ANALYSIS OF THE PATTERNS OF CRIME AMONG AWAITING TRIAL INMATESIN SELECTED CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The criminal patterns of Awaiting Trial Inmates (ATIs) at three particular Nigerian correctional facilities - Ikoyi Correctional Facility, Enugu Central Correctional Facility, and Kano Central Correctional Facilityare investigated in this study. Based on information gathered by Prison Reform Advocacy and Welfare Action (PRAWA), the study examines differences in the types of offences for which ATIs are detained across these three places, which are socioculturally and geographically distinct. The results show notable regional differences: rape cases were highest in Kano at 18.3%, compared to 4.5% in Enugu and 4.4% in Ikoyi; armed robbery accounted for 37.0% of ATIs in Enugu, compared to 17.2% in Kano and 10.2% in Ikoyi; and drug abuse offences were most common in Kano (7.5%) and Ikoyi (7.2%).Crime Pattern Theory, which connects the spatial distribution of offences to the social, economic, and environmental structures of each area, is used to analyse these differences. To better address these patterns, the study suggests greater inter-agency cooperation, increased use of non-custodial punishment, and contextualised, environment-centred crime-control solutions.

Keywords: Awaiting Trial Inmates (ATIs), Correctional Facility, Crime Patterns, Crime Management, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Nation-states all around the world continue to have serious worries about crime and how to manage it. Given Nigeria's intricate sociocultural variety, regional disparities, and institutional constraints in the criminal justice system, the problem is especially severe there. The persistently high percentage of Awaiting Trial Inmates (ATIs) in Nigerian prisons who are detained until their cases are decided by courts with the necessary authority is a significant aspect of this problem.

The patterns of crime allegedly committed by ATIs in three correctional facilities - Ikoyi (Lagos), Enugu Central, and Kano Centralare the specific subject of this paper. The study's thesis is that criminal activity varies throughout Nigerian society. Instead, the social, economic, cultural, and environmental aspects of each community influence the type and frequency of offences. Designing successful, location-specific crime prevention and control techniques requires an understanding of these patterns, a task that is more than just an academic endeavour.

Practically speaking, there seems to be a clear correlation between the kinds of criminal behaviour that arise in a community and its structural conditions. For example, societies with high levels of economic activity typically have higher rates of fraud and financial crimes. However, locations with high rates of poverty, unemployment, and social disorder are frequently linked to violent crimes like armed robbery (Ohijini, 2005). The makeup of ATI populations in correctional facilities around the nation reflects these institutional issues.

Nigeria's crime management system has not adequately utilised this information for preventive purposes, despite these discernible trends. Through specialised units such as financial crime bureaus, anti-kidnapping units, and anti-robbery squads, law enforcement agencies have made considerable progress, but they remain mainly reactive. A methodical, data-driven approach to mapping and predicting crime at the community level has not yet been developed by the criminal justice system, which includes the police, courts, and correctional services. This study argues that ATI data from correctional facilities are a relatively unexplored resource for evidence-based crime management.

2. Statement of the Problem

The lack of an organised, location-sensitive strategy for crime management in Nigeria is the main issue this article addresses. Although the criminal justice system carries out its assigned tasks, investigation, prosecution, adjudication, and incarceration,it does so in a way that is essentially consistent and fails to sufficiently consider the contextual and geographical differences in the types of crimes that occur throughout the nation.

This paper identifies three specific gaps in the criminal justice system: (1) crime records in Nigerian correctional facilities are not systematically analyzed to identify location-specific offence patterns; (2) where such data exists, it is rarely fed back into crime prevention frameworks at the community or state level; and (3) the high and growing proportion of ATIs in Nigerian correctional facilities, estimated at over 70% of the total prison population (Nigerian Prison Service, 2016), represents a critical pressure point that demands targeted and differentiated responses.

This study shows that there are significant differences in the kinds of offences for which ATIs are remanded in three correctional facilities - Ikoyi, Enugu Central, and Kano Central - using empirical data from the PRAWA (2017) survey. It makes the case that more successful, contextually based crime management in Nigeria depends on identifying and addressing these tendencies.

