

MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR CROSS-BORDER CRIMES IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF OKE-OGUN PEOPLE OF SOUTH WESTERN NIGERIA

Oladeji Matthew Olaniyi

Abstract

This study was carried out among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria, to investigate the motivational factors for crimes across border; reasons why in spite of government huge investment on security agencies, their performance seems to be ebbing; and to suggest strategies for curbing identified crimes. The main instruments used in this study were structured questionnaire, key informant method and in-depth interview. The study revealed that smuggling activities are rampant in the area owing to factors such as porosity of the border, inadequate security personnel at border post, government under-funding of security agencies manning border posts, corrupt practices of the security personnel and collusion of border town people with the smugglers. In addition, factors like unemployment, economic hardship and misplaced sense of value are instrumental to cross border crimes in Nigeria. Attitudinal change against conniption, reorganization of security agencies and enabling economic environment are some of the suggested solutions to arresting the unfavourable crime tide.

Introduction

The myriad of problems relating to heinous crimes like armed robbery, assassinations, ethnic and religious clashes and general insecurity in the nation as widely reported in the National Dailies and Weekly Magazines present a picture of anarchy in the country. For instance, *Nigerian Tribune* editorial comment of Tuesday May 9, 2002 observed that "the rate of criminal tendencies in Nigerian society today has assumed an alarming and worrisome dimension. Criminals in the country are becoming more daring and sophisticated in their evil devices and ability to circumvent detection. In fact, most of them carry out their dastardly and nefarious activities with such an unreserved impunity that presents a picture of anarchy in the country" (Oladeji, 2004:127). This scenario corresponds-with Ahire's observation that "Nigerian society is currently undergoing a ravaging crime revolution whose key highlights include an unprecedented wave in the forms of assassinations, ritual murders and especially armed robbery, a staggering level of official corruption, police collusion with criminals and actual involvement in criminality" (Ahire,1994).

Another dimension to this ravaging crime revolution in Nigeria, which has not received much attention from criminologists, is crimes across border, of which smuggling is paramount. Though, various security measures are put in place, by the government to checkmate the arbitrariness of the criminals, the tide tends to be rising.

Akano (1986) identifies smuggling as one of the commonest crimes across Nigerian borders, and indeed as rampant in the West-Africa sub-region. He identifies two causes of smuggling, especially since 1974, namely; the protectionist policies of successive Nigerian governments and the over active import demand preferences, especially of the middle class elites, have provided a congenial atmosphere for illegal commodity trade to blossom over the years.

Law enforcement agencies such as the Police, Customs Service, Courts, Prisons, State Security Service, are set up for the purpose of enforcing conformity to the norms of the land. It is disheartening however, to see that many crimes are not reported, worse still,- many of the reported cases are not investigated to logical conclusions. Consequently, the perpetrators could not be brought to book. In addition, those who are in control of political and economic resources violate the laws of the land systematically with recklessness, without being punished.

In the light of the above, this paper has its objectives as follows: identification of various criminal activities across Nigerian borders, investigation of motivational factors, assessment of current preventive mechanism and suggestion of strategies for combating, preventing and controlling crimes at Nigerian borders.

Literature Review

Crime is a worldwide phenomenon. Therefore, its commission and reports transcend racial, national and socio-cultural dimensions (Oladeji, 2003:13). Interestingly, one unique finding of many crime-related studies is the observed relationship between crime and age on the one hand, and crime and the variable gender on the other hand. Heidensohn (1985) finds out that evidence from self-reported crimes and of victim or observer recorded offences strongly suggest that crime is an activity carried out by the youths and the young adult. In addition, crime ratio (proportion of men to women in offences) varies by offence. Convictions for serious offences in recent years show that over 80% have been male. Heidensohn (1985) buttresses this assertion saying, there are far fewer women and girls in custody than there are males. According to her, this pattern somewhat varies over time and place and it is remarkably stable.

The findings of Bilton et al (1996) and Gove (1985) corroborate these patterns. Official statistics suggest that young people, majority of who are male, engage mostly in crime. They go further to state that statistics also suggest that males commit more offences than females in all age groups. In addition, virtually all forms of deviance that involve substantial risk and/or physically demanding behaviour occurs mainly among young persons. Hirschi and Gottfredson (1990) conclude that these patterns hold in a wide variety of societies.

