

REINTEGRATION OF REPENTANT OFFENDERS AND CRIME CONTROL IN FULANI COMMUNITIES OF JIGAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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Aminu Abdullahi

Department of Sociology

Federal University Dutse

Jigawa State

aminu.abdullahi@fud.edu.ng, 07061381773

Abstract

This paper examined the traditional method of crime control and the reintegration of repentant offenders in Fulani communities of Jigawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, it examined the traditional process of reintegrating repentant offenders and the successes of this traditional method of crime control. The Reintegrative Shaming theory was adopted as theoretical framework. The study population consisted of the Fulani, Fulani traditional leaders, *Pulaaku* committee members and repentant offenders. Cluster, availability and purposive sampling techniques were used and 1,075 respondents were selected as the sample population. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques were deployed for this study. While questionnaire was administered on the Fulani respondents, in-depth interviews were conducted with repentant cattle rustlers, *Pulaaku* committee members and Fulani traditional leaders. The quantitative data generated from the survey were analysed using percentages, frequency distributions while the qualitative data complemented the quantitative data. Findings revealed that the reintegration of repentant offenders required traditional processes, involving rituals and oath taking. The activities of the members of the *Pulaaku* committee culminated in the repentance of many offenders and the reduction of criminal activities in Fulani communities. The study recommends a further study to ascertain the fate of the victims of crimes and the impact of this traditional mechanism of reintegration as well as the sustenance of the efforts of the *Pulaaku* committee in controlling criminal activities in the study area.

Keywords: Crime control; Fulani communities; *Pulaaku* committee; Reintegration; Repentant offenders.

Introduction

Violation of societal norms is as old as the history of human societies. Prehistoric ancient and religious parables have shown how members of various societies transgressed the rules and regulations of societies and subsequently paid the price for their wrong-doings through social sanctions. In other words, the violation of norms began from time immemorial. Traditional African societies are known to sanction offenders according to the gravity of norm violation. As argued by Nwolise (2004), more than 70 percent of the people in traditional African societies still maintain and practice traditional means of social control.

In Nigeria, studies have shown how traditional or informal mechanisms were used as part of the strategies of crime prevention and control. For example, in the south-south state of Akwa-Ibom, the traditional Annang people used *Ukang* (trial by ordeal) as the greatest instrument of crime control (Essien 2011); traditional Igbo society as reported by Igbo and Ogwuoke (2013), used several agents of crime control, such as the family, council of elders, vigilantes, age grades and militant youth groups as well as traditional priests and diviners. In southwestern Nigeria, according to Ajayi and Aderinto (2012), there had been many traditional ways of preventing and controlling the incidence of crime among the Yoruba people. Traditional, political as well as administrative arrangements were central to crime prevention and control. Among them are the age grade, which is charged with the responsibility of keeping the society safe.

Recently, in Jigawa State, the Fulani people re-introduced the use of traditional mechanism for the control of criminal activities, such as animal theft /cattle rustling, in their communities. The move was prompted by the incessant criminal activities in Fulani communities, despite several attempts by government to curtail the situation. They revamped the use of the Fulani code of conduct (*pulaaku*) as a strategy to control the activities of criminals within their communities. After establishing guilt, the suspected criminals are expected to swear to an oath of repentance and be re-integrated afterwards into society as law abiding members. Furthermore, violating the principles of *pulaaku* by the repentant offender will render him an outcast and be exposed to several misfortunes. While the *Pulaaku* is not only limited to crime control, this study however, attempts to examine its role in controlling crimes in Fulani communities of Jigawa State.

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- (a) What are the processes of reintegrating repentant offenders into the society?
- (b) How effective is this traditional method in reducing crime in the study area?

Literature Review

Informal/Traditional Social Control

Informal or traditional social control consists of different forms of action taken by members of the society to punish unacceptable behavior. Prior to the modern system of social control, societies across the globe and indeed, African societies, had various traditional methods of social control employed either to deter potential offenders or to punish wrongdoers. In this regard, Conklin (1989) argued that informal control is the reaction of individuals and groups that bring about conformity to norms and laws which include peer and community pressures, bystander intervention in crime and collective responses, such as citizen patrol groups.

