

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Exploring The Socio-Economic And Demographic Factors That Influence Crime Rate in Omuaran, Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria continues to struggle with pervasive poverty despite having plenty of people and material resources and a number of efforts targeted at tackling the causes of poverty in the country. The exponential rise in annual unemployment rates may be related to the rising number of graduates from various educational schools. Furthermore, the standard of living is alarmingly dropping till it is nearly nonexistent, which has caused a rise in adolescent criminal activity. In light of the aforementioned assertion, the goal of this study is to investigate the socioeconomic and demographic variables that affect the crime rate in the north-central region of Nigeria. In order to gather the data for this study, both primary and secondary sources were used. The strain theory was applied, and data were acquired by using a questionnaire in a survey design. The sample size was determined by using purposive and random sampling approaches, which resulted in the selection of 1400 respondents. The study suggests that the government, through its security agencies, should delve deeper into the effects of increasing unemployment on the crime rate and how it impacts the level of business activities in the region.

Keywords: Social, socio-economic, demographic factors, crime, crime rate

Introduction

In sociology, the idea of crime comprises a variety of viewpoints and lacks a generally agreed definition. At first glance, it may appear straightforward to categorise the crime as wrongdoing or to link it to unethical behaviour. On what constitutes ethical good or evil, there is, however, no universal agreement. Should every morally repugnant behaviour be classified as a crime? Similar to how not every crime qualifies as a moral wrong. According to the strict definition of law, a crime is the transgression of rules or regulations, for which a ruling body may finally impose a conviction (Fincknenauer, 2005). Prominent criminologists have often made an effort to go above the restrictions of the criminal code and create broader social definitions of crime. Crime isn't an action that violates a basic, universal human sensibility and is bad for society; instead, it's an action that a group of individuals who have the authority to impose their values on others believe is bad for society (Kamal Ahamed, 2021).

The term "crime" in the social and legal context refers to a set of circumstances involving acts that are considered punishable under criminal law, with the punishments meted out based on a judge or jury's verdict. Crime is negligent conduct that is punishable by fines, imprisonment, or even the death penalty in the context of criminal law (Damaska, 2008). Crime can be viewed from a regulatory perspective as behaviour that deviates from established norms, which are cultural standards outlining what is expected and customary of people. This perspective explores the complex realities that surround the idea of crime and seeks to understand how shifting social, political, psychological, and economic conditions have an impact on how crime is now seen.

It aims to comprehend how these elements affect the creation of legal definitions, tactics for law enforcement, and corrective actions done by society. For instance, certain behaviours may be "condemned" or "decriminalised" as societies change and political environments change, having a direct impact on crime rates, the allocation of resources to law enforcement, and public opinion as a whole (Adegoke, 2012). Overall, poverty is pervasive nationwide, resulting in detrimental effects on economic progress and manifesting in various criminal activities occurring throughout the country.

Since crime weakens social cohesion by eroding feelings of safety and security, the frequency of crime in the modern world is a severe cause for concern. The impact of crime on society varies depending on the kind and extent of criminal activity. McCollister, French, and Fang (2010) as well as White and Habibis (2005) contend that when crime rates spiral out of control, it poses a serious problem and a threat to the general populace. Crime has specific costs and repercussions for certain segments of the community that almost everyone is subject to. As countries undergo economic growth and development, it is projected that crime rates will decrease (Odumosu, 1999; Akpotu and Jike, 2004; Egunjobi, 2007).

Numerous factors, including poverty, social exclusion, income disparity, social and familial background, religious beliefs, unemployment, education, age, gender, race, urbanisation, and many other economic and socio-demographic characteristics, are strongly related to the causes of crime. According to numerous studies (Buonanno and Montolio, 2008; Gumus, 2004; Omotor, 2009; Kustepeli and Onel, 2006), these variables have a substantial impact on how people think and act, which determines whether they engage in criminal activity. As a result, neither economic nor governmental systems alone can explain crime. The fundamental causal elements cannot be totally divorced from sociocultural narratives, despite the fact that crime rates may vary throughout states. According to numerous research looking at the factors that influence crime, lower socioeconomic level people are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour or be involved in activities that are associated with crime. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine which socioeconomic and demographic factors, such as unemployment and poverty, are most responsible for the level of crime rates in the region of Nigeria's North-Central.

