

A Review of the Evolution of Criminology and its Impact on Criminal Justice Administration in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined the historical progression of criminology and its impact on the administration of criminal justice in Nigeria, focusing on the challenges and possible solutions to enhance the system. The study utilizes a dialectical review method utilizing qualitative research design, within the Social Disorganization Theory. It delves into early criminological theories, such as the theological explanations, the classical school of thought, biological theories, psychological theories, and crime in primitive societies, tracing their effects on contemporary criminology. The research also addresses the development of criminology in Nigeria, the contributions of criminology to societal advancement, and the obstacles faced by the Nigerian criminal justice framework. The results indicate that criminology has greatly aided society by elucidating human behavior, advocating for justice, and promoting social order. Nonetheless, Nigeria's criminal justice system encounters several issues, including corruption, insufficient recruitment in law enforcement, and a lack of public confidence. To tackle these challenges, the study suggests improving accountability, boosting funding and resources, implementing community-based programs, and reinforcing anti-corruption agencies. By embracing these suggestions, Nigeria's justice system can become fairer and more effective, ultimately fostering justice and safety for its citizens.

Keywords: Corruption; Crime, Criminal justice system; Criminology; Restoration.

Introduction

Criminology, as a multidisciplinary field encompassing biology, sociology, psychology, and political science among others, stands at the forefront of understanding crime and criminal behavior. Its evolution mirrors societal changes and intellectual advancements, aiming not only to explain the causes of crime but also to propose effective preventive measures and justice systems worldwide. The roots of criminology are traceable to the 18th century when Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham pioneered its modern foundations. Beccaria, in his seminal work "On Crimes and Punishments" (1764), advocated for a rational approach to criminal justice. He argued against the use of torture and harsh punishments, suggesting that punishments should be proportional to the crime committed, marking a significant departure from the brutal practices of his time. Bentham, building upon Beccaria's ideas, introduced utilitarianism to criminology, emphasizing the maximization of happiness and reduction of pain in societal conduct and legal systems.

Throughout the Renaissance and into the 20th century, criminology expanded both in scope and theoretical diversity. The classical school, championed by Beccaria and Bentham, focused on individual rationality and free will in committing crimes and its influence paved the way for reforms in criminal law and the establishment of more humane justice systems globally.

In contemporary criminology, diverse perspectives such as biological, psychological, and sociological theories have enriched our understanding of criminal behavior. Biological theories explore genetic and physiological factors influencing criminal tendencies, while psychological theories delve into the impact of individual experiences and mental health on criminal actions. Sociological theories, including strain theory and social disorganization theory, analyze how societal structures and inequalities contribute to criminal behavior. Moreover, criminology has adapted to global challenges such as terrorism, cybercrime, and transnational organized crime. These phenomena necessitate innovative approaches in law enforcement, policy-making, and international cooperation to effectively combat evolving threats to public safety.

In Nigeria, criminology faces unique challenges amidst socio-political complexities. Issues such as corruption within law enforcement agencies, overcrowded prisons, and inadequate judicial systems pose significant obstacles to crime prevention and justice. Scholars and practitioners in Nigerian criminology strive to address these challenges through research,

policy advocacy, and community engagement, aiming to enhance law enforcement capabilities and promote social justice.

This review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the historical evolution of criminology, spanning from its classical roots with Beccaria and Bentham to its modern applications in diverse societal contexts. By synthesizing current research published between 2018 and 2024, the review seeks to highlight contemporary advancements and debates within the field. It aims to underscore the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in understanding and addressing crime, emphasizing the relevance of criminology in shaping effective criminal justice policies and practices globally.

Criminology continues to evolve as a vital discipline, essential for maintaining social order and justice in an increasingly complex world. By examining its historical foundations, theoretical frameworks, and contemporary challenges, this review underscores criminology's role in informing evidence-based policies and interventions. Moving forward, interdisciplinary collaboration and empirical research will remain crucial in advancing our understanding of crime and developing effective strategies to mitigate its impact on societies worldwide.

