

Trends and Comparative Analysis of Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos and Other States in Nigeria

Oseghale, Christian Osemuyi Ph.D.

Caleb University Imota Lagos, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency is a growing concern across Nigeria, with regional differences in crime rates, intervention programs, and legal enforcement. This article compares juvenile delinquency trends in Lagos, a highly urbanized state, with other states such as Kano, Rivers, Anambra and Borno States. Juvenile delinquency in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos State, exhibits distinct trends influenced by various socio-economic and cultural factors. A comparative analysis reveals significant differences between Lagos and other states, highlighting the unique challenges faced by youths in these regions. The study examines the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing youth crime, the effectiveness of intervention programs, and variations in law enforcement responses. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and official crime statistics. Findings indicate that while urbanization increases gang-related crimes in Lagos, economic hardship influences youth crime in Kano and Rivers, while financial fraud is more prevalent in Anambra. The paper concludes that while juvenile delinquency remains a pressing issue across Nigeria, the trends observed in Lagos State differ significantly from those seen in other regions due to various factors including socio-economic conditions, cultural influences, types of crime prevalent, law enforcement effectiveness, and available support systems for rehabilitation. And therefore, make recommendations for a unified national approach to juvenile crime prevention targeted at interventions that address these specific challenges are vital for reducing juvenile delinquency rates both within Lagos and across other Nigerian states.

Keywords: Comparative analysis, Intervention programs Juvenile delinquency, Socio-economic, Trends

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is a significant social issue in Nigeria, particularly in urban areas like Lagos, which is the most populous city in the country. Understanding the trends and factors contributing to juvenile delinquency across different states can provide insights into effective prevention and intervention strategies. An overview of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria shows that Juvenile delinquency encompasses various offences committed by individuals typically between the ages of 10 and 17 (UNICEF, 2019; Babajide, 2025). In Nigeria, these offences can range from minor infractions to serious crimes. The legal framework governing juvenile justice includes the Children and Young Persons Act, which categorizes children into three groups: those in conflict with the law, those in need of care and protection, and those beyond parental control. Juvenile delinquency varies significantly across Nigeria and influenced by urbanization, economic conditions, cultural factors, and law enforcement efficiency (Bala, 2025). Lagos, as the economic hub of Nigeria, experiences high levels of youth crime, particularly gang-related activities and petty theft. In contrast, other states exhibit different crime patterns, shaped by unique regional challenges. This comparative study seeks to identify key trends and develop a more effective national juvenile justice strategy. Juvenile delinquency, a criminal behaviour committed by individuals under 18, is a growing concern in Nigeria due to its impact on social stability and development. Factors contributing to juvenile delinquency include poverty, family instability, inadequate educational opportunities, and exposure to violence or abuse. Lagos State, Nigeria's most populous city, experiences unique trends in juvenile delinquency, including a high incidence of cybercrime, gang violence, drug trafficking, and educational disparities (Akinlami, 2021; Okonkwo, 2020; Meek, 2023; Agu, & Ugada, 2024; Babajide, 2025; Bala, 2025).

States like Kano and Kaduna have reported higher rates of traditional crimes, such as theft or assault, due to varying socio-economic conditions. Lagos, with its diverse economic opportunities, is more likely to see more youth involvement in petty crimes. Cultural influences also play a role in crime rates, with some northern states promoting open discussions about crime or delinquency, while Lagos' urbanized environment encourages open reporting. Law enforcement response varies across states, with Lagos having better resources for policing compared to rural areas where corruption or lack of funding hinders effectiveness. Additionally, Lagos has more structured institutional support systems for juvenile offenders, compared to other states that may lack adequate facilities for reforming young offenders (Ajomo, 2018; Agu, & Ugada, 2024; Meek, 2023; Bala, 2025).