Adedokun (2002) observes that people who engage in criminal activities in Nigeria are mainly youths whose age range falls between 18 and 30. They are mainly dropouts from school, marginalized youths, the unemployed, people from broken homes and those who are deserted by society. According to him, the increasing rate of crime could not be separated from the social menace of unemployment in the society. He concludes that many idle youth have at various times been arrested and prosecuted as the brains behind most crimes in Nigeria. In addition, Coomassie (1996) identifies factors that have continuously worsened crime wave in Nigeria as "get rich syndrome", depressed economy, use of hard drugs, unemployment, poor home up-bringing, ostentatious living, obstruction of justice, loss of confidence in law enforcement agencies, poor conditions of service of law enforcement personnel, the negative attitude of mass media and increasing involvement of out-laws-in uniform.

However, Merton's interpretation of crime, which links criminality to other types of deviant behaviour, similarly emphasizes the normality of the criminal (Merton, 1957). He modifies the concept of anomie to refer to the strain put on individuals' behaviour when accepted norms conflict with social reality. He posits that crime and delinquency grow out of a contradiction between ends, in the form of cultural values, and the means, which the social structure provides for achieving them.

In most industrial societies, generally held values emphasize material success, and the means of achieving it are supposed to be self-discipline and hard work. Accordingly, people who really work hard can succeed, no matter what their starting point in life. Merton (1957), however, asserts that this idea is not in fact valid, because most of the disadvantaged people are given only limited conventional opportunities for advancement or none at all. Consequently, as long as the economically disadvantaged people stick to the rules and obey the norms, they will experience frustration because they will fail to achieve wealth, happiness, fame, comfort, influence, and all the other things socialization has taught them to value (Rodney 1981). In this situation, Merton posits that there is great pressure to try to get ahead by any means, legitimate or illegitimate. He then concludes that deviance is a by-product of economic inequalities.

Russell (2001) observes that the commission of cross-border crimes has been greatly facilitated by modern mode of transportations, communications, banking and information processing. What should be the fundamental issue in crime then is how to fashion out social control policy that can adequately prevent it from becoming pathological. This is particularly important since societies literally could not function if massive number of people defy standards of appropriate conduct. On appropriate method of social control, Adedokun (2002) suggests that it is not the severity but certainty of punishment that can deter conscious criminal acts, like armed robbery and smuggling. He affirms that only consistency and rigour of enforcement could reduce crime commission. That is, that a person who commits crime will almost surely be arrested, tried and if convicted, punished.

Howbeit, Blagg and Smith (1989) have a different view. They maintain that, the most promising approach to crime control is to reduce opportunities for crimes to be committed with reasonable prospects from the offender's point of view success. This crime-as-opportunity thesis

in agreement with the idea that the offender is rational and calculating; therefore, efforts should be directed, not to change the offender, but the environment. They are of the opinion that changing the environment might be achieved through increasing security or intensifying surveillance or by some combination of the two.

Methodology

The major instruments used in this study are structured questionnaire, key informant method and in-depth interview. The study was conducted in Oke-Ogun area of South -Western Nigeria. The area covers about one-third of the land mass and about one-fifth of the population of Oyo state (National Population Commission, 2000). Three hundred (300) questionnaires were administered, but only 220 (forming 73.3%) were returned. Of these 220 questionnaires, 143 were administered on border town dwellers, who were randomly sampled while the remaining 77 were purposively administered on those who engage in illegal activities across Nigerian borders. The respondents consisted of male and female, young and old, as well as residents with and without formal education.

Twenty (20) key informants were used. Five (5) of them, one each, from Customs Service, Immigration Department, The Police, Nigerian Army and State Security Service were selected. The remaining fifteen (15) were purposively selected from among petroleum dealers, textile merchants, "tokunbo" drivers and traffickers in children, all of who transact business across Nigerian borders, along Oke- Ogun area of South Western Nigeria.

There were two sets of questionnaire: "Format A" was specifically designed for border village and town dwellers; and "Format B" was administered to those that transact illegal businesses across Nigerian borders in the area. The questionnaire schedules consisted Sections A and B, stuffed with open-ended and close-ended questions. Section "A" contained questions on socio-economic status and demographic characteristics of the respondents. On the other hand, Section B contained questions bordering on the subject matter of the research such as: frequently committed crimes in the area, motivating factors for criminal tendencies, perception of law enforcement agencies' efficiency, perception of crimes across borders, recipe for prevention of crimes, attitude and treatment accorded smugglers by border town and village dwellers.

Trained research assistants, who are junior colleagues and students of the researcher, were used to administer the questionnaires.

Analysis and Findings

Simple statistical techniques were employed in the analysis and interpretation of data. The use of cross tables, frequency distribution and percentages were employed to examine simple associations between variables.