Statement of Problem

The Nigerian criminal justice system faces several challenges that compromise its effectiveness in combating crime and delivering justice. Although the country has made attempts to reform its criminal justice framework, problems such as corruption, insufficient police recruitment, and a lack of public trust continue to exist (Dambazau, 2006; Onyeozili, 2005). The absence of a thorough understanding of the evolution of criminology and its effects on the Nigerian criminal justice system has obstructed the formulation of effective policies and interventions to tackle these issues. This research aims to fill this knowledge void by investigating the historical development of criminology and its consequences for the administration of criminal justice in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Theories of Crime and Punishment

Criminological thought has evolved significantly from its origins, where explanations of crime were often rooted in supernatural or religious beliefs, to more contemporary theories that incorporate psychology, biology, and social structures. This review examines early

criminological theories, focusing on theological explanations, the classical school, biological theories, psychological theories, and crime in primitive societies. Each of these frameworks offers insight into the foundational beliefs about crime and punishment, tracing their influence on modern criminology. Drawing on recent scholarly literature, this paper critically evaluates these theories within their historical and cultural contexts, and assesses their relevance today.

During the Middle Ages, theological explanations for crime were dominant. Crime was frequently interpreted as the result of sin, with offenders being seen as possessed by evil spirits or acting under the influence of malevolent forces. Religious traditions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism viewed crime as an act of disobedience not only to societal norms but also to divine law. Sin, in this context, was synonymous with crime, and punishment was often a reflection of divine justice rather than societal retribution (Cavanaugh & Smith, 2019).

The concept of crime in theological frameworks was intrinsically linked to morality, and the response to crime was typically punitive. The punishment served both as a deterrent and as a method of purging evil from the community. While this perspective is largely outdated in contemporary criminology, echoes of theological reasoning still appear in debates around moral responsibility and the death penalty in religious societies. However, critics argue that such a perspective oversimplifies crime by attributing it solely to spiritual failings rather than complex social, economic, or psychological factors (McWilliams, 2020).

From a modern viewpoint, the strength of theological explanations for crime lies in their capacity to offer a moral framework for understanding criminal behavior and punishment. These explanations highlight the significance of moral accountability and the influence of spirituality on individual actions. Nonetheless, the limitation of this theory is its tendency to oversimplify crime, attributing it solely to spiritual shortcomings without considering the intricate interplay of social, economic, and psychological factors that contribute to criminal conduct.

In contemporary criminology, theological explanations fall short in providing a thorough understanding of crime. Modern theories, such as social learning theory, strain theory, and critical criminology, present more nuanced accounts of crime that consider the many factors influencing criminal behavior.

Additionally, theological explanations can be problematic when they lead to punitive measures that emphasize punishment over rehabilitation and restorative justice. In contrast, modern crime approaches focus on addressing the underlying causes of criminal behavior, promoting rehabilitation, and enhancing community safety and well-being.

Overall, while theological interpretations of crime hold historical importance, their relevance to contemporary criminology is diminished by their oversimplification of crime and their inability to address the multifaceted factors that drive criminal behavior. However, they may inform policy discussions surrounding moral accountability and the impact of spirituality in rehabilitation.

The Classical School: Thomas Hobbes and Rational Choice

The classical school of criminology, emerging in the 18th century, represents a fundamental shift in the understanding of crime. Rooted in the work of Enlightenment thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, Cesare Beccaria, and Jeremy Bentham, this school emphasized rationality and free will. Hobbes' social contract theory posited that humans, in their natural state, act out of self-interest, which can lead to conflict and crime. However, individuals agree to a social contract, sacrificing certain freedoms in exchange for the security provided by the rule of law (Pratt, 2018).

The classical school introduced a key principle: crime is a deliberate act against the law, deserving of punishment proportional to the offense. This idea of proportionality laid the groundwork for modern legal systems, where the severity of the punishment corresponds to the seriousness of the crime. According to this perspective, punishment should serve as a deterrent rather than a form of rehabilitation, with retribution often articulated through the principle of "an eye for an eye" (Beccaria, 1764/2021).

