

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CRIMES IN NIGERIA: INVESTIGATING ITS MENACE AND REMEDIES

By

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ABSTRACT

The study examined crimes in Nigeria and investigated their menace and proffered remedies to the menace. The study noted that crime is a legal wrong punishable by the state. Furthermore, the study highlighted that crimes has been one significant challenge Nigeria has faced over the years. Furthermore, the study highlighted the different types of crimes that exist in Nigeria, which included violent crimes, property crimes, financial crimes, drug-related crimes, cybercrimes, corruption, environmental crimes, and terrorism, among others. The study further traced the causes of crimes in Nigeria to include socioeconomic inequality, corruption and governance issues, ethnic and religious tensions, inadequate law enforcement, drug abuse and trafficking, and many more. The study also noted that crime has tremendous effects on people and even society at large, as it affects an individual's social, emotional, and psychological wellness. In addition to causing fear, undermining trust, and upsetting the social order, the study also outlined numerous cases of crimes in Nigeria and stated that crimes in Nigeria are as old as the history of the nation. Furthermore, the study reviewed solutions to crimes in Nigeria and stated that enhancing law enforcement is one of the ways to mitigate crimes in Nigeria. The study concluded that by prioritizing the remedies stated in the study, Nigeria can aspire to create a safer, more prosperous society and attract sustainable investment for long-term development. One of the recommendations was that the Federal Government of Nigeria should priorities the enhancement of law enforcement agencies' capacity and resources to effectively combat crime across the nation.

KEYWORDS: Crimes, Nigeria, Menace and Remedies

INTRODUCTION

Crime in Nigeria represents a significant challenge, undermining the country's socio-economic development and threatening the security of its citizens. The prevalence of various types of criminal activities, from violent crimes such as armed robbery and

kidnapping to cybercrimes and corruption, reflects deep-seated issues within Nigeria's socio-political landscape (Alemika, 2013). These crimes not only impede the daily lives of Nigerians but also deter foreign investment and tarnish the nation's international reputation. To effectively address this menace, it is crucial to understand the underlying factors that drive criminal behavior in Nigeria, which include poverty, unemployment, weak law enforcement, and systemic corruption (Eze, 2019).

Despite efforts by the Nigerian government and various stakeholders to combat crime, the efficacy of these measures has often been questioned due to persistent high crime rates and the emergence of new criminal trends. Therefore, a comprehensive investigation into the nature and causes of crime in Nigeria is essential for developing sustainable remedies. This study aims to delve into the multifaceted aspects of criminal activities in Nigeria, examining their roots, impacts, and potential solutions to mitigate this pervasive issue. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the formulation of more effective crime prevention strategies and the enhancement of the overall security framework in the country.

CONCEPT OF CRIME

The word "crime," which comes from the Latin word "crimen," which means "charge," "offence," or "wrong-doer," refers to antisocial activity. A crime is an act or omission that is prohibited by law and is subject to a fine or jail term. According to Sowmyya (2014), crime is a public wrong. It is an offensive act that defies state law and is highly regarded by the community. Crimes include things like child neglect, rape, murder, robbery, burglary, and failure to pay taxes.

As stated by Isiaka and Okaphor (2018), a crime is a legal wrong for which the offender is punished at the instance of the state. Any conduct or inaction that violates a duty and is subject to an indictment in the best interests of the public is considered a crime. Furthermore, Gill and Schubert (2023) defined crime as an "illegal act in which someone can be punished by the government." An offence that calls for public censure and punishment—typically in the form of a fine or incarceration—is considered a crime. A civil wrong, also known as a tort, is an action taken against a person that calls for payment or reparations; it is not the same as a crime. Generally speaking, "something that's unfair, wrong, and difficult to fix" is what defines crime.

Furthermore, Opp (2020) defined crimes as "actions or non-actions that violate the criminal law." Crime generally is a deliberate act that results in harm, physical or otherwise, to one or more people in a manner prohibited by law. The Encyclopaedia (2019) defines crime as "an act proscribed by law and subject to punishment." Any behaviour that is deemed to be against societal norms or values is considered a crime.

