Crime and Criminology: The Roles of Women in Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

This study, investigated crime and criminology: the roles of women in Akwa Ibom State. The study adopted the survey esearch design. Ten Local government selected from 31 Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State. Thirty women were selected from each Local Government Area making a total of 300 women. In all, a total number of 300 women participated in the study. Two research instruments were used for data collection: Questionnaire on Role of Women in Crimes (r=0.74) and Questionnaire on Common Crimes in Akwa Ibom (r=0.76). Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage scores, mean and standard deviation. Findings of the study revealed that the weighted mean is 2.75, which was above the threshold of 2.50. This indicated that the selected women agreed all the stated above crimes were committed by criminals in Akwa Ibom State. Also, the result indicated a weighted mean of 2.38 which was below the threshold set at 2.50. This result implies that majority of the women played negative roles in crime and criminology in Akwa Ibom State. Based on the findings of this study, efforts to mitigate the rate of crimes of women should be achieved through moral reorientation of women. Women should play their roles as mothers to reduce peer influence in the cause of crime. Programmes should be organised for women on proper parenting so that they can instill discipline into the lives of the children. Parents should not allow their children to lack anything that is important to their lives. Women should be seen as an important part of the society and they should be accorded due respect. Government should raise the standard of living of poor families, reduce rate of unemployment and create more job opportunities.

Key words: Crime, criminology, roles of women, curbing of crimes

Introduction

In recent time, value system seems to be eroded due to the infiltration of foreign culture, advanced technology, civilisation and globalisation, social media, poverty, acceptance of foreign culture and religion (Okwilagwe 2013 & Sofadekan 2016; Akintunde & Olatunji, 2019). The western culture brings about changes in all aspects of life such as dressing, people now wear transparent dress which exposes their nakedness in the name of fashion. The mutual love of being one's brother's keeper has been replaced with self-interest which paves way for robbery and fraud. People are now looking for fast way to everything; they do not want to follow the normal protocol.

Crime is created by the law or is a product of the law. Where there is no law, there will be no crime; an act can only be regarded as a crime if there is a law that classifies it as such. The Oxford English Dictionary (2009) defined crime as an unlawful act punishable by the state. It is an act, which could be harmful to an individual, some individuals and the larger society. Through an established system of laws, the society defines what is and what crime is or is not. For an act to be an offence or crime, there must be an extant law prohibiting such an act. Consequently, crime occurs when an individual breaks or acts against the law. It could be an overt act, ommision or neglect that can result in punishment (Bolorunduro, 2019).

Crime in a broad sense is an act that violates a political or moral law or violation of the criminal law (Zems, 2013). It is an act of omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment. Tappan (1947) maintains that crime is an intentional act of omission or commission in violation of criminal law (statutory or case law), committed without defense or justification and sanctioned by the state as a Felony or misdemeanor (Reid, 2008). This means that an act of omission can only become a criminal act or criminal wrong if the act or omission is specifically prohibited by the criminal law. Omission to act he refer to failure to carry out a legal (not moral) duty imposed on someone by law which legal (not moral) duty imposed on someone by law which requires him to act in a particular case or manner. The term crime denotes an unlawful act punishable by a state.

Crime in terms of behaviour is an act of individuals to acquire resources from others by force, fraud or steal. Criminal acts do just the opposite of good. People who commit these acts intentionally harm others in other to satisfy their self interests. Conventionally, crimes are acts forbidden by act that can be punishable by imprisonment. The rising wave of crime in Nigeria has been blamed on the increasing level of unemployment (Bolorunduro, 2019). Thus, the idle youths tend to engage in illegal activities in order to meet up with contemporary trends. Suffice to say that the youths easily get enticed to riches as a result of the prevailing “get rich quick syndrome” that pervade the country. Hence, they tend to do whatever it takes to get rich quick. Therefore, the Nigeria's high rate of unemployment, especially the increasing rate of youth's unemployment is what majorly prompts the jobless youths in the country to resort to violent crime like banditry.

Prominent among these threats is the issues of organised crime (Okoli & Orinya, 2013). Organised crimes are high profile crimes which are often perpetrated through transnational syndication and

racketeering. Cases in point include terrorism, banditry, money laundry, and kidnapping. Globally, indications are rife to the effect that organised crimes are not only getting prevalent; indeed they are also getting sophisticated and consolidated and politicised. Inyang (2009) acknowledged that, a graduate who is unable to secure a job is psychologically bereft of other means of survival. Such situation the young person could develop a negative attitude towards society and attribute his failure to that society.