Critics of the classical school point to its limitations, particularly in its treatment of free will as universal and undifferentiated. More recent research has shown that social, economic, and psychological factors significantly influence decision-making, undermining the simplistic view of rational choice (Farrington, 2020). Additionally, the classical theory's focus on punishment rather than rehabilitation has been criticized for contributing to punitive systems that fail to address the root causes of criminal behavior.

Nigeria's criminal justice system primarily emphasizes punishment, with various offenses often resulting in imprisonment and fines. Additionally, Nigerian courts strive to impose

sentences that are proportional to the crime, considering the severity of the offense and the culpability of the offender. Similarly, the country's law enforcement agencies and courts implement deterrence strategies, such as publicizing penalties and enforcing severe sentences, to dissuade potential offenders.

Biological Theories of Crime: Cesare Lombroso

In contrast to the classical school's emphasis on free will, biological theories, particularly those of Cesare Lombroso in the 19th century, suggested that criminal behavior could be inherited. Lombroso, often referred to as the father of modern criminology, argued that criminals could be identified by their physical characteristics, such as large jaws, muscular builds, or certain facial features. According to Lombroso, these traits were signs of a "born criminal" and reflected an earlier stage of human evolution (Gatti & Tremblay, 2019).

Lombroso's theory, while innovative for its time, has been widely discredited due to its deterministic approach and lack of empirical support. Critics have noted that Lombroso's work perpetuated harmful stereotypes, particularly regarding race and class, by suggesting that certain groups were more likely to engage in criminal behavior based on their appearance (Rafter, 2021). Moreover, advances in genetics and neuroscience have shown that while biological factors may play a role in predispositions to certain behaviors, they interact with environmental and social factors in complex ways, making Lombroso's theory overly simplistic.

Psychological Theories: Sigmund Freud and the Role of the Unconscious

Psychological theories of crime, particularly those influenced by Sigmund Freud, shifted the focus from biological determinism to the inner workings of the human mind. Freud's psychoanalytic theory emphasized the role of the unconscious in shaping behavior, including criminal actions. He argued that criminality could result from the failure of the "superego," the part of the personality responsible for moral judgments, to adequately control the "id," which represents primal urges and desires (Freud, 1939/2020).

Key elements of Freud's theory, such as the Oedipus complex, suggested that unresolved childhood conflicts could manifest in deviant behavior. For instance, Freud believed that unconscious sexual desires directed at a parent could lead to aggressive or criminal actions later in life. While Freud's specific ideas have been critiqued for their lack of empirical evidence, his work laid the foundation for modern psychological theories that explore the

relationship between childhood experiences, personality disorders and criminal behavior (Hollin, 2020).

Crime in Primitive Societies: Bronislaw Malinowski

Bronislaw Malinowski, a 19th-century anthropologist, contributed to early criminological thought by examining crime within the context of primitive societies. Malinowski's studies of the Trobriand Islanders revealed that while these societies did not always adhere to formalized laws, social control was maintained through social relations and communal norms (Malinowski, 1926/2021). He noted that anti-social behavior existed in all societies, but the ways in which it was addressed varied depending on cultural context.

Malinowski introduced the concept of restitution, where offenders would compensate victims directly through money or services. This approach contrasts with the more punitive models seen in Western societies, offering an alternative method of resolving conflicts without the need for formal legal systems. Restitution is still relevant today in restorative justice models, which seek to repair harm and reintegrate offenders into society rather than simply punishing them (Walgrave, 2019).

The early theories of crime and punishment—from theological explanations to biological determinism and psychological frameworks—reflect the evolving understanding of human behavior in relation to criminality. While many of these theories have been critiqued and refined over time, they have each contributed to the development of criminology as a discipline. Modern criminology continues to draw on these foundational ideas while incorporating new research on the complex interplay between biology, psychology, and social environments in shaping criminal behavior.

The concept of crime has been a persistent part of human history, with ancient civilizations developing unique laws and punishments based on their societal values. In ancient Mesopotamia (3500 BCE), for instance, the Code of Hammurabi was among the earliest codifications of law, specifying penalties for crimes such as theft, murder, and adultery. This legal system, which emphasized retribution, laid the groundwork for structured criminal justice systems across civilizations. Similarly, in ancient Egypt (3100 BCE), crimes such as tomb robbery or murder were met with severe punishments, including mutilation or death. The societal norms and religious values of these civilizations influenced their approach to crime and punishment (Emsley, 2023).