3. Objectives of the Study

The broad aim of this study is to analyse the patterns of crime among Awaiting Trial Inmates (ATIs) in selected Nigerian correctional facilities. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Identify the primary arresting agencies responsible for ATIs across the three selected correctional facilities.
- Examine and compare the variations in the types of offences for which ATIs are remanded across Ikoyi, Enugu Central, and Kano Central Correctional Facilities.
- Explore the environmental and socio-structural factors that may account for the observed variations in crime patterns across the three locations.
- Draw implications from the findings for the design of context-specific crime prevention and management strategies in Nigeria.

4. Review of Related Literature

4.1 The Concept of Crime

Any act or omission that contravenes a state's laws and is punishable by the state through the criminal justice system is considered a crime. According to Tappan (1947), a crime is an intentional act that violates the criminal code, is performed without justification or defence, and is punished by the government. This concept highlights the legal aspect of crime and sets it apart from simple deviance or moral transgression. The main legal foundations for identifying and categorising criminal offences in Nigeria are provided by the Penal Code (applicable in Northern Nigeria) and the Criminal Code Act (applicable in Southern Nigeria).

Crime researchers have long acknowledged that crime is not a consistent or steady phenomenon. Individual, social, economic, and environmental factors interact in complex ways to affect its nature, prevalence, and distribution. Differences in culture, religion, socioeconomic development, and informal social control mechanisms all contribute to regional variations in crime types in heterogeneous cultures like Nigeria (Marenin&Reisng, 1995).

4.2 The Correctional Facility in Nigeria

The Nigerian prison system was first created as a custodial institution based on retaliation and deterrence during the colonial era. The institution was officially renamed from the Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS) to the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS) with the passage of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act (2019), indicating a philosophical shift toward rehabilitation and reintegration. To ensure that offenders successfully reintegrate into society, the correctional facility is designed to provide services that aim to alter their attitudes, values, and behaviour (NPS, 2017).

Correctional facilities in Nigeria still face serious structural issues despite this reorientation. The most important of these is persistent overcrowding. ATIs make up more than 71% of all inmates, according to the Nigeria Prisons Service (2016). This statistic demonstrates the inadequacies of the pretrial custody system and the structural flaws in the broader criminal justice system. The World Pre-trial/Remand Imprisonment List (2016) identifies several issues that contribute to this overcrowding, including weak court competence, limited legal counsel for accused individuals, inadequate utilisation of non-custodial bail options, and poor inter-agency coordination.

4.3 Awaiting Trial Inmates (ATIs): Historical Development, Rationale, and Legal Status in Nigeria

Nigeria inherited the common law legacy from British colonial authority, which includes the practice of pretrial detention and, consequently, the category of Awaiting Trial Inmate. Preventing flight risk, safeguarding the public, or maintaining the integrity of the legal system are the main justifications for detaining an accused individual until trial. However, pretrial detention in Nigeria has long since exceeded its initial justification.

The Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015, which specifies the rights of suspects, the terms of bail, and the duration of remand orders, legally governs the status of an ATI. For example, remand periods cannot last more than a certain amount of time without a new court order, according to Section 296 of the ACJA. Despite these safeguards, ATIs sometimes spend months or even years in detention facilities without a trial due to systemic bottlenecks like court congestion, prosecutorial delays, and insufficient legal help (Oti, 2016).

For many years, ATIs have made up the majority of Nigeria's prison population. According to Oti (2016), ATIs made up almost 80% of Nigeria's prison population, the majority of whom were detained for crimes for which they were eligible for bail. In addition to violating the accused's constitutional rights, this ongoing over-reliance on custodial remand jeopardises the penal system's goal of rehabilitation.

4.4 Nature and Prevalence of Crime among ATIs in Nigeria

In many ways, the kind of offences for which people are detained as ATIs in Nigerian prisons mirrors the larger socioeconomic and environmental circumstances of the areas from which they originate. According to Adeyemi (1990), people who enter the formal criminal justice system and become ATIs are usually accused of more serious or publicly visible offences, since the informal social control systems common in many Nigerian communities often filter out minor offences.