Furthermore, Inyang (2009) also believed that, the proliferation of arms as a result of political patronage of miscreant who were dumped after elections may indirectly encourage and enhanced kidnapping. Inyang likened today's kidnapping situation to the scourge of arm robbery in the early eighties where many young able-bodied men who fought during the Nigerian civil war were discharged and sent home with nothing. Meanwhile since the schools they left behind were destroyed and there were no jobs to engage them and keep them busy. Many of them consequently took to armed robbery, since as ex-soldiers they were armed with weapons, having acquired the skills and guns during the war. This is almost the same today as politicians employ most idle youths as political thugs and later dumped them after elections. Therefore, the youths (thugs) who have been abandoned by their masters after winning elections are now busy kidnapping innocent persons and relatives of those persons they surged to be wealthy.

Ibeanu (1997) affirmed that the politicians hired idlest persons for political thuggery and left them with unfulfilled promises. Affectedly, the used and dumped frustrated armed youths will have to figure out how to survive by abducting the relatives of their masters and vulnerable peoples as revenge (Ugwuoke & Ph, 2011). Perpetrators are people that are so desperate in their social and economic needs, in which the inequality among the poor and the rich is escalating, and the only possible means to acquire legal money is often difficult to attain; heinous crime's such as kidnapping appeared as the alternative venture to draw the government attention over the unbearable conditions (Nwaorah, 2009).

Despite the numerous measures taken by government at all levels and community leaders to prevent or reduce crimes in the society, much has not been achieved as there are still incidents of crimes in the society. Kidnapping, suicide bombing, cybercrimes, banditry, thuggery, election manipulation and rigging, robbery and vandalisation of public properties, among others are prominent in the society (Adetoro & Omiyefa, 2011; Oladiti, 2018). Societal vices are rampant in almost every part of the country. Sexual harassment and raping among the youth is becoming rampant which is not limited to youths alone.

Opportunities for criminal behaviour determine the rate of crime in the society. If such opportunities are denied for both males and females, crime will be very minimal. Hence, the society will be very safe and secured. When both males and females have equal and similar opportunities to commit crime, they are both likely to commit crime and may have similar patterns of crimes (Felson, 2002). Similarly, when there is a lacuna in the opportunity structures for men and women, there will be disparity in the crime rate of men and women.

As a way of putting an end to crime in the study, criminology is an interdisciplinary field of study that focuses on crime and the responses to crime. Criminology is the scientific study of nature, extent, management, causes, control, consequences, and prevalence of criminal behaviour, both on the individual and social levels. It is described as a scientific discipline which studies crime, response of the society on criminal acts, criminal behaviour, criminals, execution of sanctions, crime prevention, crime repression and law enforcement.

Criminology is a field primarily interested in acts constituted as crimes and the subsequent social responses to these criminal acts. It is an interdisciplinary field organised around the study of law and crime, incorporating contributions from other disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, political science and law (Durrant and Ward, 2015). While there has been a general consensus among scholars and researchers that criminology should include the study of law, the causes of crime, and the responses of society (including responses by citizens, criminal justice professionals and institutions) to criminal acts, there continues to be disagreement regarding what should be considered a crime and what specifically should be included under the purview of criminology (Durrant and Ward, 2015).

Efforts to addresss the problems of crimes have made government took a preventive measure of establishing Mass Mobilisation for Self-Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) in 1987 with the obligation of re-orientating the public about the national moral values in the country. Also, it is in a bid to alleviate various acts of indiscipline and moral decadence among the Nigerian youths that various programmes were put in place by successive governments in Nigeria. For instance, President Shehu Shagari Administration (1979-1983) introduced the Ethical Revolution; the Buhari-Idiagbon Administration (1984-1985) introduced the War Against Indiscipline (WAI). General Sani Abacha Administration (1993-1998) introduced the War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC).

In the same vein, the President Olusegun Obasanjo Administration (1999-2007) introduced both the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The Ibrahim Babangida Administration (1985-1993) introduced the Mass Mobilisation for Self-Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) which was later changed to the National Orientation Agency (NOA) in 1993 mainly to curb all forms of anti-social behaviours in the society (Wahab, 2011).

In spite of the numerous policies and programmes that have been formulated and implemented by successive governments, the country has experienced just a little transformation in the moral status of the ordinary citizen because there is less emphasis on roles of women in crimes and criminology. Women have always been considered as physically and mentally subordinate and unproductive to men. They are ignored due to the low status that the society accords them. Due to gender equality, women in law enforcement currently consistss of 12% police officers and 3% police leadership in the United States.