Additionally, Matthew (2018) defined crime as "deviant behaviour that violates prevailing norms and standards prescribing how humans ought to behave normally." Singh (2021) defined crime as "any wrongful act conducted or done with the intent of committing that wrongful act or offence, as well as any act committed or done with the intent of committing that wrongful act or offence." Similarly, Haugaard (2022) defined 'crime' as action that violates the legitimate social norms of a collective social order.

TYPES OF CRIMES

Crimes in Nigeria encompass a broad range of illicit acts that take place in the nation. These crimes can be divided into a number of categories according to their characteristics, seriousness, and social impact. Here are some of the major types of crime in Nigeria, as

mentioned by the U.S. Department of State, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (2021), and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) (2024):

- **Violent Crimes:**

Among the most serious offences in our society are violent crimes, which include actions that endanger people's safety and well-being or inflict physical injury. The following is a list of the different categories of violent crimes:

- **Homicide:** Manslaughter, infanticide, and murder are all considered forms of homicide.
- **Assault:** This category includes both physical and sexual assaults.
- **Robbery:** Common types include carjacking, burglaries, and armed robberies.

- **Kidnapping:**

Merriam Webster (2024) defined Kidnaping as an act or instance or the crime of seizing, confining, inveigling, abducting, or carrying away a person by force or fraud often with a demand for ransom or in furtherance of another crime. According to Legal Information Institute (2023) Kidnapping is a crime at common law consisting of an unlawful restraint of a person's liberty by force or show of force.

- **Property Crimes:**

A wide range of acts involving the unauthorised use of another person's property are classified as property crimes. The categories of property offences are as follows:

- **Burglary:** Theft committed by breaking into a building without permission.
- **Theft:** This include car theft, pickpocketing, and shoplifting.
- **Fraud:** This is a broad term that includes identity theft, computer fraud, and advance fee fraud (419 scams).
- **Arson:** Is the intentional starting of fires on someone else's land.

- **Financial Crimes:**

Financial crimes are a broad category of unlawful behaviours that are driven primarily by the desire for financial gain. These types of crimes can happen in a variety of industries, such as government, business, banking, and investing institutions. Here are a few examples of frequent financial crime types:

- Processing money illegally in order to hide its source is known as money laundering.
- Embezzlement or misappropriation of money by personnel working for the government.
- Fake goods or currency production is known as counterfeiting.

- **Drug-Related Crimes:**

Crimes pertaining to drugs include any illicit activity associated with the manufacture, sale, or use of restricted substances. Drug trafficking, which entails the importation, exportation, or distribution of illicit narcotics, is a common example of this crime.

- **Cybercrimes:**

Criminal actions involving computers, networks, or digital devices are referred to as

cybercrimes. Hacking, phishing, identity theft, online fraud, cyberbullying, cyberterrorism and the dissemination of dangerous software (virus) are just a few examples of the various shapes these crimes can take.

- **Corruption:**

Corruption is one kind of crime that involves the misuse of authority for one's own benefit. It usually happens when people in positions of power take advantage of their responsibilities to get unofficial advantages—like cash, access to special opportunities, or other benefits. Typical corruption manifests itself as:

- **Bribery:** Giving or receiving bribes in exchange for services or favours.
- **Extortion:** Which is the unlawful taking of property or money by force
- **Nepotism:** Which is favouring friends or family in hiring or contract negotiations.

- **Environmental Crimes:**

Illegal activities that cause direct environmental harm are known as environmental crimes. The several categories of environmental crimes are as follows:

- Illegal logging is the practice of felling trees in protected areas without permission.
- Oil Theft which is a significant problem in the Niger Delta. Oil theft involves the illicit syphoning of oil from pipelines.
- Smuggling endangered species and their products (wildlife trafficking).

- **Terrorism:**

Terrorism is the use of force or threats to instill fear and achieve political, religious, or ideological goals. Unlike other crimes, which typically have a personal motive, terrorism aims to impact not only its immediate victims but also a broader audience example of this type of crime is insurgency. It often targets iconic sites or civilians in order to maximise its psychological impact.