A wide range of offences, including armed robbery, rape, drug-related offences, fraud, child trafficking, and cultism, were found among ATI populations in a study conducted by PRAWA (2017) in many Nigerian correctional facilities. Crucially, the study found that the distribution of these offences varied across facilities within different geographic zones, indicating that local social structures, economic conditions, and cultural norms significantly influence the crime patterns observed among ATIs.

The presence of ATIs in Nigeria's jail system has important ramifications for both prison administration and the larger criminal justice system. According to Okeke (2010), the high concentration of remand inmates puts a great deal of strain on correctional resources, jeopardises the chances of significant rehabilitation, and frequently leads to the mixing of minor and major offenders - a situation with well-established criminalising effects.

4.5 Implications for Crime Management

There are significant ramifications for crime management in Nigeria due to the differences in crime trends among ATIs in various correctional facilities. Most importantly, it implies that in a nation as diverse as Nigeria, a one-size-fits-all strategy for crime prevention and control is unlikely to be successful. A useful evidence base for the development of focused, community-level interventions is provided by location-specific crime data, such as that available from ATI records in correctional facilities (Ekblom, 2017).

Furthermore, the high frequency of ATIs charged with violent crimes like armed robbery in areas with substantial economic disparity or fraud in commercial centres like Lagos indicates the importance of structural and environmental factors in determining crime trends. Therefore, situational prevention, defensible space design, and routine activity analysis are examples of environmental criminology principles that can be incorporated into crime management strategies to address the underlying causes of these patterns better (Clarke, 1983; Brantingham & Brantingham, 1984).

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1 Crime Pattern Theory

The main theoretical framework for this investigation is Crime Pattern Theory, developed by Brantingham and Brantingham (1984). According to the hypothesis, criminal activity tends to cluster around a locality's environmental characteristics rather than occurring randomly in place and time. It presents three main ideas: edges (the boundaries between activity areas, which often create increased opportunities for crime); pathways (the routes people take between nodes); and nodes (places where people congregate for regular activities, such as markets, transportation hubs, and commercial centres).

When applied to the current study, Crime Pattern Theory provides a convincing explanation for the geographical differences in ATI offence types found in Kano, Enugu, and Ikoyi. Ikoyi's status can explain the high incidence of fraud and conspiracy crimes among its ATI population as a high-density commercial and financial nexus in Lagos. The prevalence of armed robbery and child trafficking in Enugu may be a reflection of the South-East's established organised crime networks and economic marginalisation. On the other hand, the social and moral regulatory environment of a densely populated Northern metropolitan centre may be connected to Kano's high incidence of drug misuse and rape.

The idea/theory also backs up the claim that reactive policing is insufficient to combat crime. Authorities can create proactive, place-based interventions that reduce the likelihood and incentives for criminal behaviour before it occurs by mapping offence patterns onto the social and environmental structures of each region.

5.2 Routine Activity Theory

Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) is a supplementary concept that holds that crime occurs when three factors converge: a suitable target, a motivated perpetrator, and the absence of effective supervision. The idea is especially useful for understanding why certain types of offences tend to clusterin particular areas. The convergence of motivated perpetrators and appropriate targets is more likely in regions with limited community oversight and insufficient formal surveillance, which are prevalent in many Nigerian localities. For example, the increased rates of violent crime among ATIs in correctional facilities servicing areas with low law enforcement presence can be explained by this.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

To develop a thorough understanding of crime patterns among ATIs, in particular Nigerian correctional facilities, this study employs a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. While semi-structured interviews and observable insights obtained during data collection enrich the qualitative dimension, the quantitative component is based on structured data from questionnaires administered to ATIs. This methodological triangulation improves the validity and depth of the findings.

6.2 Study Population and Sample

ATIs and correctional staff from three facilities - Ikoyi Correctional Facility in Lagos, Enugu Central Correctional Facility in Enugu, and Kano Central Correctional Facility in Kano - made up the research population. To guarantee regional dispersion and diversity in the sociocultural milieu, these amenities were specifically chosen. 1,559 ATI respondents from the three sites made up the sample as a whole: 1,293 from Enugu, around 1,194 from Kano Central, and 1,549 from Ikoyi. Correctional facility administrators assisted PRAWA-trained research assistants in gathering data.