Research has shown that there are many advantages of having women among law enforcement agencies. Before 1990s, it was unlawful for women to be police officers. They were only allowed to work jails as cleaners. Lola Baldwin was the first sworn woman police officer in the United States in 1908. The advantages of having women among law enforcement agencies are trust and relationship building within the community, honesty and compassion, they do not use excessive force and they produce better crime results expecially in sexual assault cases.

Unarguably, women like their men have impacted many sectors in the country tremendously even when they were discriminated against in some parts of the country when it comes to education but this did not stop some women from pursing their academic goals and getting to the peak of their careers. Professor Oluyemisi Adefunke Bamgbose SAN, is a Professor of Criminal Law and Criminology. She is the first and only female Professor of Law in Nigeria to be conferred with the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria.

Women are seen as physically and emotionally weak. So, they are considered to be protected by the criminal justice system rather than being punished. Most time, the sex of an offender plays an essential role in police decisions. Women are found to be more likely to show behaviour that police would not consider to be offensive. Police categorise women as unserious and non-persistent offenders. So, they are less likely to be arrested by the police (Bolorunduro, 2019). They deal with them more leniently than they do with men. It has been discovered that women are cautioned rather than arrested for indictable offences more than men.

Contrary to the above assertion by Bolorunduro (2019), studies have shown that women are now being arrested for crimes like fraud, stealing, child trafficking, drug trafficking, kidnapping and so on. Adler (1975) asserted that involvement of women in criminal behaviour is on the increase especially where there are changes in their social roles. Shifts in sex roles make women more willing to participate in crime. The objective changes in women's situation particularly their greater labour force participation make more criminal opportunities available to women.

In Nigeria, the issue of crimes has been a gender issue, women are no longer playing a role of second fiddle, they now enagage in crimes which men engage in for them to make a living or to control the family especially where the breadwinner had died because of the difficulty in achieving these goals, the tendency of criminality becomes paramount in women circle. Felson (2002) noted that the drive for female and male crime is similar, while Blanchette and Brown (2006) argued that the motivating factors that lead female criminals to criminal acts may be different. Common risks factors for male and female criminals are poverty, childhood abuse, peer influence, relationship instability, among others. These factors are called gender-neutral risks and they may happen in distinct ways for the female criminals.

Women as social being portraying certain characteristics, hence more criminally inclined behaviours are found in female than male counterparts. If crime is to be explained merely by primitive traits, female crime would be greater than male crime because females are less advanced than males. Evidences have shown that hormonal changes in women which are related to the menstrual cycle increase the livelihood of criminal behaviour during pre-menstrual and menstrual days. Although not all women commit crimes at these times but hormonal changes may make women who find themselves in particular circumstances to engage in behaviour that violates the law.

Women are to inculcate moral lessons into the lives of the children from the beginning of their lives because moral decadence will lead to collapse of systems, structures, agencies and programmes (Iremeka, 2007). Morality has thus become an elusive substance in the society with great effects on almost all aspects of human life because women have failed to perform their responsibilities. Women are supposed to teach their children the basic fundamental aspect of their culture and the values that are held in high esteem by the society. The emergence of television and social media which exposes both parents and children to foreign cultures and actions is another major setback to our values which reduce one-on-one interaction at home; people are busy with Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and others (Museka and Taringa, 2014). The social media has become an avenue to pose nude pictures and video, pornography, immoral music, lyrics and rhythms. Handsets have become instrument of examination malpractices in examination hall (Onah & Nche, 2014).

Women that are supposed to inculcate the right values into the lives of their children have been found to engage in frauds and related crimes. Rotimi (1993) suggested that when women commit certain crimes, extra judicial measures may be taken to punish them, they may be ridiculed, embarrass or other forms of traditional measures may be adopted. Criminal laws are sex blind. Most laws do not have regard for sex, they focus on criminals and not the sex of the criminals and it is expected to be apllied for both male and female. However, in reality, the interpretation and application of some laws is not sex blind; many laws are most applied to members of a particular sex. For instance,

only men can be and are mostly convicted for rape in Nigeria, while only women are convicted for prostitution. This study therefore, investigated crime and criminology: the roles of women in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

Crime is an act that violates a political or moral law or violation of the criminal law. It is an act of omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment. Despite numerous efforts that have been made by government and community leaders to reduce or put an end to crimes in the society, much has not been achieved as there are still incidents of crimes such as kidnapping, suicide bombing, cybercrimes, banditry, thuggery, election manipulation and rigging, armed robbery and vandalisation of public properties among others in the society. Studies have shown that women also enagage in all these crimes. Involvement of women in criminal behaviour is on the increase especially where there are changes in their social roles. Shifts in sex roles make women more willing to participate in crime. As a way of addressing this problem, scholars and researchers have carried out numerous studies but with less research focus on crime and criminology: the roles of women especially in Akwa Ibom State. Therefore, this study, investigated crime and criminology: the roles of women in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

This study answered the following research question:

1. What are the common crimes committed in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What are the roles of women in crime and criminology?

