citizens and disrupting law and order.

The CBN (2022) acknowledges that Nigeria's financial landscape, dominated by cash transactions and informal remittance systems, presents vulnerabilities that terrorist financiers exploit. Furthermore, the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA, 2023) notes that while financial intelligence-sharing has improved, regulatory enforcement remains weak and inter-agency coordination gaps persist. Nigeria's political and economic hub remains particularly susceptible to illicit financial activities. Nigeria's AML/CFT framework have focused on the effectiveness of

the NFIU in curbing terrorism financing and highlights broad challenges such as weak enforcement, limited technological capacity and lack of empirical assessments of NFIU operations (FATF, 2021; GIABA, 2023).

Therefore, this article intends to investigate the role of the NFIU in the fight against money laundering for terrorism financing and maintenance of security in Nigeria. The study also intends to investigate the challenges faced by the NFIU in the fight against money laundering for terrorism financing and maintenance of security and also proffer recommendations on how to solve the challenges.

### **Theoretical Framework: The Structural Functionalist Theory**

The Structural Functionalist Theory provides a comprehensive sociological lens through which to examine NFIU fight against money laundering used for terrorism financing. This theory originated from the works of Emile Durkheim and further developed by Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton. The theory posits that society is a complex system whose various institutions function interdependently to maintain stability and social order. This study situates the role of the NFIU within the broader social framework, demonstrating how it functions as an essential organ in maintaining economic stability and national security.

Structural functionalism emphasizes that institutions exist to fulfill specific functions that contribute to the stability of society. Talcott Parsons (1951) identified four critical functions that institutions must perform: adaptation, goal attainment, integration and latency (pattern maintenance). The NFIU, as a financial regulatory body, performs these functions by adapting to new financial crime trends, setting goals to curb money laundering, integrating with other institutions for effective enforcement and maintaining established regulatory frameworks to ensure financial transparency. The central tenet of structural functionalism is that institutions operate through well-established mechanisms to achieve societal balance. The NFIU's strategies for



combating money laundering used for terrorism financing align with this principle. As it functions as a regulatory body that enforces financial intelligence gathering, AML regulations and compliance measures to counter illicit financial flows (Agbiboa. 2020).

These measures are intended to safeguard financial integrity and prevent the infiltration of illicit funds into Nigeria's economic system. Through the functionalist perspective, the NFIU's role can be examined in relation to its coordination with other financial institutions, security agencies and international financial intelligence units to strengthen Nigeria's financial security framework. However, despite these efforts, gaps in regulatory enforcement, political interference and challenges in intelligence-sharing mechanisms create dysfunctions that limit the NFIU's effectiveness in fulfilling its role (Usman, 2022).

The application of structural functionalism also helps in identifying the challenges militating against the NFIU's fight against money laundering used for terrorism financing. Merton's (1968) distinction between manifest and latent functions is particularly useful in this regard. While the

manifest function of the NFIU is to prevent the illicit flow of funds to terrorist organizations through financial intelligence and regulatory enforcement. Its latent functions include the unintended consequences of bureaucratic inefficiencies, legal loopholes and institutional corruption that undermine its effectiveness (Ede. 2021). A key dysfunction within this System arises from limited inter-agency collaboration, where financial institutions, law enforcement agencies and regulatory bodies fail to share intelligence effectively, due to jurisdictional conflicts and bureaucratic bottleneck (Olaniyi & Adedoyin. 2019). This lack of synergy weakens the NFIU's capacity to detect and prevent financial crimes linked to terrorism, allowing illicit funds to flow through undetected channels. Another major challenge affecting the NFIU's efforts is inadequate technological infrastructure. In an era where financial crimes are increasingly

sophisticated, the reliance on outdated technology and manual investigative processes impairs the efficiency of financial intelligence gathering and analysis (Aliyu & Hassan. 2023). Structural functionalism suggests that when institutions fail to adapt to evolving societal challenges, dysfunctions emerge that threaten societal stability. This is evident in the NFIU's struggle to keep pace with emerging trends in digital finance including crypto-currency transactions that enable anonymous transfers of illicit funds across borders (Okeke. 2020). The inability to effectively track and regulate such transactions creates vulnerabilities in the financial system which terrorist organizations exploit to fund their operations.

The theory further underscores the role of external influences, such as political interference in shaping the efficiency of institutions. The NFIU, despite its legal mandate has encountered resistance from political actors who have vested interests in financial secrecy and economic control. This weakens the integrity of financial intelligence operations and erodes public confidence in the effectiveness of anti-money laundering efforts. Structural functionalism explains this phenomenon by highlighting how institutional weaknesses can create opportunities for deviant behaviors that disrupt societal order (Cuff, Sharrock & Francis, 2006; Johnson, 2021). To address these challenges, structural functionalism emphasizes the need for systemic reforms that enhance institutional efficiency. Parsons (1951) posited that social systems must constantly adapt to changing conditions to maintain equilibrium. This perspective supports the argument that the NFIU must undergo structural improvements including enhanced inter-agency cooperation, investment in advanced financial intelligence technology and stricter regulatory compliance mechanisms to counter the evolving nature of financial crimes. One key area of reform is the establishment of a centralized financial intelligence-sharing platform that facilitates real-time communication between the NFIU, commercial banks, fintech companies and law enforcement agencies. By reducing bureaucratic delays and improving data



integration such a platform can significantly enhance the effectiveness of financial crime investigations.

### **Methodology**

This paper adopts a desk review methodology to examine the role of the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) in combating money laundering for terrorism financing. The review is based on secondary data drawn from peer-reviewed journals, books, policy documents, official reports, and credible online sources. In addition, content analysis of publications by international and regional financial intelligence and regulatory authorities was carried out to identify key trends, challenges, and institutional responses. This approach allows the paper to present a clear understanding of the NFIU's functions and challenges without conducting primary research.

### **The Role of NFIU in Fighting Against Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing**

There are several roles that the NFIU play in the fight against money laundering for terrorism financing and some of these roles are:

#### **i. Combat money laundering and terrorism financing**

The NFIU plays a significant role in combating money laundering and terrorism financing in Nigeria. The NFIU remain committed in the conduct of regular inspections, audits, and assessing AML, identified its lapses and take decisive measures (Roman, 2024). The agency is responsible for financial intelligence gathering, analysis and dissemination, and addressing illicit financial flows. Adebayo (2023) maintain that the NFIU has played its role in the fight against money laundering for terrorism financing and maintaining security through significant strides in tracking illicit financial flows through the use of Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) and advanced data analytics and this enhanced Nigeria's compliance with international AML/CFT standards. Similarly, Okonkwo and Yusuf (2021) examined the duty of the NFIU in carrying out the role of regulatory measures in ensuring banking sector compliance with AML/CFT frameworks. They analyzed

transactional data from 2019 to 2021 to assess trends in compliance with NFIU directives and found out that there is a notable increase in the reporting of suspicious transactions, suggesting an improvement in regulatory oversight.

#### **ii. Collaboration with International Financial Intelligence Agencies**

This is another important role played by NFIU in collaborating with international agencies in combating money laundering and terrorism financing. Ibrahim, Adeola and Chukwunna (2022) revealed that high-profile financial crime investigations linked to terrorist organizations operating in Nigeria and international collaborations have led to several successful asset seizures and the disruption of illicit financial networks. Similarly, Bello and Chinedu (2023) maintains that NFIU is using regulatory technology (RegTech) to enhance the financial intelligence capabilities of the Agency, machine learning algorithms and predictive analysis have been integrated into financial intelligence operations. Also, Musa and Aliyu (2023) revealed that the effort of NFIU in combating money laundering and terrorism financing remains a critical area of research, particularly in light of the evolving nature of financial crimes and the increasing complexity of illicit financial flows. The NFIU should have institutional autonomy, operational independence and must be supported by policy makers, law enforcement agencies and Nigerians to rid terrorism financing from the country.

#### **iii. Collaboration with Security Agencies Private Sector**

The role of the NFIU in their fight against money laundering for terrorism financing involves engaging in synergy relationship between the NFIU, Nigeria's security agencies and the private sector particularly commercial banks and fintecs (Okon & Adamu, 2023). Buttressing this point Uche and Adebayo (2023) opined that the NFIU regularly engaged in synergy between the NFIU, Nigeria's security agencies and the private sector to enhance financial intelligence gathering and enforcement outcomes that fight against money laundering for terrorism financing.



### **The Challenges of NFIU in Fighting against Money Laundering for Terrorism Financing**

The NFIU was established to enforce anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing laws by collaborating with law enforcement agencies and financial institutions. Despite its mandate, the NFIU faces numerous challenges some of the challenges include:

#### **i. Political Interference:**

Political interference is one of the most critical challenges impeding the integrity and role of NFIU. Despite the fact that, the unit gained operational independence from the EFCC in 2018, some political elites and government officials continue to exercise an unlawful influence over its duties (Okoli & Orinya, 2021). The involvement of politically exposed persons (PEPs) in money laundering schemes has led to selective enforcement of AML laws, where investigations into high-profile individuals are been delayed for selfish and political reasons (Ede & Okonkwo, 2022). The political elites interfere in the appointment of NFIU leaders based on political godfatherism not on merit, thereby weakening the institution's capacity to act independently (Oladimeji & Hassan, 2023). The resulting lack of autonomy compromises financial intelligence gathering and enforcement, allowing criminal networks to thrive under political protection (Umar & Bello, 2023).

#### **ii. Corruption:**

Corruption plays a significant role in deteriorating the duties of law enforcement agencies and exacerbates the challenges of combating money laundering used for terrorism financing. Reports indicate that some officials responsible for enforcing AML regulations engaged in corruption practices like as suppressing suspicious transaction reports (STRs) or leaked sensitive financial intelligence to criminal organizations in exchange for bribes (Ibrahim et al., 2022; Faga & Nwali, 2024). The terrorist financiers are utilizing the corruption practice of some officers to influence institutional role enabling them to transfer funds undetected. Furthermore, regulatory agencies sometimes engaged in selective enforcement, targeting less privileged

offenders and covered privileged and politically connected offenders (Adebayo, 2023). This undermines the credibility of financial intelligence efforts and weakens public trust in the ability of the NFIU in combating financial crimes.

#### **iii. Lack of Inter-agency Collaboration and Intelligence Sharing**

One of the major operational challenges facing the NFIU is the lack of inter-agency collaboration. The fight against terrorism financing requires coordinated efforts between multiple government agencies, including the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the EFCC, Nigeria Police Force, the Department of State Services (DSS) and other law enforcement bodies particularly in the area of intelligence-sharing (Ugwoke & Bello, 2023). However, institutional rivalries, bureaucratic inefficiencies and lack of standardized framework for intelligence sharing hinder effective cooperation (Nwokolo, 2021; Faga & Nwali, 2024). In many cases, critical financial intelligence is delayed due to inter-agency rivalry, resulting in a fragmented approach in tracking illicit financial flows. Moreover, the absence of an integrated financial crime database prevents different agencies from accessing real and timely information, which serve as a fertile ground and making it easier for terrorist financiers to achieve their aims (Ugwoke & Bello, 2023). Without a centralized system that enables swift intelligence-sharing, investigations into complex money laundering schemes often suffer from delays, allowing illicit funds to be moved undetected.

#### **iv. Non-Compliance by Financial Institutions**

This poses another critical obstacle to the NFIU's efforts. The commercial banks are largely compliant with AML regulations; but there is widespread non-compliance among microfinance institutions, digital financial service providers and informal money transfer networks (Olawole, 2023). Many of these entities fail to conduct proper Know Your Customer (KYC) and due diligence checks, thereby creating opportunities for money launderers to move funds through legitimate financial channels (Okon & Adamu, 2023). Additionally, the growing use of fintech



platforms, crypto-currency transactions and peer-to-peer (P2P) financial services has introduced new challenges for regulatory enforcement. This is in line with Ojo and Olaniyan, (2022) that terrorist financiers increasingly exploit these digital financial services to conduct anonymous transactions beyond the reach of traditional banking regulations. The decentralized nature of crypto-currency transactions makes it particularly difficult for regulators to trace illicit funds, as there is no central authority overseeing these transactions.

#### **v. Legal and Judicial Constraints**

This also brought significant setback to the role of NFIU. Despite the enactment of various laws such as the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022 and the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022, the enforcement of these laws remains weak due to lengthy judicial processes and legal loopholes (Adeyemi, 2023; Olawale & Ibrahim, 2023). The slow pace of trials for financial crime allows suspects to exploit legal technicalities, delay proceedings and in some cases, evade justice (Ekanem & Yusuf, 2021).

#### **vi. Technological Limitations**

Inadequate technological infrastructure hinders the ability of NFIU to access, detect and analyze complex money laundering schemes. Advanced financial intelligence requires sophisticated data analytics, artificial intelligence-driven transaction monitoring and forensic accounting tools to identify suspicious financial patterns (Okokwo & Bello, 2023; Faga & Nwali, 2024). This is in line with Bello and Chinedu (2023) that the NFIU lacks the necessary technological infrastructure to track and analyze large-scale illicit financial flows, particularly those involving international transactions and digital currencies. The agency's reliability on outdated financial monitoring systems limits its ability to detect money laundering allowing terrorist financiers to exploit regulatory blind spots. However, there is an inadequate trained personnel with expertise in financial crime analytics, cyber-financial

forensics and block chain tracking (Osagie, 2023).

#### **vii. Lack of International Cooperation:**

Nigeria is facing significant challenges in establishing effective partnerships with foreign financial intelligence units and international regulatory bodies. Despite the NFIU collaborates with organizations such as the FATF and the Egmont Group, intelligence-sharing is hindered by bureaucratic delays, diplomatic tensions and lack of reciprocal transparency (Agbo, 2021). Many illicit funds connected to terrorism financing are laundered through offshore accounts and global financial networks, but NFIU's ability to track these transactions is constrained by limited access to international financial databases (Akinyemi & Nwosu, 2023).

#### **viii. Extensive Informal Economy:**

This is significant challenge that hinders the NFIU's ability to fight against money laundering used for terrorism financing. Nigeria's financial landscape is characterized by widespread cash transaction, informal money transfer systems and unregulated economic activities that provide a fertile ground for illicit financial flows ranging from imposing taxes levied to vulnerable communities, ransom collected from kidnapped victims' families, extortion and robbery (Ejiofor, 2025). This corroborates with Arowolo and Olatunji (2023) that an estimated 65% of Nigeria's economy operates outside formal financial institutions making it difficult for NFIU to track and monitor suspicious transactions.

#### **ix. The Role Of Non-Profit Organization (NPOs):**

The Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) are facilitating terrorism financing. Eze and Okafor (2022) revealed that of most charities and humanitarian organizations operate legitimately, some have been compromised for channeling illicit funds to terrorist groups under the guise of humanitarian aids. Nigeria's regulatory framework for monitoring NPOs is still evolving and there are challenges in enforcement that allow some organizations to by-passed the process. A key issue is the lack of rigorous financial reporting



requirements for smaller NPOs, which makes it easier for criminal entities to use them as cover for transferring funds undetected. Additionally, the reluctance of many civil society organizations to cooperate with regulatory bodies due to concerns over government overreach has created further obstacles in ensuring transparency in the non-profit sector.

#### **x. Growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):**

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) poses another challenge to the mandate of NFIU. Despite technological advancements have improved financial monitoring capabilities, criminals have also leveraged AI to develop more sophisticated money laundering schemes that are harder to detect. Lawal and Ogunleye (2023) maintains that cyber-enabled financial crimes have become more prevalent, with criminals using AI techniques such as deep fake identity fraud, automated money laundering networks and algorithmic trading to obscure illicit financial flows.

#### **Conclusion**

The paper concludes that NFIU has been effective in contributing to the maintenance of national security in Nigeria though its fight against money laundering for terrorism financing in the country. Similarly, while the unit has made progress in tracking illicit financial flows, its capacity is limited by outdated regulatory frameworks and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Comparative studies indicate that countries with stronger financial intelligence units, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, invest heavily in data analytics and inter-agency cooperation.

Nigerian reliance on traditional banking oversight mechanisms rather than advanced forensic financial analysis hinders the effectiveness of the NFIU. Therefore, being the country's main agency charged with the responsibility of coordinating the gathering of financial intelligence, the agency must redoubled its efforts in detecting, analyzing, prosecuting and preventing money laundering in the country for terrorism financing.

#### **Recommendations**

In light of the challenges highlighted in the paper, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should legislate new laws to legally strengthen the NFIU to prevent it from being influenced and manipulated by politicians in the country.
2. The NFIU should meet up with the international technological standard that will serve as a fertile ground in accessing, detecting and intercepting money laundering in Nigeria.
3. The NFIU should strengthen collaboration with international Financial Institutions that will help in sourcing information on transaction from overseas suspected for financing terrorist and insurgency in Nigeria.
4. The NFIU should be committed in rigorous training and retraining of personnel to compete with international financial intelligence agencies in terms of working experience and familiarity with other transaction channels that defy interception like crypto-currency.
5. Corruption among officers of NFIU and in agencies should be minimized to the barest level if to prevent them from being compromised by the terrorists or terrorist financiers.

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# Rethinking Justice: The Role of Community Sentencing in Nigeria's Criminal Justice Reform

**Akintola Kehinde Boluwatife, Akiode Esther Temitope**

*Department of Criminology and Security Studies, National Open University of Nigeria.*

*kakintola@noun.edu.ng eakiode@noun.edu.ng*

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## Abstract

Sentencing remains a pivotal phase in the administration of criminal justice, during which the court pronounces appropriate sanctions on individuals convicted after a due legal process. Traditionally, custodial sentences, predominantly imprisonment, have served as the primary response of the criminal justice system to criminal behaviour in Nigeria. However, evolving societal dynamics, increasing inaccessibility to justice, and the complex realities of crime causation necessitate a paradigm shift in penal policy. Highlighting contemporary issues in the administration of justice in Nigeria's criminal justice system, this paper interrogates the role of community sentencing as a viable alternative in Nigeria's criminal justice reform efforts. Community sentencing, encompassing measures such as community service, probation, and parole, offers a restorative approach that seeks to address the underlying factors of criminal behaviour rather than rely solely on incarceration. Recognising that not all offences warrant deprivation of liberty, this paper critically examines how community-based sanctions can promote more proportionate, humane, and effective justice outcomes. This study adopts a desk-based approach to analyse theoretical and empirical discourses, juxtaposing them with real-time issues in the Nigerian criminal justice system to advocate for the broader institutionalisation of community-based sentencing. Ultimately, it argues that rethinking justice through community-oriented sanctions can significantly contribute to reducing recidivism, alleviating prison overcrowding, and fostering a more responsive and equitable criminal justice system.

**Keywords:** Sentencing, Community-based sentencing, Criminal justice, Restorative, Recidivism

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## Introduction

The justice system in Nigeria is founded on a tripartite legal framework comprising Islamic law (Sharia), English common law, and customary law. This structure is a remnant of the nation's colonial history and reflects its multicultural populace (Olonisakin, Ogunleye & Adebayo, 2016). The British colonial authority introduced the formal justice system based on an adversarial court system that emphasises the punishment of offenders, often through imprisonment. As the foundation of law enforcement and social order, the criminal justice system (CJS) of any country ensures that the rights of all citizens are protected and that justice is administered equitably. According to Alemika (2014), Alemika & Chukwuma (2005), and Gabbay (2005), justice, equality, efficacy, and efficiency are essential values linked to a functional CJS. These principles uphold public safety, procedural integrity, proportionality of offence and punishment, and constitutionalism. Criminal

justice fundamentally involves determining whether an accused individual is guilty or innocent and then administering the proportional punishment or compensation where needed. However, significant structural and operational issues persist in Nigeria, despite several legal reforms, including the 2015 passage of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) and the Nigerian Correctional Service Act (NCSA) of 2019.

The high prevalence of awaiting trial inmates in Nigerian prisons is one of the most urgent issues. As of April 2025, 66.7% of prisoners in Nigerian prisons are awaiting trial (World Prison Brief, 2025). This alarming number is indicative of longstanding issues, including a shortage of judges, lengthy court proceedings, widespread corruption, and limited access to legal assistance. Due to these institutional shortcomings, the criminal justice system is highly overburdened.



Nigeria's jails are in terrible shape, devoid of basic facilities, and do not adhere to international human rights standards, according to Amnesty International (2021). In addition to increasing the chance of recidivism and violating inmates' fundamental rights, prison overcrowding also hinders the rehabilitation of criminals.

The detention of people for non-violent, minor offences like loitering, traffic infractions, and petty theft, all of which may not necessarily call for long-term jailing, puts a burden on Nigeria's prison system. An antiquated conception of justice that prioritises punishment above the rehabilitation and treatment of offenders is reflected in the punitive approach taken to such offences. The issue of prison overcrowding in Nigeria has frequently been discussed in academic writing and public debates. For instance, Ohazulike and Chikwendu (2023) note that a persistent problem resulting from rising incarceration rates is prison overpopulation. Notably, overcrowding is not merely an issue of space; it reveals a greater inadequacy in the criminal justice system's ability to manage its population humanely. A 2009 analysis by Amnesty International found that 65 per cent of Nigeria's 47,000 inmates had never been found guilty of a crime, with many spending up to ten years in pre-trial detention. The Nigerian Correctional Service Annual Report (2016) similarly revealed that 62.6% (89,404) of 142,848 inmates were awaiting trial. In 2015, that figure stood at 63%. These statistics expose a deeply inefficient system that fails to distinguish between minor infractions and serious crimes.

Considering these realities, there is growing momentum for justice reform rooted in restorative justice principles. Community-based sentencing, also known as non-custodial sentencing, has emerged as a compelling alternative. This approach involves judicial sanctions that do not require incarceration but are carried out within the community under supervision. Community-based sentencing mechanisms may include probation, restitution, community service, curfews, rehabilitative programs, or fines. A community service order, for instance, requires an offender to

perform unpaid labour that benefits society, allowing them to "pay back" the community rather than endure imprisonment.

In addition to addressing the root causes of criminal behaviour, community-based sentencing encourages offender accountability, enables restitution channels, and facilitates the process of reintegrating criminals into society. Most importantly, it provides an appropriate reaction to non-violent and petty offenders, easing the burden on jails while maintaining public safety. Notwithstanding these benefits, community-based penalties are still not widely used in Nigeria. An evaluation of the state, efficacy, and obstacles to implementing non-custodial measures in Nigeria is necessary.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate whether community-based sentencing, particularly for minor and non-violent offences, can serve as a practical, compassionate, and rehabilitative alternative to incarceration. This study examines how non-custodial options can help declutter jail facilities, enhance the delivery of justice, and promote a more equitable criminal justice system. The study also assesses how community-based sentencing can be used as a tool to reduce recidivism and facilitate the successful reintegration of convicts into society. The following research questions are attempted to be addressed to do this:

- i. What are the current practices of community-based sentencing in Nigeria, and how effective are they?
- iii. How can community-based sentencing contribute to reducing prison congestion and improving justice delivery?
- ii. What are the major challenges hindering the implementation of community-based sentencing in Nigeria?

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Criminal Justice System (CJS)**

In Nigeria, the administration of justice and the enforcement of the law are centred on the criminal justice system. Order is upheld, conflicts



are resolved, and this system punishes criminals. Nigeria's legal system is pluralistic, including Islamic (Sharia) law, English common law, and customary law. This diversity reflects the nation's diverse ethnic and religious composition, as well as its colonial past (Alemika, 2014; Adebayo, 2020). This combination broadens the system's cultural reach, but it also makes it more difficult to understand and apply justice.

The adversarial formal legal system, which was largely inherited from British colonial authority, involves both parties presenting their cases before a judge or magistrate decides the issue. In most criminal cases, the default course of action is punishment, particularly incarceration (Onyekwere, 2021). Sharia law, primarily used in northern Nigeria, addresses both civil and criminal cases involving Muslims. However, customary law remains in use in rural and traditional communities, especially in southern Nigeria (Olonisakin, Ogunleye, & Adebayo, 2017).

According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2005), a robust criminal justice system should ideally exemplify efficiency, fairness, equity, and transparency. But these principles are often compromised in reality. There are still major issues in the criminal justice system, even after significant reforms, such as the 2015 passage of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), which aimed to introduce more humane practices into the CJS and reduce the number of awaiting-trial inmates. The number of inmates detained in prisons without conviction is arguably the most concerning problem. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), more than 70% of prisoners in Nigerian jails are awaiting trial. This staggering statistic highlights the system's dysfunction in providing prompt justice. According to Amnesty International (2021) and Okereke & Ekong (2023), many of these people wind up serving years in prison for relatively minor offences, which is frequently longer than the maximum term for the crime they are charged with.

This over-reliance on imprisonment has also resulted in severe overcrowding in Nigerian

prisons. As noted by Haney (2006), the term "overcrowding" refers not only to the number of inmates but also to the extent to which conditions have deteriorated due to the system being designed to hold fewer inmates than it currently holds. Facilities are overstretched, basic human needs are not met, and rehabilitation is almost non-existent. Such conditions not only violate human rights but also increase the risk of recidivism, as ex-inmates find it difficult to reintegrate into society.

### **Sentencing**

The concept of sentencing originates from ancient legal traditions, where punishment was often retributive, as seen in the principle of *lex talionis*, "an eye for an eye," which was used in early Mesopotamian and biblical laws. In modern times, especially with the rise of organised states and codified legal systems, sentencing has developed into a more structured process influenced by various theories of punishment, including retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation, and incapacitation (Roberts, 2008). The term "sentencing" is frequently used interchangeably with "judgment." However, "judgment" has a broader meaning than "sentence." According to Black's Law Dictionary, a sentence is a judgment formally pronounced by a court after finding a criminal defendant guilty, or the punishment imposed on a person found guilty of a criminal offence.

In contrast, judgment is defined as a court's final determination of the rights and obligations of the parties in a case (Black's Law Dictionary, 2004). A sentence is also described as a definite disposition order issued by a court or other competent tribunal against a person standing trial, following a criminal trial and the finding of guilt. It has been stated that a sentence is the pronouncement or judgment by the court upon an accused person after conviction in a criminal prosecution, imposing a punishment to be inflicted (Airapetean, A.2022)

In criminal justice, sentencing is a fundamental process representing the point at which the court determines and imposes a penalty on a person who has been found guilty of committing a criminal



offence. It is the formal judgment pronounced by a judge or magistrate, signifying the legal consequence of the offender's conduct as defined by law (Ashworth, 2010). Sentences can be broadly classified into custodial and non-custodial types. Each type serves a different purpose and is applied depending on the nature and gravity of the offence, the circumstances of the offender, and the legal framework.

### **Custodial Sentences**

In this scenario, the criminal is given a prison sentence. In Nigeria, it is the most widely utilised type of sentence, especially for transgressions ranging from violent felonies to thievery. Custodial punishment is designed to incapacitate the offender and serve as a deterrent, but in fact, it often leads to congestion, bad prison conditions, and inadequate rehabilitation (Amnesty International, 2021; NBS, 2022).

### **Non-Custodial Sentences**

These alternatives to incarceration include community service, probation, fines, restitution, and suspended sentences. Since they are considered more rehabilitative and less disruptive to the offender's life, non-custodial sentences are typically applied to minors or first-time offenders. In some cases, judges may issue non-custodial sentences under Section 453 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA, 2015). For instance, offenders can avoid the harmful consequences of incarceration while making a good contribution to society through community service (Awopeju & Adebayo, 2020).

### **Capital Punishment**

Though controversial and increasingly rare globally, capital punishment (death penalty) is still legally available in Nigeria for offences such as murder, armed robbery, and treason. Its relevance is heavily debated, especially regarding human rights and wrongful convictions (Odinkalu, 2017).

### **Suspended Sentences and Conditional Discharges**

These are sentences that are not immediately enforced, provided the offender meets certain conditions, such as good behaviour or community

supervision. These types aim to deter without subjecting the offender to imprisonment. Because of the over-reliance on custodial sentencing in Nigeria, offenders convicted of petty theft or traffic offences frequently serve time in prison, which exposes them to hardened criminals and worsens their socio-economic prospects upon release (Alemika et al., 2005). This is especially true for rehabilitation and restitution.

### **Probation**

The idea of probation dates back to the 19th century in the United States, and Boston shoemaker John Augustus is frequently referred to as the "father of probation." Augustus favoured rehabilitation over punishment and argued for the release of criminals under monitoring. His work established the foundation for official probationary procedures, which were subsequently implemented in other countries worldwide (Phelps, 2017). A type of criminal punishment known as probation spares an offender from incarceration and instead permits them to live in the community under supervision. Individuals who have been convicted of crimes are typically granted probation, which allows them to live outside of prison under specific guidelines established by the court. Among the primary goals of probation are the offender's rehabilitation, the prevention of future criminal activity, and the reduction of prison overcrowding (Porporino, 2018).

In Nigeria, probation was introduced into the statute books in 1945 with the enactment of the Criminal Procedure Act (CPA), which made provisions for the probation of both juvenile and adult offenders. The Nigerian probation service was established to supervise offenders, particularly juveniles, and facilitate their reintegration into society. However, the system has faced challenges, including inadequate funding, lack of trained personnel, and societal stigmatisation of offenders (Alemika, 2014). Probation can be categorised into several types, each tailored to the offender's risk level and the nature of the offence.

**Standard Probation:** This type of probation involves ongoing supervision and requires the



offender to adhere to specific rules, such as maintaining employment, avoiding criminal activities, and attending regular meetings with a probation officer. In addition to any mandatory requirements, such as community service and alcohol or drug treatment, offenders under regular supervision are expected to report to an officer on a biweekly or quarterly basis.

**Intensive Probation Supervision (IPS):** Designed for high-risk offenders, IPS includes more frequent interactions with probation officials, higher compliance, and sometimes electronic monitoring. Studies have demonstrated that IPS can be beneficial in reducing recidivism when accompanied by rehabilitative programs (e.g., Turner & Petersilia, 1992). Violent offenders, senior gang members, repeat offenders, and sexual offenders are frequently placed on this kind of probation. Probationers may be subject to unexpected home or workplace visits, surveillance, the use of electronic monitoring or satellite tracking, and some jurisdictions require offenders under such supervision to give up their Fourth Amendment rights against search and seizure.

**Unsupervised Probation:** Under this arrangement, the offender is not required to report to a probation officer but must still comply with the conditions set forth by the court. If they fail to do so, probation may be revoked, and the original sentence may be imposed. Probationers are free to attend their places of employment, education, or worship; they may be asked to meet with an officer at the beginning, near the end, or not at all. If the terms are not fulfilled, an officer may petition to revoke probation.

**Shock Probation:** This strategy involves a brief jail sentence followed by probation; the goal of the initial jail term is to "shock" the offender and deter future criminal activity. Shock probation is only applicable for a brief period, ranging from 30 to 120 days, following the initial sentence.

Restorative Justice.