A brief review of literature

Crime is defined from a sociological point of view as an abnormal behaviour that deviates from accepted social norms (Kamal Ahamed, 2021). The expected patterns of behaviour in society are represented by these norms. This point of view takes into account the complex reality surrounding crime and aims to investigate how changing social, political, psychological, and economic elements may have an impact

on the evolving definitions of crime and influence societal reactions in terms of law and order, law enforcement, and corrective measures (Rasak & Okafor, 2016). The public's impression of the magnitude of a specific "crime problem" can also be affected by changes in the collection and/or interpretation of crime data.

The degree to which the government should use legal or social mechanisms to enforce or reinforce a specific societal norm is influenced by each instance of adapting to criminal statistics while taking into account people's everyday experiences. Society can direct and shape behaviour in a variety of ways without using the criminal justice system (Adewara et al., 2019). In circumstances when there is a lack of a definite agreement on a norm, it is possible that some observers will view the act of one party creating criminal legislation to restrict the acts of another party as an unfair restriction on the second party's rights. Consequently, regardless of whether the authorities really implement the contested law, the general public may have a lower regard for the law or laws in general.

Theoretical Framework

The study's foundation was Merton's (1968) Strain theory, which also took into account Durkheim's (1964) notion of anomie. According to Merton, when people struggle to accomplish their goals due to societal constraints, it can trigger criminal behaviour. So, according to the strain theory, criminal behaviour is a reaction to challenges that society or the government, whether deliberately or unknowingly, imposes. As a result, society may become chaotic, which may lead marginalised people to seek out illegal means of obtaining their needs (Merton, 1968).

According to the strain theory, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more prone to experience stress since they have fewer opportunities and resources at their disposal. The conflict results from their aspirations for financial achievement and the dearth of legal ways to accomplish it. As people turn to illicit means of achieving their objectives, including stealing or drug peddling, this strain may result in criminal behaviour. According to the hypothesis, people may react to stress in different ways depending on the options that are open to them. The chances of success for an individual might depend on a variety of variables, including educational attainment,

employment prospects, and social support systems. People with few options may behave criminally more frequently because they believe that doing so will help them achieve their objectives.

Methodology

The study, which was carried out in the Omu-Aran community in the Kwara State's Irepodun local government area in Nigeria's north-central region, used a survey research design. Purposive and straightforward random sampling approaches were used to calculate the study's sample size, which came to be around 1400. A systematic questionnaire that was broken up into several sections to properly meet the study objectives was used to collect the essential data. To supplement the original data gathered, secondary data from journals and newspapers were also used. The data was analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, such as frequency counts, percentages, bar charts, and pie charts.

Result

Table 1: Shows the Socio-Economic and Demographic Features of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	906	64.7
Female	494	35.3
Total	1400	100
Age		
18-24	98	7
25-31	411	29.4
32- above	891	63.6
Total	1400	100
Marital status		
Single	411	29.4
Married	941	67.2
Divorced/Separated	48	3.4
Total	1400	100
Ethnic Group		
Yoruba	1157	82.7
Igbo	48	3.4
Hausa	98	7
Others	97	6.9
Total	1400	100

Religion		
Christianity	1231	87.9
Islam	169	12.1
Total	1400	100
Educational Qualification		
Secondary	72	5.1
OND/NCE	388	27.7
BSC/HND	868	62.1
Others	72	5.1
Total	1400	100

Source: Field Survey (2022)

According to Table 1 above, 64.7% of the respondents were men, showing that men were more likely than women to participate in the study. This raises the possibility of a link between men's criminal propensities and gender. Additionally, because men are typically the household's principal breadwinners, their propensity for taking on responsibility may cause them to engage in illegal activity. Additionally, the data shows that 63.6% of the respondents were 32 years of age or older, showing that the majority of respondents were in the employable age range. This suggests that a sizeable portion of the responders were young people qualified to work. The chart also shows that 67.2% of the respondents were married, indicating that a large percentage of participants had a lot of responsibilities. The table showed that each ethnic group was equally represented and that 82.7% of the participants identified as Yoruba. This shows that Yoruba speakers made up the majority of the population living in the studied locations. In addition, 87.9% of these residents said they were Christians, while 12.1% said they were Muslims. Regarding educational background, 5.1% of the respondents had completed the SSCE, 27.7% had obtained either an OND or an NCE, 62.1% had earned either a B.Sc. or an HND, and 5.1% had completed other courses. These results suggest that the respondents as a whole had a high level of education. Please see Table 1 for more detailed information about the socioeconomic and demographic details of the participants.