In one of his works, "Primitive Law", Radcliffe-Browne (1952) discussed extensively how laws operate in primitive societies and asserted that informal social control refers to interpersonal influence or the evaluation of conduct related to group membership. He further argued that:

...a deed committed by a member of the community that offends the moral sentiment may be subjected to three sanctions: the general or diffuse moral sanction, making the guilty person subject to the reprobation of his fellows; the ritual sanction, that produces in the guilty person a condition of ritual uncleanness that constitutes a danger to himself and to those with whom he is in contact. He further argued that in such cases custom may require him to undergo ritual purification or expiation or it may be believed that as a result of his sin he will fall ill and die; the penal sanction, whereby the community through certain persons acting as its constituted judicial authorities inflicts punishment on the guilty person, which may be regarded either as a collective expression of the moral indignation aroused by the deed or as a means of removing the ritual pollution resulting from the deed by imposing an expiation upon the guilty person, or as both (Radcliffe-Browne 1952:186).

Informal social control, as argued by Ozden & Ozcan (2006), is the best method to curb acts of lack of integrity among young people as the method is guided by values, morals and ethics applied to culture.

Pulaaku as a Mechanism for Social Control

Pulaaku is a Fulani code of conduct that deals with morals and manners and regulates the conduct of the Fulani people. It prescribes proper behavioural norms between young people and elders, customs and principles where elders usually guide and enforce moral code. According to Abdullahi (2019), the Fulani conduct norm is embedded in a code called *Pulaaku*, which is a set of prescriptive and proscriptive norms transmitted by "significant others," parents and relatives as well as "generalized others," such as community elders during socialization. More precisely, *Pulaaku* includes honour, patience, persistence, courage, discipline, determination, humanity and self-control.

Reed (1932 as cited in Sa'id 1991) argued that *pulaaku* in its actual sense, is employed to denote the characteristics which distinguish the Fulani from other tribes and is also used for the rules of conduct, which should guide the Fulani in his interaction with other people, particularly with another Fulani. He further argued that *pulaaku* is the general rules governing the *Fulbe* way of life and the rules are peculiar to them. *Pulaaku* embodies the general code of conduct that includes the modes of controlling any form of behaviour that is condemned by the Fulani. However, the violation of any of the principles of *Pulaaku* will lead to the rejection of such a person by Fulani communities entirely and also, apart from that, it is believed to cause misfortune for those who deviated.

Traditional Processes of Offender Reintegration

The idea of helping the offender to make things right is not totally new either to Western criminological and legal thinking or to the practice of courts. Cottino (2008) reported that in the last twenty years, restorative and reintegrative programmes have been implemented, which drew support from etiological theories emphasizing the pivotal role played by community and family bonds. Offender reintegration, according to Meredith and Jasmine (2016), therefore, refers to the incorporation of the offender into a normative moral order of pro-social values and practices.

The process of reintegration, as asserted by Ahmed, Braithwaite & Braithwaite, Harris (2001), involves both micro and macro communities. The former can provide bonding social capital, emotional and material support, encouragement and perhaps the supervision of agreed upon reparations while the latter can provide bridging social capital both in the symbolic sense by connecting offenders to people outside their micro-community. In practice, this can mean contributing ideas towards agreements and/or monitoring items agreed to at a restorative conference. This was exemplified by the Maori people in New Zealand, as reported by Braithwaite (2000). They exposed the offender with his family to shame. This shame of letting the family down is terminated through expressions of forgiveness and reciprocated by a gesture of repentance by the offender, whereby the bonds were restored amidst hugging and shedding of tears. Often, Maori conference, the reintegration ritual, is sealed with a final prayer.