Significance of the Study

Findings of this study revealed crime and criminology: the roles of women in Akwa Ibom State thereby showing the roles played by women in crime and criminology in the study area. Also, findings of this study would provide feedback to Akwa Ibom State Government on the appropriate steps to be taken in curbing crimes in the state. Citizens and traditional rulers would benefit from this study as it would acquaint them with the effectiveness of women in committing crimes. Also, the study add to the pool of research on crimes and criminology.

Containment Theory of Crime

This study is anchored to the Containment Theory of Crime. It is an interdisciplinary theory which is believed to be one of the foremost social control theories. It is a nuance of the Social Control Theory because it focuses on what puts an end or disallow people from committing crime. The theory became famous in the 1950's and 1960's and since then, it has become a theory to be reckonned with in the field of criminological theory (Flexon, 2010). The Containment Theory of Crime asks and addresses the salient questions such as why and how crime can be avoided by people?

It was suggested that self-concept is an important factor in iluminating the choice among available options of behaviour. A favourable and good self-concept directs and pushes an individuals towards law-conforming behaviour, but on the other hand, an unfavourable or bad self-concept directs and pushes him towards delinquent behaviour. The control is divided into: inner control and outer control; the balance of these parts will determine the behaviour of an individual.

The theory argues that there are two mechanisms to prevent and control criminal behaviour in the society-push and pull and each factor has its own external and internal factors. According to the Containment Theory of Crime, crime is a force of interplay between the push and pull factors. The theory believes that all human beings have the urge to engage in criminal behaviour. However, this urge could be resisted by two buffers, that is, the inner which is internal and the outer which is the external containment of the push and pull factors.

The theory further suggests that people can be insulated against crime if the pull force is stronger than the push force. That is, people will refrain from criminal activities by containing their impulses, but if the push force is stronger than the pull force, then it will be very difficult to retract one from committing crime. The push and pull have both internal and external factors. The internal pull-strong self-control, ego, high frustration tolerance and management, high sense of responsibility, high moral and religious values while the external pull includes consistent moral value models, effective supervision and control from other family members or society supportive group and so on. The internal push includes greed, notion of inferiority complex, hostility, tension and frustration while the external push includes poverty, unemployment, low status, lack of opportunity, family conflict, family breakdown and bad friends.

This theory is relevant to this study because there is discrepancy in male and female crime rate in Nigeria due to the interplay between the pull and push factors. The pull factor of males seems to outweigh the push factor in females because males are typically more openly aggressive than females.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. Ten Local government selected from 31 Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State. Thirty women were selected from each Local Government Area making a total of 300 women. In all, a total number of 300 women participated in the study. Questionnaire on Role of Women in Curbing Crimes and Questionnaire on Common Crimes in Akwa Ibom were subjected to face and content validity to ascertain clarity, relevance

and adequacy. To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, they were administered to 50 women in an area that was not part of the study. Questionnaire on Role of Women in Crimes (r=0.74) and Questionnaire on Common Crimes in Akwa Ibom (r=0.76). Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage scores, mean and standard deviation.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the common crimes committed in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1: Common crimes committed in Akwa Ibom State

S/N.	Statements	Mean	SD
1.	Kidnapping is one of the crimes that people are committing in Akwa Ibom State	2.69	0.86
2.	Cybercrimes are one of the crimes people are committing by some people in Akwa Ibom State	2.93	0.76
3.	Cultism is one of the crimes that some people are committing in Akwa Ibom State	2.61	0.89
4.	Armed robbery is part of crimes that some people are committing in Akwa Ibom State	2.54	0.98
5.	Rape and theft are parts of the crimes that criminals are committing in Akwa Ibom State	2.96	0.87
Weighted mean = 2.75			
Threshold = 2.50			

Table 1 revealed that the weighted mean is 2.75, which is above the threshold of 2.50. This indicates that the selected women agreed all the stated above crimes were committed by criminals in Akwa Ibom State. It further indicated that the five items with mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 were agreed upon by the respondents as crimes committed in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question 2: What are the roles of women in crime and criminology?