Table 2: Crime Rate in Omu-Aran, Kwara State, North Central Zone of Nigeria

Level of crime rate	Frequency	Percent
High	869	62.1
Low	531	37.9
Total	1400	100

Source: Field Survey (2022)

It is clear from Table 2's conclusions that the investigated locations had a high crime rate of 62.1%. This is probably due to the pervasive problem of unemployment and the region's political leaders' disregard for it. These findings are supported by Omotor's 2009 research, which emphasises the connection between unemployment, social unrest, and increased insecurity.

Commonly committed crime	Frequency	Percent
Farm Crime	317	22.6
Murders	45	3.2
Rapes	22	1.6
Robberies	225	16.1
Violent attacks	22	1.6
Domestic Burglary	317	22.6
Motor Vehicle Theft	22	1.6
Motorcycle	181	12.9
Homicide	136	9.7
Violence	22	1.6
Child Sexual Abuse	91	6.5
Total	1400	100

Table 3: Commonly Committed Crime in Omu-Aran, Kwara State, North Central Zone of Nigeria

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 3 data gives a general summary of the most common criminal actions seen in the area under study. It demonstrates that domestic

burglary and farm crimes, which together account for the highest share (22.6%) of all recorded crimes, are the main crimes in this zone. Farm crimes include things like plant and oil theft, sheep rustling, and domestic burglary. Robberies (16.1%), motorbike theft (12.9%), homicide (9.7%), child sexual abuse (6.5%), and murders (3.2%) are not far behind. Rapes, violent attacks, car theft, and violence, on the other hand, are the least frequent, accounting for just 1.6% of all reported crimes.

The suggested conclusion from this crime pattern is that people responsible for the crimes in the zone have direct ties to domestic and agricultural offences. This is understandable given the agrarian nature of the area, where unemployed adolescents turn to criminal activity to meet their necessities. Due to the high crime rate in the area, one of the villages had to close an important commercial bank for almost three years, which had an adverse effect on the local economy.

Table 4: Socio-Economic and Demographic Factors Affecting Crime Rate in Omu-Aran, Kwara State, North Central Zone of Nigeria

Socio-Economic and Demographic factors	Frequency	Percent
Unemployment	677	48.4
Education Level	158	11.3
Ethnicity	203	14.5
Alcohol and Drug Abuse	114	8.1
Family Background	22	1.6
Bad Company	226	16.1
Total	1400	100

Source: Field Survey (2022)

The failure of the Nigerian government to address the challenges of poverty and unemployment among the people has resulted in violent crime. Youth unemployment and its relationship with attendant crime are part of major social problems affecting the growth and development of this country. Table 4 represents the socio-economic and demographic factors that affect the crime rate in the north-central zone of Nigeria.

In many areas of Nigeria, there is a serious problem with unemployment, and Kwara State is not an exception. Limited employment prospects, inadequate skill development, population increase, and the general health of the economy are among the factors for the community's 48.4% unemployment rate. It is difficult to obtain precise estimates for Omu-Aran unemployment rates without recent data. It is crucial to keep in mind that unemployment rates can change over time and can be impacted by global and local economic trends. Initiatives from the public and private sectors frequently play a role in efforts to solve unemployment. Promoting entrepreneurship, offering courses for skill development and vocational training, and luring investments to generate job possibilities are a few examples of these measures.

Omu-Aran educational level has increased. The state government has put in place a number of projects and policies to encourage learning and raise the rate of literacy. Omu-Aran has a number of public and private schools that serve the neighbourhood's needs for primary and secondary education. It is important to note that Kwara State's literacy rate is often higher than Nigeria's average. Despite this development, (11.3%) of the respondents believed that the educational level of young people is a contributing factor to communal crime. In the past, Omu-Aran has faced various security issues, including sporadic instances of criminal activity.