In some traditional Nigerian societies, Jonah (1999) examined similar process, but in this context ritual cleansing was recognized as the basic requirement for offender reintegration. However, adultery, murder and incest were the major offences that attracted this method of punishment. For example, in the Ekerernor Community in Oporomor Kingdom, Bayelsa State of Nigeria, women that committed adultery in secret will confess during child labour. Thus, often under fear of death, especially in pregnancy, a woman guilty of adultery was compelled to name the accomplice in public. In such a case, the anointing sacrifice (ritual cleansing), which usually

accompanied such confession, must be made with a fowl and other materials to the forefathers (*Opu-Aduwoi*). Following the ritual cleansing, according to him, the offender would be forgiven and accepted back.

Effectiveness of Traditional Mechanisms of Social Control

The ultimate goal of using traditional mechanisms for the control of crime is to restore good relations among members of a community. That is why the approach in general follows the line of restorative justice instead of punitive one. According to Chirayath, Sage and Woolcock (2005 cited in Dinnen 2009), it is now widely acknowledged that ‘traditional’ justice plays a significant role in the maintenance of order and the resolution of disputes, including, in particular, in many post-colonial countries, such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. This is also the case in the socially diverse societies of sub-Saharan Africa. For example, in Malawi, between 80% and 90% of all disputes are processed through traditional justice forums; In Bangladesh, an estimated 60% to 70% of all disputes are processed through customary *Salish*. In Sierra Leone, approximately 85% of the population falls under the jurisdiction of customary law, defined under the constitution as ‘the rules of law which, by custom, are applicable to particular communities in Sierra Leone.

Several scholars and researchers, as argued by Estelle (2011), have not only defended traditional justice as practiced in many African communities but also recognised its relevance to the administration of justice in African countries in the 21st century. Kariuki, for example, asserts that the traditional African justice system deserves recognition because it helps in maintaining the rule of law and an assured and timely delivery of justice, including advancing the community’s economy.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the Reintegrative Shaming Theory developed by Braithwaite (1989) as its theoretical framework. According to the RST, societies have lower crime rates if they communicate shame about crime effectively. This theory underpins the conferencing alternative and reintegrative shaming as an essential part of crime control by adopting a restitutive mechanism. For effective crime control, Braithwaite emphasizes that society has to provide appropriate and effective reintegrative shaming for people, who are involved in criminal acts and to create an opportunity, which will promote acceptance of the offender back into society.

Braithwaite's (1989) theory of reintegrative shaming represents a recent elaboration of a perspective on crime control, such as the activities of the *Pulaaku* committee that propose the move to restitutive law as an important resource in crime management. It is an example of

incorporating civil remedies, especially restitution and apology into the punishment process. The theory has been criticized by Presser and Gaarder (2000) for its unquestioning assumption that all societies are built on a consensus about what is right and what is wrong.

Despite the criticisms, this theory can provide an insight, particularly in dealing with the population of a unique culture like that of the Fulani people with a common moral code of conduct, such as *Pulaaku*. The theory tries to portray the role of repentance and the reintegration of the repentant offender in controlling crime and preventing future occurrences.

Methodology

The study used mix methods (quantitative and qualitative) mode of data collection. For the quantitative, a survey was conducted while In-depth interviews were used to generate qualitative data. Secondary data were also utilized. The population used for this study included the Fulani population in Jigawa State where the *Pulaaku* method is used. Included also were the Fulani traditional (community) leaders, *Pulaaku* committee members and repentant offenders. In accordance with the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) guideline and sample size determination formula, a sample size of one thousand, seventy five (1,075) was arrived at.

From this, one thousand and thirty (1,030) represent the Fulani population who were the respondents for quantitative data (survey). The instrument was distributed according to population size as follows: a sample of two hundred and fifteen (215) was selected each from Gwaram and Guri and one hundred and fifty (150) sample each from Birnin Kudu, Kirikasamma, Maigatari and Babura Local Government areas, respectively. This is in accordance with the distribution of the Fulani population and size across Jigawa State.