Concept of Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency is the involvement of individuals under 18 in behaviours that violate legal statutes, with the specific age varying by jurisdiction. It can range from minor infractions to serious criminal offenses. Understanding juvenile delinquency involves examining factors such as individual characteristics, family dynamics, peer influences, educational experiences, and socio-economic conditions. Several theories attempt to explain the causes of juvenile delinquency, including General Strain Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Social Control Theory. General Strain Theory suggests that delinquency arises from stress or strain, leading to negative emotions and delinquent behaviour as a coping mechanism. Social Learning Theory suggests that delinquent behaviour is learned through interactions with others, while Social Control Theory suggests that delinquency occurs when an individual's bonds to society are weak or broken. Effective interventions often focus on addressing these underlying factors, emphasizing early prevention, family involvement, educational support, and community-based programs (Hirschi, 1969; Rutter, et al., 1998; Agnew, 1992; Akers, & Jennings, 2016; Ajomo, 2018; Hazra, 2021). Understanding juvenile delinquency is crucial for developing effective policies and interventions aimed at reducing youth involvement in criminal activities and promoting positive development.

Comparative Analysis of Juvenile Delinquency and Trends

Lagos State, Nigeria's most populous city, is experiencing unique trends in juvenile delinquency. The city's high incidence of cybercrime, gang violence, and drug trafficking are among the issues affecting young people. Cybercrime is a significant issue due to technological advancements and internet access, leading to online fraud. Gang violence, particularly in areas with impoverished youths, contributes to violent crimes like robbery and assault. Drug trafficking is another significant issue, with many young people becoming involved due to economic desperation. Additionally, educational disparities in Lagos' neighbourhoods contribute to higher rates of delinquency among those without quality education (Akinlami, 2021; Hazra, 2021; Barajas, 2024).

Urbanization is often linked to increased gang-related crimes among youth due to factors such as economic hardship, peer pressure, and high unemployment rates. Urban areas with dense populations and diverse socio-economic backgrounds can create environments conducive to gang activities. Rapid growth of cities often leads to overcrowding, inadequate housing, and strained public services, weakening community bonds and informal social controls. Economic hardship is a significant driver of youth involvement in gangs, as limited access to legitimate employment opportunities in impoverished neighbourhoods can lead to seeking alternative income sources, including criminal activities associated with gangs. Financial instability within families may also push adolescents toward gangs as a means of economic survival. Peer pressure, which can be driven by the desire to fit in and fear of social exclusion, also plays a crucial role in an individual's decision to join a gang. High unemployment rates, particularly among youth, are associated with increased crime rates, including gang involvement. Unemployment can lead to feelings of frustration, low self-esteem, and a lack of purpose, making gang membership attractive (Okonkwo, 2020; Akinlami, 2021; Hazra, 2021; Barajas, 2024).

High prevalence of cultism, drug-related offenses, and armed robbery in urban slums. Intervention programs such as the Lagos State Office for Youth and Social Development have seen moderate success in reducing recidivism. According to the Centre for Legal Support and Inmate Rehabilitation (CELSIR), the Juvenile Education Program (JEP) provides educational opportunities for juveniles in detention, aiming to reduce recidivism (CELSIR, 2024). Juvenile delinquency in Nigeria is a multifaceted issue influenced by various socio-economic and cultural factors. To address this challenge, several intervention programs have been implemented, particularly in Lagos State. Below is an overview of notable initiatives:

Juvenile Education Program (JEP) by CELSIR

The Centre for Legal Support and Inmate Rehabilitation (CELSIR), in collaboration with the Lagos State Ministry of Youth and Social Development, launched the Juvenile Education Program (JEP) in October 2024. This initiative aims to provide comprehensive educational opportunities to juveniles in detention facilities across Lagos State. The program addresses the significant gap in basic education among detained youths, with reports indicating that over 60% have not completed basic education, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and reoffending. According to the Centre for Legal Support and Inmate Rehabilitation (CELSIR), the Juvenile Education Program (JEP) provides educational opportunities for juveniles in detention, aiming to reduce recidivism (CELSIR, 2024).

Kano State: Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE): This World Bank-assisted project aims to improve secondary education opportunities for adolescent girls aged 10 to 20. The AGILE project, supported by the World Bank, aims to improve secondary education access for adolescent girls. In Kano, this initiative has resulted in the construction of 130 new schools, comprising 75 junior and 55 senior secondary schools (Kano Focus, 2025).

Skills Acquisition Programs: The Coca-Cola Foundation and Whitefield Foundation have empowered over 20,000 youths in Kano through vocational training, providing skills in entrepreneurship and employability (Popoola, 2024).

Skills Acquisition Programs: Collaborations between organizations like the Whitefield Foundation and the Coca-Cola Foundation have empowered over 20,000 youths in Kano through skills acquisition programs, enhancing employability and entrepreneurship.