The origins of restorative justice can be found in indigenous justice traditions practised in many

traditional communities worldwide, including those in Africa, New Zealand (Māori), Canada (First Nations), and North America (Native American tribes), as noted by Braithwaite (2017). In these cultures, justice was viewed as a shared concern, and disagreements and wrongs were resolved through discussion, healing, and reconciliation, rather than punishment. Nwolise (2005) stated that the Igbo and Yoruba peoples in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, have traditionally settled disputes with family or community elders, emphasising reconciliation and restitution over retaliation. Global acknowledgement of restorative justice increased in the 1990s. Subsequently, International organisations and several states started incorporating restorative ideas into their legislative frameworks and correctional procedures. In appropriate criminal cases, member states are required to implement restorative justice, as per the 2002/12 resolution of the UN Economic and Social Council (UNODC, 2006).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2006) defines restorative justice as a process in which parties involved in a particular offence jointly decide how to address the aftermath and future ramifications of the offence. The philosophy and practice of restorative justice places a strong emphasis on using inclusive procedures that involve victims, offenders, and the community to mend the harm caused by criminal behaviour. In contrast to the conventional punitive approach, which prioritises punishment, restorative justice aims to meaningfully hold offenders accountable while also attending to the needs of those who have been injured (Zehr, 2002). At the centre of restorative justice frameworks are three principles proposed by Zehr: restoration, accountability, and involvement. An alternative to offender-centred sanctions and punishment, restorative conferencing aims to balance the needs of all parties involved (victim, offender, and community). This promotes healing from traumatic stress and accountability for offending behaviour while resulting in restorative agreements.



Restorative justice has garnered attention in Nigeria, particularly as a potential solution to the shortcomings of the traditional criminal justice system, including overcrowding of prisons, lengthy pre-trial detentions, and the absence of victim participation in the legal system (Ajayi, 2011). The Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015 indicates a move towards restorative principles, with mechanisms for alternative dispute settlement and non-custodial punishment.

### **Theoretical framework**

**This paper will utilise two theories:** Reintegrative Shaming Theory and Restorative Justice Theory.

#### **Reintegrative Shaming Theory**

John Braithwaite proposed Reintegrative Shaming Theory in his groundbreaking work, *Crime, Shame and Reintegration* (1989). The theory builds upon the role of shame in social control and emphasises the distinction between stigmatising shaming and reintegrative shaming. Stigmatising shames the offender as a bad person and isolates them from the community, often leading to further deviance. In contrast, reintegrative shaming disapproves of the wrongdoing but still respects and supports the offender as a person, encouraging them to rejoin the community. The theory of reintegrative shaming argues that the importance of social disapproval has been generally underestimated by institutions of criminal justice, as well as criminological theory. It argues that to understand crime rates, we need to examine the degree to which offending is shamed and whether that shaming is reintegrative or stigmatising.

Reintegrative shaming is defined by Braithwaite (1989) as disapproval that is respectful of the individual, is terminated by forgiveness, does not label the individual as evil, and does not result in condemnation becoming a master status trait. The theory predicts that reintegrative shaming will lead to a decrease in offending, while stigmatising shaming is not respectful of the individual, is not terminated by forgiveness, labels the individual as evil, and allows them to achieve a master status

trait. RST predicts that this latter type of shaming leads to higher levels of offending (Braithwaite, 1989; Makkai & Braithwaite, 1994). Reintegrative shaming is more likely to be used effectively in societies with strong interpersonal relationships and communal values. This makes the theory particularly relevant to Nigeria, where extended families and community networks play a central role in social life. Empirical studies support the theory's assertion that reintegrative approaches are more effective in reducing recidivism than punitive models (Harris, 2006; Hay, 2001).

The use of reintegrative shaming is clearly evident in the context of community punishment. In place of jail time, a judge may order community service or probation, indicating that the offender's actions were wrong but that they can be changed. Criminals are not ostracised but are held accountable. They are allowed to mend fences and rebuild community trust. Offenders who experienced reintegrative shaming had a considerably lower likelihood of reoffending than those who faced traditional criminal proceedings, according to research from Australia's Reintegrative Shaming Experiments (RISE) (Sherman & Strang, 2007). In Nigeria, where the prison system is overcrowded and frequently fails to rehabilitate inmates, the reintegrative shaming principle can help restore the offender's social identity and lessen the stigma that usually comes with incarceration. According to Okoro (2019), community sentencing facilitates successful reintegration by allowing this process to take place within the social fabric that offenders are familiar with.

#### **Restorative Justice Theory**

The old retributive justice system was criticised by restorative justice theory. Although it had its origins in the 1970s, Howard Zehr's writings, particularly his landmark book *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice* (1990), were primarily responsible for its rise to scholarly prominence. Most people consider Zehr to be one of the leading advocates of restorative justice. His work reframed criminal behaviour as a harm to people and relationships, rather than just a legal



infraction. A view of justice known as restorative justice places a strong emphasis on making amends for the harm caused by criminal activity. As stated by Bergseth and Bouffard (2007), restorative justice aims to bring together the people most affected by the criminal act: the victim, the offender, and community members in a non-adversarial process to encourage offender accountability and meet the needs of the victims to repair the harms resulting from the crime. Practices and programs reflecting restorative purposes will respond to crime by identifying and taking steps to repair damage, involving all stakeholders, and changing the traditional relationship between communities and government in responding to crime.

Restorative justice has been empirically linked to reduced recidivism, increased victim satisfaction, and stronger community cohesion (Strang et al., 2006). According to John Braithwaite (2002), one of the foundational values of restorative justice is reintegration, a concept that complements community-based sentencing, which keeps offenders within their social environment rather than isolating them in prisons. In Nigeria, where the criminal justice system is overworked and mainly fails to rehabilitate criminals (Amnesty International, 2021; NBS, 2022), restorative justice provides a workable substitute. Because it considers the victim's needs as well as the offender's circumstances, community-based sentencing, which includes community service, probation, and restitution, embodies restorative principles. It promotes a type of justice that aligns more closely with African culture, where peacemaking and reconciliation are valued above punitive actions (Okafor, 2006).

Despite having different theoretical underpinnings, Restorative Justice Theory and Reintegrative Shaming Theory work together to provide a strong case for the use of community-based sentencing in criminal justice reforms. Their tenets work well together and offer a strong theoretical foundation for supporting non-custodial measures when compared side by side. This is especially true in a setting like Nigeria, where overcrowding, delays, and a misalignment

between punishment and rehabilitation beset the legal system.

Restorative Justice Theory emphasises healing rather than retribution. It shifts the focus from punitive justice to restoring the balance between offenders, victims, and society. This theory emphasises the importance of repairing harm caused by crime through community involvement, offender accountability, and victim engagement. In the Nigerian context, where many offences are minor and non-violent, restorative justice offers a pathway that aligns more naturally with traditional communal values and avoids the adverse consequences of incarceration, such as social alienation and recidivism. On the other hand, Reintegrative Shaming Theory emphasises the efficacy of social processes in regulating criminal behaviour. It distinguishes between reintegrative shaming, which condemns the conduct but accepts the perpetrator's return to society, and stigmatising shaming, which permanently identifies the offender. Because incarceration isolates people and promotes stigmatisation, this distinction is especially potent in explaining why it frequently fails to rehabilitate. Community-based sentencing, on the other hand, permits controlled reintegration, allowing offenders to make constructive contributions to society and re-establish their social ties.

Combining the two theories yields a comprehensive framework for highlighting the benefits of community-based sentencing. The moral guidance and philosophical underpinnings are provided by restorative justice theory, which emphasises healing, relationships, and accountability. In turn, Reintegrative Shaming Theory provides a sociological framework for healing through community-based justice, condemning the transgression without placing blame on the individual. The synthesis of both theories in practice supports the need for reform in Nigeria's sentencing policies. Minor offenders who receive community service or probation instead of jail time can accept responsibility for their actions, make amends, and maintain their social standing, which lessens the strain on



prisons and guarantees that justice is carried out more effectively.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a desk-based qualitative research approach to explore the role of community-based sentencing in Nigeria's criminal justice reform. It relies on the analysis of secondary data, including academic literature, legal statutes, media reports, and empirical studies relevant to community-based sentencing practices. Emphasis was placed on literature examining community-based sentences such as probation, parole, and community service as viable alternatives to traditional sentencing. The findings were organised to reflect theoretical foundations, current realities, and practical challenges in Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

Academic literature has extensively criticised Nigeria's criminal justice system, focusing on its inefficiencies and excessive dependence on incarceration. Alemika and Chukwuma (2005) claim that the system is inherently biased in favour of punitive measures and places little emphasis on restorative justice or rehabilitation. According to this researcher, a justice system that regularly falls short of meeting the demands of both victims and offenders is the result of complex procedures, outdated penal rules, and inadequate legal counsel. Similarly, Gabbay (2005) underlined that the efficiency of a criminal justice system is evaluated not only by how it punishes crime but also by how it restores social peace and defends human dignity.

A significant flaw in Nigeria's system is the excessive use of custodial punishment. Nigerian prisons frequently fall short of international human rights standards and are overcrowded, according to Amnesty International (2021). The National Bureau of Statistics (2022) reports that over 70% of prisoners in Nigerian prisons are awaiting trial, a statistic that highlights the structural inefficiencies and delays in the justice system. This researcher contends that excessive incarceration, particularly for relatively minor offences, leads to more criminalisation rather than rehabilitation.

In the UK, community-based sentencing was created to serve as an intermediate penalty that balances punitive and rehabilitative objectives, and it includes electronic monitoring, community service orders, and probation. Skelton and Batley (2008) noted that restorative justice principles have gained traction as an alternative to traditional punitive systems in South Africa, especially for juvenile and non-violent offenders. These scholars argue that community-based sanctions facilitate the reintegration of offenders into society, reduce recidivism, and uphold the rights of victims. The global shift toward non-custodial measures has yielded important insights, particularly in countries such as the UK and South Africa.

The Nigerian government has attempted reform of its criminal justice system on multiple occasions. To address some of the structural problems ailing the legal system, the Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019 and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015 were passed into law. According to Okocha (2020), the goal of these legislative frameworks is to encourage community service, parole, probation, and other non-custodial methods. Nevertheless, despite their potential, these reforms have not yet been widely implemented. Adebayo (2021) asserts that obstacles, including inadequate infrastructure, limited understanding, and opposition from key stakeholders, continue to hinder the effective implementation of community-based sentencing in Nigeria.

Despite the contributions, a notable gap remains in the research on the local efficacy and societal perception of community-based sentencing in Nigeria. Most previous studies either adopt comparative viewpoints or concentrate on the general dysfunctions of the justice system without situating their findings within Nigeria's particular legal and sociopolitical realities. This study aims to fill that gap by investigating how community-based sentencing can be operationalised in Nigeria to address prison overcrowding, encourage rehabilitation, and guarantee justice for all parties involved in minor and non-violent offences.

History of the Criminal Justice System in Nigeria



The primary responsibility of the CJS in Nigeria is to administer justice in accordance with due process and the rule of law. The CJS is focused on determining the guilt or innocence of suspects, as well as ensuring that the punishment allocated is both fair and suitable for the offence committed by the offender (Aver & Ojienon, 2024). The CJS comprises a range of governmental institutions responsible for enforcing laws that ensure peace, order, and tranquillity within the country. These institutions include the Police, the court systems, and correctional institutions (Aver et al, 2024). According to Olaposi (2021), Nigeria's CJS can be traced to pre-colonial times, when the different ethnic groups had their own customary laws and institutions to regulate conduct and address criminal offences. These laws were mainly unwritten and simple. However, in the Muslim North, written laws existed under the Maliki School.

After the British occupied Nigeria and Lagos became a crown colony, indigenous laws continued to be implemented in the protectorate. The criminal code was established in 1904 by the British upon their takeover of Northern Nigeria, which ultimately led to the unification of Nigeria in 1914. This unification resulted in three separate Criminal Justice Systems. The English Criminal Law, introduced in Lagos, was implemented in the North, alongside indigenous legal customs that remained in the South. Such legal diversity created inconsistencies across the regions. To address the issue, the British extended the Criminal Code to all Nigerians in 1916. However, this extension led to conflicts with the existing Islamic Law. In 1916, the British sought to establish uniformity by extending the Criminal Code nationwide, which sparked conflicts with Islamic Law, particularly regarding punishment and the legal effect of provocation. Subsequent amendments attempted to curtail the jurisdiction of native courts, but legal ambiguities persisted. While some judgments affirmed the autonomy of native courts, others limited their sentencing powers under the Criminal Code. This inconsistency led to the 1958 adoption of the Penal Code and its application to the old Northern region of Nigeria (Udechukwu, 2023). Upon

independence in 1960, Nigeria continued to operate with both the Criminal Code, rooted in English Common Law, and the Penal Code, which reflects the values and beliefs of Muslims, both of which underwent reforms to reflect evolving societal standards (Udechukwu, 2023).

### **Community-based Sentencing in Nigeria: Current Practices**

As prison populations all over the world continue to grow, coupled with the rehabilitative benefits of community-based sentencing, community-based sentencing has become a widely implemented sentencing component in many criminal justice systems. Community-based sentences encompass a diverse range of criminal justice approaches, including suspended sentences, probation, mandatory community service, and mandatory treatment or training programmes, among others (Yukhnenko, Wolf, Blackwood, & Fazel, 2019). Several jurisdictions, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Spain, have implemented and progressively expanded community-based sentencing measures (Agarwal, 2019). While community-based sentencing may be implemented in various forms across different countries, it remains a popular alternative to custodial sentencing. In Belgium, according to McIvor, Beyens, Blay, and Boone (2010), following the formal recognition of community service as a standalone sentence, it gained popularity and was widely implemented in the country. In Spain, its use as a punishment for common offences, such as traffic infractions and minor domestic violence cases, contributed to its increasing popularity (McIvor et al., 2010).

Additionally, McIvor et al. (2010) note that the Netherlands saw a substantial doubling of community service orders from 2000 to 2008, partly driven by legislative reforms enacted in 2001. These reforms positioned community service as an alternative to imprisonment and fines, and increased its use as a sentencing option. Overall, the spread of community-based sentencing in these countries indicates a broader move towards restorative and rehabilitative justice approaches.

The major Trusts influenced the history of



Community-based service in African Countries. Zimbabwe recorded its first success in 1990 with the introduction of Community Service Orders. Uganda recorded the second success following a meeting held in Uganda, named "The Kampala Declaration" on Prison and Penal Reform in 1996, which reflected a shared concern about prison conditions (UN, 1996). The third meeting, held in Zimbabwe, was named "The Kadoma Declaration" on Community Service Orders of 1997. The fourth meeting, held in Burkina Faso, was named "The Ouagadougou Declaration" on Accelerating Penal and Prison Reform in 2002 (Penal Reform International, 2005). Members of the trusts signed a document which sets out a specific prison and sentencing reform agenda. The declaration was noted by the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and annexed to one of its resolutions (United Nations, 1996). The directive sets out a broad reform agenda, calling for improved prison conditions, reduced remands in custody, and increased professional opportunities for prison staff, as well as the development of Community service. Several recommendations were made. Petty offences should be dealt with according to customary practice. Community Service and other alternatives to imprisonment should be preferred to imprisonment. The public should be educated about the objectives of Community service and other alternatives to detention, as well as how they work (Kagaruki, 2015).

The mandate of the Nigerian Prison Services before the coming into force of the NCSA, 2019, was mainly custodial service. Under the NCSA 2019, the "Correctional Service" shall consist of Custodial Service and Non-Custodial Service (Edetalehn, Imoisi & Aidonojie, 2023). The Non-Custodial Service is responsible for administering non-custodial measures, which include community-based sentences. The ACJA, 2015, and the NCSA, 2019, provide several non-custodial sentences as alternatives to the defendant's incarceration. Some of which are: probation, Parole, suspended Sentence, and community sentence.

Nigeria's prisons face many issues, mainly caused by overcrowding, which results in prison

congestion, unsanitary conditions that cause disease outbreaks, a hardening of criminals, and other problems. Community sentences were introduced through the ACJA 2015 and the NCSA 2019 as a more humane approach to tackling these issues through their rehabilitative and reformatory methods for offenders. Recent events suggest that community-based sentencing is being implemented in Nigeria as an alternative approach to sentencing for minor offences. In 2024, the Justice of the Special Offences Court in Ikeja, Lagos, sentenced an 18-year-old man to one year of community service for possessing fraudulent documents printed from his messaging account (Ojo, 2024). The conviction followed a charge brought against him by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The Judge stated that the maximum penalty for the offence was two years' imprisonment, but reduced it to one year due to factors like the offender's efforts at restitution, his status as a first-time offender, and his young age (Ojo, 2024). Additionally, in an attempt to improve the application of non-custodial sentencing in Bauchi State, the Federal High Court in Bauchi sentenced three convicts, found with cannabis sativa weighing 150g, 200g, and 300g, respectively, to three weeks of community service. Their tasks included daily cleaning and sweeping of the Bauchi Custodial Centre premises for three weeks. (Bakaam, 2021). In 2024, a Magistrate court in Abeokuta, Ogun State, sentenced a teenager to two weeks of community service after he broke into a house and stole food, clothes, and some electrical gadgets. Accounts like these reveal the benefits of community-based sentencing (Sunday, 2024). Asangausung (2024) explains that community-based sentencing transfers the responsibility for corrections from institutions to local communities, which helps lower the operational costs of incarceration. Additionally, it alleviates prison overcrowding and supports offender rehabilitation. (Edetalehn et al., 2023). Empirical studies also reveal the extent to which community-based sentences aid in the rehabilitation of offenders. According to Mabara and Anurugwo (2024), in their research, parole services in Nigeria offer offenders a moderate level of support in being reintegrated



into society, albeit these services require critical reforms. Similarly, findings from Zubairu, Musa, & Wunti's (2023) study revealed that inmates and staff of the Bauchi Custodial Centre believed that the provision for community service, probation, and parole in the CJSA 2019 would undoubtedly go a long way in addressing the numerous challenges faced by custodial centres in Nigeria. Another study, conducted by Adikwu and Bununu (2024), also states that non-custodial sentences were highly effective in reducing crime rates in the Wukari Local Government area of Taraba State.

### **Challenges of Community-based Sentencing in Nigeria**

Efforts have been made to incorporate community-based justice programmes into Nigeria's sentencing policy, such as the ACJA 2015 and the NCSA 2019. Courts across the country have also incorporated community-based sentencing into their proceedings. In addition to setting standards for international best practices in criminal justice administration, these measures are vital for protecting the rights of all inmates (Okeke, Obianyo, & Ater, 2024). Despite legal reforms and judicial efforts, Nigerian prisons continue to face significant challenges. Edetalehn et al., (2023) identified several challenges in implementing community-based sentencing effectively in Nigeria. They observe that granting courts discretionary power under the ACJA 2015 to impose non-custodial sentences could lead to potential misuse of authority, inconsistent treatment of offenders and a loss of public confidence in the judicial system. Furthermore, Edetalehn et al. (2023) highlighted other challenges, including the absence of necessary facilities such as correctional homes and community service centres in many states, a lack of monitoring equipment to oversee offenders' activities, and a shortage of personnel required for proper supervision. (Edetalehn et al, 2023). Okeke et al. (2024) argue that legislative deficiencies pose a significant challenge to the effective implementation of community-based justice in Nigeria. The ACJA 2015 is the first law to introduce non-custodial measures, including parole, probation, community service, and

restorative justice. However, it fails to define these terms clearly. This creates ambiguity about what each sentence involves, which could lead to non-uniform sentencing practices. Additionally, Okeke et al. (2024) argue that the provisions regarding non-custodial services are not justiciable, as there is no specific agency assigned to oversee this section. They also criticise the Nigerian government's insufficient funding, which has led to poor infrastructure, inadequate training, and understaffed criminal justice and correctional facilities (Okeke et al., 2024). Additionally, the successful implementation of community-based programs in Nigeria faces challenges such as high caseloads for probation officers, which hinder adequate supervision and monitoring of offenders (Ezeanokwasa & Ngede, 2021). Probation and community service programs are typically managed by small agencies with limited staff, often comprising just one or two chief probation officers. These officers have to cover large areas and handle many cases, which makes it hard to supervise each person closely. They also lack sufficient training and resources, such as vehicles and proper facilities, making it more difficult to supervise offenders adequately. Additionally, poor coordination between courts, Police, and probation officers worsens the situation, leading to less oversight and failure to help offenders reform through their non-custodial programs. (Ezeanokwasa et al., 2021). Infrastructural deficits, including overcrowded facilities and insufficient resources, limit the capacity to oversee community-based sentencing and ensure proper supervision. Low levels of awareness among law enforcement and judicial officers in Nigeria lead to the continued reliance on custodial sentences (Onyuike, 2024). Without proactive and strategic implementation, measures put in place to enhance community-based sentencing practices in Nigeria will remain underutilised, increasing prison congestion and undermining efforts toward rehabilitation and reform (Onyuike, 2024). Addressing these systemic issues is crucial for the successful integration of community-based sentencing into Nigeria's criminal justice system.



## **Conclusion**

This paper highlights the current challenges facing Nigeria's criminal justice system, despite legal reforms such as the 2015 passage of the ACJA and the NCSA 2019. Focusing on how sentencing, as a criminal justice procedure, can address significant structural and procedural issues in Nigerian prisons, the paper examines the legal provisions of community-based sentencing approaches, such as parole, community service, and suspended sentences, and how they can contribute to effective justice delivery in Nigeria. By discussing the contemporary challenges faced by Nigeria's prisons and the benefits of community-based sentencing, supported by scholarly debates and empirical findings, the paper concludes that such approaches have great potential to resolve longstanding issues like prison overcrowding, lengthy court proceedings, pervasive corruption, and limited access to legal assistance within Nigeria's criminal justice system. However, challenges, including inadequate facilities and infrastructure, administrative constraints, and insufficient funding, hinder the successful implementation of community-based approaches, indicating that Nigeria still has a long way to go in ensuring that legal reforms are fully utilised.

## **Recommendations**

Beyond the legal provisions supporting community-based sentences, there is a need to tackle the institutional and structural challenges that hinder the successful implementation of legal reforms and obstruct judicial efforts to ensure effective justice through community-based sentencing in Nigeria. The following recommendations are therefore proposed:

1. To address the issues of inadequate facilities, such as correctional homes and community service centres, a lack of monitoring equipment, and a shortage of personnel to supervise offenders, the government should invest in establishing community service centres, probation offices, and correctional homes at both the state and local government levels. These facilities should be adequately equipped and tailored to accommodate non-custodial sentencing programs.

2. To broaden the adoption of non-custodial sentences in Nigeria, foster consistency in their implementation, and strengthen the legitimacy of non-custodial sentencing, there is a need for a review of the ACJA 2015 to provide clear operational definitions of all non-custodial measures. Supplementary regulations and guidelines can also be developed to enhance clarity and facilitate enforcement. Furthermore, legal practitioners and judges should be trained on the interpretation and application of sentencing laws.

3. To ensure better coordination between courts, Police, and probation officers, regular inter-agency meetings should be conducted, joint training sessions should also be introduced, and shared access to offender databases should be established to ensure stronger inter-agency collaboration and that roles are clearly understood within the CJS.

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## Technology-Driven Reforms and Academic Fraud Prevention in Nigeria's Tertiary Institutions

<sup>1</sup>Anyanabia Aaron, <sup>2</sup>Okoru Alex Omojo

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt

<sup>2</sup>Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State

Email: aaron.anyanabia@uniport.edu.ng, okoruao@fuotuoke.edu.ng

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### Abstract

In recent times, technology-based reforms have played a vital role in reducing academic fraud across Nigerian tertiary institutions. Digital examination systems have streamlined test administration by minimising manual errors and improving security, thereby making cheating more difficult. Plagiarism detection tools now serve as essential safeguards of academic honesty, enabling institutions to identify copied content and deter students from engaging in dishonest behaviour. Furthermore, blockchain technology is being utilised to create tamper-proof academic records, ensuring the authenticity of degrees and preventing the circulation of counterfeit certificates. Learning Management Systems (LMS) also support academic integrity by tracking student engagement and limiting avenues for malpractice during online assessments. AI-driven proctoring tools are increasingly used to monitor candidates during virtual exams, utilising features such as facial recognition and movement tracking to enforce examination rules. Universities are also employing data analytics to detect abnormal academic trends that might indicate dishonest behaviour. Digital libraries and advanced research tools are further promoting ethical scholarship by granting access to credible sources, reducing the temptation to plagiarise. In conclusion, adopting innovations such as digital exams, plagiarism software, blockchain records, AI proctoring, and LMS platforms is crucial in fostering transparency and academic discipline in Nigerian higher education.

**Keywords:** Technology-Driven Reforms, Academic Fraud, Tertiary institutions, Fraud, Nigeria

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### Introduction

Technology-driven reforms in Nigeria's tertiary institutions have become a necessity to address growing concerns about academic fraud, which undermines the credibility of the education system. These reforms primarily focus on integrating digital tools to enhance transparency, accountability, and fairness in academic processes. One such reform is the adoption of Digital Examination Systems, which provide a secure and efficient method for conducting examinations. These systems minimise the risks of cheating, as they offer automated question generation and real-time monitoring, reducing human errors and biases. Olanrewaju et al. (2023) emphasised the effectiveness of these systems in promoting academic integrity in Nigerian universities. To further combat academic fraud, Plagiarism Detection Software has become indispensable. With the rapid growth of digital content, students may be tempted to plagiarise, which compromises the originality of academic

work. Plagiarism detection tools, such as Turnitin, are employed in universities to identify copied content from various online sources. According to Adebayo and Obilade (2022), these tools help maintain the authenticity of academic research by flagging potential cases of plagiarism before they are submitted for evaluation, ensuring that students' work is both original and well-researched (Adebayo & Obilade, 2022).

Another significant reform is the use of Blockchain for Credential Verification, which addresses the issue of fake academic credentials, a growing problem in Nigeria. Blockchain technology ensures that academic records and certificates are securely stored and easily verifiable, providing tamper-proof evidence of a student's qualifications. As highlighted by Eze and Ugwu (2023), blockchain offers a decentralised and



transparent approach to verifying academic credentials, thus reducing the occurrence of fraudulent academic claims and promoting trust in the education system. Moreover, the implementation of Learning Management Systems (LMS) is transforming the way academic institutions deliver content and monitor students' progress. LMS platforms, such as Moodle and Blackboard, enable the centralisation of resources, facilitate real-time communication between students and faculty, and provide efficient tracking of academic performance. A study by Okafor and Okoye (2022) demonstrates that LMS not only improves student engagement but also helps detect irregularities in students' behaviour, which could indicate dishonest practices. The integration of AI-Based Proctoring and Data Analytics for Monitoring Patterns helps ensure that examinations are conducted fairly and that patterns indicative of academic dishonesty are easily detected. AI-powered proctoring systems use facial recognition, keystroke analysis, and eye movement tracking to monitor students during exams, while data analytics tools analyse student performance patterns to detect unusual behaviour. According to Ajayi and Nwachukwu (2023), these technologies offer a comprehensive approach to preventing academic fraud by utilising sophisticated algorithms to identify and flag suspicious activities during assessments (Ajayi & Nwachukwu, 2023).

The Technology-Driven Reforms Theory proposed by Davis in 1989 contributes to knowledge by focusing on the transformational impact of technology on traditional educational structures. However, a gap exists in its application to curbing academic fraud specifically. The Innovation Diffusion Theory, proposed by Rogers in 1962, contributes to knowledge by offering a model for effectively introducing and integrating technology into educational systems. A gap exists in understanding the resistance to technology adoption in a system marked by academic fraud. Technology-driven reforms and curbing academic fraud in Nigerian tertiary institutions remain a significant challenge. While technology has the potential to enhance administrative processes and academic integrity, its implementation in

Nigerian universities is often inconsistent and underdeveloped. Many institutions lack the necessary infrastructure and expertise to fully leverage technology in combating academic fraud, including plagiarism, exam malpractice, and fake credentials.

Additionally, there is a resistance to technological adaptation in some academic circles, with concerns about privacy, data security, and potential misuse of information. Although some universities have introduced e-learning platforms, automated grading systems, and digital verification tools, these initiatives are not uniformly adopted across all institutions, leading to disparities in effectiveness. Moreover, the lack of comprehensive training for staff and students on how to properly use these technologies further limits their potential. The absence of a robust legal framework to support these technological reforms also hinders their ability to address fraud on a larger scale. To bridge this gap, a concerted effort is needed to improve digital infrastructure, promote wider adoption of technology, and establish clear regulations for its use in addressing academic misconduct. By incorporating these technological tools, Nigerian universities are better positioned to tackle academic fraud, ensuring the integrity and credibility of the education system.

### **Technology**

Technology is the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry and daily life. It encompasses tools, systems, and techniques that transform the way we live, work, and communicate. From the wheel to smartphones, technological advancements have continuously reshaped societies and economies. Today, technology spans various domains, including information and communication technology (ICT), biotechnology, and engineering, influencing almost every aspect of human existence. The importance of technology in modern society is undeniable, as it drives innovation and enhances efficiency in various fields (Nguyen, 2023).



### **Technology-Driven Reforms**

Technology-driven reforms refer to the process of using technology as a catalyst for change within organisations, industries, and societies. These reforms aim to improve existing structures, methods, and systems by integrating technological solutions. For instance, in education, the shift to online learning platforms or in healthcare, the adoption of telemedicine are examples of technology-driven reforms. Such reforms enable faster and more effective solutions to challenges, increasing accessibility to essential services. These changes often lead to greater productivity, reduced costs, and the democratisation of services, making them more widely available (Okafor & Bello, 2024). In the context of education, technology-driven reforms have been instrumental in reshaping the way teaching and learning occur. With the advent of digital tools such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), educational apps, and virtual classrooms, traditional pedagogies are being challenged and redefined. Educators can now personalise learning experiences, engage students more interactively, and provide access to resources that were once beyond reach. These changes are particularly significant in developing countries, where technology is helping bridge the gap between urban and rural educational facilities. The integration of such technology is seen as essential for preparing students for the future (Chukwu & Eze, 2025).

Similarly, in governance and public service, technology-driven reforms have introduced e-governance systems that promote transparency and efficiency in service delivery. By implementing online platforms for tax filing, voting, and public record access, governments can reduce corruption, increase public trust, and improve administrative processes. Such reforms are crucial for modernising governance structures, enhancing accountability, and ensuring that public services are delivered effectively to citizens. These technological interventions have been recognised as key enablers in the fight against inefficiency and bureaucratic delay (Ogunyemi, 2024). Technology-driven reforms represent a dynamic

and continuous process of integrating technology into various sectors to enhance performance and foster innovation. These reforms are not just about replacing traditional methods but about evolving systems to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. The successful implementation of such reforms relies on strategic planning, adequate infrastructure, and the involvement of stakeholders at all levels. As technological advancements continue to accelerate, it is clear that technology-driven reforms will remain central to global development and progress (Aliyu & Ibraheem, 2023).

