

Family Dynamics and Social Structures as Determinants of Criminal Behavior in Nigeria: A Socio-psychological Perspective

¹Osu Ahmed Abdulrahman & ²Isiaka Hassan Aliyu, PhD & ³Akeem Adekunle Kenku, PhD

^{1,2}Department of Crime Management, Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa

³Department of Psychology Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Email: Osu231277@gmail.com, Isiaka93@gmail.com & akeemkenku@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examines how family dynamics and social structural factors contribute to criminal behaviour in Nigeria from a sociopsychological perspective. Drawing on Social Disorganization Theory and secondary data sources, the study explores how family dysfunction, including parental neglect, poor supervision, and family instability, interacts with poverty, unemployment, social inequality, community disorganization, and weak institutions to increase vulnerability to criminal behaviour, particularly among youths. The findings indicate that criminal behaviour is shaped by the combined effects of weakened family structures, socioeconomic deprivation, neighbourhood disorganization, and deviant peer influence. Family dysfunction undermines moral development and social control, while economic hardship and social exclusion create conditions that encourage criminal involvement. The review concludes that crime is a product of interconnected family, psychological, and structural factors rather than individual choice alone, and recommends integrated interventions focused on strengthening families, empowering youths, promoting economic inclusion, enhancing community cohesion, and improving institutional effectiveness to address the root causes of crime in Nigeria.

Keywords: Family dynamics, social structure, Criminal behaviour, Social disorganization, Sociopsychological, Nigeria

Introduction

Criminal behaviour remains one of the most persistent social problems confronting contemporary societies across the world. It poses significant threats to social stability, economic development, human security, and public safety. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], (2023), millions of individuals worldwide are affected annually by violent crimes, organized criminal activities, and technologically enabled offences. The rapid advancement of information technology, globalization, urbanization, and increased population mobility have further transformed the nature and scope of criminal activities, made crime prevention and control a major challenge for governments and policymakers. Consequently, scholars increasingly recognize criminal behaviour as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by psychological, social, economic, cultural, and political factors rather than merely a violation of legal norms.

In Nigeria, criminal behaviour has become a major national concern due to the increasing prevalence of insecurity and social instability. The country continues to experience various forms of criminal activities, including kidnapping for ransom, cybercrime popularly known as "Yahoo Yahoo," cultism, armed robbery, terrorism, banditry, drug trafficking, political violence, communal conflicts, and youth gang activities. These criminal trends have resulted in loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement of populations, disruption of economic activities, and reduced public confidence in state institutions. Reports from the National Human Rights Commission [NHRC], (2025) indicate that thousands of Nigerians have been affected by

kidnapping, violent attacks, and communal clashes in recent years. Similarly, the National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022) reported that approximately 133 million Nigerians are multidimensionally poor, while unemployment and underemployment remain pervasive, particularly among young people. Such socioeconomic realities contribute to frustration, social exclusion, and feelings of hopelessness, thereby increasing susceptibility to criminal involvement and antisocial behaviour.

Understanding criminal behaviour requires examining not only individual characteristics but also the social environments within which individuals are socialized and interact. Among the most influential social institutions shaping behaviour is the family. The family serves as the primary agent of socialization, responsible for transmitting values, norms, beliefs, and behavioural expectations. Through family interactions, children develop emotional regulation, empathy, self-control, and moral reasoning. Healthy family environments characterized by effective parenting, emotional support, supervision, and positive communication tend to foster prosocial behaviour and psychological adjustment. Conversely, dysfunctional family conditions such as parental neglect, domestic violence, broken homes, poor supervision, abuse, and inconsistent discipline have been linked to increased risks of delinquency, aggression, substance abuse, cultism, and criminal behaviour (Bowly, 1969; Eneh & Ugwuoke, 2023; Widom, 1989).

Beyond the family, broader social structures significantly influence criminal behaviour. Social structures refer to the organized systems and institutions that regulate social life, including economic, political, educational, legal, and cultural systems. These structures shape access to resources, opportunities, social mobility, and life chances. In many developing societies, structural inequalities such as poverty, unemployment, corruption, inadequate educational opportunities, weak governance, and social exclusion create environments that encourage deviant adaptation and criminal involvement. Merton's (1938) Strain Theory suggests that when individuals are unable to achieve culturally valued goals through legitimate means, they may resort to illegitimate alternatives. Similarly, Social Disorganization Theory argues that crime is more prevalent in communities characterized by poverty, residential instability, weakened social institutions, and reduced informal social control (Shaw & McKay, 1942). In Nigeria, rapid urbanization, overcrowding, poor housing conditions, and weak community institutions have contributed to the emergence of criminal subcultures, gang activities, cultism, and organized crime, particularly in urban centres and economically disadvantaged communities (Akinlabi & Murphy, 2022).