Rivers State: Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA): Supported by the World Bank, BESDA focuses on reducing the number of out-of-school children by enhancing basic education. Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA). BESDA is a World Bank-supported initiative focused on reducing the number of out-of-school children by strengthening basic education. Rivers State is among the 17 states benefiting from this program (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2023).

Anambra State: Youth 2 Skills Solution Initiative: Launched by Governor Chukwuma Charles Soludo, this program aims to equip youths with two distinct skills, enhancing their employability and entrepreneurial capabilities. The second phase was initiated in August 2024, with plans to disburse N2.5 billion in start-up capital to participants.

State Education Programme Investment Project (SEPIP): Anambra is one of the pilots for this World Bank-supported project, which disburses funds based on the achievement of predetermined educational performance indicators.

Youth 2 Skills Solution Initiative: Launched by Governor Chukwuma Charles Soludo, this program provides dual-skill training to enhance youth employment and entrepreneurship. In August 2024, the government allocated ₦2.5 billion to support participants (PaperNG, 2024).

State Education Programme Investment Project (SEPIP). SEPIP, funded by the World Bank, rewards states based on improvements in educational outcomes. Anambra is a key beneficiary of this initiative (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2023).

Borno State: Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE): Like Kano, Borno State is implementing the AGILE project to enhance educational opportunities for adolescent girls, aiming to improve maternal health, women's agency, and overall community development.

Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA): Borno is a beneficiary of the BESDA program, targeting the reduction of out-of-school children and strengthening basic education.

Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE). This program is aimed at enhancing educational opportunities for adolescent girls in Borno, improving maternal health and community development (Girl Child Concerns, 2023).

Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA). Borno is a key participant in the BESDA program, which focuses on integrating out-of-school children into the formal education system (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2023).

Rehabilitation Programs in the States Correctional Homes

Studies have highlighted the positive impact of educational programs on the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents in Lagos State correctional facilities. These programs focus on literacy, life skills training, and behavioural therapy, aiming to reintegrate juveniles into society effectively. Recommendations from these studies suggest periodic reviews and enhancements of these programs to align with evolving societal needs. Studies highlight the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs in Lagos correctional facilities, emphasizing the need for periodic reviews (Ejournal UPI, 2023). Lagos State has implemented rehabilitation programs in its correctional facilities

to aid inmate reintegration. These include educational and vocational training, library facilities, juvenile education programs, skill acquisition programs, and psychological support and counselling. The Centre for Legal Support and Inmate Rehabilitation (CELSIR) established a library at Ikoyi Correctional Centre in December 2021, while the Nigeria Lawyer launched a comprehensive educational program targeting children in juvenile detention facilities. These initiatives aim to transition the correctional system from punitive measures to rehabilitative justice approaches (Ejournal UPI, 2023).

Kano State: Modern Custodial Centres: The Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS) has been developing a 3,000-capacity ultra-modern custodial centre in Janguza, Kano State. As of March 2023, this facility was 95% complete and slated for inauguration before May 29, 2023. The establishment of such centres aims to alleviate overcrowding and improve the conditions necessary for effective rehabilitation programs. The Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS) has developed a 3,000-capacity ultra-modern custodial centre in Janguza, Kano State. This facility, which was 95% complete as of March 2023, aims to reduce overcrowding and provide an environment conducive to rehabilitation programs (Habib, 2023). Vocational and Educational Programs in Kano correctional facilities incorporate skill acquisition programs such as tailoring, carpentry, and farming to equip inmates with practical skills that facilitate reintegration upon release.

Rivers State: Rehabilitation Programs in Correctional Facilities: A study examining workers' perceptions of rehabilitation programs on behaviour reformation of correctional inmates in Rivers State highlighted the state's commitment to implementing rehabilitation initiatives. These programs focus on behaviour modification, skill acquisition, and educational development to facilitate inmates' reintegration into society. Rehabilitation Programs in Correctional Facilities. Research on rehabilitation programs in Rivers State indicates a structured approach to behaviour reformation, skill acquisition, and educational training. These programs focus on modifying inmate behaviour and providing opportunities for personal and professional development (IIARD Journals, 2021). Psychological Support and Counselling in many correctional facilities in Rivers State integrate psychological counselling and support systems to help inmates address past trauma and prepare for a crime-free life post-incarceration.