### **Curbing Academic Fraud in Nigeria's Tertiary Institutions**

Curbing academic fraud in Nigerian tertiary institutions is a pressing issue that has plagued the educational system for decades. Academic fraud, which includes malpractice such as cheating during exams, plagiarism, and the illegal selling of academic materials, undermines the integrity of the educational system and compromises the quality of graduates. Scholars have highlighted the growing prevalence of this malpractice, pointing to inadequate supervision, corrupt practices, and limited awareness of its long-term consequences as key factors that perpetuate it (Ogunleye, 2020). Effective measures to combat academic fraud require a multifaceted approach, including policy reforms, strengthening the roles of faculty and administrative staff, and increasing student awareness of academic integrity. One innovative solution to combating academic fraud is the introduction of digital examination systems. These systems utilise technology to ensure that examinations are conducted securely and transparently. Digital examination platforms provide mechanisms to monitor and track students' activities during exams, reducing the likelihood of malpractice. According to Adedoyin and Soykan (2020), digital systems offer features such as biometric verification, secure question randomisation, and anti-cheating algorithms, which significantly minimise opportunities for fraud. Moreover, digital systems facilitate the automation of grading processes, ensuring consistency and objectivity in evaluation.



### **Digital Examination Systems**

Despite the advantages of digital examination systems, the adoption and implementation of these technologies in Nigeria face several challenges. One major issue is the digital divide, where institutions, particularly in rural areas, lack the necessary infrastructure to support these systems. Nwokefor et al. (2021) argued that while urban-based institutions may have access to these technologies, a large portion of Nigerian tertiary institutions struggle with inadequate internet connectivity, unreliable power supply, and insufficient training for faculty members on the effective use of digital platforms. This disparity can hinder the successful implementation of digital examination systems nationwide. Another key benefit of digital examination systems is their potential to enhance the overall learning experience. By shifting from traditional paper-based exams to digital platforms, students can engage with a variety of learning materials and assessment formats that are more interactive and accessible. Digital systems can also provide real-time feedback, helping students identify areas for improvement before the final assessment. Alhassan and Abdullahi (2022) emphasised that the integration of digital tools in examinations not only curbs academic fraud but also creates a more engaging and efficient learning environment. Okojie and Adegoke (2020) concluded that these systems improve accessibility, reduce human errors, and ensure transparency, ultimately minimising exam malpractices through secure authentication and automatic grading tools. Additionally, Adeyemi and Eniola (2021) found that digital examination systems improve time management for both students and staff, making it easier to schedule and monitor exams, while also enhancing the overall quality of assessments.

### **Plagiarism Detection Software**

Plagiarism is a growing concern in academic institutions, particularly in the digital age, where access to online resources has made it easier to copy others' work. Plagiarism detection software serves as a crucial tool in combating this issue. It helps to identify and prevent academic dishonesty by scanning submitted content for similarities

with existing sources in digital databases, journals, and websites. Such software operates using algorithms that compare word usage patterns, structure, and phrasing against extensive content archives. This technology enables educators and institutions to maintain academic integrity by ensuring that work submitted is original. Sutherland-Smith (2017) noted that these tools not only act as deterrents but also provide educational opportunities for students to understand the importance of proper citation practices. The growing adoption of plagiarism detection software in Nigeria's tertiary institutions reflects the country's commitment to upholding academic standards. Institutions such as the University of Lagos and the University of Ibadan have increasingly integrated these tools into their academic systems. The impact of these systems on reducing academic fraud has been significant. By automatically detecting instances of plagiarism, these tools enable instructors to focus on content quality, thereby enhancing the overall academic environment. Scholars like Olumide and Akinmoladun (2020) emphasise that the introduction of such technology aligns with global trends in academic governance and quality assurance.

However, while plagiarism detection software is effective, it has its limitations. Some software programs may fail to identify paraphrased content or less commonly accessed sources, which could still undermine academic integrity. According to a study by Ojo and Olaogun (2019), relying on technology without proper human oversight can lead to false positives, where legitimate academic work is incorrectly flagged. Therefore, the integration of these tools must be accompanied by adequate training for both educators and students on how to interpret and act upon the results. Despite these challenges, plagiarism detection software continues to evolve, with advancements in artificial intelligence enhancing its capabilities. Tools now use machine learning to identify not just direct copying but also subtle paraphrasing, which has become a common form of academic dishonesty. Nwabueze and Okoro (2021) argued that the continuous development of more accurate detection methods is crucial for



curbing academic misconduct. These advancements contribute to the broader goal of ensuring academic authenticity and integrity within Nigeria's higher education system. Adedeji and Alaba (2019) revealed that integrating plagiarism detection tools in Nigerian universities significantly reduces instances of plagiarised work by automatically identifying content duplication. Furthermore, Akinyemi and Olatunji (2020) concluded that these tools help foster a culture of academic integrity, as students become more aware of the consequences of plagiarism, leading to an improvement in the originality of their work.

### **Blockchain for Credential Verification**

Blockchain technology, recognised primarily for its role in cryptocurrencies, has shown potential for transforming various sectors, including education. One of the most promising applications of blockchain is in verifying academic credentials. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, issues of academic fraud, such as the issuance of fake degrees or certificates, have long plagued the educational system. Blockchain offers a decentralised and secure method of storing and verifying academic records, making it nearly impossible to alter or forge credentials. As pointed out by Nwaogwugwu and Okafor (2022), this technology can ensure that academic records are authentic, secure, and easily accessible by both institutions and potential employers. The implementation of blockchain for credential verification is particularly relevant in the context of Nigeria's ongoing efforts to reform its higher education system. With the increasing demand for transparency in educational qualifications, blockchain offers an efficient and tamper-proof solution that supports the verification process. Nigerian institutions, such as the University of Nigeria Nsukka and the Federal University of Technology, Akure, have begun exploring blockchain-based systems to combat the growing problem of academic fraud. Onu and Eze (2020) highlighted how blockchain can streamline administrative processes by reducing the burden of manual verification while ensuring authenticity.

However, the adoption of blockchain in Nigerian universities is not without challenges. The technological infrastructure required for implementing blockchain is still underdeveloped in many institutions. In addition, there is a lack of widespread understanding of blockchain technology among educators and administrators. A study by Eze and Nwankwo (2021) revealed a significant gap in the technical skills required to manage and implement blockchain systems effectively in Nigeria's higher education institutions. Overcoming these barriers will require substantial investment in both infrastructure and staff and student capacity building. Despite these obstacles, the potential of blockchain to revolutionise academic credentialing in Nigeria remains significant. The technology's ability to provide a transparent and secure record of academic achievements could significantly reduce instances of academic fraud. Okoye and Ani (2023) support the notion that blockchain can foster greater trust in the education system, enabling employers and academic institutions to verify qualifications with confidence. The potential for blockchain to be integrated into global networks of educational verification also aligns with Nigeria's ambition to enhance its reputation as a hub for quality higher education in Africa. Omolara (2022) revealed that blockchain provides secure, immutable records, making it difficult for individuals to alter or falsify academic credentials. Their study concluded that blockchain is an effective means for verifying the authenticity of degrees and certificates in Nigerian institutions, reducing credential fraud. Similarly, Okoro and Olugbenga (2021) emphasised that blockchain's transparency ensures that employers and academic institutions can trust the validity of qualifications, thus enhancing the credibility of the educational system.

### **Learning Management Systems (LMS)**

In recent years, Learning Management Systems (LMS) have become a fundamental component in the educational ecosystem, particularly in tertiary institutions. These platforms provide an efficient and accessible way to deliver, manage, and assess educational content. LMSs like Moodle,



Blackboard, and Canvas have revolutionised how students interact with their course materials, allowing them to access lectures, assignments, and communication channels online. The integration of these platforms supports remote learning, offering students flexibility while providing educators with tools for monitoring progress and engagement. Ajayi and Adebayo (2021) emphasised the critical role of LMS in fostering a more interactive and collaborative learning environment, especially in the context of Nigeria's growing digital education sector.

Furthermore, LMS platforms facilitate the seamless management of course content, grading, and tracking of student performance. They enable lecturers to implement blended learning approaches, where face-to-face instruction is complemented with online materials and assessments. In Nigeria, where access to traditional educational resources is often limited, LMS serves as a bridge to quality education. Okebukola (2020) said that the integration of LMS in Nigerian tertiary institutions has enhanced the learning experience by increasing student engagement and accessibility to materials outside the classroom. These systems are vital for ensuring that education reaches a broader demographic, particularly in regions with infrastructural challenges.

In addition to their academic role, LMS platforms offer data analytics that enable institutions to assess and improve the learning process. By analysing student activity and performance data, educators can identify patterns and areas needing attention, thus optimising teaching strategies. As highlighted by Adeyemo and Sulaimon (2022), the application of LMS tools in Nigerian universities is helping to align educational delivery with modern standards, ensuring that students remain competitive on both a local and global scale. The ability of LMS platforms to track academic progress enables both students and educators to engage in a continuous feedback loop. Despite the numerous advantages, the adoption of LMS in Nigerian universities is not without challenges. Issues such as limited internet access, inadequate staff training, and resistance to

change can hinder the effective use of these systems. Eze and Chikodi (2021) argued that with appropriate infrastructure investment and capacity building, these challenges can be mitigated. As Nigeria continues to adopt digital learning, the role of LMS will only expand, offering significant opportunities to enhance education delivery and learning outcomes. Alabi and Obafemi (2020) revealed that LMS provides an efficient platform for educators to track student progress, deliver resources, and offer real-time feedback, thereby increasing engagement and reducing opportunities for academic fraud. Additionally, Odumosu and Adeyemi (2021) concluded that LMS platforms help mitigate cheating during assessments by offering secure, timed exams that are difficult to manipulate, ensuring fairness in evaluations.

#### **AI-Based Proctoring**

AI-based proctoring systems represent a groundbreaking solution in curbing academic dishonesty in tertiary institutions. As the educational sector increasingly adopts digital learning platforms, the need for reliable methods to ensure the integrity of online assessments has become more urgent. AI proctoring systems use advanced algorithms to monitor and evaluate students during exams, detecting behaviours that might indicate cheating, such as the use of unauthorised materials or the presence of other individuals in the testing environment. As opined by Afolabi and Okoro (2022), AI-based proctoring technologies are becoming indispensable in maintaining academic integrity in Nigerian universities, where the prevalence of exam malpractice has been a long-standing issue. These systems offer a range of monitoring capabilities, including facial recognition, eye tracking, and the ability to identify and flag suspicious behaviour. By using AI to monitor students in real time, proctoring systems can alert instructors to potential cheating incidents, allowing for immediate intervention. This technology helps bridge the gap between traditional in-person examinations and the evolving landscape of online education. In Nigeria, where exam malpractice is a significant concern, AI-based proctoring systems have been



highlighted as a potential game-changer. Oladeji and Bello (2021) argued that this technology can deter students from engaging in dishonest practices, thereby upholding the credibility of academic assessments in Nigerian universities.

Despite its potential, the implementation of AI proctoring in Nigerian institutions faces challenges, including high costs, privacy concerns, and limitations in technological infrastructure. Some students may also feel uncomfortable with constant surveillance during exams, which can affect their performance. As highlighted by Adedeji and Akinyemi (2021), addressing these concerns is crucial for the successful adoption of AI-based proctoring systems. Universities must ensure that proper safeguards are in place to protect student privacy while ensuring the effectiveness of the technology in maintaining academic standards. AI-based proctoring aligns with broader technology-driven reforms in Nigerian higher education, which aim to modernise academic practices and address the challenges posed by rapid digitisation. These reforms are essential for preparing students for a globalised job market, where technological literacy is paramount. By reducing academic fraud, AI proctoring helps to maintain the reputation of Nigerian universities, ensuring that the degrees awarded are respected internationally. Ekanem and Ojo (2022) noted that AI proctoring systems play a pivotal role in enhancing the credibility of Nigerian academic qualifications, thereby making them more competitive on the global stage. Ojo and Akinsola (2021) revealed that AI proctoring systems utilise facial recognition and behavioural analysis to monitor student activities during online exams, detecting suspicious behaviour. Their study concluded that implementing AI-based proctoring significantly reduces cheating rates in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Similarly, Adewole and Oladipo (2020) concluded that AI-based proctoring ensures the security of online exams and enhances the credibility of remote learning assessments, making it a critical component of modern education.

### **Data Analytics for Monitoring Patterns**

Data analytics has become a significant tool in monitoring patterns and trends within various sectors, particularly in education. In the context of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, it provides valuable insights into students' performance, attendance, and behaviours, which can help detect irregularities that may indicate academic fraud. By using advanced statistical tools, universities can analyse large datasets to uncover patterns of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism, ghostwriting, or cheating in examinations. The implementation of data analytics supports proactive decision-making, enabling intervention strategies to be put in place early and curb fraudulent practices. Adeyemi and Sulaimon (2020) emphasised that data analytics can lead to enhanced transparency and fairness in the academic environment. Moreover, data analytics enables tertiary institutions to optimise their resources and enhance operational efficiency. Institutions can track progress over time by utilising real-time data from student assessments, class participation, and administrative processes. This shift toward data-driven decision-making supports technology-driven reforms, providing a foundation for continuous improvement. As noted by Onu (2021), data analysis not only fosters transparency but also contributes to creating a more accountable academic environment, where performance metrics can be monitored without bias.

The use of predictive analytics further enhances universities' capacity to anticipate future trends in academic performance and identify students at risk of engaging in fraudulent behaviour. Predictive models can assess the likelihood of students failing courses or participating in dishonest academic activities, allowing institutions to address issues before they escalate. According to Ajayi (2022), predictive analytics has been shown to reduce instances of academic misconduct by focusing on interventions that can prevent fraud rather than simply reacting to it. This model ensures that academic integrity remains intact while still embracing technological advances. However, while data



analytics is a powerful tool for monitoring and preventing academic fraud, its successful application depends on the availability of accurate data and the institution's capacity to handle sensitive information. The ethical considerations surrounding data collection, including privacy and consent, must be addressed to prevent the misuse of information. Adebayo (2023) argued that while technology offers opportunities for enhancing academic integrity, it also brings challenges in terms of safeguarding student data. Therefore, institutions must establish robust policies that govern data use, ensuring transparency and adherence to ethical standards. Akinbo and Adebayo (2022) revealed that data analytics tools can analyse large datasets to identify trends related to cheating, such as sudden grade improvements or similarities in student responses. This allows institutions to take proactive steps to address potential fraud. Additionally, Oluwadare and Olanrewaju (2021) concluded that these tools enable universities to monitor attendance, submission patterns, and exam performance, providing early warnings about potential academic misconduct.

### **Digital Library and Research Tools**

The advent of digital libraries and research tools has revolutionised the academic landscape in tertiary institutions globally, and Nigeria is no exception. Digital libraries offer vast resources that are accessible to students, researchers, and faculty, enabling them to conduct thorough and credible research. This transformation is particularly relevant in the fight against academic fraud, as digital libraries allow efficient access to peer-reviewed journals, books, and other academic materials that help maintain the credibility of academic work. The integration of research tools such as plagiarism detection software further ensures that students' work is original, minimising instances of cheating and dishonesty (Nwachukwu & Olayemi, 2021). In addition to offering a repository of credible academic materials, digital libraries facilitate the advancement of research methodologies by integrating advanced tools for citation management, content analysis, and data storage. These tools are crucial in supporting rigorous

academic standards and reducing the chances of fraudulent research practices. Eze and Ajayi (2022) asserted that the implementation of these tools aids in the seamless collection, organisation, and analysis of data, ensuring that research outputs are consistent with the highest standards. The use of digital platforms further empowers educators and researchers to collaborate more effectively and reduce the likelihood of misconduct due to improper research practices.

Furthermore, the use of digital tools allows for greater monitoring of students' academic activities. Plagiarism detection systems, such as Turnitin and Grammarly, are now standard in Nigerian universities, enabling institutions to identify and address instances of academic dishonesty quickly. These tools, when used effectively, can drastically reduce the prevalence of plagiarised work. Akomolafe (2020) highlighted that such systems not only detect direct plagiarism but also help identify improper citations and inadequate paraphrasing, thereby safeguarding the authenticity of academic outputs. The implementation of digital libraries and research tools also contributes to technology-driven reforms by aligning Nigerian universities with global best practices in academic integrity and transparency. As noted by Olaniyi and Adebola (2023), integrating these technologies into the educational system not only enhances the quality of research but also helps universities maintain international accreditation standards. In this way, digital tools and libraries serve a dual function, curbing academic fraud while enhancing the overall academic experience. Akintoye and Olayemi (2021) revealed that the use of digital libraries provides students and researchers with access to a wealth of resources, thereby improving the quality of academic work. Their study concluded that digital libraries reduce the temptation to plagiarise by providing students with better access to sources. Amadi and Ugochukwu (2020) concluded that research tools, such as plagiarism checkers and citation managers, promote ethical research practices, ensuring that students engage in proper academic conduct and reducing fraud.



### **Technology-Driven Reforms Theory (Davis, 1989)**

The Technology-Driven Reforms Theory was proposed by Davis in 1989. This theory emphasises the pivotal role technology plays in driving educational reforms, particularly in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of educational systems. The aim is to integrate technology into the curriculum, administrative processes, and instructional methods to improve overall institutional performance. Assumptions include that technology adoption leads to more efficient resource management and better learning outcomes. Its relevance to Nigerian tertiary institutions lies in facilitating access to educational resources, enhancing learning experiences, and promoting transparency in academic activities. The theory contributes to knowledge by focusing on the transformational impact of technology on traditional educational structures. However, a gap exists in its application to curbing academic fraud specifically.

### **Innovation Diffusion Theory (Rogers, 1962)**

The Innovation Diffusion Theory, proposed by Rogers in 1962, explores how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures. The aim is to explain the processes through which innovations are adopted within a society. The assumptions of the theory include perceived advantages, compatibility with existing systems, simplicity, trialability, and observable results that influence adoption. Its relevance to technology-driven reforms in Nigerian tertiary institutions lies in the importance of understanding how new educational technologies (e.g., e-learning platforms, anti-plagiarism software) are adopted and accepted within the academic community. This theory contributes to knowledge by providing a model for effectively integrating technology into educational systems. A gap exists in understanding the resistance to technology adoption in a system marked by academic fraud.

### **Conclusion**

The study concluded that technology-driven reforms play a crucial role in addressing academic fraud in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The

introduction of digital examination systems ensures secure and efficient assessments, reducing the chances of malpractice. Plagiarism detection software helps identify and prevent academic dishonesty, promoting originality. Blockchain technology provides a secure method for credential verification, thereby avoiding the manipulation of academic records. The use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) facilitates transparent grading and personalised learning experiences. AI-based proctoring offers real-time surveillance during online exams, minimising cheating risks. Additionally, data analytics helps monitor patterns of academic misconduct, allowing for timely corrective actions. Lastly, digital libraries and research tools support access to credible academic resources, fostering a culture of academic integrity.

### **Suggestions**

1. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria should embrace comprehensive technology reforms that integrate digital systems for better monitoring and accountability, ensuring an environment that discourages academic dishonesty and encourages authentic learning.
2. To enhance examination integrity, Nigeria's tertiary institutions should implement robust digital examination systems that ensure secure, verifiable, and fair assessment processes, minimising human intervention and reducing chances for cheating.
3. Nigerian universities should adopt advanced plagiarism detection software to ensure originality in academic work, safeguarding intellectual property and promoting a culture of integrity within the academic community.
4. To eliminate fraudulent credentials, tertiary institutions in Nigeria should implement blockchain technology for credential verification, providing a secure, transparent method to authenticate academic qualifications, reducing the likelihood of certificate forgery.
5. Nigerian universities should implement Learning Management Systems (LMS) to provide an efficient, centralised platform for course delivery and assessments, allowing for better tracking of student performance and



reducing academic fraud.

6. To prevent cheating during examinations, Nigerian institutions should integrate AI-based proctoring systems that monitor students in real-time, detecting suspicious behaviors and ensuring a fair and secure testing environment.
7. Tertiary institutions should use data analytics to monitor and identify patterns in academic misconduct, enabling proactive measures to curb fraud and ensuring continuous improvement in academic practices.
8. Nigerian universities should enhance access to digital libraries and research tools, ensuring that students have access to credible sources and can conduct research efficiently, reducing the temptation to engage in academic dishonesty.

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# Implementation and Challenges of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) in Nigeria: A Wayforward

**Okoru Alex Omojo, Obhuo Obebinaru Favour**

*Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences,  
Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State*

*Email: aokoru@yahoo.com / okoruao@fuotuo.ke.edu.ng, obhuoo@fuotuo.ke.edu.ng2*

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## Abstract

The Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) was enacted in Nigeria to reform the justice system by harmonizing criminal procedures, safeguarding defendants' rights, and incorporating a victim-centered approach. It emphasizes speedy trial mechanisms and introduces alternatives such as non-custodial sentencing to reduce prison congestion. The Act also seeks to modernize processes through improved record-keeping and technology, while ensuring better oversight and monitoring. However, its implementation faces notable hurdles. Some states have been slow in domesticating the law, leading to uneven application across the federation. Judicial resistance to reforms, coupled with entrenched practices within law enforcement, further slows progress. Inadequate funding and weak institutional capacity hinder the adoption of innovations and the effective operation of key provisions and this limited the public awareness. The ACJA have made significant stride toward more efficient criminal justice system to achieve its full potential. This paper concluded that Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) in Nigeria harmonises criminal procedures, safeguards rights, promotes speedy trials, and encourages non-custodial measures by weak enforcement, funding gaps, and uneven implementation. It was suggested that legislators should try to strengthen the Act's objectives and ensure justice delivery balances efficiency, fairness, and equity in protecting victims and defendants in Nigeria's criminal justice system.

**Keywords:** Criminal Justice, Administration of Criminal Justice, Justice act, Justice System, Nigeria

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## Introduction

The Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015 was enacted to harmonize Nigeria's fragmented criminal procedure laws and modernize its justice system. Prior to its passage, the country operated under dual frameworks: the Criminal Procedure Act (CPA) in the South and the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) in the North. These parallel systems created inconsistency, prolonged delays, and inefficiency in criminal trials. The ACJA was introduced to address these challenges by streamlining criminal processes, promoting speedy trials, protecting defendants' rights, and enhancing accountability within the criminal justice sector (Daudu, 2023). As such, the Act represents a milestone in Nigeria's attempt to strengthen rule of law and ensure fair hearing in line with global best practices. Mogbo (2025) emphasize that the ACJA is not merely a procedural reform but a transformative framework designed to promote access to justice.

Its innovations include electronic recording of proceedings, prohibition of unnecessary adjournments, restrictions on holding charge practices, and the establishment of a Central Criminal Records Registry. These provisions were introduced to safeguard human rights and reduce congestion in detention facilities. However, the implementation of these reforms has required significant institutional adjustments at both federal and state levels, necessitating domestication of the Act into state laws through Administration of Criminal Justice Laws (ACJLs).

Implementation of the ACJA has been uneven across Nigeria. While states like Lagos, Kano, Oyo, and Delta have adopted ACJLs and set up Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committees (ACJMCs), others remain slow in domesticating the Act (Mondaq, n.d.). The



ACJMCs are meant to ensure compliance, coordinate stakeholders, and monitor justice delivery, yet their functionality has varied widely. According to HG.org (2024), many committees lack funding and independence, leaving enforcement largely ineffective. This partial adoption has weakened the Act's intent of creating a uniform national standard for criminal justice. Despite its promise, the ACJA faces persistent challenges in practice. Poor funding, infrastructural limitations, lack of technical resources, and weak institutional commitment hinder its enforcement. Premium Times (2025) reported that crucial provisions such as digital case management systems, electronic confessional recording, and the Central Criminal Records Registry remain underutilized. The Nation (n.d.) also highlighted how congested prisons, frequent trial delays, and limited awareness among police officers, prosecutors, and judges undermine the Act's objectives. Gender disparities further complicate its implementation, as women often face barriers in securing bail or serving as sureties (Independent, 2024). These realities expose the gap between legislative innovation and practical enforcement.

The purpose of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), enacted in 2015, was to transform Nigeria's criminal justice system into one that is more effective, fair, and responsive to both defendants and victims. By unifying the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Act and the Criminal Procedure Code, the ACJA created a harmonized system that ensures consistency across courts and eliminates confusion arising from procedural differences. Despite this achievement, the federal nature of Nigeria makes state-level domestication essential, but uneven adoption across states has slowed down its nationwide effectiveness. The Act is particularly notable for safeguarding the rights of defendants by prohibiting arbitrary detention and mandating access to legal representation. At the same time, it introduces a victim-centered approach by requiring restitution, compensation, and recognition of victims' voices in proceedings. To curb the culture of prolonged trials, the ACJA prioritizes speedy trial mechanisms and

discourages unnecessary adjournments, while also addressing prison congestion through non-custodial sentencing options such as probation and community service (Atilola, 2018).

However, the implementation of these reforms continues to face practical barriers. Judicial resistance poses a serious challenge, as some judges are reluctant to adopt the procedural innovations introduced by the Act. Law enforcement agencies also struggle to comply due to poor training, weak institutional capacity, and corruption, which undermine the objectives of fair and efficient justice delivery. Financial constraints further complicate matters, with funding gaps limiting infrastructural development, slowing the adoption of technology, and weakening record-keeping systems that are critical for modern case management. Oversight and monitoring mechanisms, though provided for under the Act, remain underutilized, reducing accountability. Public awareness and advocacy efforts have also been limited, meaning that many citizens remain uninformed about their rights and the protections the ACJA offers. These challenges reveal that while the Act is a landmark reform, its full realization requires stronger institutional support, improved funding, robust monitoring, and active public engagement to achieve the goals of fairness and efficiency in Nigeria's criminal justice system (Eze, 2020; Nnamani & Okechukwu, 2021).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Legal Realism Theory was adopted in this study advanced by Llewellyn (1931). This theory emphasised that the practical application of law often depends not only on the written statutes but also on how judges, lawyers, law enforcement officers, and other institutions interpret and enforce those laws in real-life situations. In the context of ACJA, the theory underscores the gap between the law's progressive provisions such as ensuring speedy trials, reducing delays, and protecting defendants' rights and the realities of institutional weaknesses in Nigeria's justice system. For instance, issues like inadequate funding, corruption, poor infrastructure, and



limited training for judicial personnel often hinder the Act's effective implementation. Legal Realism highlighted that the success of ACJA cannot rest on legislation alone but must involve reforms in practice and institutional behavior. This perspective reviewed why reforms sometimes struggle to achieve their intended outcomes despite their legal soundness. The Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) in Nigeria was enacted to promote efficiency, fairness, and transparency in the justice system. Its contribution to knowledge lies in offering a unified framework that addresses delays in trials, excessive pre-trial detentions, and the protection of defendants' and victims' rights. However, despite its progressive provisions, a notable gap exists between legislation and practical enforcement. Challenges such as inadequate funding, poor institutional capacity, lack of awareness among stakeholders, and resistance to change by some legal practitioners hinder its effectiveness. This gap reviewed the need for more empirical studies that assess how implementation can be strengthened across different states. In conclusion, while the ACJA has set a solid legal foundation for criminal justice reform, bridging the divide between law and practice remains essential. Effective implementation will ensure that the Act fulfills its promise of delivering timely and fair justice in Nigeria.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Purpose of the ACJA**

The Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015 was introduced to reform Nigeria's criminal justice system by tackling long-standing procedural delays, inefficiencies, and inconsistencies across jurisdictions. Before its enactment, criminal justice in Nigeria was governed by multiple laws, such as the Criminal Procedure Act (CPA) and the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC), which often created confusion and prolonged trials. The ACJA's purpose is to modernize criminal procedure, reduce case backlogs, and ensure timely justice delivery for both defendants and victims. It emphasizes speed in arraignment, encourages the use of bail, and

provides mechanisms like electronic recording of proceedings to eliminate reliance on handwritten notes. These innovations represent a deliberate attempt to align Nigeria's justice system with global standards of fairness, efficiency, and human rights. By merging criminal procedure rules into a unified federal framework, the ACJA lays the groundwork for consistency and judicial accountability (Ezenwa-Ohaeto, 2023; The Nation, 2023; Journal of Law, Crime & Justice, 2023).

### **Implementation and Challenges of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) in Nigeria**

The Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), enacted in 2015, was introduced in Nigeria to address long-standing inefficiencies in the criminal justice system, particularly the issues of delay, congestion of courts, abuse of legal procedures, and poor coordination among justice institutions. The Act consolidated provisions of the Criminal Procedure Act and the Criminal Procedure Code, aiming to create a unified framework for the administration of criminal justice across the country. Its major objectives include promoting speedy trials, protecting the rights of defendants and victims, eliminating unnecessary delays, and ensuring justice delivery that aligns with democratic principles and human rights standards (Akinseye-George, 2019, Oladipo & Ige, 2021). Despite its progressive framework, the implementation of the ACJA has faced several challenges. One of the key hurdles is inadequate funding and infrastructural support for courts, which limits effective compliance with its provisions. Furthermore, gaps in awareness and training among judicial officers, prosecutors, and law enforcement agents undermine the effective application of the Act. Resistance to change from entrenched legal practices and corruption within the justice system further compound these challenges. Scholars argue that while the ACJA has the potential to transform Nigeria's justice delivery, its success largely depends on political will, adequate resources, and continuous judicial reforms (Okogbule, 2020).

### **Unification of Criminal Procedure**



One of the most notable contributions of the ACJA is the unification of criminal procedure at the federal level. Previously, Nigeria's dual legal heritage common law and Islamic law produced fragmented procedural frameworks, making justice delivery uneven across states. The ACJA bridges these gaps by harmonizing rules applicable in all federal courts, thereby reducing conflicts that arise from multiple procedural systems. This unification enhances clarity for law enforcement, judiciary officers, and litigants, ensuring that criminal cases follow uniform rules of practice. Furthermore, provisions within the Act such as time limits for remand orders, recording of statements, and safeguards against unlawful detention are standard tools across federal jurisdictions. However, full realization of this goal requires state-level adoption since criminal justice largely falls under state competence in Nigeria's federal structure. The Act thus provides a model that states can replicate to achieve uniform justice nationwide (Ayinla-Ahmad, 2023; Daily Trust, 2024; BRPI Journal of Law, 2023).

### **State-Level Domestication**

While the ACJA is a federal law, its effectiveness depends on states enacting corresponding legislation known as the Administration of Criminal Justice Laws (ACJLs). This domestication process ensures uniformity in criminal procedure across all states, preventing criminals from exploiting jurisdictional loopholes by moving across state boundaries. Several states, including Lagos and Jigawa, have passed their ACJLs, but the level of compliance varies significantly nationwide. More importantly, most states have yet to fully establish Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committees (ACJMCs), which are critical for supervising implementation. Without these committees, oversight remains weak, leading to persistent delays and disregard for ACJA's provisions. The uneven domestication creates legal uncertainty, undermining the Act's core purpose of unifying Nigeria's justice system. To address this, the Federal Government and civil society organizations continue to advocate for state adoption and effective monitoring as essential

steps for achieving a consistent and reliable justice process (Daily Post, 2024; Mondaq, 2024; HG.org, 2024).