6.3 Data Collection

The main tool for gathering data was structured, interviewer-administered questionnaires. To ensure uniformity in data collection and account for respondents' varying literacy levels, trained enumerators distributed questionnaires to ATIs at each of the three correctional facilities. Among other things, the questionnaires recorded the length of pretrial confinement, arresting agencies, offence types, and demographics. In 2017, data werecollected as part of a larger jail survey commissioned by PRAWA.

Key informant interviews with security and correctional staff at each facility were carried out in addition to the questionnaire. Contextual information on institutional dynamics, facility-specific challenges, and environmental factors influencing inmate profiles was obtained through these interviews. The quantitative data were further enhanced by observational notes from site visits.

6.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions and percentage comparisons, were used to analyse quantitative data from the questionnaires to identify and compare crime trends among the three prisons. To provide contextual depth, emerging themes from the thematic analysis of qualitative data from field observations and interviews were incorporated into the interpretation of quantitative findings. In keeping with a convergent mixed-methods strategy, the integration of both data strands was done throughout the paper's discussion section.

6.5 Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate prison authorities and institutional gatekeepers, given the sensitive nature of data on incarcerated individuals. Throughout the research process, the confidentiality and identities of all participants were scrupulously upheld. Before using the dataset for this work, PRAWA, the commissioning institution, gave its consent.

6.6 Limitations

Certain shortcomings are acknowledged in the study. Administrative restrictions limited access to correctional facilities, and reliance on self-reported data increases the risk of response bias. Furthermore, the statistics show the state of affairs as of 2017; crime trends may have changed since then. Throughout, methodological triangulation was employed to mitigate these limitations and enhance the validity of the results.

7. Findings and Discussion

7.1 Arresting Agencies of Awaiting Trial Inmates

The results show that across all three penitentiary facilities under investigation, the Nigeria Police Force is by far the most common arresting agency. In Enugu, Kano Central, and Ikoyi, 75.9%, 76.5%, and 78.2% of ATI respondents, respectively,reported being detained by ordinary police. The percentage of ATIs apprehended by police agencies increases to 86.4%

in Enugu, 78.8% in Kano Central, and 80.0% in Ikoyi, with arrests made by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a specialised police squad. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) was the second most well-known arresting agency among the three institutions.

These numbers demonstrate the Nigeria Police Force's significant role in creating ATI flows into the criminal justice system and the very minor role of other law enforcement organisations. They also highlight how crucial police behaviour, institutional capability, and operational priorities are in determining the makeup and size of ATI populations in various prisons.

7.2 Patterns of Crime among ATIs across Correctional Facilities

The distribution of offence categories among ATI responders from the three penitentiary facilities is shown in Table 1. The information shows clear regional differences in the types of crimes for which people are detained before trial.

Table 1: Categories of Offences per Correctional Facility

S/N	Type of Offence	Enugu	Kano Central	Ikoyi
1	Armed Robbery	478 (37.0%)	205 (17.2%)	158 (10.2%)
2	Child Trafficking	21 (1.6%)	2 (0.2%)	5 (0.3%)
3	Conspiracy	22 (1.7%)	12 (1.0%)	55 (3.5%)
4	Cultism	15 (1.2%)	—	—
5	Fraud	5 (0.4%)	1 (0.1%)	37 (2.8%)
6	Drug Abuse	14 (1.1%)	90 (7.5%)	111 (7.2%)
7	Rape	58 (4.5%)	219 (18.3%)	69 (4.4%)

Source: PRAWA Prison Survey, 2017

The ATI offence profiles of the three correctional facilities differ significantly across regions, as shown by the statistics in Table 1. The most common crime category in Enugu (37.0%) is armed robbery, which is more than twice as common in Kano Central (17.2%) and almost four times as common in Ikoyi (10.2%). This pattern is in line with established patterns of organised violent crime in the South-East, where high rates of robbery-related offences have long been attributed to economic marginalisation and criminal group activity.