Anambra State: While specific details about rehabilitation programs in Anambra State's correctional facilities are limited, it is reasonable to infer that, like other Nigerian states, Anambra implements educational and vocational training programs aimed at reducing recidivism and promoting successful reintegration. Educational and Religious Interventions in correctional facilities in Anambra State often engage inmates in adult literacy programs and religious activities fostering personal growth and moral reformation.

Borno State: Rehabilitation Efforts: Specific information regarding rehabilitation programs in Borno State's correctional facilities is not readily available in the provided sources. However, it is plausible that Borno, like other states, engages in efforts to implement rehabilitation programs focusing on education, vocational training, and psychological support to aid inmates' reintegration. Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs in Borno State Given the challenges posed by insurgency and security issues in Borno State, rehabilitation efforts in correctional homes often focus on vocational training and psychosocial support for inmates, particularly those affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. Deradicalization and Reintegration of ex-combatants As part of broader rehabilitation efforts, Borno State collaborates with national and international agencies to reintegrate ex-combatants and inmates involved in insurgency-related activities.

Advocacy for Educational Access in Juvenile Centres

Organizations such as the Centre for Legal Support and Inmate Rehabilitation (CELSIR) have been at the forefront of advocating for educational access within juvenile centres. Collaborating with the Lagos State Ministry of Youth and Social Development, CELSIR's initiatives aim to provide quality education to children in Borstal centres, addressing the educational deficiencies that contribute to delinquency. Organizations such as CELSIR advocate for increased access to education within juvenile centres to address deficiencies contributing to delinquency (Aikulola, 2024). In October 2024, the Centre for Legal Support and Inmate Rehabilitation (CELSIR) launched the Juvenile Education Program (JEP) to provide structured learning opportunities for children in juvenile detention facilities across Lagos State. Reports indicate that over 60% of juveniles in detention have not completed basic education, underscoring the need for such initiatives (Chima, 2024). At the

launch of JEP, Justice Sherifat Solebo (Retired) emphasized the importance of providing free education as part of rehabilitation and empowerment programs for juveniles. The event, held at the Special Correctional Centre for Boys in Oregun, highlighted the need for policy changes to ensure that all detained minors have access to education (Aikulola, 2024).

Kano State: In June 2023, the Awareness Against Terrorism Foundation provided educational support to four juvenile inmates at the State Juvenile Detention Centre in Kano. The initiative aimed to guide inmates towards better futures by enlightening them on how to stay safe and improve their lives. In June 2023, the Awareness Against Terrorism Foundation launched an educational initiative supporting four juvenile inmates at the Kano State Juvenile Detention Centre. This program provided educational materials and guidance to inmates to help them transition into a more productive future (Blueprint, 2023).

Rivers, Anambra, and Borno States: Specific information on advocacy efforts and educational programs within juvenile centres in Rivers, Anambra, and Borno States is limited based on available sources. However, the overarching need for educational access in juvenile justice facilities is recognized nationwide. Advocacy groups and stakeholders continue to emphasize the importance of shifting from punitive models to rehabilitative approaches that focus on education, psychological support, and vocational training to ensure that young offenders are given a second chance at life. While limited documented information exists on structured educational programs in juvenile centres in Rivers, Anambra, and Borno States, advocacy groups continue to push for increased access to education within these facilities. Experts stress that shifting from punitive models to rehabilitative approaches, including education, vocational training, and psychological support, is crucial to breaking the cycle of youth crime (AWJAI, 2024).

Rehabilitation and Skill Acquisition Programs

Rehabilitation centres in Lagos State have implemented various programs focusing on interpersonal skills and behavioural development. Research indicates that these programs are perceived positively by both parents of clients and staff, emphasizing the importance of skill acquisition in the rehabilitation process. Recommendations include periodic reviews to adapt to changing dynamics and enhance effectiveness. Skill acquisition and interpersonal development programs in rehabilitation centres have been positively received, particularly by parents of clients and staff (HRMARS, 2023). Lagos State has implemented various rehabilitation and skill acquisition programs to empower residents, particularly youth and inmates in correctional facilities. The government operates 19 centres, including tailoring, hairdressing, catering, computer training, and adult literacy, to equip individuals with practical skills for economic empowerment. To combat youth unemployment, the Lagos State Employability Trust Fund offers training in construction trades, Job gate provides free ICT training, and Project Loud Skills Centre targets economically disadvantaged youths. Inmates are also rehabilitated through programs like the Centre for Legal Support and Inmate Rehabilitation's juvenile education program and the Directorate for Citizens Rights' sensitization visits (HRMARS, 2023).