Table 1: Perception Of Common Crimes Across Nigeria Borders
(Border Town Dwellers)

S/no	Types of crime	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Armed robbery	-	-
2	Smuggling	117	81.8
3	Currency Trafficking	16	11.2
4	Child trafficking	10	7.0
5	Others	-	-
	Total	143	100%

Source: Field Survey, February 2003.

Table 1 indicates that the commonest crime along Nigerian borders in Oke-Ogun area is smuggling activities. While majority (81.8%) of the respondents was of the opinion that smuggling is the most prevalent crime across the border, slightly more than one-tenth (11.2%) of the respondents asserted that currency trafficking is a common crime along Nigerian borders and a small proportion (7%) of the respondents maintained that child trafficking is the commonest crime.

Table 2: Motivating Factors for Engaging in Crimes Across Border (Border Town Dwellers)

S/no	Factors	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Economic gain	66	30.0
2	Economic hardship	42	19.1
3	Unemployment	74	33.6
4	Group/Environmental influence	10	4.5
5	Effectiveness of security officers at the border	9	4.1
6	Nearness to border	17	6.4
	Missing cases	5	2.3
	Total	220	100

Source: Field Survey, February 2003.

The major factor inducing crimes across Nigerian borders is economic in nature. From Table 2, majority of the respondents (82.7%) were of the opinion that unemployment; economic hardship and economic gains are the factors motivating people into illegal businesses across Nigerian borders. Only 4.5% and 6.4% of the respondents maintained that group/environmental influence and nearness of Oke-Ogun area to neighbouring countries respectively, are responsible for criminal activities across the nation's border. Similarly, 4.1% of the respondents accounted for those who indicated that ineffective security network at the border is responsible for crimes across border.

In tandem with this finding, of the seventy-seven (77) respondents reached for this survey, who engaged in illegal activities, 64 of them, representing 83.1%, affirmed that they were motivated into their present businesses for economic reasons (unemployment, economic hardship and economic gain). Only 10.4% of the respondents revealed that nearness of their place of residence to the neighbouring countries informed their decisions to take to illegal business across the border.

Table 3 Factors Responsible For Increased Smuggling Activities (Border Town Dwellers)

S/no	Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Ban on importation\Harsh port regulation	61	42.6
2	Inferior or lack of equivalent home-made goods	29	20.3
3	Addiction to foreign tastes	34	23.8
4	Poor Economy	8	5.6
5	Others	2	1.4
	Missing cases	9	6.3
	Total	143	100,0

Source: Field Survey, February 2003.

Table 3 shows that 42.6% of the respondents were of the opinion that, ban on importation of certain items and/or harsh port regulations are responsible for increased smuggling activities. Similarly, 20.3% of the respondents believed that non-availability of home-made equivalence of banned goods as well as production of sub-standard goods, which could not compete favourably with foreign goods, by domestic industries are responsible for increased smuggling activities. Those who agreed, that addiction of Nigerians to foreign-banned-goods is responsible for soaring rate of smuggling, accounted for 23.8% of the respondents. Other respondents affirmed that poor economy; unemployment, poverty level and harsh economic conditions are the root causes of crimes in general and increased smuggling activities in particular.

Table 4: Recipe For Prevention Of Crimes Across Border

S/no	Recipe	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Establishment of industries/ creation of employment	95	43.2
2	Relaxation of post rules	4	1.8
3	Communal effort	28	12.7
4	Better condition of service for Law	68	30.9
	Missing Cases	25	11.4
	Total	220	100.0

Source: Field Survey, February 2003,

As shown in table 4, majority of the respondents (43,2%) asserted that the only panacea to combating, preventing and controlling crimes at Nigerian borders is to establish more industries, which will produce high quality goods that could compete favourably with foreign goods, and at moderate prices.

Those who believed that better condition of service for law enforcement agents will curb their ineffectiveness, thus reducing incentives for those crossing borders illegally, were 30.9% of the respondents. They offered prompt payment of salaries and good allowances for these security personnel, as a way of arresting the ugly situation.

Others, 12.7% of the respondents, suggested that the cooperation of law the community dwellers with the enforcement agents is the quickest way to nip the pin of these crimes in the bud. Only 1.8% respondents suggested that harsh port regulations should be relaxed to make Nigerian ports more attractive than neighbouring countries.

Discussion of Findings

The research revealed that the major crimes rampant across Nigerian border among the people of Oke-Ogun area of South Western Nigeria are smuggling, child trafficking and currency-trafficking. The respondents observed that cigarettes, arms and ammunitions, electrical and electronic gadgets also come from neighbouring countries into this side of the country.

The security agents: Immigration Department, Police Officer, State Security Service Department and a member of the Armed Forces, who was once a member of Special Petroleum Task Force, all affirmed that smuggling of petroleum, textile material, arms and ammunitions, currencies and illegal entry of aliens without documentation, including child trafficking are the crimes rampant in the study area.