Ancient Greece (8th century BCE) also had its own judicial systems. The Athenian legal system, for example, dealt with serious crimes like murder, theft, and sacrilege, emphasizing the communal role in maintaining law and order. Ancient Rome (509 BCE) operated under the Twelve Tablets, which established rules regarding property rights, theft, and treason. The Romans, like the Greeks, viewed crime in both legal and moral terms, with punishments varying in severity based on the crime (Shoemaker, 2023).

Ancient China, under the Tang Code (700 CE), had its own sophisticated legal system that addressed crimes such as murder, theft, and corruption. This system influenced the development of later legal frameworks across Asia. In both ancient European and African cultures, witchcraft was a serious crime, often punished by death through stoning or other forms of execution (Law, 2024).

During the Middle Ages, the church played a significant role in defining crime and punishment. Crime was often seen as an offense against both God and the community, leading to harsh punishments like corporal penalties or public executions. These acts were meant to serve as deterrents and reinforce social order, with public displays of punishment emphasizing divine justice. The medieval period relied on physical tests (often believed to be divinely guided) to determine guilt or innocence, and punishment was primarily retributive rather than rehabilitative. Ecclesiastical courts had authority over moral offenses like blasphemy and heresy, highlighting the strong religious influence on crime definitions (Bernard, 2024).

The **Renaissance** marked a shift in thinking about crime and justice. Scholars began to challenge traditional beliefs, advocating for rational approaches to crime. **Cesare Beccaria**, in his 1764 work *On Crimes and Punishments*, was a key figure in this intellectual movement. He argued for proportionate punishments and rationality over vengeance, laying the groundwork for modern criminological theory. Beccaria's work emphasized deterrence and sought to reform the justice system, moving it towards a more structured and empirical approach to criminal behavior (Shoemaker, 2023).

This shift towards rationality, along with the development of centralized courts and legal codes during the Renaissance, began shaping the legal frameworks that would influence modern societies. The period fostered the idea of fairness in justice, steering away from the excessive brutality that characterized earlier eras, and promoting systematic observation of criminal behavior as a means to understand and prevent crime (Emsley, 2023).

Crime and punishment have evolved significantly across civilizations and eras, from the retributive justice systems of ancient societies to the more structured and empirical

approaches seen during the Renaissance. These developments have paved the way for modern criminology, with historical legal systems influencing contemporary thoughts on justice and legal practice.

The Positivist School of Criminology, emerging in the 19th century, marked a significant shift from the Classical School by focusing on scientific approaches to understanding crime. Unlike the Classical School, which emphasized free will and rationality, the Positivist School argued that criminal behavior could be studied and understood through observation, measurement, and empirical research.

Key features of the Positivist School include:

- i. **Determinism:** The belief that behavior is determined by external factors such as biological traits, psychological conditions, or environmental influences. This view counters the Classical notion of free will, suggesting that individuals have limited control over their actions due to factors like brain dysfunction, genetics, and early childhood experiences (Bernard, 2024).
- ii. **Empirical Methods:** Positivists employed systematic research methods, such as qualitative data analysis and statistical modeling, to study criminal behavior scientifically. These methods helped build a body of evidence for understanding crime as a phenomenon influenced by various external forces rather than just personal choice.
- iii. **The Concept of the "Born Criminal":** Introduced by **Cesare Lombroso**, often considered the father of the Positivist School, this idea suggested that certain individuals were biologically predisposed to crime. Lombroso believed that physical characteristics could help distinguish criminals from non-criminals, a theory that has since been discredited but was foundational at the time (Emsley, 2023).