The biggest disparity is seen in rape offences, where Kano Central had a rate of 18.3%, whereas Enugu and Ikoyi only had rates of 4.5% and 4.4%, respectively. This pattern may also represent regional variations in reporting rates, law enforcement priorities, and the formal prosecution of sexual offences, rather than just a higher incidence of sexual violence in Kano. Cases that might otherwise be handled informally are more likely to enter the formal legal system in communities whose social norms and religious authorities have strong informal regulatory responsibilities. This leads to greater ATI counts for certain offence categories.

Enugu has a far lower rate of drug abuse offences (1.1%), while Kano Central (7.5%) and Ikoyi (7.2%) have the highest rates. This tendency might be explained by the fact that these facilities are located close to important economic hubs and drug trafficking corridors, where drug availability and related enforcement activities are higher. In contrast, fraud offences are most common among Ikoyi ATIs (2.8%), which makes sense given the facility's location in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub and the nation's main financial and commercial hub.

Cultism crimes were only reported in Enugu (1.2%); neither Kano Central nor Ikoyi had any incidents. This is in line with established patterns of criminal activity related to cults in South-Eastern Nigeria, where cults on university campuses and related criminal networks have historically been concentrated.

When combined, these results provide compelling evidence for the main claim of this research, which is that the crime patterns of ATIs in Nigerian prisons are systematically influenced by the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental circumstances of the communities they serve rather than being random. These trends provide a useful empirical foundation for the development of focused, site-specific crime control tactics.

8. Recommendations

Based on the foregoing findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

8.1 Implement Location-Specific Crime Management Strategies

To create context-sensitive crime prevention frameworks, authorities at the federal and state levels should invest in the systematic collection, analysis, and application of crime data from correctional facilities. Effective management must be based on local circumstances rather than on a standard national template, because each geopolitical zone has a unique crime profile.

8.2 Promote Non-Custodial and Alternative Sentencing

There is an urgent need to eliminate the excessive reliance on custodial remand for ATIs, many of whom are charged with minor or bailable offences. Increased use of community service, probation, bail, and other non-custodial alternatives will ease the burden on correctional resources, lessen overcrowding, and enable more targeted treatment of high-risk ATI populations, especially for first-time or low-risk offenders.

8.3 Strengthen Inter-Agency Collaboration

Addressing the systemic causes of high ATI populations requires better cooperation between the police, the courts, correctional services, community-based organisations, and other pertinent institutions. Federal and state criminal justice authorities should institutionalise formal channels for information exchange, collaborative planning, and coordinated case management.

8.4 Invest in Capacity Building and Environmental Audits

Regular training in situational crime prevention, behavioural management, and environmental criminology principles should be provided to security and correctional staff. To spot new changes in crime patterns and provide prompt, flexible management solutions, regular environmental and behavioural audits of correctional facilities should also be institutionalised.

8.5 Address Community-Level Predisposing Factors

Correctional facilities and law enforcement responses should not be the exclusive focus of crime prevention initiatives. A complete and long-lasting crime management strategy must include community-level interventions, such as youth involvement programs, economic empowerment programs, and public awareness campaigns that target the specific types of crime common in each location.

9. Conclusion

The crime patterns of Awaiting Trial Inmates (ATIs) in three particular Nigerian correctional facilities - Ikoyi, Enugu Central, and Kano Centralhave been studied in this paper. It has been shown that there are significant, systematic differences in the offence profiles of ATI populations across these geographically and socioculturally distinct locations. Based on empirical data from a PRAWA (2017) prison survey and an analysis of the results using Crime Pattern Theory and Routine Activity Theory, the paper contends that these differences are not accidental but rather have their roots in the structural, economic, and environmental circumstances of each locality.

The results have important ramifications for Nigerian crime control. They contend that the existing strategy is insufficient to address the varied and complex nature of crime across the nation because it is mostly reactive, homogeneous, and insufficiently sensitive to local context. A paradigm shift is required, one that bases crime management and prevention on evidence-based, location-specific tactics informed by crime trends in ATI data from prisons.

Future studies should aim to broaden the geographic scope of this approach, incorporate more recent data, and focus more intently on the qualitative aspects of ATI experiences and the institutional factors that influence community-level crime patterns. The safety of Nigerian communities and the efficiency of the criminal justice system might both be greatly enhanced by incorporating environmental criminology concepts into Nigeria's crime management framework.

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