Table 2: Roles of women in crime and criminology

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. D.
1	I educate my people on why they should not engage in crimes.	-	7 (28%)	7 (28%)	11 (44%)	1.84	.85
2	I enage in different crimes.	3 (12%)	7 (28%)	6 (24%)	9 (36%)	2.16	1.06
3	I give appropriate punishment to my children when they commit crime.	4 (16%)	7 (28%)	9 (36%)	5 (20%)	2.40	1.00
4	I do not encourage people to attend religious programmes.	1 (4%)	9 (36%)	10 (40%)	5 (20%)	2.24	.830
5	I do not allow people closer to me to keep bad company of friends.	4 (16%)	5 (20%)	5 (20%)	11 (44%)	2.08	1.15
6	I monitor what my children watch on television.	6 (24%)	3 (12%)	11 (44%)	5 (20%)	2.40	1.08
7	I do not inculcate moral lessons into the lives of the children from the beginning of their lives	13.6%)	5 (22.7%)	10 (45.5%)	4 (18.2%)	2.31	.945
8	I always violate the laws of the society.	7 (28%)	7 (28%)	9 (36%)	2 (8%)	2.76	.969
9	I train people on how to enagage in different crimes	9 (36%)	3 (12%)	10 (40%)	3 (12%)	2.72	1.10
10	I counsel my children on the type of role model they should have.	2 (8%)	11 (44%)	10 (40%)	2 (8%)	2.52	.770
11	I like people engaging in robbery.	2 (8%)	9 (36%)	6 (24%)	8 (32%)	2.20	1.00
12	I counsel people on why they should refrain from cybercrimes.	1 (4%)	10 (40%)	10 (40%)	4 (16%)	2.32	.802

13	I listen to programmes that will make me engage in cybercrimes	5 (20%)	4 (16%)	6 (24%)	10 (40	2.16	1.17
14	I discourage from being their brother's keeper	3 (12%)	7 (28%)	5 (20%)	10 (40%)	2.12	1.09
15	I do not promote love among my children and their friends	4 (16%)	7 (28%)	5 (20%)	9 (36%)	2.24	1.12
16	I ensure that people around me are too desperate in their social or economic need	5 (20.8%)	6 (25%)	7 (29.2%)	6 (25%)	2.41	1.10
17	I encourage the spirit of self -interest in people	4 (16%)	10 (40%)	6 (24%)	5 (20%)	2.52	1.00
18	I neglect my responsiblities as a mother	5 (20%)	8 (32%)	8 (32%)	4 (16%)	2.56	1.00
19	I always affect the lives of my neighbours negatively.	6 (24%)	6 (24%)	11 (44%)	2 (8%)	2.64	.952
20	I instill discipline into the lives of my children	7 (28%)	10 (40%)	7 (28%)	1 (4%)	2.92	.862
	Weighted mean = 2.38; Threshold = 2.50						

Table 2 shows the roles perform by women in crimes in Akwa Ibom State. The result indicates a weighted mean of 2.38 was below the threshold set at 2.50. This result implies that majority of the women played negative roles in crime and criminology in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 revealed that the selected women agreed all the stated above crimes were committed by criminals in Akwa Ibom State. This is in line with the findings of Adetoro and Omiyefa (2011) and Oladiti (2018) who reported in their separate studies that kidnapping, suicide bombing, cybercrimes, banditry, thuggery, election manipulation and rigging, robbery and vandalisation of public properties, among others are prominent in the society. This is contrary to the findings of Wahab (2011) who reported that National Orientation Agency (NOA) curb all forms of anti-social behaviours in the society.

Table 2 revealed that majority of the women played negative roles in crime and criminology in Akwa Ibom State. This is similar to the study of Adler (1975) who reported that involvement of women in criminal behaviour was on the increase especially where there are changes in their social roles. Also, Blanchette and Brown (2006) revealed that the motivating factors that lead female criminals to criminal acts may be different. This is against the study of Bolorunduro (2019) who revealed that women committed lesser crimes than men; that the causes of crime are many and multi-dimensional depending on the situation such criminal found himself or herself; that no differential punishment was given to either sex of the inmates. Criminologists agree that globally there is gender gap in crime; that men commit more than women. Men's crime rates are higher than women's crime rate and this is consistent for all categories of crimes.

Conclusion

The study has shown that women played negative roles in crime and criminology in Akwa Ibom State. Findings of this study have provided a better understanding of crime and criminology: the roles of women in Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, efforts to mitigate the rate of crimes of women should be achieved through moral reorientation of women. Women should play their roles as mothers to reduce peer influence in the cause of crime. Programmes should be organised for women on proper parenting so that they can instill discipline into the lives of the children. Parents should not allow their children to lack anything that is important to their lives. Women should be seen as an important part of the society and they should be accorded due respect. Government should raise the standard of living of poor families, reduce rate of unemployment and create more job opportunities. Women should be given the same opportunity with men.

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