Despite its innovations, the Positivist School faced criticism, notably from scholars like Enrico Ferri and Raffaele Garofalo, who argued that the narrow focus on biological determinism overlooked critical social factors such as poverty and inequality. These critics emphasized the need to consider the broader social context when analyzing criminal behavior. In contrast, the Classical School of Criminology, pioneered by Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham, emphasized rationality and free will. Beccaria, in his famous work *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764), argued against the use of torture and capital punishment, proposing that punishments should be proportionate to the crime. He also advocated for better prison conditions and supported the "social contract" theory, where the state exists to serve the people, and laws should reflect the general will (Shoemaker, 2023).

Jeremy Bentham, a proponent of utilitarianism, extended Beccaria's ideas by emphasizing that the law should maximize the "greatest happiness for the greatest number." He argued that people are motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, and that punishment should deter crime without being excessively harsh. Bentham also designed the Panopticon, a model prison based on the principle of constant surveillance to ensure discipline and efficiency (Bernard, 2024). Both schools of thought have left enduring legacies in criminology. The Classical School influenced legal reforms and the development of more humane justice systems, while the Positivist School introduced scientific approaches to understanding crime, laying the foundation for modern criminology.

Developments in Criminology during the 20th Century

The 20th Century experienced significant developments in criminological theory, resulting in various frameworks aimed at elucidating criminal behavior and societal responses to crime. This period signified a transition from conventional perspectives of crime as solely a legal or moral concern to a more nuanced, interdisciplinary comprehension (Beccaria, 2021; Blumberg, 1974).

Principal Theories

Strain Theory, formulated by Robert Merton in 1938, posits that societal pressures to achieve success may result in criminal behavior when individuals cannot reach these goals through legitimate avenues (Dambazau, 2006).

Social Learning Theory, developed by Ronald Akers in 1939, asserts that individuals acquire behaviors, including criminal ones, through observation of others, particularly within intimate social circles (Farrington, 2020).

Howard Becker's Labelling Theory, articulated in 1963, highlights the impact of societal reactions and labels, such as "criminal," on individuals' adoption of deviant identities (Odekunle, 1998).

Control Theory posits that, according to Travis Hirschi (1969), robust social bonds—such as those formed within family, school, and community—serve to deter individuals from criminal behavior. Individuals with weak social ties are more prone to deviance (Walgrave, 2019).

Rational Choice Theory, formulated by Ronald Clarke and Derek Cornish in 1986, posits that individuals assess the costs and benefits prior to engaging in criminal behavior, indicating that crime arises from rational decision-making processes (Pratt, 2018).

The Chicago School of Criminology refers to a significant theoretical framework in the study of crime and deviance, emphasizing the role of the social environment in shaping criminal behavior. The Chicago School, which emerged in the early 20th Century, was a transformative force in criminology. It brought to light the profound impact of urban environments on criminal behavior. Pioneering researchers such as Robert Park and Clifford Shaw delved into the social disorganization that was rampant in rapidly expanding urban areas. Their work posited that crime is significantly influenced by variables such as poverty, unemployment, and the lack of social cohesion within communities (Dambazau, 2006; Gatti & Tremblay, 2019).

Critical criminology

Developments in the late 20th Century encompassed the emergence of critical criminology, which challenged conventional crime theories by emphasizing social justice, inequality, and power dynamics. Researchers in this domain examine the disproportionate impact of the criminal justice system on marginalized groups, such as racial minorities and women (Malinowski, 2021; Rafter, 2021).

Progress in Methodological Approaches and Technological Innovations

Criminology adopted a more empirical and scientific methodology. Quantitative methods, including statistical analysis, surveys, and experiments, have gained increased prominence. Technologies such as computerized databases, crime mapping, and surveillance techniques have enabled criminologists to enhance the tracking and analysis of criminal trends, thereby transforming the field (Hollin, 2020; McWilliams, 2020).