Eighteen repentant cattle rustlers were selected (three each from the selected local government areas) for the In-Depth Interview (IDI). Others are six Fulani traditional leaders (one from each Local Government Areas), nine members of the *Pulaaku* committee (one from each of the six Local Government Areas and three state leaders), six Divisional Officers of the Nigerian Police Force and six Divisional Officers of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (one each from the six selected Local Governments Areas), making a total sample size of one thousand and seventy five.

With regards to sampling techniques, this study used cluster, availability and purposive sampling techniques as follows: First stage, (1). cluster sampling was used to identify three senatorial districts of the State at the first stage, then two Local Governments areas where *Pulaaku* activities are taking place were selected from each of the three senatorial districts, namely: Birnin Kudu and Gwaram Local Governments Areas from Jigawa Central District, Guri

and Kirikasamma Local Governments Areas from Jigawa North east District, Maigatari and Babura Local Governments Areas from Jigawa North West District. (2). availability sampling technique was used to select members of the Fulani population in the selected Local Government areas. Second stage: purposive sampling was used to reach specific key populations in each of the above-mentioned Local Governments areas who provide relevant information. These populations are Fulani traditional leaders, *Pulaaku* committee members, repentant cattle rustlers, officials of the Nigerian Police Force and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps. They were purposively selected based on their roles and knowledge of the subject.

The quantitative data collected was analysed using frequency table distributions, percentages. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in processing the data. While the qualitative data were generated, transcribed and interpreted to complement the quantitative data appropriately.

Findings

The Traditional Processes of Reintegrating Repentant Cattle Rustlers

This section presents the data on the traditional process of the reintegration of repentant cattle rustlers.

Table 1: Knowledge of the Respondents on Whether there are Traditional Processes for Reintegration of offenders

Processes for reintegration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	747	73.4
No	271	26.6
Total	1018	100.0

Table 1 indicates whether or not the respondents are aware of traditional processes used for the reintegration of repentant offenders. Majority of the respondents (73.4%) reported that there are traditional processes. According to them, part of the prerequisite for reintegration is to fulfill all the traditional rites and rituals for repentance. While 26.6% noted that there are no traditional processes for reintegration even though they further revealed that they are not much familiar with the processes of *Pulaaku* activity. Traditional processes involve all the rites and rituals that a cattle rustler must fulfill while taking the oath of repentance.

An in-depth interview with a *Pulaaku* committee member revealed that:

Before a repentant offender is reintegrated into society, there are certain traditional rites he has to fulfil and the processes involve steps as follows: after the guilt is established, the offender will take an oath that he will never go back to commit similar acts, then he will be given a spiritual leaf (*Ganyen Kalgo*) which symbolises boycott against that prohibited act, from that moment the repentant offender will be declared as free, law abiding and reintegrated member of the society. This activity is

normally conducted in a community gathering. (IDI, *Pulaaku* committee member, 2023).

Similarly, a repentant offender indicated that:

...There are processes involved in reintegrating the repentant offender into society. After we surrendered or accepted to repent, we take an oath of repentance and taking this kind of oath involve some traditional rituals or rites and when we do that we finally got reintegrated back to society as free members (IDI, Repentant offender, 2023).

As stated by the respondents, reintegration requires traditional processes to ensure that repentant cattle rustlers did not go back to their previous criminal act. All rituals must be carried out together with oath taking. Then the repentant offender would be fully reintegrated into society as a normal citizens.

Table 2: Views of respondents on whether or not repentant offenders are accepted back into their Community

Accepted	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	906	89.0
No	112	11.0
Total	1018	100.0

On whether or not repentant offenders are accepted by their communities after reintegration, Table 2 indicates that majority of the respondents (89.0%) reported that repentant offenders are accepted in their communities after reintegration, while some respondents (11.0%) opined that they are not accepted in their communities. Although this is a minority view, the respondents might be among those few who are not very familiar with the activities of the *Pulaaku* committee. This was further revealed by a *Pulaaku* committee member:

The repentant offenders are accepted in the society after reintegration. You see the activity of our committee is known and accepted by the entire Fulani communities; therefore, no one stigmatizes the repentant offenders. To prove the level of their acceptance, some of them are even involve in our committee. So not only accepted they are also trusted (IDI, *Pulaaku* committee member, 2023).