This study further revealed that the motivational factors culminating in criminal tendencies across Nigerian borders are multifarious. For instance, the security officers working along the borders believed that porosity of Nigerian borders along the study area plays no small role in encouraging criminal tendencies. Some of these security agents, used for in-depth interview, blamed the porosity of the border on shortage of personnel, lack of logistic support, lack of joint operations by men of the Custom Service, Immigration Department, The Nigeria Police "and other security outfits working along the border. The lapses are hinged on government under funding of these Para-military agencies.

Similarly, the respondents; both border town/village dwellers and those engaged in illegal business across borders, confirmed that economic factors: economic gain, unemployment, as well as economic hardship, environmental factors and ineffectiveness of security officers at the border posts are the prime reasons for engaging in crimes across border. In addition, nearness to border is indicated as a factor inducing people to engage in cross border crimes.

The increasing rate of crime could not be separated from social menace of unemployment in the society. Many idle youths have at various times been arrested and prosecuted as the brains behind most crimes in Nigeria (Adedokun, 2002). Poverty breeds crime because it is always difficult to control crime where poverty is rife and basic necessities of life are unaffordable. This position agrees perfectly with Merton's theory of anomie, most especially as it relates to the 'innovators' who accept the goals but reject the prescribed societal means of achieving the goals.

Misplaced sense of value is another motivating factor making people to engage in criminal activities across border. A society that honours drug barons, child traffickers, smugglers and criminals but covertly looks down on or encourage its citizens to ridicule people looking for honest means of livelihood 'cannot but be riddled with criminal activities.

Again, the study has shown that the security agencies in Nigeria, as presently constituted, are ill equipped and psychologically unprepared for the difficult task of crime detection and control. Majority of the respondents rated the security agencies concerned with border security as corrupt and inefficient. The smugglers interviewed revealed that there are agreed unofficial rates they pay to each

category of security outfit manning the border posts to facilitate their passage. There are many unscrupulous officials who connive with criminals to sabotage the effort of government at crime prevention. Furthermore, the law enforcement agents used as key informants revealed that there is gross shortage of requisite number of security personnel to man the various border routes in Nigeria. Mrs.Nwizu Uzoamaka, the Nigerian Immigration Service boss, during the Immigration Service Retreat in 2002 requested from the Federal Government an approval to recruit 10,000 officers and men within the next 3 years to man Nigeria's 962, 432 square kilometers of geographical terrain. In fact, modem communication equipment and sophisticated weapons with which to confront and crack down criminals are non-existent.

Moreover, there is no approved border post in the whole of Oke-Ogun area; there are only patrol bases, which are grossly inadequate. Since there are several unmanned border routes connecting the country to several other neighbouring countries, it is difficult for the law enforcement agencies to prevent illegal activities across the border thoroughly.

Recommendations

First, there is the need for attitudinal change against corruption on the part of Nigerians. Corruption is deleterious to growth as well as to crime prevention. The situation where law enforcement agents collect bribes and look away from criminal acts in the country is untidy.

This could be rectified, if there is reinvigoration and adequate funding of the intelligence units to be able to fight crime proactively. As Comassie (1996) notes, there should be adequate welfare package and logistic support for law enforcement agents to enhance their effectiveness. By this, Comassie refers to transportation for patrols, effective communication and appropriate intelligence outfit to support their operations. Well-equipped law-enforcement agencies whose members are adequately housed would more likely be dedicated and alive to their duties than otherwise.

On the part of the citizens, all hands must be on deck in terms of vigilance and prompt reporting of untoward activities to the law enforcement agents in their areas. The press should also cooperate with the law enforcement agents in the task of enlightening the members of the public about the inimical nature of crimes and the positive effects of Custom Service and other Law enforcement agencies to their well being and hence, the need to support them at all times.

This can work effectively, if government can address some social issues such as unemployment, retrenchment, lopsided affluence, poverty and social disorganization. To check the menace of crime, the Nigerian government has an onerous task of providing conducive environment that will create enough jobs to engage the ever-rising number of youths and unemployed graduates. As it has been established by this survey, majority of those engaged in cross-border crimes are young adults between the age bracket of 20 and 39 years. The federal government, the press and the religious homes should work tirelessly to de-emphasize the attitude of craze for materialism among Nigerians. Emphasis should be laid on virtues of hard-work and honesty. There must be room for investigating the wealth of citizens.