Kano State: The Kano State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to mass education and skill acquisition programs. Efforts are directed towards supporting the State Agency for Mass Education to enhance adult learning and vocational training across the state. The Federal Government has conducted training programs for selected youths and women in Kano under its Skill Acquisition Training and Empowerment Programme, aiming to equip participants with essential skills for economic self-reliance. Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR): CBR programs in Kano State adopt an inclusive approach, integrating individuals with disabilities into society by providing vocational training and rehabilitation services, thereby contributing to sustainable national development. The Kano State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to mass education and skill acquisition programs, supporting the State Agency for Mass Education in expanding adult learning and vocational training across the state (Weekenders Magazine, 2024). The Federal Government has conducted skill acquisition training and empowerment programs for selected youths and women in Kano to provide economic self-reliance opportunities (Oso, 2020; Blueprint, 2023;). Kano State has implemented CBR programs aimed at integrating individuals with disabilities into society through vocational training and rehabilitation services. These programs contribute to sustainable national development by ensuring that marginalized groups gain employable skills (Yahya, et al., 2018).

Rivers State: Skill Acquisition and Socio-Economic Development: The Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) has been involved in skill acquisition programs aimed at socio-economic development. These programs focus on empowering youths with vocational skills to enhance their employability and contribute to the state's economic growth. **Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA):** RSSDA has been involved in skill acquisition programs focused on socio-economic development. These programs aim to equip young people with vocational skills to improve employability and reduce poverty (Samphina, 2024).

Anambra State: National Directorate of Employment (NDE): The NDE office in Anambra, located at 35 Nnamdi Azikiwe Avenue, Amawbia, Awka, offers various skill acquisition programs. These initiatives aim to reduce unemployment by providing vocational training to youths and women in the state. The NDE office in Anambra, located at 35 Nnamdi Azikiwe Avenue, Amawbia, Awka, offers skill acquisition programs targeted at unemployed youths and women. These initiatives aim to create employment opportunities through vocational training (Infomediang, 2024).

Borno State: The NDE office in Borno, situated at the Federal Secretariat Complex, Kano-Jos Road, Maiduguri, implements skill acquisition programs targeting unemployed youths and women. These programs are designed to equip participants with vocational skills to improve their livelihoods. The NDE office in Borno, situated at the Federal Secretariat Complex, Kano-Jos Road, Maiduguri, provides skill acquisition training for unemployed youths and women to improve their economic prospects (Infomediang, 2024).

Legal Framework and Juvenile Justice Administration

Nigeria's juvenile justice system is primarily governed by the Child Rights Act (CRA) 2003, which aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The CRA emphasizes the protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration of juvenile offenders. However, challenges persist in implementation, necessitating continuous efforts to strengthen the legal and institutional frameworks for juvenile justice. These intervention programs reflect a concerted effort to address juvenile delinquency in Lagos State through education, rehabilitation, and legal reforms. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of these initiatives are crucial to effectively meet the needs of at-risk youths and facilitate their successful reintegration into society. The Child Rights Act (CRA) 2003 governs Nigeria's juvenile justice system, emphasizing rehabilitation and reintegration, though implementation challenges remain (AWJAI, 2022). Lagos State the administration of juvenile justice in Nigeria operates under a legal framework that combines federal legislation with state-specific laws. Key federal statutes include the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) of 1943 and the Child Rights Act (CRA) of 2003. The CRA aims to align Nigeria's juvenile justice system with international standards, emphasizing the rights and welfare of children. However, its implementation varies across states, depending on whether they have domesticated the Act into their local laws (Aliyu, 2021; Partners Nigeria, 2024).