Another response from a repentant offender revealed:

After fulfilling all the rites for repentance, we are normally reintegrated into our communities as free, law abiding and as normal like every member of the community, acceptance by the members of the community is not a problem because like me I feel like everything is normal, no one has ever remind me about my previous activities. Sometimes we are involved in community activities particularly the one that concern security (IDI, Repentant offender, 2023).

The completion of the rituals and the fulfilment of traditional rites, according to the participants, are what signify the forgiveness and acceptance of repentant offenders. Once they are given the leaves of camel foot-tree (*ganyan kalgo*) as a symbol of *pulaaku*, signifying the approval of their repentance, they will be fully accepted and recognized by the members of their

communities as law-abiding people. They will also be treated as normal citizens in their communities, with less stigma.

Effectiveness of the traditional method in reducing the incidence of Cattle Rustling:

This section presents respondents’ opinions about the effectiveness of the traditional method used by the Fulani communities of Jigawa State, Nigeria for controlling crimes in their communities.

Table 3: Views of the respondents on whether or not the activity of *Pulaaku* Committee is viewed as successful

Successful	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	948	93.1
No	70	6.9
Total	1018	100.0

Table 3 indicates that majority of the respondents (93.1%) were of the view that the activity of the *Pulaaku* committee recorded some successes in reducing the incidence of cattle rustling in their communities while 6.9% opined that the activity is not successful because they are not sure whether the reduction of crimes is as a result of *Pulaaku* activities or not. Similarly, a Fulani traditional leader stated:

With regards to the successes of using this traditional method to control crimes in our communities, I can tell you, it yielded a huge success. Every Fulani knows how we live, most of us use to sleep halfway because of the fear that our cattle and other animals will be stolen. But with the reintroduction of this traditional method few years back, crimes have drastically reduced. I cannot say that there is crime at all, but it has reduced to the extent that our cows move freely without being stolen away. (IDI, Community leader, 2023).

Also, an interview with a *Pulaaku* committee member revealed:

Yes, I can say that we recorded successes in carrying out our activities. For example, looking at the number of people who repentant and even the reduction of criminal activities can testify that there is success in what we are doing. We try our best to perform the duties assigned to us and ensure that we did not betray the trust and confidence reposed on us (IDI, *Pulaaku* committee member, 2023).

Furthermore, a repentant offender stated:

From my own understanding or opinion, there are a lot of successes associated with this traditional method of controlling crimes. First for example by looking at the number of people that took an oath and repentance we can say there is successes because if not this method is being used, there are many offenders who will never repent. Another success is that majority of those who repentant did not return to criminal activities (IDI, Repentant offender, 2023).

Majority of the respondents viewed the activities of the *Pulaaku* committee as successful. This is attributed to the large number of offenders reported to have taken the oath of repentance. Many of them are now coopted into the committee of *Pulaaku*.

Discussion

The study found that repentant offenders are reintegrated into the society after taking an oath of repentance. There are traditional processes (ritual and rites) that are involved. This was elaborated further by the in-depth interview participants that before a repentant offender is reintegrated into society as a normal and law-abiding person, there are certain traditional rites he has to fulfil. This ensures whoever is accepted and forgiven must truly repent assurance is as a result of the traditional rites and oath of repentance the offender will undertake.