Crime is understood as a construct shaped by societal norms and values. The perspective that crime is a social construct indicates that criminal behavior is not intrinsically deviant but is shaped by societal norms and power dynamics. This concept is consistent with labeling theory and conflict theory, which assert that behaviors are designated as "criminal" due to social biases and power dynamics rather than any inherent immorality (Freud, 2020; Walgrave, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in social disorganisation theory, which asserts that the breakdown of social institutions and the dilution of social ties can result in a rise in criminal activities and deviant behavior (Sampson & Groves, 1989). The concept, introduced by Clifford Shaw and Henry D. McKay of the Chicago School of Criminology in 1942, argues that an individual's behavioral choices are primarily influenced by their physical and social environment. This theory suggests that elevated levels of social disorganisation within neighborhoods and communities are marked by a lack of social cohesion, fragile social networks, and diminished informal social control (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993). Shaw and McKay noted that areas with high crime rates shared at least three characteristics: physical decay, poverty, and a greater extent of ethnic and cultural diversity. The theory posits that crime and antisocial behaviors are not the result of individual failings, but rather a normal reaction of typical individuals to abnormal conditions.

The Social Disorganization Theory offers a significant framework for understanding the development of criminology and its influence on criminal justice management in Nigeria. This theory suggests that crime and delinquency are more prevalent in regions with feeble social structures, adverse economic conditions, and a lack of community solidarity. Within the Nigerian context, the theory may clarify how social and economic elements impact crime statistics and trends.

Methodology

This research employs a dialectical review approach to explore the evolution of criminology and its influence on criminal justice administration in Nigeria. The study is based on an extensive review of current literature, encompassing academic journals, books, and credible online sources. Utilizing a qualitative research design, the study applies a thematic analysis method to recognize and examine pertinent themes and concepts found in the literature. Data is gathered from a variety of sources, including academic journals, textbooks on criminology, criminal justice, and related disciplines, along with online resources.

The thematic analysis method is utilized to interpret the collected data, which involves:

- a) Identifying relevant themes and concepts in the literature.
- b) Analyzing and interpreting the themes and concepts within the context of the study.
- c) Drawing conclusions based on the analysis.

The limitations of the study include its dependence on existing literature and the possibility of bias in the selection of sources. Nevertheless, the research aims to present a comprehensive and impartial review of the literature to minimize these limitations.

Discussion

The Role of Criminology in Societal Development

Criminology, as a field of study, has made significant contributions to society by:

- (a) Understanding human behaviour through examining the underlying causes of crime through psychological, social, and biological factors (Blumberg, 1974; Dambazau, 2006).
- (b) Criminology plays a crucial role in promoting justice. It does so by advocating for fairness within the legal system, evaluating the justness and equity of laws and judicial processes (Cavanaugh & Smith, 2019). This reassures us that criminology is not just about understanding crime, but also about ensuring justice prevails.
- (c) Social stability helps identify factors that disrupt societal order and facilitates the implementation of preventive measures (Onyeozili, 2005).
- (d) Criminologists are not just interested in understanding crime, they also play a key role in forecasting crime trends. By utilizing research and theoretical frameworks, they can predict crime trends and propose preventive measures (Pratt, 2018). This proactive approach helps us prepare for and potentially prevent future criminal activities. Social change emphasizes the identification of injustices and inequalities, advocating for reforms to tackle systemic issues such as poverty and discrimination (Walgrave, 2019).

The 20th Century established the foundation for contemporary criminology, expanding its scope and integrating multi-disciplinary approaches that have clarified crime and enhanced the criminal justice system.

Criminology within the Nigerian Context

The field of criminology in Nigeria is significantly influenced by the country's distinct cultural, economic, and political context. The underdevelopment, religious diversity, ethnic divisions, and socio-economic challenges in Nigeria have directly impacted the crime landscape (Adekunle, 2010). Nigeria crime rate ranks the country 3rd in Africa following South Africa and Angola with crime index of 66.2. The country's crime environment is characterized by political instability, corruption, terrorism (notably the Boko Haram

insurgency), economic crime, and various social issues such as human trafficking and cybercrime (Premium Times, 2018; Odekunle, 1998). The interplay of these factors has hindered law enforcement and the justice system's ability to effectively address crime (Dambazau, 2006).

Historical Development of Criminology in Nigeria

Despite the significant changes brought about by colonialism, the Nigerian criminal justice system has shown resilience. Prior to colonialism, Nigerian societies depended on customary rules administered by traditional authorities, emphasizing reparation above punishment. British colonization (1862–1960) instituted formal English law, leading to the establishment of colonial courts and police forces that predominantly catered to colonial interests rather than community needs (Dambazau, 2006; Onyeozili, 2005).