- **Human Trafficking:**

Human trafficking is a serious and intricate criminal activity that involves using coercion, deception, or force to exploit people for commercial sex or other sorts of work. It is a serious worldwide problem that affects millions of people, mostly women and children, and a violation of human rights. The various forms of human trafficking are as follows:

- The exploitation of people for commercial sex known as "sex trafficking."
- Forced employment or servitude, including child labour, known as labour trafficking.

- **Electoral Crimes:**

Any illegal activity that tampers with the democratic process of elections is considered electoral crime. These offences seek to rig elections, compromise the fairness of the electoral process, and degrade public confidence in democratic institutions. The categories of electoral crimes are as follows:

- Vote buying is the practice of exchanging things or cash for votes.
- Theft or manipulation of electoral materials is known as ballot box snatching.

CAUSES OF CRIME IN NIGERIA

Ogbonnaya and Nnadi (2019) identified the following factors as the reasons for crime in Nigeria:

- **Socioeconomic Inequality:**

Nigeria's economic divide is a major factor in the country's high crime rate. Crime rates are high because of poverty, income disparity, and high unemployment. A dearth of job prospects pushes many people—especially young people—to turn to crime as a means of subsistence.

- **Corruption and Governance Issues:**

Law enforcement efforts are undermined and public trust in the justice system is eroded by widespread corruption and inadequate governance institutions. This results in a lack of deterrent and a sense of impunity for criminals, which encourages criminal activity.

- **Ethnic and Religious Tensions:**

Intergroup conflicts can occasionally be exacerbated by Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious environment and turn into criminal actions like looting, vandalism, and communal violence. The problem is made worse by political maneuvering along these fault lines.

- **Inadequate Law Enforcement:**

Inadequate funding, inadequate instruction, and corruption in law enforcement organizations limit their ability to effectively combat crime. This gives the impression that there is no law and encourages criminal activity.

- **Drug Abuse and Trafficking:**

Drug addiction and trafficking are on the rise, and this leads to a number of crimes, such as drug-related offences, violent crimes, and organized crime networks. These problems are made worse by flimsy legal frameworks and open borders.

- **Youth Unemployment and Marginalization:**

High rates of youth unemployment, together with feelings of exclusion and dearth of opportunity, encourage many young people to engage in criminal activity, such as theft, fraud, and cybercrime.

- **Rapid Urbanization and Overcrowding:**

Nigerian cities struggle with issues like slum living, poor infrastructure, and congestion. These elements foster an environment that is conducive to crime, such as robbery, theft, and gang activity.

- **Lack of Social Services:**

Social exclusion and despair are exacerbated by limited access to social support, healthcare, and educational opportunities, which pushes some people to turn to criminal activity in order to survive.

EFFECTS OF CRIME

Although everyone is affected by crime differently, there are some impacts that all people experience regardless of the type of crime. Crimes can significantly affect a person, a group of people, or society at large. Crime has negative social, emotional, and psychological effects in addition to causing fear, undermining trust, and upsetting the social order. It is essential to comprehend these consequences in order to create preventative, intervention, and rehabilitation programmes that work. These are the consequences of crime:

- **Economic effect:**

Theft, vandalism, and fraud are examples of crimes that cause immediate financial damages for victims, companies, and governments. These expenses consist of lost or stolen

property, attorney fees, and law enforcement charges. According to Smith (2018), there are other indirect economic costs associated with crime as well, like decreased property values, higher insurance premiums, lost productivity as a result of trauma or injuries, and the redirection of funds from worthwhile endeavours to criminal justice and crime prevention.

- **Social effect:**

Trust and communal cohesion can be undermined by crime. Fear of crime can cause social networks to disintegrate, people to become more alone, and social interactions to decline. According to Gracia (2020), stigmatization and discrimination against victims of crime can result in social isolation and marginalization for both people and groups.