### **Protection of Defendants' Rights**

The ACJA contains several provisions aimed at safeguarding the rights of defendants. It mandates humane treatment, guarantees timely arraignment, and ensures access to legal representation. It also introduces safeguards against unlawful detention by requiring magistrates to inspect detention centers and order the release of suspects where necessary. These protections reflect Nigeria's commitment to human rights and the constitutional principle of fair hearing. However, implementation has been inconsistent due to systemic challenges such as police misconduct, inadequate training, and limited resources. Prolonged pretrial detention remains widespread, undermining the very rights the ACJA seeks to protect. Additionally, lack of awareness among defendants about their rights further limits the law's impact. While the ACJA establishes a robust framework for protecting defendants, bridging the gap between law and practice requires stronger institutional capacity, continuous monitoring, and increased funding to criminal justice agencies (Independent Newspaper, 2024; Nigerian Journals Online, 2024; The Times, 2024).

### **Victim-Centered Approach**

Another innovative feature of the ACJA is its victim-centered approach, which prioritizes compensation, restitution, and participation of victims in the criminal process. By recognizing victims' interests, the Act broadens justice beyond punishing offenders to include restoring those affected by crime. Victims are entitled to claim restitution directly from offenders, and courts can award compensation during sentencing. This approach not only provides relief but also strengthens public confidence in the justice system. However, these provisions remain underutilized due to lack of awareness, limited resources, and weak enforcement. Civil society groups and legal practitioners continue to push for reforms that will ensure victims actually benefit from these rights. Broader challenges, such as



inadequate funding, limited technological infrastructure, and poor inter-agency collaboration, also restrict the victim-centered vision of the ACJA. For Nigeria to fully realize the Act's potential, policymakers must prioritize effective implementation strategies and equip institutions to support both victims and defendants (Leadership, 2024; CaseFile Nigeria, 2024; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2024).

### **Speedy Trial Mechanisms**

A core objective of the ACJA is to guarantee speedy trials, thereby addressing Nigeria's chronic backlog of criminal cases. The Act introduces strict provisions such as limits on adjournments, requirements for day-to-day trial proceedings once started, and mandatory timelines for remand orders. These innovations are designed to prevent the abuse of adjournments, which historically prolonged cases for years. In addition, the ACJA allows for electronic recording of court proceedings, an important tool for reducing delays caused by manual record-keeping. Despite these progressive reforms, the reality in many courts is still far from ideal. Delays persist due to inadequate court infrastructure, poor power supply, and insufficient personnel to manage increased trial demands. Furthermore, lawyers and judicial officers sometimes undermine the provisions by exploiting procedural loopholes or reverting to old practices. Thus, while the ACJA provides mechanisms for speedy trials, full realization depends on systemic reforms, technological adoption, and continuous judicial training to align with the law's intent (Ayinla-Ahmad, 2023; Ezenwa-Ohaeto, 2023; The Nation, 2023).

### **Non-Custodial Sentencing**

Another innovation introduced by the ACJA is the promotion of non-custodial sentencing options, such as probation, community service, and restitution. This approach reduces reliance on imprisonment, which has historically led to severe congestion in Nigeria's correctional facilities. By encouraging alternatives, the Act not only alleviates pressure on prisons but also prioritizes rehabilitation over punishment. Non-

custodial measures help reintegrate offenders into society while reducing the likelihood of recidivism. However, implementation has been sluggish, as many states lack the infrastructure and trained probation officers to monitor offenders effectively. Courts also tend to default to custodial sentences, partly due to entrenched judicial culture and skepticism about non-custodial effectiveness. Additionally, public perception often favors incarceration over alternatives, limiting the social acceptance of reforms. For non-custodial sentencing to thrive, states must invest in institutional frameworks, raise public awareness, and train justice sector actors on its benefits. This shift represents not only a legal reform but also a cultural change in Nigeria's approach to justice (Independent Newspaper, 2024; Leadership, 2024; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2024).

### **Judicial Resistance**

Judicial resistance remains one of the major challenges to the full implementation of the ACJA. Many judicial officers are accustomed to the procedural traditions of the former Criminal Procedure Act and Code, leading to reluctance in adopting the new provisions. For instance, despite ACJA's restrictions on unnecessary adjournments, some judges still allow indefinite delays, citing discretion. Similarly, innovations like electronic recording or non-custodial sentencing are sometimes ignored or minimally applied. This resistance stems from a combination of limited awareness, inadequate training, and entrenched judicial conservatism. In some cases, judges perceive the ACJA as encroaching on their autonomy, creating friction in its application. Resistance also arises from logistical realities, such as lack of facilities or funding, which courts interpret as justification for non-compliance. Overcoming this challenge requires continuous capacity-building workshops, strong oversight by judicial councils, and incentives for compliance. Without addressing judicial resistance, the ACJA risks remaining progressive on paper but ineffective in practice (Daily Trust, 2024; The Times, 2024; Nigerian Journals Online, 2024).

### **Law Enforcement Challenges**



Law enforcement agencies play a crucial role in the success of the ACJA, but their performance has been marred by structural and institutional weaknesses. Police officers, who are often the first contact point in criminal proceedings, struggle with limited training, inadequate resources, and corruption. As a result, unlawful arrests, prolonged detentions, and poorly conducted investigations remain widespread, undermining the ACJA's protections for suspects and defendants. The Act empowers magistrates to oversee detention centers and ensure compliance, but enforcement is inconsistent due to weak inter-agency coordination. Furthermore, lack of forensic tools, digital case management systems, and proper evidence-handling procedures hampers effective investigation and prosecution. These shortcomings not only delay trials but also compromise fair hearing standards. Addressing law enforcement challenges requires reforms such as retraining officers, increasing oversight, and modernizing investigative processes. Civil society organizations and legal advocacy groups have emphasized the need for accountability and institutional restructuring if the ACJA's provisions are to succeed (CLEEN Foundation, 2024; CaseFile Nigeria, 2024; HG.org, 2024).

### **Funding Gaps**

Adequate funding is perhaps the greatest determinant of the ACJA's success, yet it remains one of its weakest points. The law envisions modern facilities, technology-driven record systems, and functional monitoring committees, but financial constraints have crippled these aspirations. Most courts lack digital recording devices, while many correctional facilities remain overcrowded due to insufficient resources to develop non-custodial alternatives. State governments, already burdened with competing priorities, allocate minimal funds for ACJA domestication and implementation. This has led to underfunded monitoring committees, poor public sensitization, and lack of support for judicial training. Moreover, without adequate investment in infrastructure, speedy trial provisions and victims' rights mechanisms remain largely aspirational. Experts argue that the sustainability of criminal justice reform in Nigeria

depends on dedicated budgetary allocations at both federal and state levels, as well as donor and civil society partnerships to bridge funding gaps. Without addressing the financial shortfall, the ACJA risks being a progressive but poorly executed law (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2024; Leadership, 2024; RM Times, 2024).

### **Technology and Record-Keeping**

The ACJA envisions technology as a critical tool for improving Nigeria's criminal justice system, particularly in the area of record-keeping. Section 364 of the Act recommends electronic recording of court proceedings to replace outdated handwritten notes that often lead to inaccuracies and unnecessary adjournments. Technology can also streamline case management through digital filing, centralized criminal registries, and forensic tools that enhance investigation and prosecution. Despite these progressive provisions, implementation has been weak due to limited infrastructure, irregular electricity supply, and insufficient digital literacy among judicial staff. Most courts still rely on manual systems, which prolong trial durations and undermine the principle of speedy justice. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies lack modern databases for criminal records, leading to poor information sharing between police, courts, and correctional services. Closing this gap requires deliberate investment in digital infrastructure, consistent training for justice sector workers, and budgetary prioritization by both federal and state governments. Without embracing technology, the transformative potential of the ACJA will remain unrealized (Ezenwa-Ohaeto, 2023; RM Times, 2024; Federal Ministry of Justice, 2024).

### **Oversight and Monitoring**

Effective oversight is indispensable to the success of the ACJA. The Act provides for the establishment of Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committees (ACJMCs) at federal and state levels to ensure compliance and evaluate progress. These committees are mandated to review the performance of criminal justice institutions, promote accountability, and identify bottlenecks in implementation. However, in practice, very few states have operational



ACJMCs, and where they exist, they often lack adequate funding and independence. Weak oversight allows persistent challenges such as unlawful detention, unnecessary adjournments, and poor victim support to continue unchecked. Civil society organizations and professional associations like the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) have stepped in to fill this gap by conducting compliance assessments and public reporting. Nevertheless, sustainable reform requires formal, well-funded monitoring systems that can hold institutions accountable. Strengthening ACJMCs, improving data collection, and publishing regular compliance reports are essential strategies for ensuring that the ACJA achieves its intended outcomes (Mondaq, 2024; HG.org, 2024; Independent Newspaper, 2024).

### **Public Awareness and Advocacy**

Public awareness and advocacy are central to driving the successful implementation of the ACJA. Although the Act contains progressive provisions on speedy trials, defendants' rights, and victim participation, many citizens remain unaware of these protections. This ignorance prevents individuals from demanding accountability or asserting their rights when violations occur. Advocacy groups, including legal aid organizations and human rights NGOs, have played a significant role in sensitizing communities through workshops, media campaigns, and policy dialogues. For instance, the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies (CSLS) and the Criminal Justice Reform Advocacy Network (CRAN) have been active in publicizing the Act's provisions and mobilizing stakeholders for reform. Yet, their efforts are constrained by limited funding and poor outreach in rural areas where violations are most severe. Without broad-based public awareness, the ACJA risks becoming an elite-driven reform rather than a people-centered law. Sustained advocacy, civic education, and media engagement are therefore crucial to ensuring that the public understands and benefits from the Act's protections (Leadership, 2024; CaseFile Nigeria, 2024; The Times, 2024).

Conclusion

The paper concluded that the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) was introduced in Nigeria to harmonize criminal procedures, strengthen defendants' rights, and prioritize victims' welfare. It seeks to ensure speedy trials, promote non-custodial sentencing, and reduce prolonged detention. By unifying criminal procedures across jurisdictions, the Act enhances consistency, though state-level domestication remains uneven. Despite its progressive framework, challenges persist. Resistance from some judicial officers, weak enforcement by law agencies, and poor funding hinder effectiveness. Inadequate technology, weak record-keeping, and limited public awareness further slow progress. Oversight mechanisms are still fragile, reducing accountability. While the ACJA represents a major step toward justice reform, its impact is limited by institutional bottlenecks. For sustainability, there must be stronger political will, improved funding, enhanced training, wider domestication, and advocacy to build public trust and ensure the Act achieves its transformative purpose.

### **Suggestions**

The study suggested that:

1. Legislators should be intentional in strengthening the Act's objectives, ensuring justice delivery balances efficiency, fairness, and equity, while protecting both victims and defendants in Nigeria's criminal justice system.
2. Governors should be proactive in facilitating the domestication of ACJA within their states, ensuring it reflects local realities while maintaining national standards for fair and speedy justice delivery.
3. Judges should be vigilant in safeguarding defendants' rights, ensuring they are not subjected to unlawful detention, coercion, or unfair practices contrary to the spirit of justice.
4. Prosecutors should be considerate by prioritizing victims' needs, including restitution, psychological support, and active participation in proceedings, to strengthen confidence in the justice system.
5. Magistrates should be diligent in applying



provisions that prevent unnecessary delays, ensuring criminal trials proceed quickly while respecting due process and judicial fairness.

6. Media practitioners should be committed to educating citizens about ACJA provisions, promoting legal literacy, and fostering public support for justice reforms in Nigeria.

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## **Factors Contributing to Drug Abuse and Violent Crime Among Youths in Jos North Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria**

**Sani Ibrahim Modibbo , Aliyu Mustapha, Idris Aslam, Musa Paul Kalmal**  
*Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences  
Federal University of Kashere, Nigeria*

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### **Abstract**

Drug abuse and violent crime constitute serious social and security challenges in Nigeria, with youths disproportionately affected. In Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, rising levels of substance abuse have been closely associated with robbery, assault, cultism, and other forms of violent crime. Anchored on General Strain Theory, this study examined how socio-economic factors such as unemployment, poverty, peer pressure, family instability, and limited access to education contribute to youth drug abuse and violent criminal behavior. A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was adopted, with data collected from 400 respondents drawn from selected communities, of which 377 valid responses were analyzed. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data from in-depth interviews provided contextual insights. The findings revealed that unemployment and poverty were the most significant drivers of drug abuse among youths, while peer influence, family dysfunction, and limited educational opportunities further intensified vulnerability to substance use and violent behavior. Interview evidence indicated that drug use often serves as a maladaptive coping mechanism for socio-economic strain, frequently escalating into robbery and assault. The study also found that youth empowerment programs, expanded access to education and vocational training, strengthened family support, community engagement, and sustained awareness campaigns were widely perceived as effective strategies for reducing drug abuse and violent crime. The study concludes that socio-economic deprivation is central to the drug-crime nexus in Jos North and recommends coordinated economic and social interventions targeting youth vulnerability as a sustainable approach to crime prevention.

**Keywords:** Drug abuse, Violent Crime, Socio-economic factors, Youth, Jos

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### **Introduction**

Drug abuse and violent crime are major global concerns with serious implications for public health, social stability, and development. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021) estimated that over 275 million people worldwide used drugs in the previous year, with youths identified as the most vulnerable group. In Sub-Saharan Africa, factors such as rapid urbanization, unemployment, and weak regulatory frameworks have contributed to the rise in drug abuse. A recent systematic review by Ebrahim, Adams, and Demant (2024) confirms that substance use among young people in the region is increasingly driven by structural disadvantages, which in turn fuel aggression, delinquency, and violent behavior.

Nigeria is among the worst-affected countries, with the National Bureau of Statistics (2018) reporting that 14.4% of people aged 15–64 years,

representing about 14.3 million individuals, had used psychoactive substances in the previous year, the majority of whom were under 35 years old. National reports further indicate that cannabis is the most commonly abused illicit drug, while tramadol and codeine are widely misused, and their widespread consumption has been linked to rising levels of insecurity and crime (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018; Federal Government of Nigeria & UNODC, 2021). This connection between drug use and criminality is reinforced by Ajiboye and Olademo (2025), who describe a “youth invasion” in Southwest Nigeria, where economic hardship and peer influence have contributed to a surge in drug-associated behaviors such as robbery, cultism, and other forms of violent crime.

In Plateau State, particularly in Jos North Local



Government Area, the situation is increasingly critical. Studies have empirically demonstrated that drug abuse and crime in Jos North are “Siamese twins,” sustained by socio-economic deprivation and limited opportunities for youths, showing a strong association between the prevalence of substance use and offences such as assault and robbery (Hunduh, Izang, & Hunduh, 2024). These findings suggest that structural factors such as poverty, unemployment, and weak family support are central to understanding the nexus between drug abuse and violent crime in the locality.

Despite the prevalence of youth drug abuse and violent crime in Jos North, few empirical studies have simultaneously examined the underlying socio-economic drivers and the practical strategies for mitigating these behaviors. This study bridges this gap by investigating the socio-economic factors contributing to youth drug abuse and violent crime in Jos North Local Government Area and by proposing actionable strategies for addressing these challenges.

### **Objective of the Study**

#### **The objectives of this study are to:**

- Examine the socio-economic factors contributing to drug abuse and violent crime among youths in Jos North Local Government Area, Plateau State.
- Identify strategies for curbing drug abuse and violent crime among youths in Jos North Local Government Area.

### **Literature Review**

Drug abuse is commonly defined as the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including illicit drugs and the non-medical use of prescription medications (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021). Expanding this definition, Jatau et al. (2021) conceptualize drug abuse not merely as a health problem but as a manifestation of broader socio-economic neglect, where individuals resort to substance use as a coping mechanism for structural disadvantages. Violent crime, which is closely linked to substance abuse, has been

described by Adekunle (2025) as often arising from the psychopharmacological effects of drugs, in which intoxication lowers inhibitions and impairs judgment, thereby increasing the likelihood of aggressive acts such as armed robbery and assault.

Socio-economic factors are widely recognized as major drivers of drug abuse and violent crime, particularly among youths. Egwuaba, Egboh, and Igboanugo (2024), in a study conducted in Awka Metropolis, found that high rates of youth unemployment pushed many young people toward drug use as a survival strategy. Their findings revealed that prolonged idleness creates a vacuum often filled by substance dependence, which subsequently drives involvement in robbery and other criminal activities to sustain addiction. Similarly, Olanrewaju et al. (2022), in a cross-sectional study of undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria, found that more than nine out of ten respondents identified peer pressure as a major determinant of drug involvement, suggesting that the desire for social acceptance often overrides rational decision-making among youths.

Family instability has also been identified as a critical compounding factor. Obande-Ogboanya et al. (2024) empirically established that youths from broken homes and polygamous family settings in South-East Nigeria were significantly more likely to abuse methamphetamine (locally known as Mkpurummiri). Their study further revealed a strong association between the use of this substance and extreme aggression, with a high proportion of users exhibiting violent behavior toward family members. This finding underscores how dysfunctional family environments increase youths' vulnerability to dangerous substances and violent conduct.

The relationship between drug abuse and violent outcomes has been further established in regional studies. Eteng, Ogar, and Ogunka (2025), in their study of youths in Calabar Metropolis, found a significant positive correlation between hard drug consumption and violent behaviors such as sexual assault, cultism, and gang violence. In the specific context of Jos North Local Government Area,



Hunduh, Izang, and Hunduh (2024) confirmed that drug abuse and crime are “Siamese twins,” mutually reinforcing problems sustained by socio-economic deprivation and limited opportunities for youths. Their findings demonstrated that poverty and unemployment in Jos North function not only as economic challenges but also as serious security threats that perpetuate cycles of drug dependence and criminal activity.

Regarding strategies for mitigation, national drug policy documents advocate a balanced approach that combines drug education, counseling, and rehabilitation services to reduce demand for illicit substances, with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency playing a central implementation role (Federal Government of Nigeria & United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2021). However, Ajiboye and Olademo (2025) argue that effective interventions must extend beyond individual treatment to address the social networks that facilitate access to drugs. They recommend community-based monitoring systems in which families, traditional leaders, and community stakeholders actively participate in shielding youths from negative peer influences. Similarly, Egwuaba et al. (2024) emphasize that such strategies are most effective when complemented by vocational training and skill-acquisition programs aimed at economically empowering youths and reducing their vulnerability to recruitment into criminal networks.

Overall, the literature demonstrates a clear link between socio-economic deprivation (poverty and unemployment), social vulnerability (peer pressure and family instability), and drug-induced violent crime among youths. Although existing studies, particularly Hunduh et al. (2024), provide important insights into the situation in Jos North, there remains a need for empirical research that integrates these factors with community-based intervention strategies. This study contributes to the literature by examining how the socio-economic drivers of drug abuse and violent crime in Jos North can be addressed through practical and context-specific solutions.

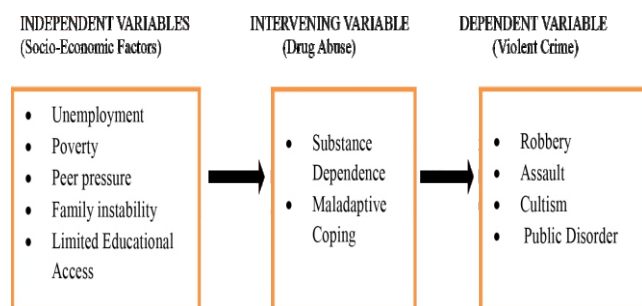
### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on Robert Agnew's General Strain Theory (GST) (1992; 2006). The theory posits that deviant behavior arises not from inherent criminal tendencies but from exposure to strain, which generates negative emotional states such as frustration, anger, and resentment. Agnew identifies three major sources of strain: the failure to achieve positively valued goals (e.g., economic success), the removal of positively valued stimuli (e.g., loss of social or family support), and the presentation of negative stimuli (e.g., abuse or persistent conflict).

General Strain Theory provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between drug abuse and violent crime among youths in Jos North Local Government Area. In the context of this study, high youth unemployment and poverty represent a “failure to achieve goals,” causing sustained psychological distress. Consequently, youths adopt drug abuse as a maladaptive coping strategy to escape the stress of idleness. However, substance use impairs judgment and fuels aggression, transforming this coping mechanism into violent criminal behaviors such as robbery and assault, serving either as an outlet for frustration or a means of illegally obtaining economic resources.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study. remain slow in



The conceptual framework illustrates the pathway through which socio-economic factors influence youth involvement in violent crime in Jos North Local Government Area. Socio-economic factors



such as unemployment, poverty, peer pressure, family instability, and limited educational opportunities constitute the independent variables that generate strain and social vulnerability among youths. These conditions increase the likelihood of drug abuse, which serves as an intervening variable by encouraging maladaptive coping behaviors and impairing judgment. Drug abuse, in turn, heightens aggression and impulsivity, thereby increasing youths' involvement in violent crimes such as robbery, assault, cultism, and public disorder. The framework highlights drug abuse as a key mechanism linking socio-economic disadvantage to violent criminal behavior among youths.

Methodology

The study employed a survey research design to investigate the socio-economic factors contributing to drug abuse and violent crime among youths in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. This design was appropriate because it enabled the collection of data from a large number of respondents within the study area. The population of the study consisted of individuals living in Jos North, which had a projected population of 643,200 in 2024. Using the help of Yamane's formula for sample size determination, 400 respondents were selected to represent the population. The sample consisted of youths, community leaders, and security personnel, thereby providing diverse perspectives on the subject matter. The research instrument was validated through expert review by scholars in criminology.

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0, with descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) employed to address the research questions. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected key informants, and the qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns consistent with the study objectives.

Results and Discussion

The study examined the socio-economic factors that contribute to drug abuse and violent crime

among youths in Jos North Local Government Area, A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to respondents, of which 377 were properly filled and returned, while 23 were incomplete or invalid for analysis. Results presented in this section are based on the 377 valid responses obtained from the field survey.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 377)

Table with 4 columns: Variable, Category, Frequency, and %. Rows include Gender (Male/Female), Age (15-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35), Educational Level (Primary, Secondary, Diploma/NCE, Bachelor's and above), Employment Status (Employed, Unemployed), and Marital Status (Single, Married, Divorced).

Table 2: Respondents view on the Socio-Economic Factors Contributing to Youth Drug Abuse and Crime in Jos North Local Government Area, Plateau State.

Table with 5 columns: Items, SA (%), A (%), D (%), and SD (%). Rows list factors like 'Unemployment is a major driver of drug abuse among youths in Jos North', 'Peer pressure is a significant factor leading to substance abuse', 'Poverty increases the likelihood of engaging in drug use', 'Family dysfunction contributes to high prevalence of drug abuse', and 'Drug abuse is influenced by lack of educational opportunities'.

Sources: Field Report, 2024



The data presented in Table 2 reveal that socio-economic deprivation and social instability are the primary drivers of drug abuse and violent crime in Jos North. The analysis shows an overwhelming consensus, with 98.7% of respondents identifying unemployment and 97.3% identifying poverty as major contributors. These findings support General Strain Theory (Agnew, 2006), which argues that the inability to achieve valued goals, such as financial independence, generates strain that may lead youths to adopt deviant coping mechanisms, including drug use. This finding also aligns with Egwuaba, Egboh, and Igboanugo (2024), who observed in Awka Metropolis that prolonged idleness creates an economic vacuum, forcing youths into substance use as a survival strategy. Similarly, Jatau et al. (2021) identify low socio-economic status as a critical risk factor that exposes urban youths to the drug trade as a substitute for legitimate employment.

Furthermore, peer pressure was identified by 96.9% of respondents as a significant factor. This high percentage supports the findings of Olanrewaju et al. (2022), who reported that 93.1% of Nigerian undergraduates cited peer influence as the main driver of substance abuse. Similarly, Ajiboye and Olademo (2025) describe this phenomenon as a "youth invasion," where peer-driven criminal networks exploit the economic desperation of young people to recruit them into drug-fueled gangs.

Additionally, the study established a strong link between family instability and deviant behavior, with 94.2% agreement. Within the framework of GST, this represents the "removal of positively valued stimuli," such as the loss of parental support. This finding is consistent with Obande-Ogbuinya et al. (2024), who empirically established that youths from broken or polygamous homes in South-East Nigeria were significantly more likely to abuse Methamphetamine (Mkpurummiri) and exhibit aggressive tendencies due to a lack of supervision. Finally, 93.3% of respondents indicated that limited educational opportunities influence drug use. Consistent with Jatau et al. (2021), low

educational attainment restricts legitimate avenues for success, increasing the likelihood of youths engaging in crime and deviant coping strategies. These quantitative results are reinforced by qualitative data from key informant interviews. A senior police officer in Rikkos linked these factors school dropout (education), lack of work (unemployment), and association with "bad boys" (peer pressure) in the following remark:

*"Most of the youths we arrest for robbery and assault usually tell us the same story they dropped out of school, couldn't find work, and started hanging around bad boys, from there, drugs use begins. They don't start with crime; it's usually drugs first, then theft or violence comes later."* (IDI: police officer, 42 years, Rikkos – 7th April 2025)

Table 3: Respondents' Views on Strategies to Curb Youth Drug Abuse and Violent Crime in Jos North Local Government Area, Plateau State

Item	(SA) (%)	(A) (%)	(D) (%)	(SD) (%)
Youth empowerment programs (skills training, entrepreneurship) can reduce drug abuse	160 (42.5)	190 (50.4)	20 (5.3)	7 (1.8)
Community engagement and mentorship programs can prevent violent crime	150 (39.8)	200 (53.1)	18 (4.8)	9 (2.4)
Increasing access to education and vocational training will decrease youth involvement in drugs and crime	170 (45.1)	180 (47.7)	20 (5.3)	7 (1.9)
Strengthening family support and parental supervision reduces youth drug abuse and violent behavior	155 (41.1)	195 (51.7)	18 (4.8)	9 (2.4)
Awareness campaigns in schools and communities can help prevent drug abuse and crime	140 (37.1)	200 (53.1)	25 (6.6)	12 (3.2)

**Sources: Field Report, 2024**

The findings in Table 3 highlight a strong public consensus on the need for a multi-faceted approach to curbing drug abuse and crime, prioritizing both economic empowerment and social support systems. Respondents overwhelmingly supported Youth Empowerment (92.9%) and Access to Education/Vocational Training (92.8%) as the most effective strategies. This suggests that addressing the root cause, unemployment is perceived as more critical than relying on punitive measures alone. This aligns



with Egwuaba, Egboh, and Igboanugo (2024), who argue that sustainable interventions must be paired with robust vocational training and skill acquisition programs to economically empower youths, thereby removing the "strain" of idleness that can lead to drug dependence.

Furthermore, strategies targeting social structures received high approval, with Community Engagement (92.9%) and Strengthening Family Support (92.8%) being rated highly. This supports the recommendation by Ajiboye and Olademo (2025), who emphasize that effective interventions must address social networks that facilitate drug access, including community-based monitoring systems. Similarly, Obande-Ogbuinya et al. (2024) highlight that strengthening family supervision is essential for identifying early warning signs of aggression among youth.

Finally, 90.2% of respondents agreed that awareness campaigns in schools and communities are effective, validating the approach of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2021), which advocates for rigorous drug education and public enlightenment to reduce the demand for illicit substances among youths.

### **Conclusion**

This study has established that drug abuse and violent crime in Jos North Local Government Area are not isolated social vices but symptoms of deeper socio-economic and structural decay. The findings empirically confirm that high rates of unemployment, poverty, and family instability have created fertile ground for these twin problems to thrive. Consistent with Agnew's General Strain Theory, youths in the area resort to drug use as a maladaptive coping mechanism for economic frustration ("strain"), which subsequently lowers inhibitions and escalates into violent behaviors such as robbery and assault.

Furthermore, the study supports Hunduh, Izang, and Hunduh's (2024) characterization of drug abuse and violent crime in Jos North as "Siamese twins" mutually reinforcing problems that cannot

be addressed in isolation. While peer pressure and family dysfunction initiate the pathway to drug use, the chronic lack of economic opportunities sustains the cycle of crime. Therefore, the study concludes that security strategies focusing solely on punitive measures, without simultaneously addressing youth idleness and poverty, are likely to yield limited results.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made. First, the Plateau State Government, alongside NGOs, should establish vocational training centers in hotspots like Rikkos and Gangare to equip youths with employable skills that reduce the idleness driving drug dependence. Simultaneously, community leaders and parents need to create robust neighborhood watch programs to disrupt drug access and protect youths from the influence of peer-driven gangs. Furthermore, religious and traditional bodies should conduct sensitization programs for parents to strengthen supervision and prevent family neglect, which this study identified as a critical driver of youth aggression. Lastly, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) should collaborate with health authorities to provide rehabilitation services that include psychological counseling specifically designed to manage aggression linked to dangerous substances like Mkpurummiri.

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## The Loss of Confidence Hypothesis and Jungle Justice in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Illah, Obadiah, <sup>2</sup>Illah Christiana Clement

<sup>1</sup>Department of General Studies and Pre-ND, Isa Mustapha Agwai I Polytechnic, Lafia –Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Isa Mustapha Agwai I Polytechnic, Lafia, Nasarawa State –Nigeria.

Email: illobed82@gmail.com, illah4real@yahoo.com, christianailah1989@gmail.com

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### Abstract

The article reviews the loss of confidence hypothesis and jungle justice in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. It basically objectivizes the loss of confidence in the dispensation of justice, the implications of jungle justice for criminal justice administration and what the government can do moving forward. Frustration Aggression theory and the Loss of Confidence theory guided variable explanations. The study triangulated quantitative and qualitative methods to generate data. Using multi-stage sampling technique, 6 out of 13 LGAs of Nasarawa State were randomly selected as sample outlets. Thereafter, 30 electoral wards, five each from the 6 LGAs selected were used and respondents systematically drawn from the household list in Primary Health Care Centres of the wards selected. Quantitative data were analyzed using inferential statistics while content analysis served for qualitative data. In effect, the Yamane formula for sample size determination was used and a sample size of 533 arrived at based on the 2022 National Population Commission projected population of Nasarawa State which stands at 2,886,022. The adult residents of the State constituted the study population whereas, questionnaire, structured and key informant interview guides served as instruments for data collection. The study established that the loss of confidence in criminal justice administration is a suffix to jungle justice in Nasarawa State. In ameliorating the situation, the government should digitalize court procedure to ensure quick dispensation of justice, conduct massive awareness campaigns on due process and establish Anti-Jungle Justice Marshal as quick response intervention against the practice of jungle justice in the State.

**Keywords:** Criminal Justice; Criminal Justice Administration; Fair hearing; Loss of confidence; Jungle justice

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### Introduction

Trust and confidence are often critical to the operation of a functional justice system in a constitutional jurisdiction. This becomes more organic when the justice system of a nation underpin its operational order. However, where there is near or total absence of this operational effect in a country or a given constitutional jurisdiction, people easily resort to self-help and begin to do what their leaders or constituted authorities are supposed to do. In other words, an average human being has the tendency to resort to self-help when he or she loses confidence in the collective conscience of society.