Following independence, Nigeria preserved a significant portion of the colonial legal framework while incorporating customary rules. The burgeoning academic interest in criminology resulted in its incorporation into higher education curricula. Nigerian institutions such as the University of Ibadan and the University of Lagos emerged as hubs for criminological research, playing a crucial role in understanding and addressing the effects of urbanization, corruption, and other novel criminal activities that surfaced in the late 20th century (Walgrave, 2019; Farrington, 2020).

Criminal studies in Nigeria have concentrated on economic offenses, fraud, corruption, cybercrime, armed robbery, kidnapping, and terrorism, including the Boko Haram insurgency (Odekunle, 1998; Gatti & Tremblay, 2019). The obstacles confronting Nigeria's criminal justice system encompass: Inadequate coordination among law enforcement, judiciary, and correctional facilities leads to inefficiencies and inconsistencies (Cavanaugh & Smith, 2019). Adverse public opinion of law enforcement is exacerbated by pervasive corruption, brutality, and the inability to safeguard individuals (Dambazau, 2006). Prison inefficiencies, characterized by elevated recidivism rates and a significant proportion of inmates awaiting trial, indicate a failure in rehabilitation and deterrence (Blumberg, 1974; Malinowski, 2021).

A significant difficulty is the recruitment process within the Nigerian police force, which is characterized by influence, bribery, and nepotism. Inadequate compensation has compelled numerous police personnel to resort to extortion and other immoral behaviors for survival, thereby further undermining public confidence in law enforcement (Adekunle, 2010).

Notwithstanding these issues, many improvements have been implemented to enhance Nigeria's criminal justice system. Organisations such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) were created to address certain challenges, including financial crimes and corruption (Premium Times, 2018). Criminological research remains essential for comprehending crime patterns and guiding policy recommendations (McWilliams, 2020).

Criminology in Nigeria is continually evolving, influenced by the nation's distinct social, political, and economic circumstances. The evolution of the profession in Nigeria highlights multidisciplinary methodologies, tackling diverse concerns from traditional law to contemporary cybercrime and terrorism (Freud, 2020; Pratt, 2018). Notwithstanding the obstacles confronting the justice system, criminologists and policymakers are actively striving for reforms to enhance crime prevention and justice administration (Rafter, 2021).

Criminal Justice Policies in Nigeria

Nigeria's criminal justice policies aim to combat crime, safeguard human rights, and enhance the legal framework. Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015 (ACJA): This Act seeks to optimize the judicial system by facilitating prompt justice delivery, safeguarding defendants' rights, and implementing reforms, including plea bargaining, witness protection, and non-custodial punishment for minor offenses. These measures mitigate prison overcrowding and improve equity in the judicial process (Dambazau, 2006).

Anti-Corruption Policies: The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) were created to address corruption through the investigation and prosecution of corrupt persons. These entities seek to recuperate misappropriated public finances and enhance government transparency. Despite its acknowledged presence, corruption continues to be a pervasive problem in Nigeria (Odekunle, 1998; Onyeozili, 2005).

Criminal Justice changes: These changes aim to modernize the justice system by establishing specialized courts, automating judicial processes, and implementing training programs for law enforcement personnel and judiciary staff. The revisions seek to rectify delays in the judicial system, which have posed considerable difficulty (Cavanaugh & Smith, 2019).

Protection of Human Rights: Policies have been established to safeguard the rights of all Nigerians, encompassing suspects and inmates. Organizations like the Legal Aid Council and human rights units within law enforcement agencies offer assistance to marginalized groups and guarantee equitable treatment within the judicial system (Malinowski, 2021).

Community Policing: Community policing has been implemented to enhance cooperation between law enforcement agencies and local communities. This strategy prioritizes trust cultivation and responsiveness to community needs, hence aiding in grassroots crime prevention. This paradigm has shown some success; nonetheless, issues such as corruption, underfunding, and resource deficiencies persistently hinder its efficacy (Pratt, 2018; Walgrave, 2019).