Kano State: Kano State has made efforts to address juvenile justice through the enactment Kano State Juvenile Courts Edict of 1987, which led to the creation of juvenile courts. However, studies indicated no structured juvenile justice administration in the state; instead, certain magistrate courts are designated to handle juvenile cases. This approach may not fully align with the specialized needs of juvenile justice administration (Aliyu, 2021). **Rivers State:** Rivers State enacted the Administration of Criminal Justice Law (ACJL) on September 17, 2016. While the ACJL modernizes criminal justice procedures, its specific provisions for juvenile justice are not extensively detailed. The state's approach to juvenile justice relies on existing legal frameworks, with ongoing efforts to enhance the system to serve minors (Partners Nigeria, 2024). **Anambra State:** Anambra State domesticated the Child Rights Act (CRA) in 2004, demonstrating a commitment to child rights and juvenile justice reform. The state has established juvenile courts and related institutions to handle cases involving minors, aiming to provide a child-friendly justice system (Partners Nigeria, 2024). **Borno State:** Borno State passed its Administration of Criminal Justice Law (ACJL) on September 6, 2023. The state has also domesticated the Child Rights Act, reflecting a commitment to improving juvenile justice. However, challenges persist due to socio-economic factors and regional instability, which impact the effective administration of juvenile justice (Aliyu, 2021; Partners Nigeria, 2024).

Comparative Analysis Lagos with Other States in Nigeria

Table 1

State	Major Causes of Juvenile Delinquency	Common Crimes	Intervention Strategies
Lagos	Urban poverty, gang activities, cybercrime	Theft, cultism, fraud (Yahoo Yahoo)	Police patrol, juvenile homes, NGOs
Kano	Almajiri system, street begging, lack of formal education	Petty theft, drug abuse	Islamic education reforms, rehabilitation centres
Rivers	Oil-related violence, cultism, political thuggery	Armed robbery, kidnapping	Anti-cultism laws, security task forces
Anambra	High unemployment, peer influence, family neglect	Drug trafficking, robbery	Youth empowerment programs, community policing
Borno	Insurgency, displacement due to Boko Haram	Terrorism-related crimes	Military intervention, humanitarian aid

Source: Researcher tabulation from literature reviewed

Table 1 shows Lagos and Kano states have different juvenile crime rates, with Kano's juvenile delinquency being influenced by the Almajiri system, while Rivers faces political violence and oil-related crime. Borno's juvenile delinquency is influenced by insurgency and radicalization, while Lagos' crime is driven by urban challenges. Policy recommendations include strengthening technical and vocational education, promoting family and community involvement, improving juvenile justice systems, and implementing poverty alleviation programs. In Kano State, religious and cultural influences on juvenile crime are evident, with Almajiri street children and lack of formal education leading to high petty theft and begging-related offenses. Sharia-based juvenile correction programs offer alternative rehabilitation measures. Rivers State has a high rate of youth militancy and cultism due to oil-related conflicts, leading to oil theft and political violence. Government amnesty programs have mixed success in reducing youth crime. In Anambra State, economic crimes and fraud among youths are increasing, with rising internet fraud cases and societal pressure for quick wealth contributing to financial crimes. Local mentorship programs have been introduced to discourage youth from engaging in cybercrime.

Lagos, a state in Nigeria, has a higher prevalence of specific crimes compared to other states like Kano and others. These differences are largely due to socio-economic factors, cultural influences, and the effectiveness of law enforcement. While cybercrime is prevalent in Lagos, other states may experience higher rates of traditional crimes like theft or assault. Lagos, with its diverse economic opportunities, is more likely to see more youth involvement in petty crimes. Cultural attitudes towards crime can also vary between regions, with some northern states promoting open discussions about crime or delinquency, leading to underreporting. Lagos also has better resources for policing than many rural areas, where corruption or lack of funding can hinder effectiveness. Additionally, Lagos has more structured rehabilitation programs for juvenile offenders than many other states. These factors highlight the need for targeted interventions to reduce juvenile delinquency rates in Lagos and other Nigerian states.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by two criminological theories, Routine Activity Theory and Cultural Deviance Theory. Routine Activity Theory (RAT), developed by Cohen and Felson in 1979, explains crime because of three key elements: motivated offenders, suitable targets, and a lack of capable guardians. Motivated offenders are individuals who have a desire or inclination to commit a crime, which can stem from socio-economic conditions, psychological issues, or environmental influences. For example, individuals might be motivated to commit theft due to financial hardship or peer pressure. A suitable target is one that possesses characteristics that make it

attractive for criminal activity, such as value, accessibility, and visibility. The more suitable a target is, the higher the likelihood of attracting motivated offenders. The absence of capable guardians, such as police presence, neighbourhood watch programs, and security systems, increases the risk of crime as there is less deterrence against motivated offenders. This can lead to increased crime rates and a decrease in the overall criminal landscape. This theory shifts the focus from offender motivation to opportunity-driven crime, suggesting that changes in societal routines (e.g., urbanization, work schedules, and technological advancements) influence crime rates. This is the inherent value of this theory to the study “Trends and Comparative Analysis of Juvenile Delinquency in Lagos and Other States in Nigeria”.