In addition, there is the need to revisit the old but now discarded strategy of having community police men who live among the people and seek as unobtrusively as possible to monitor strange occurrences in social behaviour, which can lead to the commission of crime. In tandem with this suggestion, the Nigeria Customs Service inaugurated Customs Community Relation (CCR) in Lagos on October 17, 2002, to the intent that it would serve as interactive forum for crime prevention (*Nigerian Tribune* 23, October 2002). This should continue and should be improved upon.

It must be said however, that any arrangement for crime control that emanates from such relationships can only be a complement to, not a substitute for, normal law enforcement agents' methods and the use of effective communication equipment capable of linking units at short notice.

Furthermore, there should be scheme for sustaining domestic industries. Oyewole (2002) pinpoints some incentives that can stimulate the local industries, among which are; reduction of import duties on machinery, spare parts, and raw materials; setting strict monitoring of quality standard; and empowering Custom Officials to track down smugglers. The approval granted by the Federal Government for reduction on import duties of some inputs used by textile factories; and import relief on textile raw materials, machinery and spares parts, is a right step in the right direction. This should spread to other industries.

Another task for the government is how Nigerians could be encouraged in all the ways possible to patronize made-in-Nigeria goods. This will allow the local industries to grow, since craze for imported goods was advanced as a major cause of smuggling among Nigerians.

Another area to look into for redress is the negative effect of tariffs on imported goods. For instance, the World Bank Country Director in Nigeria, Mr. Tomlinson Mark said that with over 32 government agencies operating at the ports, the extraneous charges and levies an importer is compelled to pay tends to compound investment problem in Nigeria. It also culminates in high cost of production thus making Nigerian finished goods too expensive. (*Nigerian Tribune*, November, 2002). This singular factor is responsible for the use of other neighbouring ports by merchants and smugglers alike. The revenue that ought to have accrued to the government through the normal tariff system, is being lost to dubious businessmen and neighbouring countries whose ports and markets have become centers of attraction to Nigerian citizens.

Finally, there should be a drastic positive change in the criminal justice system. Corrupt citizens, law enforcement agents and public officials should be apprehended, prosecuted and made to receive just punishment. Crime should be made more risky for offenders. Akindele and Vogt (1983) note that an arrangement that allows for infiltration of aliens into the country through ports/borders and where many of the apprehended border offenders escape conviction due to various lapses in institutional processes is inimical to crime prevention. Therefore, government must sit up and devise means of making crime more risky for potential offenders.

Conclusion

From the observations, survey of newspapers, review of literatures, and available data from the field, it has been established that the major motivational factors for increased cross-border crimes are basically economic considerations, unfavourable and harsh import policies as well as group/environmental influence. The panacea is positive change in criminal justice system and creation of enabling environment for domestic industries cum provision of employment for able bodied citizens.

References

- Adedokun, A. (2002). How to Reduce Crime Rate in Nigeria Lagos: *The Guardian*, April 9.
- Ahire, P. T. (1994). Crime, Insecurity and the Stability of Nigerian Nation. *IB OM Journal of Social Issues*. Vol. 1. No. 1₃ September, 1994. Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Uyo.
- Akano, O. (1986). *The Effect of Smuggling on the Protection of Industries in Nigeria*. Ibadan: NISER.

- Akindele, R.A. and Vogt, M.A.(1983). (ed.) *Smuggling and Coastal Piracy in Nigeria*. Lagos: NIIA Bilton, T. et al. (1996). *Introductory Sociology*. London Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Blagg, H. and Smith D. (1989). *Crime, Penal Policy and Social Work*. London: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc.
- Comassie, I. (1996). In Fejokwu L. (ed.) *Police and Social Justice in Nigeria: A Viable Black Power* Lagos: Polcom Press.
- Giddens, A. (2000). *Sociology* 3rd edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Gove, W.R. (1985): The Effects of Age and Gender on Deviant Behaviour: A Bio-psychological Perspective: In Alice, S. R. (ed.) *Gender and Life Course*. New York: Aldine.
- Heidensohn, F (1985). *Women and Crime*. London: Macmillan
- Hirschi, T and Gottfredson, M (1990). *Theory and Research*. California: Sage.
- Merton, R. K (1957). *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Illinois; Free Press
- National Population Commission: CENSUS '91 National Summary (774 L.G.As) in (N.P.C Year 2000, Diary).
- Oladeji, M.O. (2003). *Crimes Across Nigerian Borders: A Case Study of Oke-Ogun Area of South Western Nigeria*. M. Sc Dissertation Submitted to Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan.
- Rodney, Stark (1981) *Sociology*. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Russell, G.S. (2001). Cross Border Economic Crime: The Agenda for Reform. In *Trends and Issues in Crime and CriminalJustice*. No 202 April.