- **Psychological and emotional effects:**

A wide range of psychological and emotional impacts, such as anxiety, despair, PTSD, terror, and feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness, are frequently experienced by crime victims. According to Johnson (2019), criminals may also experience psychological problems like regret, guilt, shame, and the long-term consequences of their engagement in criminal activity.

- **Health effect:**

Victims of some crimes, such as violent assaults or robberies, may sustain physical harm, become disabled, or experience long-term health effects. Trauma and stress associated with crime can have a major effect on mental health, exacerbating issues including substance misuse, anxiety disorders, depression, and suicide thoughts (Wilson, 2021).

- **Educational effect:**

Children's growth, scholastic achievement, and general well-being can be negatively impacted by exposure to crime, violence, and insecurity. It might also make people more likely to participate in dangerous actions or become delinquent. Perez (2022) asserts that community-level criminality can disturb learning environments, resulting in lower educational attainment, absenteeism, and dropout rates.

CASES OF CRIME IN NIGERIA

Nigerian crimes are as old as the nation. Numerous crimes, including cybercrimes, environmental crimes, white collar crimes, and violent crimes, have been committed in Nigeria over the years. According to Ukoji and Ukoji (2023), crimes ranging from ethnic, religious, and politically motivated violent crises have existed over time, as has the terrorist insurgency since 2009, which has all significantly contributed to Nigeria's lethal violence burden. Over 30,000 deadly occurrences and over 143,000 violent deaths have been reported in Nigeria since 2006. The main causes of these deaths include violent conflicts between farmers and herders in Nigeria's South-South, terror attacks in the North-East, armed banditry by criminal gangs in the North-West, separatist movements in the South-East, and general criminal activity in the South-West.

Similar to this, there have been reports of armed robberies in Nigeria, mostly in urban areas, that target people, companies, and financial institutions. High-profile incidents of kidnapping for ransom, involving the kidnapping of notable people and youngsters, have sparked worries about difficulties facing law enforcement and security. In the northeastern part of Nigeria, extremist organizations like Boko Haram and its offshoot divisions have caused extensive bloodshed, attacks on people, and displacement (Smith, 2019).

In Nigeria, instances of financial or white-collar crime have also increased. This crime has also been mentioned in a number of other slang situations, including identity theft, cyber

fraud, and fraud (419 schemes). Although this crime is not new in Nigeria, it has expanded its reach into the modern media landscape, affecting people and companies on a national and worldwide scale. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) of Nigeria has been working nonstop to combat this widespread crime; as a result, there have been over 976 convictions in 2020, 2220 convictions in 2021, and 3,785 convictions in 2022. A significant number of individuals are at the top of the wanted list in 2024 (EFCC, 2022).

There have also been several noteworthy cases of human trafficking in Nigeria. A total of 1,634 cases of human trafficking with victims occurred in Nigeria in 2023, according to reports from the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (2024) and the U.S. Department of State (2023). Of these, 841 victims were trafficked for sex, 543 for labour, and 250 victims were trafficked for unspecified purposes.

Nigeria has also seen a high rate of environmental crime. Illegal mining operations, especially in areas like Zamfara, Benue, Nasarawa, and Bauchi that have abundant natural resources like gold and oil, have been linked to social instability, war, and environmental damage. The explosion that occurred on January 16, 2024, in the Bodija neighbourhood of Ibadan, the state capital of Oyo, stands out as an example of environmental crime in Nigeria. According to state governor Seyi Makinde, the incident was caused by illegal miners who had stashed explosive devices in buildings.

Since Nigeria's independence, electoral crime has had a negative impact on the political system because it has always been a tool for determining who will have national authority. About 197 persons were named by the Independent National Electoral Commission to face charges related to electoral violations also, during the 2023 elections, the Nigeria Police Force arrested roughly 774 people for various electoral offences, and 215 case files were turned over to the commission (Habib, 2023). Crimes of this magnitudes have coexisted "peacefully" in Nigeria since the country's founding; cases of these crimes and more, including those whose names are still unknown, continue to rear their ugly heads.