These processes, as it was revealed, involve steps as follows: after guilt is established, the offender will take an oath that he will never go back to commit cattle rustling and other similar acts and then he will be given a spiritual leaf of camel-foot (*Ganyen Kalgo*), which symbolizes a desisting from the prohibited act. From that moment, the repentant offender will be declared as a free, law abiding and reintegrated member of the society. In a similar vein, Braithwaite (2000) also disclosed how Maori people in New Zealand exposed the offender with his family to shame. This shame of letting the family down is terminated through expressions of forgiveness and reciprocated by a gesture of repentance by the offender whereby bonds are restored amidst hugging and shedding tears. Often at a Maori conference, the reintegration ritual is sealed with a final prayer.

Furthermore, the methods of reintegrating repented offender as presented by the data, is in harmony with the Reintegrative Shaming Theory of Braithwaite (1989), which emphasizes the conferencing alternative, and reintegrative shaming as an essential part of crime control like cattle rustling. By adopting this mechanism, Braithwaite (1989) argued in his theory that societies have lower crime rates. While other traditions of crime control mechanisms have focused on the offenders' isolation from society or punishment, the reintegrative shaming theory focuses on the importance of cultural integration and emphasizes that the key factor of crime control is the cultural commitment to shaming.

For effective crime control, Braithwaite emphasizes that society has to provide appropriate and effective reintegrative shaming for people who are involved in criminal acts, and to create an opportunity that will promote the acceptance of the offender back into society. On whether or not repentant offenders are accepted by their communities after reintegration, the data indicate that they are accepted in their communities after reintegration. This was further reported

that they are accepted in the society after reintegration with a minimal or less stigma. Some of them are even involved in the activities of the committee. Therefore, they are not only accepted but are also trusted.

It was revealed that the activity of the *Pulaaku* committee was effective in reducing the incidence of crimes in Fulani communities. This opinion attributed the success to the reduction as a result of *Pulaaku* committee activities. It was further revealed that with the reintroduction of this traditional method, crimes have drastically reduced to the extent that cattle and animals move freely without being stolen. Other indicators of the success, according to the data, relied on the large number of offenders that took the oath of repentance. This view was supported by the media report that over five hundred cattle rustlers took the oath from December 2017 and February 2018 in Jigawa State (Daily Trust, 2018). From the data, *Pulaaku* activities are generally accepted by Fulani communities. The activities have been welcomed from inception till date and the committee members are receiving overwhelming support and cooperation from both the Fulani leadership and the general public.

Conclusion

Societies used a variety of traditional mechanisms for dealing with wrongdoers. Unlike the modern justice system, the traditional approach for controlling transgression is based on the customary principle of justice. The method relies heavily on customary practice and moral codes, such as *Pulaaku*, for regulating the behaviour of the people in the society. Similarly, the Fulani people in Jigawa State reintroduced and adopted this approach for controlling crimes. By using their moral code of conduct (*Pulaaku*), the traditional method resulted in the repentance of offenders. The initiative complemented the efforts of formal law enforcement agencies in curtailing the incidence of crimes in the State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The reintegration of repentant offenders requires a process of rehabilitation and reformation. Apart from the traditional process of repentance and reintegration using different forms of ritual, the government needs to intervene at this juncture and ensure that repentant offenders undergo a comprehensive rehabilitation programme. The programme is expected to provide them with knowledge and skills for their future life and ensure their compliance with the law of the land.

- ii. To minimize the chances or the possibilities of recidivism among repentant cattle rustlers, the government should support the *Pulaaku* committee by providing skills acquisition training for alternative means of livelihood among repentant cattle rustlers.
- iii. A more elaborate and in-depth study should be conducted to find out the fate of the victims of cattle rustling in those communities where repentant cattle rustlers are reintegrated and accepted by their communities. The study should be able to provide answers to whether or not the victims are compensated and, if compensated, who provides the compensation between the community and the repentant cattle rustlers.
- iv. Further study should be conducted to ascertain the long-term impact of *Pulaaku* activity on the life of repentant cattle rustlers in terms of behavioural changes and their new way of socioeconomic life, which involves their relationship with their families, friends and other members of the community as well as the jobs they are engaged.

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