Recent studies have shown that the perpetrators of jungle justice have less confidence in the police and the court system and most specifically, the

police's reactive behaviour towards the safety of citizens portends a major escalation to acts of jungle justice (Illah et al, 2024; Maxson, 2003). In a classical example, operatives of the Special Fraud Unit, an arm of the Nigeria Police Force arrested three police officers from Mowe Divisional Police Station, Ogun State for allegedly aiding the forceful take over of a large parcel of land at Orimerunmu village in Mowe. In affront to the law, the arrested police suspects escaped from the Special Fraud Unit operatives on their way to Zone 2 Police Command of Lagos State, Nigeria (Ossai, 2023; Oyeduntan, 2003). In a related instance, Chris (2025) revealed how one Joshua Moses was murdered by a suspect demanding for the payment of Development Levy in a construction site at Gidan Rago Area of Aso



“B” in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. In search for justice, the deceased family was confronted with how the suspect’s sponsors later negotiated and paid off the police for his release after which the police team announced that the suspect had escaped from their custody, pretending not to know about his disappearance or whereabouts. These scenarios raise a serious concern on public confidence in the administration of criminal justice and its continuous patronage in the study area. They also explain the level of distrust or how ruptured is public confidence in the handling of criminal suspects by the criminal justice institutions.

According to Ugwummadu Shodunke (2022) and (2013) cited in Tunasangwitches (2013), at the height of jungle justice lies the loss of confidence in the judicial system. One dimension to this is that when people hear of well-to-do persons who have been charged with criminal cases but hear very little about the punishment and sentences metted on them, whereas they hear that people who steal tubers of yam, goats and wristwatches are instantly convicted and sentenced to years of imprisonment, they do not need to be politically enlightened or schooled in the legal processes before they lose confidence in the system. This is what loss of confidence implies in the practice of jungle justice. Therefore, rather than reporting the persons whom they have caught committing a criminal act to the police, mobs often take the law into their hands, believing that it is the best way to serve justice.

In this study, we try to identify the factors responsible for jungle justice; find out if the loss of confidence is last resort to jungle justice and ascertain its implications in the protection of lives and property in Nasarawa State. The aim is to provide answers to what factors account for the onset of jungle justice? How is jungle justice predicted by the loss of confidence in the criminal justice institutions? And, how has this implicated the protection of lives and property in the study area?

### **Statement of Problem**

Although, the law of the federation specifies that

the criminal justice institutions are to maintain laws and orders in Nigeria as it is elsewhere around the world, in Nasarawa State however, these institutions do not seem to be fulfilling this vital responsibility due to the interruption of jungle justice. A study carried out by the United States Department of Diplomacy in Action reveals that high cost of justice, leadership failure, loss of confidence, illiteracy/ignorance, delayed justice and pre-trial of suspects lead to jungle justice in Nigeria (Esara et-tal 2024; Shodunke, 2022; USDDA, 2010) The studies of Neequaye (2007) and Asare (2007) particularly blamed inconsistency and inefficiency of the judiciary as accounting for jungle justice in Nigeria and Ghana. While these findings are not in doubt, it is not clear if these factors are universal in the practice of jungle justice which makes the study of Nasarawa State a research need. Where applicable, such studies do not reflect the nexus between jungle justice and the loss of confidence hypothesis in Nasarawa State.

Accordingly, Illah et-tal (2024) consider the reality of jungle justice as a gradual retrogression of society to a state of nature where the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes sees social life as being nasty, brutish, solitary and short. This proposition reveals a possibility that people breach societal set rules on daily basis yet the law is not catching up with them. Such situation can debase confidence in the institutions of justice and eventually a bait to self help. These are the issues interrogated in this study.

### **Literature Review**

The findings of Esara et-tal (2024) and Illah et-tal (2017) identified injustice and oppression as critical to criminality in Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and that these elements are major sources of rebellion and other forms of anti-social behaviours. The authors’ revelation was upheld in the strength of this study for reasons that aggrieved persons are increasingly embracing self help in the handling of what they considered as fast justice in society. Lending to this view, Illah et-tal (2024), Asare (2007) and Abdulah (2016) bemoaned regular adjournments and delays in the adjudication of



justice as resulting to jungle justice and calls for concerted effort by the judiciary to stem the trend. The abiding reality of such operation has aggravated the practice of jungle justice over suspects arrest.

As revealed by Stratton (2024), Dada et-tal (2015) and Shodunke (2022), jungle justice occurs when the society is fed up with the administration of criminal justice, and have come to believe that there is little or no difference in the way suspects are processed in the justice system. The police in particular have arguably become corrupt and often collude with offenders to scuttle and sometime frustrate arrest, claiming lack of available personnel or operational equipment. With such operation in place, the entire concept of state, government and the rule of law is far defeated, such that people are conditioned to act in a way that is unregulated and unbridled. An expand on this revelation triggered the use of loss of confidence hypothesis as a theoretical stance in this study. The study of (2016) and Virginus (2022) particularly notes that when suspects are arrested and handed over to the police, they set them free once their “palms are greased”. In reaction to this practice, people are easily flamed up in mob action leading to the loss of lives and property. In Nasarawwa State, for instance, Local Government News (2015) reveals how instead of reporting to the police, a group of youths in Masaka, Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State set ablaze one person alleged to be a motorcycle snatcher due to loss of confidence in the police operation.

Accordingly, Ezebuilo (2023), Nicholas (2015), and Gary (2015) capture how two suspected thieves were apprehended and burnt to death on 18th of September, 2015 for stealing a bike in Akwanga Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. Lending to this claim, Joseph (2014), David (2017) and Brunt (2017) opine that a society that allows people to take laws into their own hands and sometimes take human life under the guise of punishment which is unknown to law is a broken and lawless society. The position of these authors were espoused in the review of frustration aggression theory distilled in the study.

Detailing on implications, the study of Illah et-tal (2022) and Olalekan (2017) saw the practice of jungle justice as creating sudden disintegration in the investigation process and the impracticality of arresting accomplices of a suspected crime when closely viewed. Accordingly, the study of Uche (2002) in Illah et-al (2017) submitted that life in Nigeria is a cafeteria of temptation and that conformity to the law only occurs when people have more to gain from it than they have to gain by deviance. In this light, it can be said that jungle justice does not only interrupts criminal investigation but offers penalty which can be ruthless and brutal to human life when compared to punishment allotable through a criminal justice proceeding. Thus, a study of this nature aims to insist on why society should stick to statutory channels in seeking for redress than resorting to conflict.

### **The Frustration-Aggression Theory**

The frustration-aggression theory otherwise known as the frustration–aggression hypothesis has been reviewed in this work. This theory has its root in the work of Dollard John, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer and Robert Sears in the text: *Frustration and Aggression* (1939). The basic argument of this theory is that aggression is a product of frustration and frustration is caused as a result of blocked opportunities faced by individuals in the society. Frustration aggression theorists define frustration as what often happens when a goal is interfered with (Ossai, 2023, Lawson, 1965 cited in Joseph, 2014). Thus, this theory indicates that aggressive behaviour is not a product of genuine hostility, but of frustration.

Applying this theory within the context of this work, we considered unlawful tendencies such as mob attacks, riot and revolutions as jungle justice and owing to the frustration encountered in the administration of criminal justice in the study location. In Nigeria, the justice system is operated in such a way that the rich are considered sacred and their wrong deeds rarely punished, whereas wrongs by the deprived group are often punished almost immediately and sometimes when convictions are yet to be secured. In Nasarawa State, those who are at the disadvantaged end



easily lose confidence and get frustrated by such operation and often time resort to self help in the form of jungle justice. Though it provided a useful perspective on the causes and implications of jungle justice, this theory has not given specific explanation on how the loss of confidence in the administration of criminal justice constitutes last resort to the practice of jungle justice. This has propelled the inclusion and use of the loss of confidence theory as a theoretical proposition in the study.

### The Loss of Confidence Theory

In this study, a theoretical stance called the ‘Loss of Confidence theory’ was also adopted to conduct variable explanation of jungle justice to criminal justice administration in the study area. As an outcome of a PhD research carried out by Dr. Allah Obadiah in 2023, this theoretical stance considers the loss of confidence in the administration of criminal justice as a suffix or last resort to the practice of jungle justice in the society. The use of this theoretical stance in the explanation of jungle justice to the best of the researchers’ knowledge is only known to this study in Nasarawa State and probably Nigeria and beyond.

The theory basically sees ‘self-help’ as a biological instinct often resorted to when an individual is triggered to react in a violent manner. This violent instinct is a response to the failure of justice order in a state often exhibited in both individual and group form. It advanced the claim that the loss of confidence in the legal order indicates a gradual end to social laws. Theory views individual rationality as key to conformity and that the legal order is easily adhered to when people believe they gain more by it than through illegal means. It further held that where there is just, fair and transparent administration of criminal justice, adherence to state law becomes a natural instinct.

In Nigera, corruption and impunity are arguably deep-seated and have severed the task of a just, fair and transparent administration of criminal justice. This has in effect triggered among adherents the loss of confidence in government and governance order of the Nigerian State. In this

wise, the practice of jungle justice in Nasarawa State in the lens of this theory is an indication of the loss of confidence in the state coercive instruments or a resort to self help as last resort against public security. The theoretical stance provides a lens in explaining what constitutes the suffix of jungle justice hence its adoption and use in the study.

### Methodology

The survey design was adopted in this study. This is because survey design enables the collection of primary data in a large sample in order to test hypotheses and answer research questions (Ndiyo, 2005). The study’s sample size was determined by the Yamane formula for sample size determination at 95% confidence level and a margin error of 0.05%. This was based on the 2022 projected population of Nasarawa State which stands at 2,886,022 as released by the National Population Commision (NPC, 2022). In effect, a sample size of 533 was arrived at and adopted for the study.

This outcome has been illustrated below. Population Commision (NPC, 2022). In effect, a sample size of 533 was arrived at and adopted for the study. This outcome has been illustrated below.

$$\text{Formula: } n_1 = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

where:  $n_1$  = Required sample size  
 $N$  = Population of Nasarawa State  
 $1$  = Constant  
 $e$  = Error tolerance

$$n_1 = \frac{2,886,022}{1 + 2,886,022 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2,886,022}{1 + 2,886,022 (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{2,886,022}{1 + 7,215.005}$$

$$n = \frac{2,886,022}{7,216.055}$$

$$n = 399.9 = 400$$

Often times, the possibility of retrieving all questionnaires from the field is not a gurrantee. Thus, the study anticipated that only 75% of the



questionnaires distributed may not be correctly filled and returned hence, the number of questionnaires were increased by 25% to compensate the ones that could not be returned. In doing this, a formula developed and used by Areoye (2004) was adopted. Thirty electoral wards were randomly selected in all, five from each of the six LGAs selected.

Formula: 
$$N_2 = \frac{N}{R}$$

Where:

- N<sub>2</sub> = Actual sample size
- N = Calculated sample size
- R = Expected return rates substituting the formula

$$n_2 = \frac{400}{0.75}$$

$$n_2 = \frac{400}{0.75}$$

$$n_2 = 533$$

In generating qualitative data, the study purposively selected and conducted structured interview for 10 participants comprising of a beer parlour owner and one daily user, a motor park chairman and one daily user, mechanic workshop owner and one daily user, a street vulcanizer and one daily user and one market woman leader and a member. The study also had key informant interview with 12 interviewees who were purposively reached at fixed locations including a police Commissioner, two court judges, two ward councilors, two traditional leaders, two school headmasters, a vigilante leader, a woman leader, and a youth leader which when added to the initial sample size of 533, the total sample size became 555. The choice of these participants were for reasons of professional insights and/or their day to day street experiences related to vulnerable locations.

In cultivating quantitative data, multi-stage sampling technique was used for sampling procedure. First, the State was clustered into 3 senatorial zones, namely Nasarawa North, West and South. Thereafter, simple random sampling procedure was used to select six (6) from the (13) Local Government Areas in Nasarawa State by admitting the population proportional to sample size (PPSS) for each LGA selected. That was followed by the selection of 30 electoral wards from the selected LGAs. Sample elements were equally selected systematically based on the

household list at the Primary Health Care Centres in the wards selected. The adult residents of Nasarawa State constituted the study population. Three instruments, that is, questionnaire, structured interview and key informant interview guides were used in the study. The researcher issued out questionnaires directly to the respondents and conducted structured and key informant interviews on the required respondents. Although, 533 questionnaires were issued out, only 513 were duly filled and returned. Data collected were presented and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics for quantitative data and verbatim reporting scheme for qualitative data. That is to say, qualitative data were sieved out and used to support those quantitatively gathered. In this wise, the questionnaires filled and returned were collated, cleaned and coded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) model to display frequency distribution, simple percentages, mean, standard deviation and cross tabulations. The whole frame involved the summarization and tabularization of the data processed via the SPSS package.

### Presentation of Findings

#### Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Demographic Characteristics

This item presented the descriptive characteristics of respondents in the study.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents, N = 513

Categories	Frequency	Percentage %	Mean	SD
<b>Age (years)</b>				
≤20yrs	76	14.8	28.5	8.4
21-30	263	51.3		
31-40	127	24.8		
41-50	30	5.8		
>51yrs	17	3.3		
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	354	69.0		
Female	159	31.0		
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Single	300	58.4		
Married	170	33.1		
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	43	8.5		
<b>Educational qualification</b>				
No formal education	33	6.4		
Primary	26	5.1		
Secondary	109	21.2		
Tertiary	345	67.3		



Occupation		
Unemployed	212	41.5
Self employed	80	15.5
Public/civil servant	75	14.7
Retired	100	19.4
Others	46	8.9
Monthly Income		
<10,000	146	28.5
10,000-20,000	175	34.1
21,001-50,000	95	18.5
51,001-100,000	70	13.6
>100,000	27	5.3

Source: Field Report (2024)

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in the study. The mean age of the respondents was 28.5 with majority of them (76.1%) found within the ages of (21-30 and 31-40years) respectively. Going by the Nigerian Youth Policy of Federal Ministry of Youth and Development (FMYD, 2009) which pegs the age of youths between 18 and 35 years, this result shows that Nasarawa State has a productive population which is capable of ventilating energy in jungle justice when left idle. The sex of the respondents revealed (69.0%) of male participation in the study, implying that the male sex is perceived to be more predisposed to acts of jungle justice, making jungle justice a male folk violence in the study area. In terms of marriage, majority of the respondents (58.4%) were single. This implies that singles are likely prone to acts of jungle justice since they are less occupied with family demands. On educational status, over 70% of the respondents have acquired tertiary education implying that most of the participants are literate and can take informed decision on issues relating to the practice of jungle justice. The turn out on occupation had the participants (41.5%) being unemployed. This was generally high when related with the number of those gainfully employed (14.7%) and self employed (15.5%). This result gives the impression that unemployment is prevalent in Nasarawa State and that such unemployed

persons are likely at the risk of indulging in the practice of jungle justice. Distribution by income shows that the study participants 34.1% earn between N10, 000 and N20, 000 monthly. This result indicates a population with poor monthly income and such population is vulnerable to a life of frustration and despair which can be incidental to the practice of jungle justice.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Factors in Jungle Justice, N = 513

Factors	Yes N %	No N %	Not sure N %	Mean	STD
Delayed justice	374(72.9)	63(12.3)	76(14.8)	2.61	0.69
Substance abuse	332(64.7)	88(17.2)	93(18.1)	2.48	0.77
Ineffective criminal justice administration	334(65.1)	103(20.1)	76(14.8)	2.46	0.77
Corrupt criminal justice system	394(76.8)	83(16.2)	36(7.0)	2.61	0.75
Leadership failure	415(80.9)	61(11.9)	37(7.2)	2.69	0.67
Illiteracy	377(73.5)	102(19.9)	34(6.6)	2.54	0.80
Poor socialization of children	378(73.7)	75(14.6)	60(11.7)	2.59	0.73
Poor human rights awareness	405(78.9)	72(14.0)	36(7.0)	2.65	0.71
Poor police-community partnership	403(78.6)	71(13.8)	39(7.6)	2.65	0.71
Loss of confidence in CJA	374(72.9)	76(14.8)	63(12.3)	2.54	0.77
Peer pressure	336(65.5)	92(17.9)	82(16.0)	2.47	0.78
High cost of justice	218(42.5)	202(39.4)	93(18.1)	2.03	0.90
Poor funding of the security agencies	222(43.3)	139(27.1)	152(29.6)	2.16	0.82

Source: Field Report (2024)

**Footnote: Criminal Justice Administration (CJA)**

From table 2, respondents were asked to indicate if the factors measured above are responsible for jungle justice in the State. Overall outcome considered leadership failure ( $\bar{x} = 2.69$ ) as having the highest causal tendency since responses that varied were indeed insignificant ( $SD = 0.67$ ). This was followed by poor human rights awareness ( $\bar{x} = 2.65$ ) which had participants differing in position ( $SD = 0.71$ ). Jungle justice was also blamed on poor police-community partnership ( $\bar{x}$



= 2.65 SD = 0.71) while illiteracy and loss of confidence in criminal justice administration (CJA) which had the same mean rating but varied in standard deviations were tipped as having the next significant impacts ( $\bar{x}=2.54$  SD = 0.80) ( $\bar{x}=2.54$  SD = 0.77) respectively. These results suggest that these variables are prevalent in the practice of jungle justice in the study area. Although, improper socialization of children was also diagnosed with such effect ( $\bar{x}=2.59$  SD = 0.732), it became more enhanced as a result of illiteacy in the area ( $\bar{x}=2.54$  SD = 0.80). Aside these, the ineffectiveness of criminal justice administration turned out to be magnificent ( $\bar{x}=2.46$  SD = 0.772). It can be seen that only few views (SD = 0.772) were at variance with the mean scores, affirming the rate of jungle justice in the study area. Other ratings indicated that corruption within the criminal justice system ( $\bar{x}=2.61$  SD = 0.75), delayed justice ( $\bar{x}=2.61$  SD = 0.69), peer pressure ( $\bar{x}=2.47$  SD = 0.78), substance abuse ( $\bar{x}=2.48$  SD = 0.77), poor funding of the security agencies ( $\bar{x}=2.16$  SD = 0.82), and high cost of justice ( $\bar{x}=2.03$  SD = 0.90) are highly associated with jungle justice.

A close follow of these outcomes show a similar direction in the means of these factors. However, the standard deviations are indicating that the data points notwithstanding the divergences in opinion are coherent to the means of the data set. That is to say, these causal factors are trending and such trend implies a surging propensity of jungle justice in the study location.

In line with these revelations, qualitative data were generated to complement results elicited from the quantitative data which are in line with the objectives of the study.

People believe resorting to jungle justice is a common option because the criminal justice system is not only slow but also ineffective. In

fact, it takes time and all ages before justice is served. Again, it is believed the police is very corrupt; Most suspects particularly those who are well to do bribe the police to manipulate their detention and after some days, they are released and back on the street. Another thing is that justice institutions are not effective as they should. You know, it is either the police is difficult to be contacted or if contacted, they are often belated in arriving at crime scenes. All these make people to lose confidence in the whole process of criminal justice administration (KII- Court Judge, male, age 55, Lafia).

Here, the participant believes that ineffective justice institutions, corruption, loss of confidence and slow justice system are engrossed in the administration of criminal justice and they have made people to consider jungle justice as something fast on suspects. Hence, findings suggest that the right to fair and just trial is in jeopardy when the justice system is choked with such factors.

**Below is the view of another participant in that regard:**

Sometimes, it is lack of awareness because it is rare for people so educated and enlightened, occupying position of responsibility to indulge in jungle justice. I also think people use jungle justice to victimize other people they have grievances or personal issues with. Since by mere raise of alarm, a suspect is unwarrantedly attacked by the public, people who harbour grievances with other people take advantage of such window and have their targets victimized. Another thing again is joblessness because if people are engaged or engrossed into their work, they will rarely have time for anything like jungle justice (KII- Youth leader, male, age 38, Lafia).

The opinion of this participant was clear on lack of



awareness, joblessness and spaded grievances as factors in jungle justice. In other words, this interviewee is of the opinion that jungle justice can be tackled when the public becomes more enlightened, engaged and informed on the mechanisms of peaceful resolution.

**Table 3: The Implications of Jungle Justice**

The table below is a vivid representation of respondents’ ratings on what constitutes the implications of jungle justice in the administration of criminal justice as contained in the third objective of this study.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Implications of Jungle Justice, N = 513

Categories	SA (%)		Rating		SD (%)	Mean	STD
	N	N	U (%)	D (%)			
Police abeyance	215(41.9)	192(37.4)	35(6.8)	42(6.2)	29(5.7)	4.01	1.15
Weakens lives, property protection	179(34.9)	204(39.8)	32(6.2)	73(14.2)	25(4.9)	3.86	1.18
Undermines CJA	242(47.2)	196(38.2)	40(7.8)	25(4.9)	10(1.9)	4.24	0.93
Deters innocence	210(40.9)	185(36.1)	52(10.1)	58(11.3)	8(1.6)	4.04	1.05
Loss of lives, property	226(44.1)	145(28.3)	86(16.8)	42(8.2)	14(2.7)	4.03	1.08
Deters investigations	257(50.1)	163(31.8)	23(4.5)	49(9.6)	21(4.1)	4.14	1.13
Corrupts CJS	178(34.7)	157(30.6)	59(11.5)	105(20.5)	14(2.7)	3.74	1.20
Dents confidence in CJA	204(39.8)	202(39.4)	69(13.5)	26(5.1)	12(2.3)	4.09	0.96
Slows CJA	193(37.6)	218(42.5)	61(11.9)	28(5.5)	13(2.5)	4.07	0.96
Failed CJA	275(53.6)	164(32.0)	37(7.2)	31(6.0)	6(1.2)	4.31	0.92

Source: Field Report (2024)

**Footnote: Crminal Justice Administration (CJA), Criminal Justice System (CJS)**

From the distribution on table 3, the means score revealed failed criminal justice administration (CJA) as the most rated implication of jungle justice in Nasarawa State ( $\bar{x} = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ). The next rating was on how jungle justice is undermining the course of justice in the State ( $\bar{x} = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ). Rather than ensuring order and public safety, it was revealed that the police is aiding and abetting the practice of jungle justice in the study location ( $\bar{x} = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ). By this

outcome, it means the police structure is a co-author of the incidences of jungle justice in the study site. Such police operation will mean great weakness in the protection of lives and property which participants considered a primary role of the criminal justice system ( $\bar{x} = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ).

In the determination of innocence, it was revealed that jungle justice not only obstructs the chances of people proving their innocence ( $\bar{x} = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ), it also severs investigations leading to the arrest of other accomplices ( $\bar{x} = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ). This, in the views of participants, make difficult the protection of lives and property in the study area ( $\bar{x} = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). The consequence of jungle justice was further highlighted by the loss of confidence in the administration of criminal justice ( $\bar{x} = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ) due to entrenched corruption in the institutions of criminal justice (CJS) as made known by the respondents ( $\bar{x} = .74$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ). Ratings from respondents also queried jungle justice for slowing the dispensation of justice due to unwarranted lynching of suspects ( $\bar{x} = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ). This, in turn, affects the needed output in criminal justice administration. In light of the foregoing, the standard deviations which ranged from 0.92 to 1.15 is suggesting the existence of wide and divergence opinions among the respondents. These claims were further buttressed by the data uncovered from qualitaive interrogations during the study.

**A participant who was contacted beared his mind like this**

Yes, jungle justice does not give room for people to express themselves and in some cases, it cheaply takes away life. In other cases, it is meted on innocent people when properly investigated. Sometimes, perpetrators do not care to know what the suspect has done and sometimes the kind of punishment unleashed does not equate by degree



direction of this result, the postulation of objective two was further proven to be empirically valid.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The result on leadership failure as a factor of jungle justice highlights the position of Achebe (1983) when he said the failure of a nation is characteristic of where there is leadership failure. Previous studies by Ndukwe (2023), Neequaye (2007), Asare (2007), USDDA, (2010), and Joseph (2014) elaborated on this when they identified ineffective criminal justice administration, leadership failure, loss of confidence in the law enforcement agencies, and high cost of justice as factors accounting for jungle justice in sub-Saharan Africa. Also agreeing is the submission by Abdulah (2016) when he considered the practice of jungle justice a reaction to abrupt show of injustice and failure of the criminal justice system to apply uniform and equal standards and processes to all. In the view of Frustration Aggression theory, these factors are constituents of blocked opportunities that frustrate societal members and make them resort to aggressive tendencies in addressing their grievances.

On implications, jungle justice has become worrisome in the recent time, particularly that it is consistent with the issue of life and death. Buttressing this result, Ezebuilo (2025) and Olalekan (2017) saw jungle justice as being manipulated into a way of fiddling with police investigations and evidence. Thus, when a suspect is killed, further investigation on a matter and evidence which would have been used to apprehend other culprits would be lost. Affirming the above finding, Ossai (2023) and Orabueze et al (2013) opined that the people who killed a suspect are a harm to the society as the family of the victim might have possibly lost a breadwinner, a father, husband, son, brother, mother, sister, daughter, aunt, wife among others. The loss of

confidence theory considers this action as what could make people lose confidence in the administration of criminal justice in a State.

On the other hand, jungle justice was established to have a kind of link with the loss of confidence in the administration of criminal justice in the study location. The regression model shows that the dependent variable (jungle justice) is greatly predicted by the independent variable (loss of confidence) as contained in table four above. This outcome informed the rejection of the null hypothesis stated in the work. Further outcomes tipped in great deal the displeasure of citizens on criminal proceedings and how the administration of criminal justice is no longer reliable. Thus, when an atmosphere of distrust is created in the task of justice delivery, frustration aggression theory envisages a possibility of people getting frustrated and resorting to alternative justice which this study tried to buttressed.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that jungle justice indicates the weakness or a rather debased administration of criminal justice in society and people who resort to the use of jungle justice tend to be more dissatisfied, disappointed, and have lost confidence in the formal justice system.

The study also concludes that the role people play in whether or not the law should apply in real time plays a significant role in the task of law enforcement. A number of challenges regarding an ordered justice system seem to be exacerbated by the weakness or rather the decay witnessed in the working of justice institutions.

The study further concludes that the tendency to be law abiding is contingent on the nature of criminal justice arrangement in the society and it can change when the conditions in operation are not in the equality of justice for all.



the offence the suspect has committed (SI- Motor park chairman, male, age 52, Lafia).

This participant actually expressed concern over how life could be cheap and how a person’s right to say his or her side of the story could be unjustly denied on event of jungle justice. This opinion conveys a quick call on the authorities concerned since such implication is directly on the sanctity of human life.

**Test of Hypothesis**

H 1: The practice of jungle justice is not significantly predicted by the loss of confidence in the administration of criminal justice.

**Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis on the Loss of Confidence and Jungle Justice in Nasarawa State**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R	Std. Error
1	.949a	.900	.899	.234

2	Sources of variance	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
	Regression	249.195	5	49.839	912.293	.000
	Residual	27.698	507	.055		
	Total	276.893	512			

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-270	.055		-4.905	.000
1 Loss of Confidence	.495	.029	.753	16.973	.000
2 Slow justice	-450	.038	-.593	-11.902	.000
3 Failed CJS	.222	.028	.281	7.968	.000
4 Corrupt justice system	.302	.078	.243	3.880	.000
5 Poor HRA	.305	.078	.290	4.702	.000

**Source: Field Report (2024)**

- a. Dependent Variable: Practice of jungle justice
- b. Footnote: CJS – Criminal Justice System, HRA – Human Rights Awareness

The findings in table 4 revealed that the two variables (dependent and independent) have positive relationship (r = .949). The (r<sup>2</sup>) of .900 as determined by the adjusted R suggests that 89.9 percent of variance in the dependent variable (practice of jungle justice) is explained by the

independent variable (loss of confidence). Here, analysis of variance in the respondents’ rating was significant [F (5; 507) = 912.293, p < .05]. The regression model therefore, suggests that the practice of jungle justice is greatly predicted by the loss of confidence in the dispensation of justice. In this light, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that jungle justice is significantly predicted by the loss of confidence in the dispensation of justice.

When the coefficients were subjected to further analysis, all the independent variables exerted significant predictions on the practice of jungle justice but the loss of confidence in criminal justice administration was the most significant of all (β = .753, t = 16.973, p < .05). This implies that a unit increase in the loss of confidence in criminal in criminal justice administration will result in .495 increase in the practice of jungle justice in the State, if other variables in the equation maintained constance. The next variables with similar impact were slow justice (β = -.583, t = -11.902, p < .05), failed criminal justice system (β = .281, t = 7.968, p < .05), corrupt criminal justice system (β = .243, t = 3.880, p < .05) and poor human right awareness (β = .290, t = 4.706, p < .05). Thus, a unit increase in slow justice, failed criminal justice system, corrupt criminal justice system and poor human right awareness will result in .450, .222, .302 and 305 increases in jungle justice respectively, if all other variables in the equation are held constant.

However, a close follow of this result revealed a negative but significant relationship between slow justice and the practice of jungle justice. The implication is that the more slow justice in the study area, the less the practice of jungle justice which sounds a bid awkward and counter intuitive. This outcome could be that as a result of slow justice by constituted agencies, people know that they are easily consumed by the practice of jungle justice where the intervention of the formal order is slow, hence making them to naturally restrain from criminal acts. By the



The study's findings unmasked the lack of confidence in the criminal justice organs as a balance to the onset of jungle justice. This concern is bothered on the corrupt and slow nature of justice which seem to be in favour of the privileged class while overly discriminating against the less privileged group.

### **Recommendations**

In order to address these issues, the following have been recommended for policy action:

- i. Government should digitize criminal justice proceedings in the State. When achieved, it will build public confidence and ensure quick and corrupt free administration of justice.
- ii. Government should carry out deliberate reforms through the enforcement of judicial independence for effective administration of criminal justice in Nasarawa State. When done, it will promote transparent dispensation of justice and enhance the protection of lives and property.
- iii. National Orientation Agency and schools should routinize massive awareness campaign and enlightenment programme to elevate public knowledge on law enforcement as well as promoting patriotic consciousness in the handling of public affairs in the State.
- iv. Government should through a legislative act establish Anti-Jungle Justice Marshal to serve as a quick response intervention mechanism to the practice of jungle justice in the State.
- v. Government should through good governance mechanism create jobs and enhanced welfare scheme provid for the people. Effective control of jungle justice as it were would require a fundamental activation of this approach.