Challenges

Notwithstanding these policies, Nigeria's criminal justice system encounters numerous enduring challenges. Corruption in the police, judiciary, and jail institutions obstructs the administration of justice (Freud, 2020). Numerous prisons in Nigeria are overcrowded, with a substantial number of offenders in pretrial detention, exacerbating the system's strain (Blumberg, 1974; Gatti & Tremblay, 2019). Extended legal proceedings lead to postponed justice, so compromising the efficacy of criminal justice reforms (McWilliams, 2020). Inadequate funding and resources for law enforcement and judicial entities frequently result in substandard working conditions and systemic inefficiencies (Hollin, 2020; Rafter, 2021).

Findings

The development of criminology in Nigeria has been influenced by the country's distinctive historical, cultural, and socio-economic background. The imposition of the British legal system during the colonial period has left a lasting mark on Nigeria's approach to crime and justice (Dambazau, 2006). Furthermore, Nigeria's rich cultural diversity has shaped its perceptions of crime and justice, as various cultures possess unique viewpoints on these matters (Odekunle, 1998). Socio-economic difficulties, such as poverty and inequality, have further complicated the landscape of crime and justice in Nigeria (Adekunle, 2010).

Numerous challenges impede the efficient administration of justice in Nigeria. The police recruitment system often suffers from corruption, favoritism, and nepotism, resulting in the hiring of unqualified individuals (Adekunle, 2010). Corruption is a widespread problem within Nigeria's judicial framework, affecting law enforcement bodies, the judiciary, and

correctional institutions (Odekunle, 1998). Insufficient funding and resource shortages also undermine the efficacy of law enforcement and the justice system (Cavanaugh & Smith, 2019).

A range of reforms have been introduced to tackle these issues. The Administration of Criminal Justice Act (2015) seeks to enhance the justice administration in Nigeria by fostering fairness, efficiency, and efficacy (Dambazau, 2006). Community policing represents another strategy that focuses on collaboration between law enforcement and local communities, fostering trust and enhancing cooperation (Pratt, 2018). Improvements in forensic practices can also bolster the efficiency of law enforcement and strengthen the justice system's capability to deliver appropriate outcomes (Hollin, 2020).

In spite of these reforms, challenges continue to exist. Corruption remains a widespread issue in Nigeria's justice system, eroding public confidence and diminishing the efficacy of law enforcement (Freud, 2020). The police recruitment process continues to be problematic, leading to the hiring of unqualified personnel (Adekunle, 2010). Eroded public trust in the justice system can stem from corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of transparency (Cavanaugh & Smith, 2019). These issues need immediate attention as they are crucial to making the system more effective and efficient.

Conclusion

Criminology has substantially changed, with scientists proposing diverse theories to elucidate crime and criminal behaviour. Nigeria's criminal justice policies include global endeavours to reconcile punishment with rehabilitation, safeguard human rights, and maintain societal order. Nevertheless, Nigeria's system is plagued by corruption, inefficiencies, and resource scarcity, hindering the realisation of the changes and policies implemented. Continuous initiatives are required to enhance accountability, get sufficient resources, and resolve structural challenges to guarantee a more equitable and efficient justice system.

Recommendations

To tackle these issues, the study suggests:

- i. **Improving Accountability:** Boosting accountability can enhance transparency and integrity within the justice system. This can be accomplished through initiatives such

- as equipping police officers with body-worn cameras, conducting regular audits, and carrying out internal investigations.
- ii. **Increasing Funding and Resources:** Augmenting funding and resources can help resolve resource shortages and enhance the efficiency of law enforcement. This might involve investing in infrastructure, equipment, and training for law enforcement officials.
 - iii. **Establishing Community-Based Initiatives:** Community-based programs can foster trust and improve collaboration between law enforcement and local populations. Such initiatives may include community policing, neighborhood watch programs, and other efforts that encourage community involvement.
 - iv. **Bolstering Anti-Corruption Agencies:** Reinforcing anti-corruption agencies can help maintain accountability and integrity within the justice system. This could involve providing sufficient funding and resources, ensuring their independence, and promoting transparency.

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