Omu-Aran is a settlement in the Kwara State region of Nigeria's North Central Zone. Omu-Aran is a diverse neighbourhood with inhabitants from various ethnic backgrounds, just like many other areas of Nigeria. Yoruba, Fulani, Nupe, Bariba, and other notable ethnic groups can be found in Kwara State, among others. It is critical to avoid generalising crime rates based just on ethnicity. According to the responses, (14.5%) of crimes in the neighbourhood are influenced by a person's ethnicity. Education levels, for example, can have a big impact on crime rates. When assessing the crime rates in any particular place, it is crucial to take these elements into account.

Any community, including Omu-Aran in Kwara State, Nigeria, might experience a major increase in crime rates as a result of alcohol and drug misuse. According to some respondents (8.1%), substance misuse, particularly alcohol and drug abuse, can raise crime rates for a number of reasons. Substance addiction can affect a person's cognitive

abilities, which can result in bad judgement and an increased chance of committing crimes; people who struggle with substance misuse frequently turn to unlawful means of income, such as theft, burglary, or drug dealing, to support their addiction; using certain drugs can increase anger and violence, increasing the likelihood of committing violent crimes; financial hardships, unemployment, and poverty brought on by substance use might lead to criminal activity.

Family and kinship relationships are highly valued in Nigerian society. Families often comprise close friends and blood relatives, and everyone in the family shares responsibility for each other's happiness and success. Traditional principles like esteem for elders and strong family ties are frequently retained. Family histories can, however, differ greatly based on elements including socioeconomic class, level of education, and cultural norms. Like many other communities, Omu-Aran deals with a variety of criminal issues, such as theft, fraud, cybercrime, armed robberies, kidnapping, and inter-communal disputes. However, crime rates can change dramatically among the nation's various communities and regions. As revealed by the finding, 1.6% of the respondents said that factors like family origins influence the crime rate in Omu-Aran. Omu-Aran experiences security and criminal justice issues much like any other neighbourhood. Numerous factors, including bad company, according to 16.1% of the respondents, can affect the level of crime in a specific location.

Conclusion

The study reveals that among the population of Omu-Aran in the north-central region of Nigeria, particularly among the youth, the high prevalence of unemployment and poverty, educational attainment level, ethnicity, alcohol and drug abuse, and family background all significantly contribute to their propensity towards criminal activities. This study offers insightful information about the key socioeconomic variables affecting the local crime rate. The findings show how widespread youth unemployment is in Omu-Aran's north-central region of Nigeria and provide pertinent data for the Nigerian police and other relevant authorities, both nationally and internationally, who could be interested in learning more about the local criminal activity trends.

Recommendation

To address and reduce crime rates in Omu-Aran, the following recommendations can be considered:

1. **Strengthen Law Enforcement:** Increase the visibility and efficiency of law enforcement organisations in Omu-Aran by increasing patrols, hiring additional officers, and providing the tools and training they require. This will speed up reaction times and discourage criminal activity.
2. **Promote community involvement and cooperation with law enforcement organisations:** Encourage the public to alert authorities about questionable activity. Create community programmes and neighbourhood watch groups to improve safety in their area and foster goodwill between the public and law enforcement.
3. **Public Awareness and Education:** Conduct public education programmes to inform locals about crime prevention techniques like locking their homes, protecting their possessions, and exercising caution in public areas. Inform the public of the value of coming forward with information regarding crimes and helping the police.
4. **Social Programmes and Youth Engagement:** Create and promote social programmes that give young people positive outlets, such as sports teams, career development programmes, and mentorship efforts. Positive youth engagement can assist in refocusing their attention away from criminal activity and foster a sense of community connection and accountability.
5. **Infrastructure Development:** Upgrade Omu-Aran's infrastructure, including its road systems, street lighting, and general urban setting. Infrastructure that is well-lit and maintained can deter criminal activity and enhance the community's overall safety and security.
6. **Stakeholder collaboration:** Encourage alliances between the local government, the business community, non-governmental organisations, and community leaders to jointly address issues relating to crime. Create forums for discussion and collaboration to create all-encompassing plans and solutions.

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