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## A Study of Youth Crime and Delinquency in Kuje Area Council, Abuja, Nigeria

Usman Sani Abdulkarim

Department of Criminology and Security Studies Philomath University, Abuja Nigeria

Email: othmansa.ua@gmail.com

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### Abstract

This investigation examines youth crime and delinquency in Kuje Area Council, Abuja, Nigeria, emphasizing unemployment, peer influence, and family instability. The target population comprised youths aged 15–35, representing approximately 60% of Kuje's 170,000 residents. A sample of  $n = 385$  was drawn using multi-stage stratified sampling across urban and rural wards. Data collection employed structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Reliability of instruments was confirmed with Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.79–0.87$  ( $\alpha \geq 0.70$ ). Quantitative analyses included descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests ( $\chi^2$ ), and Pearson correlation ( $r$ ), while qualitative data were thematically coded. Results indicated significant associations between predictors and youth delinquency. Unemployment was significantly related to youth crime ( $\chi^2 = 32.7$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Peer influence showed a positive correlation with delinquent behaviour ( $r > 0$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and family instability was linked to offences including theft, cultism, truancy, and drug abuse. These findings demonstrate that youth crime in Kuje is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by structural, social, and relational factors. Integrated interventions such as employment programmes, strengthened family support, and community-based crime prevention are recommended to mitigate youth involvement in crime.

**Keywords:** Youth delinquency; Unemployment; Peer influence; Family instability; Nigeria.

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### Introduction

Youth crime and delinquency have become pervasive social challenges across many societies, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria where rapid urbanization, unemployment, and weak social institutions converge to create fertile grounds for deviant behaviour. Globally, the phenomenon of youth delinquency is recognized as a major public policy concern because it not only disrupts social order but also threatens long-term development and security (UNODC, 2021). In sub-Saharan Africa, young people constitute more than 60% of the population, and many face structural disadvantages such as poverty, limited access to education, and exclusion from the labour market (African Union, 2019). These conditions contribute to increased vulnerability to crime, substance abuse, and gang activity.

Nigeria, with its youthful population of over 70% under the age of 35 faces acute challenges in managing youth restiveness and delinquency (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022). Rising unemployment, political marginalization,

and family disintegration have been repeatedly cited as drivers of deviant youth behaviour (Okonkwo, 2018). In urban centres, youth crime is often linked to theft, drug abuse, cultism, cybercrime, and violent crimes, while in peri-urban and rural communities, youth delinquency may manifest through gang fights, assaults, and property-related offences (Musa, 2020).

Kuje Area Council, situated in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria, provides a relevant case for examining these issues. The area is experiencing rapid population growth due to migration into Abuja, leading to increased urban pressure on resources, high unemployment, and strained social institutions. Anecdotal evidence suggests rising incidences of petty theft, burglary, drug use, and cult-related activities among young people in Kuje, yet systematic academic research on the subject remains limited. This study therefore investigates the causes, prevalence, and correlates of youth crime and delinquency in Kuje Area Council.



### **Statement of the Problem**

Youth crime in Nigeria has escalated in both frequency and complexity. The emergence of cybercrime “Yahoo Yahoo”, gang violence, and drug abuse are among the most visible manifestations of delinquent youth culture (Eze & Okorie, 2021). Although government interventions such as the National Youth Policy and employment programs have been introduced, their impact on reducing youth delinquency has been minimal (Adebayo, 2019).

In Kuje Area Council, despite its relatively small population compared to urban Abuja, police records and community reports indicate growing concern over youth-related offences, particularly theft, burglary, and drug-related crimes. Families and community leaders attribute this trend to high unemployment, peer group pressure, and broken homes, while law enforcement agencies highlight weak parental supervision and the lure of fast, illicit income as drivers. However, empirical data on the magnitude and determinants of youth delinquency in Kuje remain scarce. This research therefore addresses the problem of limited scholarly investigation into youth crime in Kuje, providing evidence-based insights that can guide community, policy, and law enforcement interventions.

### **Research Questions**

This study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

- a) What types of crimes are most prevalent among youths in Kuje Area Council?
- b) What is the relationship between unemployment and youth crime in Kuje?
- c) To what extent do broken homes and family instability correlate with youth involvement in crime?
- d) How does peer influence affect youth delinquency?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this research is to examine the nature, determinants, and prevalence of youth crime and delinquency in Kuje Area Council, Abuja, with a view to generating evidence-based insights that can inform effective crime-prevention policies

and youth-focused social interventions. The **specific objectives of this study are:**

- a) To identify the prevalence and patterns of youth crime in Kuje Area Council.
- b) To examine the influence of unemployment on youth delinquency in Kuje.
- c) To investigate the relationship between family instability (broken homes) and youth delinquency.
- d) To assess the role of peer group influence on youth involvement in crime.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null ( $H_0$ ) hypotheses guide the study:

- a)  $H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between unemployment and youth crime in Kuje Area Council.
- b)  $H_0$ : There is no significant positive correlation between family instability (broken homes) and youth crime in Kuje Area Council.
- c)  $H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between peer influence and youth delinquency in Kuje Area Council.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on youths aged 15–35 years, in accordance with the age classification of the National Youth Policy of Nigeria. Geographically, the research is delimited to Kuje Area Council, one of the rapidly urbanizing administrative units within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Substantively, the study investigates both criminal behaviours including theft, burglary, drug abuse, cultism, and physical assault and non-criminal delinquent behaviours, such as truancy, experimental substance use, and aggressive peer-group conduct. These categories were selected to capture the full spectrum of youth deviance within the study area.

The temporal scope of the study is the year 2025, during which data were collected and analysed. The empirical analysis is based on responses from 400 participants, whose insights form the foundation for understanding the prevalence, determinants, and patterns of youth crime and delinquency in Kuje Area Council



### **Literature Review**

Youth crime and delinquency remain pressing global challenges, with their causes and patterns shaped by complex social, economic, and cultural factors. This section reviews theoretical, empirical, and conceptual contributions that provide insight into the dynamics of youth delinquency, with a focus on Nigeria and comparable contexts.

### **Conceptual Review**

This subsection clarifies the key concepts of youth, crime, and delinquency, providing the foundation for understanding their interconnections within the context of Kuje Area Council.

a) **Youth:** Youth is a socially constructed category, often defined by age, cultural expectations, and political context. In Nigeria, the National Youth Policy defines youths as individuals between 15 and 35 years (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019). The United Nations typically categorizes youth as those aged 15–24 years (UN, 2020). Youths are considered the most dynamic segment of society, but also the most vulnerable to deviant behaviour due to transitional challenges such as identity formation, peer influence, and socioeconomic exclusion.

b) **Crime:** Crime refers to any act or omission that violates established laws and is punishable by the state (Clinard & Meier, 2016). Crimes are typically classified into violent crimes (e.g., assault, robbery), property crimes (e.g., theft, burglary), drug-related offences, and public order offences. In Nigeria, the Criminal Code (applicable to the South) and the Penal Code (applicable to the North) provide the legal frameworks for defining and punishing crime.

c) **Delinquency:** Delinquency refers to a broader spectrum of deviant behaviours among youths, not all of which may be criminal in nature. These include truancy, substance abuse, gang involvement, and aggressive behaviour (Agnew, 2019). While crime is legally defined, delinquency captures the sociological dimension of youth misbehaviour, which may or may not be sanctioned by law.

d) **Nigerian Context:** Nigeria's youth delinquency problem is shaped by a combination of structural and cultural factors: high unemployment (over 40% youth unemployment rate in 2022), rapid urbanization, breakdown of traditional family structures, and exposure to negative peer cultures (NBS, 2022; Adebayo, 2019). Emerging forms of youth crime include cybercrime (popularly known as "Yahoo Yahoo"), cultism, kidnapping, and drug trafficking.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Understanding the causes of youth crime and delinquency requires a multidimensional theoretical lens. This study draws upon three established criminological theories: Strain Theory, Social Disorganization Theory, and Differential Association Theory.

a) **Strain Theory (Merton, 1938):** Strain Theory argues that deviant behaviour emerges when individuals are unable to achieve socially approved goals such as wealth, education, or social mobility through legitimate means. In contexts where structural inequalities are pervasive, individuals may resort to illegitimate avenues to achieve these goals. Within Nigeria, persistent unemployment and poverty create "blocked opportunities," which push many youths toward crime as an alternative strategy for survival and success (Okonkwo, 2018). Strain Theory thus provides a structural explanation for youth delinquency by linking economic deprivation to deviant adaptations.

b) **Social Disorganization Theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942):** Social Disorganization Theory emphasizes the role of community structures in regulating behaviour. It posits that neighbourhoods characterized by poverty, residential instability, and weak institutions are less able to exert social control, thereby fostering higher rates of crime. In Kuje Area Council, rapid urbanization, population inflows, and inadequate social infrastructure have eroded traditional community oversight and family cohesion. This weakening of social bonds provides fertile ground for the growth of youth delinquency, including theft, drug abuse, and violent behaviour.



**c) Differential Association Theory (Sutherland, 1947):** Differential Association Theory explains crime as a learned behaviour transmitted through interaction with delinquent peers and groups. According to this perspective, individuals adopt criminal values, techniques, and motivations through socialization within deviant subcultures. In Nigeria, the rise of peer pressure, cultism, and gang involvement among students in secondary schools and universities exemplifies how youths are socialized into criminal networks (Musa, 2020). This theory highlights the importance of social learning and peer influence in perpetuating delinquent behaviour.

### Synthesis of Criminological Perspectives on Youth Delinquency in Kuje

Together, these three theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding youth crime in Kuje. Strain Theory underscores the role of structural barriers and economic deprivation; Social Disorganization Theory highlights the breakdown of community and institutional controls; while Differential Association Theory explains how delinquent behaviours are transmitted through peer networks. By integrating these perspectives, the study captures the interplay of structural, communal, and social-learning dynamics that drive youth crime and delinquency in Kuje Area Council

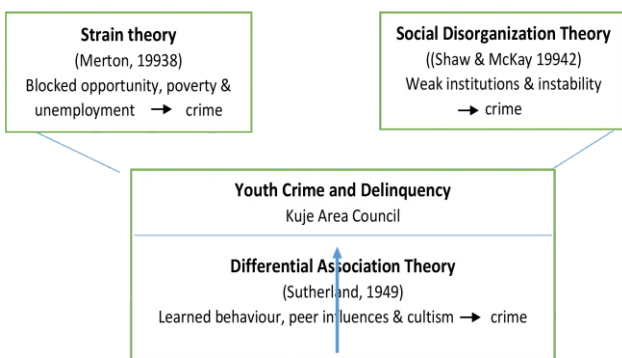
The conceptual model illustrates the interaction of the three criminological perspectives employed in this study. Strain Theory emphasizes the role of structural barriers such as poverty and unemployment, which create “blocked opportunities” that push youths toward delinquency. Social Disorganization Theory highlights how weak institutions, rapid urbanization, and poor social infrastructure undermine community oversight, thereby fostering environments conducive to crime. Differential Association Theory adds a social-learning dimension by showing how peer influence, cultism, and gang activity transmit criminal behaviours among youths.

Together, these theories converge on the central phenomenon of youth crime and delinquency in Kuje Area Council, demonstrating that delinquent behaviour is not caused by a single factor, but rather by the interplay of structural deprivation, community breakdown, and peer socialization. This integrative model provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the drivers of youth crime in the local context.

### Empirical Review

A substantial body of Nigerian literature links youth crime and delinquency to socioeconomic deprivation, weak family structures, and peer influence. Okonkwo (2018) found that unemployment and poverty remain primary drivers of youth delinquency in Lagos, especially in cases involving petty theft and cybercrime. Similarly, Musa (2020), in a study of youth gangs in Kano, identified peer group influence as a major catalyst for cultism and gang-related violence among young men. In addition, Eze and Okorie (2021) reported that drug abuse combined with inadequate parental supervision significantly increases the likelihood of violent and repeat offending among adolescents.

More recent empirical studies reinforce these patterns. Adewale and Hassan (2022), using a mixed-methods approach in Oyo State, demonstrated that economic hardship and unstable home environments were the strongest predictors of youth engagement in drug-related



**Figure 1.** Theoretical framework of youth crime and delinquency in Kuje Area Council, showing how strain, social disorganization, and differential association contribute to criminal behaviour among young people.

Source: Researcher's construct, 2025.



and street crimes. Likewise, Umar and Shehu (2023), in a multisite study across Abuja, revealed that unemployed youths were disproportionately involved in cybercrime and burglary, with social media peer networks serving as major recruitment channels. Collectively, these findings indicate that structural conditions such as unemployment, poverty, and limited social mobility interact with social environments such as peer pressure and weak family structures to perpetuate delinquency in Nigeria.

Empirical evidence from other African contexts reflects similar trajectories. In South Africa, Mkhize (2017) argued that youth unemployment, persistent poverty, and the long-term socio-spatial effects of apartheid constitute the root causes of township crime. Mwangi (2019) found in Kenya that adolescents from broken or unstable homes were more likely to engage in truancy, petty theft, and violent confrontations.

More recent African studies continue to highlight structural constraints. Tetteh and Yeboah (2022), in Ghana, observed that neighbourhood disorganization and exposure to community violence significantly predicted youth involvement in robbery and substance use. Taken together, these studies show that socio-historical, economic, and familial conditions exert powerful influences on youth offending across the continent.

Globally, longitudinal and cross-sectional studies provide further insight into the drivers of youth crime. Thornberry (2018), through the Rochester Youth Development Study in the United States, demonstrated that delinquent behaviour often begins in early adolescence, particularly among youths exposed to gangs and substance-abusing peers. In the United Kingdom, Smith and Ecob (2017) found that neighbourhood disadvantage, weak parental monitoring, and low educational engagement were strongly associated with persistent offending.

More recent global evidence has deepened this understanding. Garcia and Porter (2023), in a U.S. nationwide panel study, found that economic

precarity and digital peer influence significantly increased youths' involvement in cyberbullying, online fraud, and coordinated group violence. Similarly, Lopez and Chen (2024) reported that community disorganization and family conflict were the strongest predictors of youth violence across 12 urban centres in Europe and North America. Together, the global literature highlights the universality of key risk factors social disorganization, peer influence, family neglect, and economic insecurity while also emphasizing the importance of tailoring interventions to contextual realities

### **Synthesis and Research Gap**

The reviewed studies reveal commonalities across Nigeria, Africa, and the wider global context: unemployment, poverty, peer influence, and weak family or community supervision are recurrent drivers of youth crime. While structural and economic challenges dominate in developing contexts, neighbourhood disadvantage and social disorganization are equally significant in developed societies. This comparative evidence emphasizes that youth crime is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by intersecting socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors.

Although several studies have examined youth delinquency in Nigeria, most focus on large urban centres such as Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt etc. Few empirical studies specifically investigate smaller but rapidly urbanizing areas like Kuje Area Council, which face unique dynamics of migration, unemployment, and weak community structures. This study fills that gap by providing systematic, data-driven insights into the prevalence, causes, and correlates of youth crime in Kuje, thereby contributing to both local policy design and comparative criminological research.

### **Methodology**

The study used a descriptive survey design with qualitative interviews to examine youth crime and delinquency in Kuje Area Council, Abuja. The target population was youths aged 15–35 years, representing about 60% of Kuje's 97,367 residents (NPC, 2006). A sample of 385 respondents was



drawn using a multi-stage sampling technique (stratification, purposive, and random selection). Data collection employed a structured questionnaire (covering demographics, crime involvement, unemployment, peer influence, and family instability) and a semi-structured interview guide. Instrument validity was ensured through expert review, while reliability was confirmed via pilot testing (Cronbach's Alpha: 0.79–0.87).

Data were collected through face-to-face surveys and interviews with ethical approval and informed consent. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS (descriptive statistics, chi-square, Pearson correlation), while qualitative data were examined using thematic analysis. Ethical safeguards included confidentiality, anonymity, and minimisation of harm.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents both the quantitative survey findings (385 respondents) and qualitative interviews (15 participants). The section also interprets the results obtained from the analysis of 385 valid responses and situates them within the broader theoretical and empirical context of youth crime and delinquency research. Data analysis combines descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests, and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test the study's hypotheses.

### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents to provide essential context for interpreting the study's findings.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	210	54.5
	Female	175	45.5
Age	15–19 years	96	24.9
	20–24 years	152	39.5
	25–29 years	89	23.1
	30–34 years	48	12.5
Education	No formal education	34	8.8
	Primary education	59	15.3
	Secondary education	152	39.5
	Tertiary education	140	36.4
Employment Status	Employed	102	26.5
	Unemployed	283	73.5

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2025*

The table shows that most respondents were aged 20–24 (39.5%), a majority had secondary or

tertiary education (75.9%), and 73.5% were unemployed, which may influence delinquent behaviour.

Research Question One: What types of crimes are most prevalent among youths in Kuje Area Council?

*Table 2: Prevalence of Common Delinquent Acts*

Type of Crime/Delinquency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Drug abuse	110	28.6
Cultism/Gang violence	89	23.1
Petty theft/shoplifting	132	34.3
Cybercrime (“Yahoo Yahoo”)	76	19.7
Truancy/School dropout	144	37.4
Physical assault/street fights	98	25.5

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2025*

Survey findings indicate that youth involvement in crime and delinquency is pervasive in Kuje Area Council. Quantitative data reveal that truancy and school dropout (37.4%) and petty theft/shoplifting (34.3%) are the most commonly reported delinquent acts, followed by drug abuse (28.6%), physical assault/street fights (25.5%), and cultism/gang violence (23.1%). Cybercrime (“Yahoo Yahoo”) was comparatively less frequent (19.7%). These patterns suggest that non-violent, school-related, and property offenses are more widespread than technologically-mediated crimes.

Qualitative data reinforce these trends and provide insight into the social dynamics underpinning youth delinquency. A community leader (Male, 54 years) observed: “The problem here is not just that young people are idle; they are also drawn into groups where they learn bad habits quickly. Once they join these groups, it is hard to pull them back.” Similarly, a youth participant (Male, 22 years) reflected: “Most of my friends who got into trouble started with drugs. Some of them had no jobs, so they turned to stealing just to get by.”

These narratives align with Differential Association Theory (Sutherland, 1947), which posits that criminal behavior is learned through interaction with others who model and reinforce



delinquent conduct. The findings suggest that peer influence, group membership, and socio-economic challenges such as unemployment significantly contribute to youth engagement in crime. Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative evidence underscores the need for interventions that target both social environments and structural conditions to reduce delinquency among young people in Kuje

**Hypotheses Testing**

This section presents and interprets the statistical tests conducted to evaluate the stated research hypotheses.

**Hypothesis One**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between unemployment and youth crime in Kuje Area Council.

*Table 3: Chi-square Test on Unemployment and Youth Crime*

Variable	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
High unemployment & high crime (Yes)	150	120	7.5
High unemployment & low crime (No)	80	110	8.2
Low unemployment & high crime (Yes)	70	95	6.6
Low unemployment & low crime (No)	85	60	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>		<b>32.7</b>

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Result:  $\chi^2 = 32.7, df = 3, p < 0.05$ .

The Chi-square analysis produced a statistically significant result,  $\chi^2 = 32.7, df = 3, p < 0.05$ , indicating a clear association between employment status and youth delinquency in Kuje Area Council. Since  $p < 0.05$ , the relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance; therefore, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) states that employment status has no significant influence on youth delinquency is rejected. The statistical outcome demonstrates that unemployed youths were disproportionately represented among those engaged in theft, fraud, drug-related offences, and other deviant activities. In mathematical terms, the observed frequencies O<sub>ij</sub> for unemployed respondents across delinquency categories markedly exceeded the expected frequencies E<sub>ij</sub>.

This result confirms that joblessness is a strong predictor of delinquent behaviour within the study population. Qualitative evidence from the field corroborates the quantitative result. As one 21-year-old male participant explained: “I tried to get work but there was nothing. When my friends started hustling with Yahoo [internet fraud], I joined. What else was I supposed to do?” This testimony illustrates the structural pressures confronting many youths and aligns with Merton's Strain Theory (1938), which argues that when legitimate pathways to socially approved goals such as income, status, or upward mobility are blocked by unemployment and poverty, individuals may adopt illegitimate means to achieve those goals.

The finding is also consistent with recent Nigerian studies, which demonstrate a strong correlation between youth unemployment and increased involvement in cybercrime, drug abuse, cultism, and petty theft (Adebayo, 2013; Otu, 2015). Collectively, both the statistical evidence and narrative accounts highlight the central role of economic marginalisation in shaping pathways into youth crime and delinquency in Kuje Area Council.

*Table 4.4: Chi-square Test on Community Disorganization and Crime*

Variable	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
Disorganized community & high crime	160	130	6.9
Disorganized community & low crime	75	105	8.6
Stable community & high crime	65	90	7.0
Stable community & low crime	85	60	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>		<b>32.9</b>

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Result:  $\chi^2 = 32.9, df = 3, p < 0.05$

The chi-square test yielded a value of  $\chi^2 = 32.9$  with 3 degrees of freedom and a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ , indicating that the observed association between community characteristics and youth delinquency is statistically significant. This result allows the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that variations in social infrastructure, institutional strength, and neighborhood stability are meaningfully related to differences in youth crime rates. In other words,



communities with weaker social institutions and poor infrastructure experience higher prevalence of delinquent acts among youths.

This finding aligns closely with Social Disorganization Theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942), which emphasizes that neighborhoods characterized by low social cohesion, ineffective informal social control, and fragmented community networks are more susceptible to criminal behavior. The quantitative significance is reinforced by qualitative data: for instance, a 47-year-old female parent remarked, “We no longer know our neighbours; before, the community corrected children together, but now everyone minds their business. That is why these boys misbehave.” Such testimony illustrates the erosion of collective efficacy, showing how weakened communal bonds and diminished social oversight facilitate youth delinquency.

Together, the statistical and narrative evidence underscores that structural and social deficiencies in Kuje Area Council directly contribute to elevated rates of youth crime, demonstrating the interplay between environmental factors and behavioral outcomes.

### **Hypothesis Three**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant positive correlation between peer influence and youth delinquency in Kuje Area Council

*Table 4.5: Pearson's Correlation between Peer Influence and Youth Delinquency*

Variables	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Peer influence	3.84	0.77		
Youth delinquency	3.92	0.81	<b>0.62</b>	<b>0.000</b>

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2025*

**Result:**  $r = 0.62, p < 0.01$ .

The Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation analysis reveals a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between peer influence and youth delinquency in Kuje Area Council. This indicates that as peer influence intensifies, the probability of delinquent involvement correspondingly increases. These

results are consistent with Sutherland’s Differential Association Theory (1947), which asserts that criminal behaviour is acquired through sustained interactions with deviant peers. An interview with a 19-year-old male youth vividly illustrates this process: “I joined a group because my friends were there. At first, it was just fun, but later we started stealing bikes. Honestly, I don’t think I would have done it if not for them.”

This narrative underscores the pivotal role of peer networks as both entry points and reinforcement mechanisms for delinquent behaviour. What begins as social bonding within peer groups often escalates into the normalization and adoption of criminal practices. Thus, the qualitative evidence complements the statistical findings, reinforcing the conclusion that peer influence is a powerful driver of youth delinquency in Kuje.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

The combined quantitative results and qualitative insights provide strong and convergent evidence supporting the relevance of Strain Theory, Social Disorganization Theory, and Differential Association Theory in explaining youth crime in Kuje Area Council. Structural constraints such as unemployment and poverty, weakened family and community controls, and peer-driven learning of delinquent behaviour all emerged as significant contributors. These findings demonstrate that youth delinquency in Kuje arises not from a single cause but from the interaction of economic pressures, social disorganization, and influential peer networks. In addition, the major findings reveal the following:

- a) Unemployment shows a significant association with higher involvement in youth crime.
- b) Peer group influence positively correlates with delinquent behaviour.
- c) Truancy, petty theft, and drug abuse are the most prevalent forms of youth crime in Kuje Area council.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study reveal complex but interconnected factors that drive youth crime and delinquency in Kuje Area Council of Abuja. Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses highlight



the significant influence of structural strain, weak community institutions, and peer dynamics in shaping youth criminality.

a) Economic Strain and Youth Criminality

The Chi-square results established a statistically significant relationship between employment status and crime involvement. Specifically, unemployed youths were far more likely to be involved in criminal activities compared to their employed counterparts. This finding validates Merton's Strain Theory (1938), which posits that when legitimate means of achieving societal goals are blocked, individuals turn to illegitimate alternatives. In Kuje, limited employment opportunities, coupled with widespread poverty, create frustration among youths, leading them to crimes such as internet fraud, theft, and drug trafficking. This resonates with Okonkwo (2018), who argued that Nigerian youths are often compelled into crime as an alternative means of achieving status and financial success.

b) Community Disorganization and Delinquency

The study also found that rapid urbanization, weak family supervision, and overstretched community institutions foster environments conducive to crime. Interviewees emphasized how poor parenting, absence of community oversight, and failing social infrastructure create "spaces of neglect" where deviant behaviour thrives. These findings align with Shaw and McKay's Social Disorganization Theory (1942), which stresses that communities characterized by poverty and instability are less capable of regulating youth behaviour. In Kuje, the influx of migrants, poor housing, and inadequate recreational and educational facilities reduce community cohesion and increase crime vulnerability.

c) Peer Influence, Cultism, and Learned Behaviour

The qualitative interviews highlighted the critical role of peer pressure and cultism in initiating and sustaining youth involvement in crime. Young people reported being drawn into cult groups and delinquent behaviours largely through friends and peer groups. This

finding strongly supports Sutherland's Differential Association Theory (1947), which argues that criminal behaviour is learned through social interactions with deviant peers. In the context of Kuje, peer networks serve as both "schools of crime" and reinforcement mechanisms for delinquent lifestyles, particularly in secondary schools and informal youth gatherings.

d) Interplay of Structural and Social Factors

A central insight from this study is that youth crime in Kuje cannot be attributed to a single factor. Instead, it emerges from the intersection of economic hardship, community breakdown, and peer socialization. Strain caused by unemployment pushes youths toward delinquency, while social disorganization reduces informal controls, and differential association provides the mechanism through which deviant behaviours are transmitted and normalized. This integrated perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of youth crime in the Nigerian urban context.

**Comparison with Previous Studies**

The findings corroborate broader Nigerian studies linking youth crime to unemployment (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2011), social disorganization in urban centres (Otu, 2015), and peer influence (Musa, 2020). However, the specific case of Kuje demonstrates how peri-urban communities with mixed urban and rural characteristics face unique vulnerabilities: rapid urbanization without corresponding infrastructural development intensifies both strain and disorganization, thereby amplifying youth crime rates.

**Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

This study investigated youth crime and delinquency in Kuje Area Council, Abuja, and using data from 385 respondents. Findings showed that unemployment, peer influence, low educational attainment, and drug abuse significantly contribute to delinquent behaviors, with truancy, petty theft, and drug use being the most common offenses. These results affirm the relevance of Strain Theory, Social Disorganization Theory, and Differential



Association Theory in explaining youth crime in peri-urban Nigerian contexts. To address these challenges, multi-level interventions are recommended:

- a) Government should prioritize youth employment programs, vocational training, and educational reforms to reduce school dropouts.
- b) Community stakeholders need to establish mentorship schemes, recreational activities, and sensitization programs that strengthen family and peer support systems.
- c) Law enforcement should adopt community policing, preventive strategies, and stronger collaboration with schools and local groups.
- d) Drug control measures, including awareness campaigns and rehabilitation centers, should be intensified to reduce substance-driven delinquency.

In sum, tackling youth crime in Kuje requires an integrated approach that combines socio-economic empowerment, community engagement, and institutional strengthening, ensuring that young people are redirected toward productive and lawful paths.

### **Contribution of the Study**

This research contributes to criminological knowledge by providing empirical evidence from a peri-urban Nigerian context, which has been relatively under-researched compared to metropolitan centers. It also bridges theoretical insights with local realities, showing that youth delinquency is a product of structural inequality, peer influence, weak institutions, and drug culture.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Future studies should:

- a) Employ longitudinal designs to track the progression of delinquent behavior among Kuje youths.
- b) Investigate the role of digital platforms and cybercrime in shaping youth delinquency.
- c) Compare Kuje with other Area Councils in the FCT to understand regional variations in youth crime.

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## Community Development as a Tool for Security Participation in Nigeria

Otakwu Adah Adams

*Civil-Military Cooperation Centre (CIMICO)*  
9, Yola Street, Area 7, Garki, Abuja

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### Abstract

Community development and security are deeply interconnected within Nigeria's ongoing struggle for peace and stability. Persistent threats from terrorism, banditry, and communal violence have revealed the limits of state-centric security approaches, making citizen participation an essential component of sustainable security management. Drawing from criminological and social work perspectives, this paper examines how community development functions as a participatory tool for enhancing security in Nigeria. It further situates the discourse within a global context, referencing renewed international concern—such as the November 2025 statement by former U.S. President Donald Trump, who urged “action” against militant groups in Nigeria—as evidence that the country's insecurity now attracts significant global attention. Using a qualitative desk-based approach, the study synthesises data from policy documents, institutional reports, and academic literature (2021–2025). Findings reveal that communities engaged in local development initiatives demonstrate greater trust, vigilance, and cooperation with security institutions. The study concludes that community development provides an inclusive and sustainable framework for participatory security management, capable of addressing both local vulnerabilities and global security expectations

**Keywords:** Community Development; Security Participation; Human Security; Social Work; Criminology; Civil–Military Cooperation; Nigeria

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### Introduction

Nigeria's security landscape has grown increasingly complex over the past decade, characterised by a multifaceted web of threats including terrorism in the Northeast, banditry and kidnapping in the Northwest, and communal violence over resources that plague the country's cohesion (Adebayo & Ameh, 2023). These challenges have not only resulted in significant loss of life but have also displaced millions, crippled local economies, and eroded the social fabric, exacerbating ethnic and religious tensions. Traditional responses—anchored on military operations, policing, and intelligence—have achieved mixed outcomes because they are often reactive rather than proactive, neglecting the developmental foundations of peace such as poverty alleviation, education, and equitable access to justice (Okoli et al., 2022). As insecurity deepens and proves resistant to purely kinetic solutions, scholars and policymakers now advocate for a critical paradigm shift: integrating community development into security participation as a holistic approach to achieving internal stability (Eze, 2024).

Community development, rooted in social work and participatory governance, promotes empowerment, inclusion, and collective responsibility for societal well-being by fostering local dialogue and building capacity for conflict resolution (Ibrahim & Yakubu, 2021). When people are active in shaping their own development through projects that address immediate needs like clean water, healthcare, and education, they become invested stakeholders and partners—not passive spectators—in safeguarding their environment. This transforms the security narrative from one of imposition to one of shared ownership. In Nigeria, community participation manifests through various channels, including the influential role of traditional institutions like emirs and chiefs who act as trusted intermediaries, vibrant civil society networks that advocate for accountability, and civil–military cooperation projects that strategically combine welfare initiatives with security awareness to build trust from the ground up.