HOW TO MITIGATE CRIMES IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is still plagued by severe crime, which jeopardizes the security and well-being of its citizens and prevents economic development. To solve this issue, a comprehensive plan involving social policy, participation from the community, law enforcement, and institutional improvements is required. Here are strategies to mitigate crimes in Nigeria, as stated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2019):

- **Enhancing Law Enforcement:**

The efficiency of law enforcement organizations in preventing crime can be enhanced by providing them with more resources, more training, and cutting-edge gear. Furthermore, encouraging coordination and cooperation across agencies might expedite efforts to combat criminal activity in various places.

- **Community Policing:**

By putting community policing programmes into place, law enforcement and the public can develop trust, which encourages residents to take an active role in attempts to prevent crime. Law enforcement can obtain important insights and assistance in their operations by incorporating locals in the identification and resolution of security threats.

- **Investing in Technology:**

The surveillance and monitoring skills of law enforcement agencies can be improved by embracing technological solutions like biometric identification tools, crime mapping

systems, and surveillance cameras. Finding crime hotspots and anticipating possible criminal activity can also be aided by utilizing artificial intelligence and data analytics.

- **Youth Empowerment Programmes:**

Giving young people opportunities through education, career training, and job placement initiatives can discourage them from committing crimes. When underlying socioeconomic issues like unemployment and poverty are addressed, young people's susceptibility to being recruited by criminal gangs is decreased.

- **Improving the Judicial System:**

Deterring crime requires judicial system reform to guarantee the prompt and equitable administration of justice. Enhancing the infrastructure of courts, accelerating the trial process, and fortifying legal frameworks can all help to boost public trust in the legal system and deter criminal impunity.

- **Combating Corruption:**

Effective crime prevention requires addressing corruption in law enforcement and other government organizations. Restoring public confidence and integrity in governance can be facilitated by putting anti-corruption policies into action, encouraging openness, and holding dishonest officials accountable.

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:**

Public education on safety measures, crime prevention tactics, and the repercussions of criminal activity can promote a law-abiding and civic-minded culture. Public relations efforts, neighbourhood outreach activities, and school-based projects can increase understanding and encourage constructive behaviour modification.

- **Addressing Drug Trafficking and Substance Abuse:**

Strong action against drug trafficking and substance misuse can contribute to a decrease in related crimes like property crime and drug-related violence. Providing support services to addicts and funding drug rehabilitation programmes can help lessen the negative societal effects of drug misuse in local communities.

- **Strengthening Border Security:**

Improving border security protocols to avert the entry of illicit firearms, narcotics, and human trafficking can destabilize criminal organizations and diminish transnational criminal activity. Effective border control requires sharing intelligence and resources with international partners and bordering countries.

- **Promoting Sustainable Development:**

Investments in sustainable development programmes over the long term are necessary to address the core causes of crime, which include social exclusion, inequality, and poverty. Prioritizing social welfare, employment, and infrastructure development can promote inclusive growth and lessen the socioeconomic gaps that encourage criminal activity.

SUMMARY

Crime in Nigeria remains a significant impediment to the nation's advancement, fueled by socio-economic disparities and institutional weaknesses. Despite ongoing efforts, its prevalence persists, necessitating comprehensive approaches to address root causes and mitigate impacts. Strengthening law enforcement, socio-economic empowerment, and anti-corruption measures are imperative. By prioritizing these remedies, Nigeria can aspire to

create a safer, more prosperous society and attract sustainable investment for long-term development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Federal Government of Nigeria should prioritize the enhancement of law enforcement agencies' capacity and resources to effectively combat crime across the nation. This includes investing in modern crime-fighting technologies, improving training programs for law enforcement personnel, and ensuring adequate staffing levels to address the various forms of criminal activities effectively.
- The government should implement comprehensive socio-economic development initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of crime, particularly poverty, unemployment, and social inequality.
- There is a pressing need for the government to strengthen anti-corruption measures and promote transparency and accountability in governance. This includes reforming existing anti-corruption agencies, enforcing stricter penalties for corrupt practices, and fostering a culture of integrity and ethical conduct within government institutions.

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