Cultural Deviation Theory (CDT), introduced by sociologists Clifford Shaw and Henry D. McKay in 1942, offers a framework for analysing the influence of socio-cultural environments on crime across various communities. CDT explains juvenile delinquency as behaviour that arises when individuals adopt norms, values, and lifestyles that deviate from mainstream societal expectations (Miller, 1958). This theory is particularly valuable in analysing juvenile delinquency trends in Lagos and other states in Nigeria because it highlights how different subcultures, such as urban street gangs, peer groups, or communities affected by poverty, reinforce criminal behaviour as acceptable or necessary for survival. In this study that explores the cultural and socio-economic factors influencing juvenile delinquency in different states, including Lagos, Kano, Rivers, Anambra, and Borno. The theory helps explain why crime rates vary, with urbanization leading to higher gang-related crime in Lagos and insurgency-related delinquency in Borno. Subcultures also play a role, with some juvenile groups developing alternative value systems where crime is normalized. Family structures and community values also determine whether deviant behaviour is accepted or punished. If delinquent behaviour is not condemned but rewarded, juveniles are more likely to continue engaging in crime. The study suggests that effective juvenile justice interventions should consider cultural influences and focus on cultural reorientation in rehabilitation programs. In line with the findings of this study CDT posits that crime is significantly influenced by the socio-cultural context in which individuals live. Economic conditions contribute to this dynamic by creating environments where deviant behaviours are normalized due to strain and resource scarcity.

METHODOLOGY

Research on juvenile delinquency in Lagos State employed semi-structured interviews and a structured questionnaire to collect qualitative and quantitative data. According to the survey questionnaire, 87.9% of respondents believe peer pressure is a major factor in adolescent misbehaviour, whereas 67.4% believe poverty contributes to criminal behaviour. Broken homes, economic issues, a lack of parental supervision, and negative peer groups all contribute to high crime rates. The availability of recreational facilities is also a concern, with some rated as poor or extremely poor. The poll demonstrates a complex relationship between peer influence and criminality, with 77.4% acknowledging its significance. delinquency among youths. In Lagos State, 20 respondents were chosen for key informant interviews (KII) based on their understanding of the research topic. In Lagos, all respondents, both quantitative and qualitative, blamed urbanisation for an increase in gang-related crimes, which led to juvenile delinquency.

In other states, a mixed-methods approach was applied, including quantitative analysis of crime data from police records in Kano, Rivers, Bornu, and Anambra states. Qualitative interviews were conducted with police officers, social workers, and community leaders. Surveys were conducted with at-risk kids and past juvenile offenders to better understand their opinions on crime and intervention initiatives. Case studies of effective and unsuccessful intervention initiatives from various locations. Structured interviews and questionnaires were used to collect primary data from 150 respondents across four states. Secondary data on youth crime rates were obtained from police reports, government publications, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Descriptive statistical approaches were used to discover crime patterns between states. Thematic analysis was used on qualitative responses to uncover major themes about intervention efficacy and geographical difficulties.

Lagos State, Nigeria's most populous city, is experiencing unique trends in juvenile delinquency. High rates of cybercrime, gang violence, drug trafficking, and educational disparities are prevalent among youths due to technological advancements and internet access. Online fraud, such as Yahoo, is a common financial gain for many. Gangs in certain areas contribute to violent crimes, often recruiting vulnerable youths from impoverished backgrounds. Drug trafficking is another significant issue, with many young people becoming involved due to

economic desperation. Despite being an economic centre, educational disparities in different neighbourhoods contribute to higher rates of delinquency among those without quality education.

According to the Crime Experience and Security Perception Survey by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), an estimated 51.89 million crime incidents were recorded across Nigerian households between May 2023 and April 2024.