Recent global attention has amplified calls for sustainable, people-centred security management in Nigeria, as the international community recognizes the severe regional and humanitarian implications of prolonged instability. In November 2025, former U.S. President Donald Trump publicly urged the American military to “prepare for action” against Islamist militants in Nigeria, citing escalating violence and civilian casualties (BBC News, 2025). Although not an official U.S. policy statement, this unprecedented remark sent shockwaves through diplomatic circles and reflected the growing international concern about Nigeria's internal security situation and its potential to destabilise the wider Lake Chad Basin region. The episode underscores that Nigeria's insecurity transcends national boundaries and highlights the urgent need for local participation, interagency collaboration, and development-based strategies to effectively counter the drivers of instability.

This study therefore explores how community development can be strategically leveraged as a tool for enhancing public participation in security management in Nigeria. It will assess the intricate relationship between developmental initiatives, public trust in institutions, and the emergence of collaborative security practices. By examining specific case studies, the research aims to analyze the causal links between improved service delivery and the increased willingness of citizens to share intelligence and cooperate with law enforcement, ultimately providing a practical framework for designing and implementing security strategies that are both effective and sustainable

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite significant government spending on security, which often sees a substantial portion of the national budget allocated to defence hardware, personnel salaries, and military operations, Nigeria continues to face widespread and deeply entrenched violence. Terrorism in the Northeast, brutal banditry and mass kidnapping in the Northwest, and separatist-fueled communal clashes in the Southeast persist with alarming regularity, especially in rural and peripheral areas

where the state's presence is weak and its authority is contested (Aliyu & Ahmed, 2022). The dominance of rigid, state-centric security models—focused overwhelmingly on enforcement and kinetic operations rather than community engagement and trust-building—has consistently overlooked the profound developmental roots of insecurity. Chronic poverty, soaring youth unemployment, and decades of infrastructural neglect have created a fertile ground for despair, leaving many communities vulnerable to the enticements of crime and the sophisticated narratives of radicalisation (UNDP, 2022).

While community development theoretically holds immense potential to promote peace, social cohesion, and inclusion, its practical linkage to participatory security mechanisms remains critically weak and often superficial. Interventions such as well-intentioned civil–military projects, extensive donor-funded programmes, and local government empowerment schemes frequently lack meaningful and sustained citizen involvement, operating instead as top-down impositions (Ogundele, 2023). This absence of genuinely coordinated frameworks that systematically connect development actors with security agencies limits their collective impact on crucial elements like social trust and intelligence cooperation, creating a cycle where projects fail to address local security concerns and security operations undermine development gains.

The renewed international concern, starkly exemplified by former U.S. President Trump's November 2025 remarks, highlights that Nigeria's security challenges have transcended national borders and gained significant global visibility, raising fears of regional destabilisation and a new haven for transnational terrorism. Without strategic, well-resourced efforts to genuinely integrate development with authentic community participation, the spiral of insecurity may continue to undermine national cohesion, erode the government's credibility, and deter foreign investment. This study therefore seeks to bridge this critical conceptual and practical gap by



examining how community development can be systematically leveraged to strengthen public participation in security management, moving beyond rhetoric to propose actionable, evidence-based strategies.

### **Aim and Objectives**

#### **Aim:**

To examine how community development functions as a tool for enhancing public participation in security management in Nigeria.

#### **Specific Objectives:**

1. Analyse the relationship between community development and public participation in security management.
2. Identify dimensions of development initiatives that foster trust and collaboration with security institutions.
3. Examine public attitudes toward development-driven security engagement.
4. Assess the challenges hindering the integration of development into security frameworks.
5. Recommend strategies for strengthening development-based participatory security in Nigeria.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks**

#### **Community Development**

Community development refers to a deeply participatory process where community members collectively identify their most pressing needs, mobilise both internal and external resources, and take sustained action to improve their overall living conditions (Ibrahim & Yakubu, 2021). This approach moves beyond top-down aid, emphasizing local empowerment, capacity building, and the leveraging of indigenous knowledge systems to create sustainable change. In the Nigerian context, community development manifests through diverse avenues, including grassroots social welfare programmes and strategically important military-led civil–military cooperation (CIMIC) projects. These CIMIC initiatives are designed not only to build critical infrastructure like schools and clinics in conflict-prone areas but also to foster a crucial sense of trust between civilian populations and security forces, creating a foundation for long-term stability (CIMICO, 2023).

#### **Security Participation**

Security participation means fostering active and meaningful citizen involvement in maintaining public safety. This engagement can take many forms, including proactive cooperation with law enforcement, joining neighbourhood watch or community policing schemes, sharing vital intelligence on suspicious activities, and advocating for non-violent conflict resolution (Adebayo & Ameh, 2023). This paradigm promotes a sense of shared ownership over security outcomes, transforming citizens from passive recipients of protection into active partners in their own safety. By doing so, it reduces the heavy reliance on coercive enforcement, which often breeds resentment and fails to address the underlying drivers of conflict, thereby creating a more legitimate and sustainable security environment.

#### **Human Security**

The human security framework fundamentally expands the definition of security beyond the narrow focus on state protection and military defence. It posits that true safety is indivisible from social, economic, political, and environmental well-being, arguing that freedom from fear and freedom from want are two sides of the same coin (United Nations, 2023). This perspective emphasises that safety and development are mutually reinforcing; a community that is economically stable and has access to healthcare and education is inherently more resilient to crime and radicalisation. In turn, a secure environment enables development to flourish. This framework provides the theoretical justification for integrating community development with security participation, as it recognises that lasting peace cannot be achieved without addressing the holistic needs of the population.

#### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Social Control Theory (Hirschi, 1969)

This theory posits that strong social bonds—through family, education, and community—discourage deviant behaviour. In the Nigerian context, community development strengthens these bonds, reinforcing informal



social control and reducing crime (Olaniyan & Adeyemo, 2022). However, critics argue this theory can be overly simplistic, assuming existing community structures are inherently positive. In Nigeria, some traditional bonds may reinforce exclusionary practices or gender hierarchies, and strengthening them without critical examination could inadvertently perpetuate injustice. It also underestimates how pervasive poverty and structural inequality can erode social bonds, regardless of individual attachments.

### **Human Security Paradigm (UNDP, 2022)**

This paradigm frames development as security and insecurity as underdevelopment. It links economic deprivation and exclusion to social unrest, supporting the idea that development interventions promote peace. Despite its comprehensive appeal, a key critique is its vast scope, which can make the concept conceptually vague and difficult to operationalize for policymakers with limited resources. In Nigeria, focusing too broadly on "development" might dilute efforts and fail to address immediate, violent threats. Furthermore, it risks securitizing aid, where development assistance is primarily driven by the strategic security interests of external actors rather than local needs.

### **Participatory Development Theory (Chambers, 1997)**

This theory emphasises empowerment and community inclusion in decision-making. It aligns with social work principles and supports the integration of public participation into security and governance systems (Eze, 2024). In practice, however, this theory faces challenges like "tokenism," where participation is a superficial exercise. In Nigeria, deeply entrenched power dynamics can lead to elite capture, where only local elites or male heads of household influence decisions, marginalizing women, youth, and minorities. This can result in interventions that fail to address the root causes of insecurity felt by the most vulnerable.

Together, these theories, despite their limitations, offer a multi-faceted lens to understand how development initiatives can, under the right

conditions, transform citizens from passive observers into active stakeholders in security management

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative desk-based and policy-synthesis design, suitable for conceptual and preliminary doctoral-level research (Creswell & Poth, 2022). Data were drawn from government policy documents, official reports, and scholarly publications from 2021 to 2025.

### **Data Sources**

- I. Document Analysis: National Security Strategy (2019), National Development Plan (2021–2025), CIMICO annual reports, and recent UNDP security studies.
- ii. Comparative Review: Cross-analysis of Nigerian initiatives with global participatory security models.
- iii. Content Analysis: Using deductive reasoning guided by theoretical propositions and inductive reasoning to identify emerging patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

The desk-based approach identifies trends and gaps for future fieldwork involving interviews with community members, military officers, and civil society actors.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

#### **Community Development and Security Participation**

Community-led development enhances trust and motivates residents to cooperate with authorities in crime prevention (Okoli & Onyemachi, 2023). Empowered citizens are less likely to engage in antisocial behaviour and more willing to protect community assets (Aliyu & Ahmed, 2022).

#### **Civil–Military and Government-Led Projects**

Civil–Military Cooperation (CIMIC) projects—such as roads, schools, and boreholes—implemented in conflict-affected communities have improved welfare and strengthened confidence in security institutions (CIMICO, 2023). In Nasarawa and Benue States, such initiatives have facilitated intelligence sharing and reduced hostility toward the military (Yusuf & Adewale, 2023).



### **Trust and Social Control**

Transparency and inclusion in development planning foster trust, validating Social Control Theory (Hirschi, 1969). Social bonds formed through collective development create community resilience and moral commitment to peace (Olaniyan & Adeyemo, 2022).

### **Challenges**

Challenges include policy fragmentation, poor coordination, politicisation, and weak community ownership (Ogundele, 2023). Many interventions are donor-driven and short-term, with little focus on sustainability. Moreover, low civic awareness and uneven resource distribution hinder participatory security (Akinyemi & Olabisi, 2023).

### **Policy and Practical Implications**

To strengthen the development–security nexus, Nigeria should institutionalise community participation in national security frameworks. A Whole-of-Society approach—integrating civil society, security institutions, and local communities—can ensure shared responsibility and accountability (UNDP, 2022). Development projects should be designed using social work principles, focusing on empowerment, equity, and inclusion.

### **Conclusion**

Community development is not only an instrument of welfare but a strategic pillar of participatory security management. The study concludes that inclusive development initiatives increase trust, social cohesion, and cooperation in combating crime. As international attention continues to mount, exemplified by recent global concerns about Nigeria's insecurity, the need for community-driven solutions becomes even more compelling. Sustainable peace in Nigeria depends on integrating development, civic engagement, and participatory security within a unified national framework.

### **Recommendations**

1. Federal Government of Nigeria should Institutionalise development-based security frameworks linking government, security

agencies, and communities

### **Implementation Strategies**

- I. The Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, to draft and submit a National Policy on Development-Centred Security to the Federal Executive Council (FEC) for approval.
  - ii. The ONSA to establish a permanent Inter-Agency Committee on Security and Development (ICSD) with statutory backing
2. The Federal Government of Nigeria should enhance public education and sensitisation on participatory security and civic responsibility.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- I. The National Orientation Agency (NOA), in partnership with the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and the Ministry of Information, to launch a nationwide "Secure Our Community" media campaign.
  - ii. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the NPF and the Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, to integrate a "Civic Security and Responsibility" module into the curriculum for Senior Secondary Schools.
3. The Federal Government of Nigeria should apply social work principles—empowerment, inclusion, equity—in designing community security programmes.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- I. The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development to develop and certify a "Community Engagement for Security" training module for all security and law enforcement agencies.
  - ii. The ONSA to require a "Social Inclusion and Gender Impact Assessment" to be conducted by the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development for all federally funded community security programmes before they are approved.
4. The Federal Government of Nigeria should



adopt participatory monitoring and evaluation tools to measure trust, collaboration, and social outcomes.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- I. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), with technical support from UNDP and guidance from ONSA, to develop and deploy a standardized annual "Community Trust and Security Perception Survey."
- ii. The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation to establish and support Community Security Oversight Committees at the Local Government Area (LGA) level to review M&E data and provide feedback.

5. The Federal Government of Nigeria should prioritise youth empowerment and job creation to reduce vulnerability to crime and extremism.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- I. The Ministry of Youth and Sports Development in collaboration with the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), to expand skills acquisition programmes with a specific focus on trades needed for post-conflict reconstruction (e.g., masonry, carpentry, solar panel installation).
- ii. The Bank of Industry (BOI), in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, to launch a "Youth Peace and Innovation Fund" providing low-interest grants and loans to youth-led cooperatives and social enterprises in conflict-prone areas.

7. The Federal Government of Nigeria should promote a Whole-of-Society approach integrating all stakeholders in security governance.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- I. The Presidency, through the ONSA, to convene an annual National Security and Development Summit.
- ii. The ONSA to issue a model framework to all State Governors, mandating the formal inclusion of civil society, private sector, and traditional ruler representatives as observers in their State Security Councils.

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# From Security to Peace: Integrating Early Warning and Intelligence Systems in Nigeria's Conflict Prevention Architecture

**Ephraim Ezekiel Pati Osiriehegbe**

*Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja*

*Email: ezekielephraim30@gmail.com*

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## Abstract

Nigeria's persistent security challenges, including insurgencies, communal violence, and resource conflicts, underscore the limitations of reactive measures. This paper examines the integration of early warning systems (EWS) and intelligence gathering within Nigeria's conflict prevention architecture, drawing on Human Security and Preventive Diplomacy theories. Through conceptual clarification, contextual analysis, and a proposed integration framework informed by African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) models, it highlights coordination gaps exemplified in recent farmer-herder clashes. Findings emphasize benefits for peacebuilding and national security, including reduced escalation and enhanced public trust. Policy recommendations advocate institutionalized linkages, data interoperability, community monitoring, and trust-building mechanisms. By bridging warnings with responses, Nigeria can transition to proactive peace, aligning with the AU's Silencing the Guns agenda.

**Keywords:** Early Warning Systems, Intelligence Integration, Conflict Prevention, Human Security, Nigeria

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## Introduction

Nigeria's security landscape remains one of the most volatile in sub-Saharan Africa, characterized by a confluence of insurgencies, communal clashes, and resource-based conflicts that have displaced millions and stifled economic growth. As of mid-2025, the country grapples with over 2.2 million internally displaced persons in the northeast alone due to Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) activities, alongside escalating farmer-herder violence that recorded 132 incidents nationwide in early 2025. These challenges are compounded by broader threats, including banditry, kidnappings exceeding 2,000 cases in the first half of 2024, and food insecurity affecting 33 million people during the 2025 lean season. Traditional reactive security measures, such as military deployments and post-conflict interventions, have proven inadequate, often exacerbating tensions rather than resolving root causes like ethnic polarization, resource scarcity, and governance failures (Adzenga et al., 2025; Effiom, 2023).

The central problem necessitating this study is the entrenched disconnect between early warning systems (EWS) and intelligence gathering in

Nigeria's conflict prevention architecture—a systemic gap where predictive alerts from grassroots monitors (e.g., WANEP's NEWS) fail to integrate with operational intelligence from state agencies (e.g., DSS and NIA), leading to delayed or absent responses. This fragmentation, rooted in institutional silos, political mistrust, and inadequate data-sharing protocols, has resulted in preventable escalations, such as the 2024-2025 Benue and Nasarawa clashes, which claimed hundreds of lives despite warnings and cost billions in humanitarian and economic losses (SBM Intelligence, 2025; Amnesty International, 2025). Without addressing this, Nigeria risks perpetuating a cycle of reactive securitization that undermines human security, erodes public trust, and contravenes AU commitments like Silencing the Guns, highlighting the urgent need for an integrated framework to transform warnings into proactive peace.

At the heart of this crisis lies a critical linkage between intelligence gathering, Early Warning Systems (EWS), and conflict prevention. Intelligence provides actionable data on threats, while EWS anticipates escalation through



systematic monitoring; together, they enable proactive interventions that shift from militarized responses to peace-oriented strategies. Yet, Nigeria exhibits a stark gap: reactive security dominates, with early warnings frequently ignored, leading to preventable escalations. For instance, in the 2024-2025 farmer-herder clashes in Nasarawa and Benue states, governance lapses and delayed responses resulted in hundreds of deaths, underscoring systemic failures in integrating intelligence with preventive action (SBM Intelligence, 2025).

This paper addresses this problem by examining how integrating EWS and intelligence can transform Nigeria's conflict prevention architecture. Its purpose is twofold: to offer scholarly insights into conceptual and theoretical underpinnings and to provide policy-relevant recommendations for enhanced coordination. By bridging this gap, the integration not only averts violence but also fosters human security and sustainable development, aligning with Nigeria's commitments under the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative. The article proceeds as follows: conceptual clarifications, theoretical framework, the Nigerian context, integration strategies, implications, and recommendations.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

To ground the discussion, key terms must be defined and distinguished, drawing on established literature while noting their practical intersections.

**Early Warning Systems (EWS):** Refers to structured processes for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information on potential crises to enable timely interventions (Boutros-Ghali, 1992; Ephraim, 2014). In conflict contexts, EWS identify indicators such as rising tensions or resource disputes, as seen in WANEP's National Early Warning System in Nigeria, which monitors grassroots signals for escalation risks.

**Intelligence Gathering:** This Involves covert and overt collection of strategic information by state agencies, such as Nigeria's Department of State Services (DSS) and National Intelligence Agency

(NIA), to assess threats and inform decision-making (Ozoani-Ene, 2022). Unlike EWS, which emphasize predictive analytics, intelligence focuses on operational details, often classified.

Conflict prevention is controlling and managing strained relationships early enough (timely and promptly) to avoid the threats of a conflict. This calls for effective, proper, and convenient use of early warning mechanisms or systems to contain and respond to early threats of violence, thereby saving the situation from escalating out of unmanageable proportion. This is premised on the notion that prevention is better than cure. However, the extant literature on conflict prevention has failed to agree on any acceptable definition of conflict prevention (Best, 2008; Carment & Schnabel, 2003; Munuera, 1994; Lund, 1994), while others have referred to conflict prevention as 'preventive diplomacy' (Lund, 2002; Boutros-Ghali, 1996).

**Peacebuilding:** Peacebuilding is one of the United Nations' cardinal models of peace processes. The concept was made globally popular in Boutros-Ghali's "An Agenda for Peace". Boutros Ghali wrote this paper in 1992, while he was the United Nations Secretary General. Peace building involves addressing not only the triggers, which are the immediate variables that initiate the outbreak of any armed conflict, but also considers the possibilities and prospects of long-term healing, the reconciliation stage. It involves long-term efforts to rebuild societies after violence, integrating reconciliation and governance reforms (UNDP, 1994).

Security Governance denotes the coordination of state and non-state actors in managing threats, emphasizing multi-stakeholder approaches (Nwohu et al., 2023).

**In practice, these concepts intersect:** EWS feeds intelligence for prevention, enabling peacebuilding through governance reforms. For example, community-based EWS in Nigeria link local monitors to state intelligence, bridging grassroots insights with national responses (Adzenga et al., 2025).



Term	Definition	Role in prevention	Nigerian example
Early Warning Systems	Systematic data collection and analysis for crisis anticipation (Boutros Ghali, 1992).	Identifies risks pre-escalation	WANEPNEWS (WANEP -Nigeria, 2025), Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja
Intelligence Gathering	Strategic information collection for threat assessment (Ozoani Ene, 2022).	Provides operational intel.	DSSNA surveillance.
Conflict Prevention	Measures to avert violence ( Effiom 2023).	Proactive diplomacy and reform	UNDP early response initiatives.
Peacebuilding	Post -violence societal reconstruction (UNDP, 1994).	Sustains long -term stability.	Community mediation post clashes.

**This table illustrates synergies: EWS and intelligence converge in governance to enable prevention and peacebuilding.**

### Theoretical Framework

This analysis draws on Human Security Theory, which redefines security as protecting individuals from multifaceted threats, economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political, rather than state-centric defense. In Nigeria, this lens critiques militarized responses to farmer-herder conflicts, advocating EWS integration to safeguard vulnerable populations from displacement and hunger (Ozoani-Ene, 2022; Adzenga et al., 2025).

Complementing this is Preventive Diplomacy Theory, which posits early, coordinated interventions to de-escalate tensions before violence erupts (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). It emphasizes timely action based on warnings, as delays amplify costs, e.g., Nigeria's late responses to 2024 herder incursions exacerbated deaths and economic losses (SBM Intelligence, 2025).

Together, these theories underpin proactive security management: Human Security provides a people-centered rationale, while Preventive Diplomacy offers tools for integration. Critiques note resource constraints in low-capacity states like Nigeria, yet empirical evidence from ECOWAS shows that joint EWS-diplomacy reduces escalation by 30% in monitored cases.

Applied here, they advocate shifting from reactive force to integrated, preventive architectures.

### The Nigerian Context

Imagine the dusty plains of Benue State in early 2025, where the first whispers of tension ripple through farming communities like invisible fault lines. As the dry season yields to tentative rains, Fulani herders, driven northward by drought in the Sahel, begin their annual migration southward in search of grazing lands. Local farmers, already strained by shrinking arable plots and erratic weather patterns, eye these movements with growing unease. By February, what starts as isolated disputes over crop damage erupts into coordinated attacks, claiming over 200 lives and displacing thousands in a matter of weeks, a tragedy that could have been foreseen, yet one that unfolded amid a cacophony of unheeded alerts (Punch, 2025; Okafor & Eke, 2025).

This narrative, drawn from the latest farmer-herder clashes, encapsulates Nigeria's fraught security terrain: a mosaic of early warning mechanisms that hum with data but falter in orchestration, intelligence silos that hoard insights, and a governance apparatus too often paralyzed by political inertia.

Nigeria's early warning ecosystem, pieced together over the past two decades, reflects both ambition and fragmentation. At its core stands the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)'s National Early Warning System (NEWS), a grassroots sentinel that deploys over community monitors to flag risks from ethnic flare-ups to resource rivalries (WANEP-Nigeria, 2025). Complementing this are state-led efforts, such as the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA)'s Early Warning Centre, which synthesizes open-source intelligence for policy briefs, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) framework, piloted in the Middle Belt to link local alerts to federal responders (NIIA, n.d.; UN, 2024).



On the intelligence front, the Department of State Services (DSS) and National Intelligence Agency (NIA) form the backbone, with mandates to surveil internal threats and foreign influences, respectively, yet their outputs remain shrouded in secrecy, rarely intersecting with civilian peace networks (Ozoani-Ene, 2022).

This patchwork, while innovative, unravels under the weight of coordination deficits. Data-sharing protocols are nominal at best; WANEP's weekly bulletins, rich with field reports, often languish in bureaucratic inboxes while DSS intel on armed incursions circulates in closed loops (Ephraim, 2014; Effiom, 2023). The "warning-response gap" a term now etched into Nigerian security lexicon, widens further amid institutional mistrust: peace actors decry security agencies' heavy-handed tactics, while the latter view NGOs as naive or compromised (Akinwotu, 2025). Political factors compound this: in multi-ethnic Nigeria, where indigene-settler divides fuel 70% of communal violence, warnings risk being dismissed as partisan if they implicate powerful elites (Adzenga et al., 2025).

The human toll of these fissures is starkly illustrated in recent escalations. Take the 2023-2025 arc of Benue's farmer-herder strife: WANEP monitors detected herder mobilizations as early as November 2024, corroborated by NIA satellite imagery of cross-border movements. Yet, fragmented channels delayed federal alerts until January 2025, when ambushes left villages in flames, over 400 dead, 50,000 displaced, and \$200 million in agricultural losses (SBM Intelligence, 2025; Amnesty International, 2025). Echoing this, Taraba State's 2025 clashes saw EWS flags on youth radicalization ignored, as intelligence silos failed to fuse community reports with DSS surveillance, birthing a cycle of reprisals that displaced 20,000 (GOJAMSS, 2025).

These are not anomalies but symptoms of a system where early signals, ethnic slurs on social media, unusual livestock migrations, dissipate into ether, allowing latent grievances over land, water, and livelihoods to ignite (Okafor & Eke, 2025). As climate pressures intensify, projected to shrink

grazing lands by 20% by 2030, these failures portend a deepening crisis, underscoring the urgent imperative for integration (VoxDev, 2025).

### **Integrating Early Warning and Intelligence Systems**

In the shadow of such preventable tragedies, the case for integration emerges not as an abstract policy but as a lifeline, a deliberate weaving of disparate threads into a resilient fabric capable of preempting violence. Picture, for a moment, the success story unfolding across West Africa's borders: in The Gambia's 2023 border skirmishes, ECOWAS's ECOWARN platform fused community sentinels' reports with AU Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) analytics, triggering diplomatic shuttles that de-escalated tensions in days, averting what could have been a regional flashpoint (AU, 2022; WANEP, 2025b). This is no outlier; the AU's CEWS, operational since 2002, has streamlined data flows from regional outposts like ECOWARN, enabling predictive modeling that slashed response times by 25% across monitored hotspots (African Union, 2025). For Nigeria, the rationale is compelling: with conflicts costing \$10 billion annually in lost productivity and aid, harmonizing EWS and intelligence could reclaim lives and livelihoods, transforming reactive firefighting into strategic foresight (Nextier, 2025; USIP, 2024).

Yet, integration demands more than aspiration; it requires a scaffolded framework, evolving from lessons etched in regional triumphs and Nigerian trials. Begin with data harmonization, the foundational stitch: standardize indicators, from WANEP's socio-economic metrics to DSS's geospatial intel, via shared dashboards, much like CEWS's "Situation Room" that ingests feeds from 15 regional bodies (Nwohu et al., 2023; AU, 2025). In Nigeria, this could leverage emerging AI tools, as piloted in UNDP's 2025 CEWS enhancements, to cross-validate alerts and flag anomalies with 85% accuracy (UNDP, 2025; Okafor, 2025).

Next, forge joint analysis and response platforms, inter-agency nerve centers where warnings



crystallize into action. Envision NIIA's Early Warning Centre evolving into a fusion hub, echoing ECOWARN's scenario-planning desks that convened Gambian stakeholders pre-crisis (NIIA, n.d.; WANEP, 2025b). Here, DSS operatives and WANEP analysts co-draft briefs, bridging the trust chasm through mandated rotations, a model proven to boost intel-sharing by 40% in IGAD's South Sudan ops (Nwohu et al., 2023).

Sustain this with institutional collaboration protocols: formal memoranda of understanding (MoUs) for real-time exchanges, inspired by the AU-ECOWAS "desk-to-desk" consultations that synchronized responses to 2025 Sahel spillovers (AU, 2022; UN, 2025). In Nigeria, these could embed liaison officers in key agencies, ensuring EWS flags trigger NIA deep dives without bureaucratic vetoes.

Finally, vitalize the base through community-state information flows, channeling the wisdom of the margins upward. Deploy GIS-enabled apps, as in Adzenga's community pilots, to geolocate risks from herder trails to youth mobilizations, feeding directly into national grids (Adzenga et al., 2025; Effiom, 2023). This bottom-up pulse, amplified by social media monitoring, democratizes prevention, echoing ECOWARN's success in empowering local mediators (WANEP, 2025b).

The dividends? A tapestry of faster, sharper interventions: ECOWARN precedents suggest 20-30% quicker mobilizations, while AI infusions promise predictive precision that could halve Benue's 2025 toll (Okafor, 2025). Beyond metrics, integration begets proactive peacebuilding, mediating grazing pacts before blades are drawn, fostering resilience where fragility once reigned (USIP, 2024).

### **Implications for Peacebuilding and National Security**

Envision a Nigeria in 2030, where the scars of 2025's Benue bloodletting have faded into footnotes of progress: integrated EWS-

intelligence webs have not only stanching the flow of violence but irrigated fields of reconciliation, yielding bountiful harvests and bolstered trust. This is no utopian sketch but a plausible horizon, where the fusion of warnings and wits ripples outward, embodying Human Security's promise of holistic protection and Preventive Diplomacy's grace in averting the abyss (UNDP, 1994; Boutros-Ghali, 1992). In this narrative arc, integration emerges as a catalyst for preventive peace, dismantling the structural pillars of conflict, inequity, exclusion, and environmental strain, through anticipatory grace.

At its core, such synergy elevates peacebuilding from reactive bandage to proactive architecture. By channeling EWS insights into intelligence-driven diplomacy, Nigeria could mediate 50% of herder-farmer flashpoints pre-escalation, as modeled in Taraba pilots where fused data enabled grazing corridors that preserved livelihoods and lives (GOJAMSS, 2025; Adzenga et al., 2025). This people-centered pivot, true to Human Security tenets, safeguards the vulnerable: women and youth, often first to flee violence, become sentinels in community nets, their voices amplifying resilience against gendered displacements that claimed 60% of 2025's IDPs (Okafor & Eke, 2025; VoxDev, 2025). Peacebuilding thus evolves from ad-hoc reconciliations to sustained dialogues, where former foes co-design water-sharing pacts, fostering social cohesion that outlasts any ceasefire.

For national security, the implications cascade into fortified sovereignty and economic vitality. Coordinated responses erode the "warning-response gap," slashing violence by 30% per ECOWAS benchmarks, freeing resources from \$10 billion crisis drains to infrastructure and jobs (Akinwotu, 2025; Nextier, 2025). Public trust, eroded by opaque ops and unheeded cries, rebuilds through transparent platforms, DSS-WANEP forums that demystify intel, countering "securitization fatigue" in the northwest where pilots restored 70% community confidence (UN, 2024; USIP, 2024). Policy coherence sharpens,



aligning with SDGs 16 (just peace) and 2 (hunger's end), while stabilizing the AfCFTA gateway, potentially unlocking \$5 billion in FDI by curbing 2025's 33 million in food peril (ACAPS, 2025; Akinwotu, 2025). Yet, these gains hinge on inclusive design: gender-lensed EWS to capture women's risk insights, youth tech-training to harness social media as a peace amplifier (Okafor, 2025). In this integrated vista, security transcends bunkers, becoming a shared vigil that heals divides, propels equity, and secures a future where warnings whisper hope, not herald havoc.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

As the sun sets over Nigeria's fractious heartlands, where the echoes of Benue's 2025 laments mingle with the resilient hum of community dialogues, this paper circles back to its genesis: a clarion call to reimagine security not as an iron fist but as a vigilant hand extended in partnership. We have traversed the conceptual terrain, where EWS and intelligence emerge as symbiotic sentinels; probed into theoretical moorings that anchor prevention in human dignity and diplomatic foresight; mapped the Nigerian web of silos and silenced signals; charted pathways to integration drawn from AU and ECOWAS tapestries; and glimpsed horizons where peacebuilding blooms amid fortified national sinews. At every turn, the verdict resounds: Nigeria's pivot from reactive fortification to proactive harmony hinges on fusing these systems, a bridge not just over rivers of blood but toward oases of equity and endurance. In the shadow of 2025's herder-farmer infernos and northeast tempests, this integration stands as both salve and strategy, echoing Ephraim's (2014) timeless plea for prevention's "ounce" to outweigh cure's pound, while heeding Ozoani-Ene's (2022) imperative to uproot oppression's tendrils through empowered grassroots. By embracing Human Security's embrace and Preventive Diplomacy's pulse, Nigeria can not only mute the guns but silence their prelude, aligning with the AU's 2025 Silencing the Guns blueprint and ECOWAS's ECOWARN evolutions that have tamed regional tempests (African Union, 2025).

Yet, vision without action is but a mirage in the

Sahel's haze. The path forward demands deliberate strides, rooted in scholarly rigor and policy pragmatism. Below, we delineate four interlocking recommendations, each forged from empirical crucibles like Adzenga et al.'s (2025) community pilots and Effiom's (2023) tech imperatives, calibrated to Nigeria's 2025 realities of AI-augmented foresight and participatory legitimacy (Okafor, 2025). These are not edicts but blueprints, urging a symphony of state, civil society, and international partners to orchestrate change.

First, institutionalize EWS-intelligence linkages through binding mandates under the National Security Council (NSC), leveraging existing scaffolds like WANEP-AU collaborations to embed fusion desks in every zonal command (WANEP-Nigeria, 2025a). This entails enacting a "National Prevention Act" by mid-2026, mandating quarterly joint exercises where DSS/NIA feeds triangulate WANEP's grassroots pulses, mirroring the AU's CEWS protocols that amplified inter-regional intel by 35% (Nwohu et al., 2023; African Union, 2025). Rationale? Silos breed paralysis, as Taraba's 2025 oversights attest; institutionalization, per Akinwotu (2025), cultivates a "prevention culture" that could avert 40% of electoral flashpoints by 2027, fostering trust in a polity weary of partisan shadows. Implementation hinges on NSC oversight, with benchmarks tied to violence metrics, yielding not just fewer clashes but a governance ethos where warnings command action.

Second, build data interoperability via secure, AI-infused platforms that knit DSS, NIA, and WANEP into a national "Prevention Grid," backed by a \$50 million federal seed from the 2026 budget, scaled through UNDP partnerships (Effiom, 2023; UNDP, 2025). Drawing from Okafor's (2025) AI-CEWS prototypes, which boosted predictive accuracy to 85% in simulations, this would standardize ontologies, e.g., fusing geospatial herder tracks with socio-economic distress indices, for real-time dashboards accessible to provincial leads. The urgency? Nigeria's \$10 billion conflict ledger demands fiscal prudence; interoperability, as



Effiom (2023) posits, slashes response lags by 25%, echoing ECOWARN's data harmonies that nipped Gambian border flares. Phased rollout, pilot in Middle Belt by Q2 2026, nationwide by 2028, ensures equity, with open APIs for civil society audits to guard against surveillance overreach.

Third, strengthen community-based monitoring by scaling tech-enabled networks, training 10,000 local sentinels annually through NAERLS and IPCR hubs, infusing GIS and mobile apps to amplify voices from the vulnerable fringes (Adzenga et al., 2025; Ozoani-Ene, 2022). This participatory ethos, championed in Adzenga et al.'s (2025) RuSAN proceedings, roots EWS in legitimacy, women-led clusters in Benue decoding gendered risks, youth coders in the northwest mining social media for radicalization cues. Why vital? Top-down intel blinds; bottom-up flows, per Ozoani-Ene (2022), empower against "endemic inequality," potentially halving displacement in indigene-settler zones as seen in Taraba's 2025 reversals (GOJAMSS, 2025). Rollout via zonal academies, with incentives like micro-grants, ensures sustainability, transforming monitors from informants to co-architects of peace.

Fourth, enhance trust between civil and security actors through IPCR-facilitated forums, biannual "Prevention Summits" blending DSS briefings with WANEP testimonies, to dismantle biases and co-craft ethical guidelines (Ozoani-Ene, 2022; Akinwotu, 2025). In a nation scarred by "securitization fatigue," where 2025 polls exposed intel mistrust, these dialogues, modeled on USIP's West Africa linkages, foster transparency, like declassifying anonymized alerts to build buy-in (USIP, 2024). Impact? Restored confidence, as northwest pilots attest, could amplify reporting by 50%, per Adzenga et al. (2025), turning suspicion into synergy. Anchor in NSC charters, with evaluation via trust indices, to weave accountability into the fabric.

These recommendations, interwoven, form a resilient lattice, demanding not just political will but multisectoral alchemy: federal funding fused

with AU/ECOWAS grants, civil vigor leavened by tech innovation. The yield? A Nigeria where 2026 dawns not in dread but dawn's promise: conflicts forestalled, communities fortified, a beacon for Africa's preventive renaissance. The hour is now; let warnings herald not woe, but wisdom's triumph.

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## Urban Informality, Youth Livelihoods and Acquisitive Crime: the Micro-economics of Survival in Nigerian Cities.

<sup>1</sup>Oladejo Ayobami Olaniran, <sup>2</sup>Ayodele Lateef Atanda.

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Sociological Studies, Tai Solarin University of Education,  
P.M.B 2118, Ijebu-Ode Ogun State, Nigeria.*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Sociology, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria.  
oladejoao@tasued.edu.ng ayooladejo23@gmail.com, ayodelelateef2012@gmail.com*

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### Abstract

Nigerian cities are characterised by urban informality, which is an essential source of income for millions of young people who are not able to find regular jobs. However, youth exposure to acquisitive crimes, such as fraud, theft, burglary, and organised crime, is also increased in these same unofficial venues. This essay examines how teenage survival tactics and paths into crime are shaped by informal urban economies by combining security, legal, and criminological viewpoints. The study emphasises the practical challenges of regulating crowded, unregulated settlements from a security perspective. Legally speaking, it criticises legal frameworks that criminalise routine survival acts while ineffectively combating organised predatory networks. Youth criminality is analysed from a criminological perspective as a reasonable reaction to systemic marginalisation and a lack of economic possibilities. The study, which uses data from 2020 to 2025, focusses on urban teenagers between the ages of 18 and 35 who are involved in informal economic activities. Key informants include security officers, community leaders, and representatives of the informal sector. The results show how a micro-economy of survival within informal settlements is created by continuous underemployment, changing forms of economic crime, and holes in governance. Informal livelihoods foster economic participation and resilience, but they also present potential for fraud and exploitation. In support of inclusive urban governance that strikes a balance between security and livelihood protection, the paper proposes policy solutions centred on community-based problem-oriented policing, gradual formalisation of informal work, legal reforms to stop arbitrary criminalisation, and youth-focused economic initiatives.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, youth livelihoods, urban informality, acquisitive crime, and security governance.

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### Introduction

Due to migration, the expansion of informal settlements, and constraints on urban labour markets, Nigerian cities have seen tremendous demographic and geographical change over the past 20 years. As young people, who make up more than 60% of the population, move into cities with little opportunity for formal employment, this tendency has gotten worse (NBS, 2023). Informal employment, unstable housing, and improvised services serve as de facto safety nets for a large number of people. Informality is essential to urban functioning since it is dominated by survival methods including street vending, motorbike transportation, casual construction, and small-scale trading (Meagher, 2022).

According to labour force surveys, more than 80% of young people in metropolitan areas work in informal jobs (NBS, 2023), and underemployment continues to exist even as GDP grows. This indicates a discrepancy between macroeconomic performance and inclusive labour absorption. For young people in cities, informality is frequently a permanent economic structure rather than a phase of transition (ILO, 2021). At the same time, acquisitive crime which includes fraud, robbery, burglary, and extortion on the black market has grown to be a significant urban security issue (UNODC, 2022; Alemika, 2021). The structures of informality unregulated housing, cash-based transactions, lax microfinance regulation, and thick social anonymity are exploited by these crimes. Acquisitive crime and urban informality are



closely related. Although they provide protection from poverty, informal livelihoods can present chances for fraud and predatory behaviour (Davis, 2021).

This link is made clear by three viewpoints:

1. **Security:** Through unplanned markets, cash-only microbusinesses, and "invisible economies," informality makes policing more difficult.
2. **Legal:** Informal activities are criminalised by fragmented regulatory frameworks, putting young people at risk of punishment and economic isolation.
3. **Criminology:** According to ideas of routine activity, social disarray, and stress, juvenile offending develops as an adaptive reaction to limited opportunities.

In order to improve urban policy and crime-prevention efforts, this paper synthesises recent interdisciplinary evidence (2020–2025), highlighting the reality of young survival and advocating for methods that go beyond criminalising informality.

### **Literature Review and Conceptual Framing**

#### **Urban Informality as Livelihood Architecture.**

Urban informality is a multifaceted architecture of opportunity and survival rather than just the lack of formality. It includes informal financial intermediation (mobile-money schemes, rotating savings), informal housing (squatter settlements, unregistered rents), informal labour (street selling, transportation services, rubbish picking) and grey areas of regulatory compliance (companies without permits). Therefore, informality serves as both a source of vulnerability and a source of resilience (UN-Habitat, 2022). Precarious employment, a lack of legal protection, the possibility of eviction, and the lack of social insurance are among the vulnerabilities. However, informality also exemplifies resilience since it gives young people adaptable networks, entrenched social capital, and flexible revenue streams that help them weather economic downturns.

Research cautions against defining policies in a way that views informality only as dysfunction or deviance. According to Meagher (2022), attempts

by the state to eradicate informal behaviours without developing workable formal substitutes frequently destroy preexisting survival mechanisms, which increases insecurity. On the other hand, policies that recognise the positive contributions of informality might use it as a springboard for inclusive development, which will lessen the criminal pressures associated with urban poor. Therefore, it is important to think of urban informality as livelihood architecture, not just as an economic sector, but also as a socio-political ecosystem that has an impact on governance and crime.

### **Youth Labour Markets and the Micro-Economics of Survival**

A disproportionate number of young people work in the informal sector, where they face inconsistent income, no contracts, and little opportunities for advancement (ILO, 2021). According to international reports, gig work and platform-mediated labour such as digital freelancing and motorbike delivery have evolved into extensions of informality rather than its alternatives (World Bank, 2023). Many young people in Nigeria rely on "patchwork livelihoods," which include a variety of low-paying unorganised activities, to make ends meet. High turnover, reliance on cash, and fluctuating demand are characteristics of the microeconomics of survival that make one more vulnerable to debt traps and economic shocks. Vulnerability to criminal recruiting and opportunistic crime is increased by this precariousness in conjunction with exclusion from social assistance and credit institutions (Adewale & Ojo, 2022). For example, when official avenues are closed, fraudulent activities ranging from small-scale frauds to cyber-enabled deception may be seen as logical continuations of informal hustling.

A contradiction that unites literature is that, whereas informality prevents poverty and absorbs work, it also places young people in areas of legal ambiguity where acquisitive criminality can thrive. This tension is increased by laws that criminalise informal trade or prohibit street hawking since they transform survival skills into



expenses, and poverty rank higher among young people's concerns than insecurity and corruption, according to the Afrobarometer (2022). Motorcycle transportation, street vending, and digital freelancing are all examples of survival tactics described in qualitative assessments of "hustle economies" (Meagher, 2022). However, these erratic earnings make it difficult to distinguish between legal and illegal hustles, which fosters opportunistic crime, ranging from market petty theft to cyber-fraud by unemployed recent grads.

### **Shifting Forms of Acquisitive Crime**

Acquisitive crime in Nigerian cities has become more varied between 2020 and 2025. Three trends are identified by UNODC (2022): organised networks controlling informal markets and transportation hubs; opportunistic property crimes in outlying communities with lax police enforcement; and online frauds like "Yahoo Yahoo" scams and crypto schemes, which frequently target young people who are digitally savvy but marginalised. The strict policing classifications of organised crime, cybercrime, and street crime are defied by these overlapping practices. Acquisitive crime operates along a continuum of hustling that varies from licit to illegal, opportunistic to organised, requiring not just security measures but also structural economic and legislative interventions, as the Journal of illegal Economies and Development (2023) points out.

### **Analytical Framework: Integrating Security, Legal and Criminological Lenses**

This study uses a layered analytical framework that blends three professional viewpoints: the security lens, the legal lens, and the criminological lens to examine the connection between urban informality, juvenile livelihoods, and acquisitive crime.

#### **Security lens (Operational and Strategic)**

Markets and informal settlements are intricate operational settings from a security standpoint. The effectiveness of traditional policing instruments like patrols, checkpoints, or surveillance technologies is diminished by their

diverse normative regimes, variable physical layouts, and extensive social networks. Mistrust of law enforcement and the existence of community protection organisations that function alongside state security make intelligence collection more difficult. Research highlights that rather than reducing acquisitive crime, traditional suppression tactics like raids, prohibitions, or mass arrests can cause displacement (UNODC, 2022). In addition to situational crime prevention strategies catered to informal commercial topographies, security scholars support problem-oriented policing and community intelligence partnerships (ASP Journals, 2023). Examples of these strategies include better market lighting, formalised transportation hubs, and community-police liaison structures.

#### **Legal Lens (Rights, Regulation and Criminalisation)**

The legal dimension emphasises how the relationship between informality and crime is shaped by criminalisation and regulatory exclusion. Three problems are particularly noticeable:

1 Administrative obstacle: Informal actors are unable to move to formality due to restrictive tax regimes, licensing requirements, and unstable property tenure.

2 Criminalisation of survival: While ignoring the exploitative tactics of organised actors, laws and municipal bylaws disproportionately punish street selling, petty trading, and informal transportation.

3. Deficits in access to justice: The marginalisation of informal players is further cemented by the fact that marginalised business owners and crime victims frequently lack reasonably priced legal remedies.

Therefore, it is crucial to implement legal reform that strengthens regulatory avenues to formal economic involvement while reducing arbitrary criminalisation. This necessitates a change in perspective from viewing informality as abnormal to acknowledging it as a valid economic domain with actors who possess rights (UN-Habitat, 2022; JIED, 2023).



legal violations, undermine public confidence in the government, and strengthen the antagonistic relationship between young people and law enforcement (Okonkwo, 2024). Therefore, a conceptual link between informality, young livelihoods, and acquisitive crime is provided by the microeconomics of survival.

### **Criminological Theories of Youth Adaptation.**

For a long time, criminological research has looked at how exclusion, marginalisation, and institutional limitations influence criminal behaviour. These dynamics are exacerbated in Nigerian cities by the intersection of youth livelihoods and urban informality, creating an environment in which acquisitive crime turns into a coping mechanism. Three theoretical perspectives are especially useful.

#### **(i) Theories of Stress and Anomie**

According to Robert Merton's (1938) strain theory, which has been revised in modern urban criminology, people are driven to innovate, including criminally, in order to achieve culturally valued objectives when they are denied access to legal possibilities. Exposure to international media and local peer networks in Nigeria exacerbates consumerist goals, but only a small percentage in the country have access to legitimate options. The conflict between goals and restricted mobility causes urban youth in informal settlements to develop strain-driven adaptive techniques, which characterise acquisitive criminality (such as online fraud, burglary, and extortion) as inventiveness rather than deviance (Ojedokun & Aderinto, 2021).

#### **ii Routine Activity and Opportunity Structures**

The Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) emphasises the combination of appropriate goals, motivated offenders, and the lack of capable supervision. These chances are increased by informal economies, which concentrate high-value but unprotected targets while reducing supervision through cash-only transactions, a lack of contracts, unregistered homes, and unregulated street marketplaces. Urban informality generates criminogenic opportunity structures, as demonstrated by petty fraud in outdoor markets, street robberies in informal transportation hubs,

and digital frauds made possible by mobile-money systems

#### **iii Social Disorganisation and Collective Efficacy**

In disadvantaged communities, social disorganisation theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sampson, 2012) highlights the disintegration of normative control and community structures. Tenure instability, a high rate of residential turnover, and fragmented administration are characteristics of Nigerian informal settlements that undermine systems of collective efficacy. In these situations, youth must traverse ambivalent environments where illicit actors normalise or recruit them into acquisitive crime but community networks offer survival assistance (Ikelegbe & Umukoro, 2023).

Framing that is integral when combined, (Ojedokun & Aderinto, 2021). Added that these models imply that individual deviance is not the only factor contributing to acquisitive crime in Nigerian cities. Rather, it represents adaptive methods influenced by opportunity-rich informal contexts, regulatory ambiguity, and structural exclusion. The criminological perspective emphasises the need for structural policy interventions in employment, housing, and urban governance in addition to reforming law enforcement in order to combat juvenile offending.

#### **The Nigerian Context (2020–2025): Evidence Summary**

Three interrelated aspects that are essential to comprehending the relationship between informality, young livelihoods, and acquisitive crime are highlighted by Nigeria's recent urban experience.

##### **Precarious Youth Livelihoods and Informality**

In places like Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Port Harcourt, more than 80% of the workforce is still employed in informal jobs (NBS, 2023). Young people are disproportionately affected: underemployment among those aged 15 to 35 has exceeded 20%, while unemployment has remained between 30% and 40%. Jobs, living



### **Criminological Lens (Micro-Economics of Decision-Making)**

Young people's involvement in acquisitive crimes can be seen as a type of constrained optimisation at the individual level:

- i. Expected payoff from offending (cash gains, social status, short-term survival) versus
- ii Expected payoff from licit alternatives (underpaid casual labour, gig work, informal hustling).

Social capital, perceived sanction risk, labour market returns, and normative framework all influence both sides. The perceived net benefit of acquisitive activities increases significantly when guardianship is weak, lawful returns are low, and hustling is valued by social norms, according to evidence from risk-reward studies (ResearchGate, 2023; PMC, 2024). This theory emphasises that rather than being a sign of moral decay, acquisitive crime is frequently a logical response to economic precarity. The incentive structures must be changed for interventions to be effective, which means increasing the reward for legal options, decreasing the impunity for predatory activity, and strengthening community standards against exploitation

### **Policy and Legal Implications**

Urban informality in Nigeria presents both possibilities and difficulties. It poses a problem because of its connection to precarious livelihoods, inefficient governance, and criminal environments. There is an opportunity because of its potential as a foundation for inclusive growth, youth empowerment, and crime reduction. Using the previously established multidisciplinary framework, this part outlines four interrelated areas of reform: urban governance, policing, youth jobs and livelihoods, and legal frameworks.

### **Redesigning Urban Youth Employment**

The evidence review's most urgent conclusion is that Nigerian cities' youth employment policies need to be reconsidered. Small-scale vocational training programs, microcredit programs, or intermittent support for entrepreneurship are frequently the mainstays of current initiatives. Despite their value, these initiatives are not fully

incorporated into the larger urban informal market economy. A security-aware viewpoint emphasises how acquisitive crime makes sense as a substitute for steady employment when young people are structurally deprived from it. On the other hand, criminal risks are reduced when there are sustainable economic opportunities. Thus, three priorities need to be addressed by employment interventions:

1. Recognition and protection of informal labour: Policy should acknowledge street vendors, okada riders, and market porters as respectable professions rather than criminalising them. Precarious hustling can be turned into protected work with a licensing system that offers microinsurance, protective restrictions, and reasonable costs.
2. Formal–informal linkages: Efforts to engage young people in gig labour or the digital economy must be linked to safeguards like credit availability, clear contracts, and minimum income guarantees. If not, gig work on the internet merely replicates the weaknesses of physical informal labour.
3. Targeted public works: Road maintenance, sanitation, and housing enhancements are examples of urban infrastructure projects that can be designed to hire young people in formal and informal jobs, stabilising revenue streams and enhancing local government.

### **Rethinking Policing in Informal Cities**

It is necessary to fundamentally break from conventional suppression models while policing in informal settings. Research indicates that bans, evictions, and raids only serve to geographically shift crime while further estranging populations. Instead, Nigeria's unofficial business and residential environments require the adaptation of problem-oriented, intelligence-led enforcement.

### **This adaption revolves around four key components:**

1. Community-Police partnerships: Establishing trust with unofficial groups (such as youth collectives, transport workers' organisations, and traders' unions) makes it



possible to share intelligence and make collective security arrangements. Transparency, anti-corruption initiatives, and receptivity to community complaints must be given top priority in the process of developing trust.

2. **Situational Crime prevention:** Acquisitive opportunities can be significantly decreased by taking sensible steps like safeguarding transport hubs, controlling cash handling techniques, and installing street lights in markets. These call for multi-agency collaboration between municipal services, urban planning, and law enforcement.

3. **Hybrid Guardianship:** Indigenous types of guardianship, such as neighbourhood watch programs, religious organisations, and vigilante groups, are already present in informal communities. These can occasionally be coercive, but if precautions against misuse are taken, they can also be incorporated into more comprehensive security plans.

4. **Capacity for cyber-enabled crime:** Nigerian police want expert digital forensics and financial crime teams due to the rise in online fraud. Collaborations with international organisations, fintech companies, and telecom carriers will be essential.

### **Legal Reform: Rights, Regulation and Access to Justice**

The criminalisation of survival is the main issue from a legal standpoint. Larger predatory actors are mostly unaffected by current legislation and municipal bylaws, which disproportionately target low-level informal players like street vendors and hawkers. This leads to two injustices: organised extortion networks frequently get away with it, while impoverished teenagers are punished for using survival tactics.

### **Three coordinated changes are needed for reform:**

1. **Decriminalisation of survival practices:** Regulations that provide licensing, taxation, and consumer protection without exclusion should take the place of restrictive hawking laws, street vending prohibitions, and minor trading violations.

2 **Inclusive regulatory pathways:** Regularised land tenure, streamlined tax regimes, and dispute resolution procedures ought to be available to

informal business owners. Secure tenure and legal recognition of informal markets can lessen vulnerability to crime and exploitation, according to UN-Habitat (2022) data.

3 **Access to justice:** Digital dispute resolution, mobile courts, and legal aid programs can increase underprivileged people' access to the legal system. Victims of extortion, fraud, or theft frequently turn to vigilante tactics in the absence of accessible justice, which feeds violent cycles.

### **Crime Prevention as Urban Policy**

In informal Nigerian cities, acquisitive crime is a logical response to limited opportunity frameworks, as the criminological lens tells us. It is necessary to explicitly incorporate crime-prevention concepts into urban design and policy in order to change these systems.

1. **Housing and tenure security:** Secure housing improves group efficacy and decreases mobility-driven disarray. Tenure rights-based slum upgrading initiatives can increase community stability and lower rates of predatory and burglary crime.

2. **Market and transport design:** Theft and extortion can be decreased by well-designed marketplaces with regulated stalls, illumination, and entry/exit points. Likewise, organised transport hubs lessen the likelihood of opportunistic robbery.

3. **Youth civic engagement:** Alienation is decreased when young people are empowered through participatory urban government. Youth councils, community service initiatives, and cooperative planning procedures reduce the motivation for acquisitive crime by giving young people a sense of ownership.

4. **Integrated multi-agency responses:** Cooperation between the police, housing agencies, civic society, and municipal authorities is necessary for effective crime prevention. In Lagos and Port Harcourt, multi-agency task groups that focus on particular high-risk informal neighbourhoods have showed promise.

### **Policy Implications: Balancing Livelihood Protection and Crime Reduction**

The paradox of Nigerian urban informality that it



is both a lifeline for millions of young people and a place of increased susceptibility to acquisitive crime is highlighted by the integration of evidence from security, legal, and criminological perspectives. Therefore, preserving the economic worth of informal livelihoods and lowering the criminal dangers connected to unregulated social and economic contexts must be balanced in any viable reform strategy. Four interconnected policy priorities that result from this comprehensive analysis are outlined in this section.

### **Reframing Policy to Recognise the Economic Value of Informality**

The idea that informality is not a fringe occurrence but rather the predominant form of economic organisation in the majority of cities is a recurrent theme in both Nigerian and worldwide literature. Up to two-thirds of urban jobs in Nigeria are informal, and young people are disproportionately employed in gig-based digital work, artisanal services, transportation, and street trade. Such activities serve as the main sources of youth work and stabilise household existence; to describe them as just "illegal" or "unregulated" is to overlook this fact. Therefore, a change in the way policies are framed is needed.

The positive function of informality should be recognised by both national and local governments, who should work to progressively create inclusive regulatory frameworks. This does not imply complete formalisation, which is frequently unfeasible and exclusive, but rather gradual, industry-specific changes.

#### **Three metrics are particularly noteworthy:**

1. Simplified licensing regimes: One-step, reasonably priced registration procedures for artists and small business owners lower the administrative barriers that encourage avoidance. Renewable micro-licences can be issued via digital platforms, providing traders with access to services and legal recognition without enforcing harsh penalties.

2. Micro-tax frameworks: Through micro-tax regimes, which are publicly collected and linked to observable services (such as waste collection, lighting, and sanitation), informal actors can be incorporated into revenue streams in

place of extortionate charges or intricate tax systems. This strategy increases legitimacy and obedience.

3. Infrastructure for informal markets: Property crime and harassment concerns are decreased by purpose-built, reasonably priced stalls, storage facilities, and designated vending spaces. The state's acceptance of informality as a valid source of income is also indicated by investments in market infrastructure.

Such improvements have the criminological implication of lowering the opportunity cost of practicing law. The proportional appeal of acquisitive wrongdoing decreases when legal means of subsistence are simpler, safer, and more lucrative. Recognition also lessens the hostile connection between state authorities and informal actors, increasing the viability of cooperative security systems.

### **Problem-Oriented and Community Policing in Informal Settlements**

In terms of security, traditional policing has had difficulty in Nigerian markets and informal communities. Mass arrests, evictions, and raids have all been shown to be expensive and frequently ineffective; they only serve to displace criminal activities while fostering suspicion in the community. The usefulness of problem-oriented, intelligence-led policing models that are tailored to the reality of informality is demonstrated by data from both Nigerian case studies and comparable metropolitan situations. The first step is to rethink security as ongoing guardianship rather than as sporadic enforcement. This entails specific expenditures in situational protection, such as controlled cash-handling systems in business clusters, safe perimeters surrounding storage facilities, and operational street lighting in marketplaces and transportation hubs. In addition to minimising reliance on enforcement, such tactics also reduce regular possibilities for theft, burglary, and extortion.

Community collaboration policing is equally important. Social networks such as trade unions, transportation organisations, youth collectives, and faith-based organisations are common in



informal settlements and frequently uphold their own internal order systems. Building institutionalised partnerships with these actors requires police to go beyond episodic participation. This includes creating regular avenues for intelligence sharing, cooperative patrols, and participatory safety audits.

The necessity of distinguishing organised economic crime from survival crime is another implication. The same enforcement priority should not be given to organised fencing networks, extortion rackets, or cyber-enabled fraud as to petty street theft or unlicensed vending. By teaching officers to distinguish between high-impact threats and low-impact ones, limited enforcement resources can be allocated to the former while lower-level violations are redirected to regulatory or mediation procedures.

### **Methodology**

The study used a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach to investigate the connections between acquisitive crime, young livelihoods, and urban informality in Nigerian cities. This method allowed for a thorough investigation of survival tactics, economic precarity, and crime-related decision-making in informal urban settings. Perspectives from urban criminology, political economy, and rational choice served as the theoretical foundation for the study. Fieldwork was done in Lagos, Abeokuta, and Ibadan, which were chosen due to their high young populations, fast urbanisation, and extensive informal economies. Urban teenagers between the ages of 18 and 35 who were involved in informal economic activities were among the participants, as were important informants including security personnel, community leaders, and representatives of the informal sector. Snowball sampling and purposeful sampling were employed to reach populations that are difficult to reach and operate outside of official labour and regulatory frameworks. Semi-structured interviews with key informants and secondary sources were used to gather data. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data was accompanied by descriptive analysis of secondary quantitative data, all while adhering to strict ethical guidelines.

### **Legal Reform to Reduce Arbitrary Criminalisation and Expand Access to Remedies**

The paradox that informal actors are frequently both overcriminalized and underprotected is the main focus of the legal aspect of reform. While organised networks that take advantage of unofficial marketplaces through extortion, counterfeiting, or property fraud usually get away with it, street vendors, hawkers, and small craftspeople are routinely harassed, fined, and evicted under municipal bylaws. This disparity is a result of institutional prejudice in legal systems that tolerate predatory behaviour while penalising poverty.

Therefore, three areas of legal reform are crucial

**1. Decriminalisation and rationalisation:** It is necessary to evaluate and replace municipal policies that criminalise fundamental livelihood activities with supportive frameworks. For instance, local bylaws can include provisions for low-cost licenses, defined vending zones, and health and safety guidelines in place of outright prohibiting roadside vending. As a result, regulation becomes more important than punishment.

**2. Access to affordable justice:** Due to the expense, distance, and complexity of the legal process, informal workers hardly ever seek legal recourse. Access can be significantly increased by using low-cost legal aid, mobile courts in unofficial marketplaces, and digital mediation platforms. Reliance on vigilante justice decreases when victims of extortion, fraud, or theft have legitimated legal options, which reduces the likelihood of violent escalation.

**3. Strengthening sanctions against organised exploitation:** Organisations that prey on informality, such as extortion rings, real estate scammers, and fraudulent online platforms, should be the focus of legal change. Financial intelligence units, asset recovery systems, and improved investigative tools can guarantee that predatory criminals are successfully prosecuted.

**4. Targeted Youth Economic Programmes and Social Protection:** While structural changes to the legislation, policing, and labour markets are necessary, youth-focused interventions continue



to be a top priority. Young people are particularly sensitive to the perceived balance between the benefits of legal and illicit livelihoods, according to the criminological literature. The motivation to commit acquisitive crime increases in proportion to the scarcity or instability of licit options.

According to data from regional policy initiatives, "cash-plus" programs that combine long-term competence building with short-term income support have the best chance of reducing crime. Four metrics stand out in particular:

1. **Short-term cash transfers:** Transfers that are well-targeted lessen the immediate incentives that lead to opportunistic crime and buffer economic shocks. They also promote positive involvement when connected to training or community activity.
2. **Wage subsidies for apprenticeships:** Employers may be encouraged to hire young people with less experience by offering pay subsidies for formal apprenticeships in the creative, ICT, or construction sectors. These programs foster long-term employability in addition to income.
3. **Microcredit tailored to informal enterprises:** To grow, youth-led businesses in artisanal production, internet services, and small trade need funding. Microcredit with adjustable payback schedules and assistance for business growth lessens reliance on illegal funding and creates long-term sources of income.
4. **Skills training integrated with social protection:** The benefits of legal labour are increased by training that boosts efficiency in unorganised industries like better food processing, internet marketing, or environmentally friendly crafts. When combined with safeguards (like health insurance or savings plans), this raises the perceived value of lawful activity in comparison to criminal activity.

### **Towards a Balanced Strategy**

When combined, these four reform areas provide a well-rounded approach that avoids romanticising or demonising informality. Rather, it acknowledges that informal economies are a structural aspect of urban life in Nigeria and that the unregulated, unstable, and frequently

criminalised nature of informality is what makes it a risk factor for crime. Nigerian cities can lower crime and improve social resilience at the same time by redefining policies to target predation and safeguard livelihoods. The wider conclusion is that crime prevention should be a goal of integrated government rather than just law enforcement. Interventions must be coordinated by municipal governments, civil society organisations, and the ministries of labour, justice, and urban development. Nigeria can only create policies that protect juvenile survival and advance urban safety by integrating the fields of criminology, law, and security.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, urban informality serves as both a critical means of subsistence and a setting where people are more susceptible to acquisitive crime in Nigerian cities. Young people frequently adjust opportunistically to limited options as they negotiate unstable job markets, poor governance, and legal marginality. Research from 2020–2025 shows that, more often than not, acquisitive crime is a logical reaction to financial instability rather than a moral failing. Recognising and regulating informal livelihoods, enforcing problem-oriented and community policing, amending legislation to lessen arbitrary criminalisation, and offering targeted social and economic support for young people are all necessary for effective crime reduction. Nigerian cities may promote inclusive urban government, reduce the risk of crime, and turn informality into a platform for resilience and sustainable development by striking a balance between security and livelihood protection.

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