Accessing detailed, up-to-date crime data for Kano, Rivers, Borno, and Anambra states can be challenging due to limited public availability. However, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) provides some historical data that was useful for this analysis:

In 2017, the NBS reported the following number of cases:

Nigerian National Statistical Office

Anambra State: 3,442 cases

Borno State: 905 cases

Kano State: 2,826 cases

Rivers State: 7,043 cases and Lagos State reported a total of 45,385 crime cases, accounting for 36.08% of all reported offenses in Nigeria.

These figures encompass offenses against persons, property, lawful authority, and local acts.

2017 Crime Statistics:

The 2017 report indicates that offenses against property had the highest number of cases, totalling 68,579 nationwide.

However, as of now, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has not publicly released the detailed state-by-state breakdown of the estimated 51.89 million crime incidents recorded across Nigerian households between May 2023 and April 2024. While the NBS has published comprehensive crime statistics in the past, such as the 2017 report, the specific data for the 2023/2024 period has not been made available on their official website (NBS, 2017; NBS, 2024).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Urbanisation and Crime Rates: The analysis reveals that rising urbanisation in Lagos is associated with an increase in gang-related offences. Slums with low infrastructure, significant unemployment, and restricted access to education provide an atmosphere conducive to the growth of criminal networks. Unlike Lagos, Kano has lower urbanisation rates, and criminality is more closely related to cultural and educational inequalities, notably the huge number of street children.

Economic Influence on Delinquency: Economic hardship continues to be a major motivator of teenage criminality in all states. However, its manifestation varies; whereas Lagos and Rivers see gang violence and organised crime, Anambra sees an increase in economic fraud among young people seeking financial stability through cybercrime. This emphasises the importance of specialised economic empowerment initiatives designed to address unique area concerns.

Rehabilitation Program Effectiveness: According to the study, intervention programs in Lagos, such as skill-based training, have shown modest success in reducing recidivism. However, in states like as Kano and Rivers, where cultural and economic barriers impede rehabilitation, program efficacy is considerably reduced. Kano's focus on religious penal facilities offers an alternate method, but it lacks comprehensive rehabilitation alternatives.

Regional Policy Gaps: The data show disparities in law enforcement techniques among states. Lagos has a better-established legislative framework for juvenile justice, but Rivers and Kano face challenges with enforcement and corruption. Despite decreasing crime-related violence, Anambra urgently needs digital literacy initiatives to combat financial fraud among young people.

The study found considerable differences in adolescent delinquency rates in Lagos, Kano, Rivers, Anambra, and Borno states. Permissive parenting, social and environmental circumstances, cultural deviance theories, and gaps in policy and law enforcement all lead to high levels of criminal activity. To address these difficulties, a multifaceted strategy should be developed, which includes enhancing family support systems, extending education and vocational training, improving juvenile justice legislation, and tackling cultural and peer pressures through community participation and mentorship programs.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Juvenile delinquency in Nigeria varies by state due to economic, cultural, and legal disparities. Lagos deals with urban crime and gang violence, Kano with street children and petty crime, Rivers with young militancy, and Anambra with financial crime trends. To minimise adolescent criminality and promote long-term rehabilitation, a comprehensive national approach combining law enforcement, social initiatives, and economic development measures is required. While federal laws provide a basis for juvenile justice in Nigeria, its execution varies by state. Anambra State has made tremendous progress in domesticating the CRA and establishing separate juvenile tribunals. Kano and Rivers states have passed legislation to improve criminal justice administration, but other changes may be required to suit adolescents' particular needs. Borno State's recent legislative attempts show progress, but practical problems remain in implementing an efficient juvenile justice system. Although noteworthy advocacy and instructional programs have been undertaken in states such as Lagos and Kano, there is still a pressing need for such activities in other locations. Expanding educational access in juvenile facilities is critical for breaking the cycle of crime and providing a better future for Nigeria's young. As a result, the report advocates the establishment of a Unified National Juvenile Crime Prevention Framework, with an emphasis on standardised intervention programs and increased interstate collaboration. It also advises extending rehabilitation and reintegration programs, offering mental health services, enhancing law enforcement and community policing, and tackling socioeconomic aspects that contribute to delinquency. The study also suggests strengthening education and employment programs to reduce economic pressure on youths and investing in poverty alleviation strategies to tackle the root causes of crime. The Development of standardized intervention programs adaptable to different regional challenges and increase vocational training opportunities for at-risk youths.

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