From a sociopsychological perspective, criminal behaviour emerges through the interaction between environmental conditions and individual psychological processes. Exposure to poverty, violence, neglect, discrimination, trauma, and social exclusion can generate feelings of frustration, anger, hopelessness, and alienation. These experiences may weaken emotional regulation and increase susceptibility to antisocial behaviour. Furthermore, Social Learning Theory posits that criminal behaviour is often acquired through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within family, peer, and community contexts (Bandura, 1977). Adolescents who are exposed to deviant peers, criminal role models, or environments where crime is normalized may gradually adopt similar attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, criminal behaviour cannot be adequately explained solely by individual moral deficiencies but must be understood within the broader social and psychological contexts that shape human development.

Contemporary criminal trends in Nigeria further illustrate the interconnected nature of family and structural influences. The growing involvement of youths in cybercrime, kidnapping, cultism, political thuggery, drug abuse, and gang-related activities reflects the combined effects

of family instability, unemployment, poverty, corruption, weak institutions, and limited social support systems. The United Nations Emergency Children Fund [UNICEF] (2024) reports that many Nigerian children are exposed to violence, abuse, neglect, and inadequate psychosocial support, conditions that heighten vulnerability to maladaptive behavioural outcomes.

Despite the growing body of literature on crime and insecurity in Nigeria, much of the existing research has focused either on individual psychological explanations or on broader socioeconomic determinants, often neglecting the dynamic interaction between family processes and social structural conditions. Therefore, this study seeks to provide an integrated sociopsychological analysis of the relationship between family dynamics, social structures, and criminal behaviour in Nigeria.

Literature Review

This section examines how societal institutions and family dynamics affect criminal behavior in Nigeria by synthesizing important results from actual examples and the literature.

Sociopsychological Mechanisms Linking Family Dynamics and Social Structures to Criminal Behaviour in Nigeria

The empirical literature demonstrates that criminal behaviour in Nigeria results from the interaction of family, social, economic, and community factors. Family dysfunction, including parental neglect, weak supervision, broken homes, and poor parent–child relationships, significantly increases the likelihood of delinquency and criminal involvement among adolescents and young adults (Adeyemi, 2021; Akinpelu & Arowolo, 2019). Studies further show that unstable family environments characterized by conflict, domestic violence, and parental irresponsibility undermine the development of self-control, empathy, and moral reasoning, thereby increasing susceptibility to theft, substance abuse, violence, and gang-related activities (Okafor & Nwankwo, 2022; Ojedokun & Balogun, 2021). These findings support the view that weakened family structures reduce social control and increase deviant behaviour (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Beyond family influences, socioeconomic conditions such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, and economic deprivation are major contributors to criminal behaviour. Economic hardship often generates frustration and feelings of relative deprivation, pushing many youths toward criminal activities including robbery, kidnapping, and cybercrime (Ugwuoke et al., 2023). Recent reports indicate that worsening economic conditions continue to heighten youth vulnerability to crime and social unrest in Nigeria (NBS, 2024).

Community and neighbourhood characteristics also play a crucial role in shaping criminal behaviour. Socially disorganized communities characterized by poverty, weak social cohesion, residential instability, and ineffective informal social control tend to experience higher crime rates (Akinwale, 2021; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Evidence from Nigeria shows that neighbourhood disorganization, poor community integration, and weak collective efficacy significantly increase youth involvement in criminal activities (Mohammed & Yusuf, 2024). Similarly, the weakening of neighbourhood institutions, family networks, religious organizations, and traditional leadership structures creates opportunities for criminal behaviour and exposes youths to deviant subcultures (Agbiboa, 2021; Alemika & Chukwuma, 2020).

Peer influence further strengthens the relationship between family dysfunction, social disadvantage, and criminal behaviour. Adolescents who experience parental neglect and inadequate supervision often seek acceptance from peer groups, and association with delinquent peers increases the likelihood of criminal involvement through imitation, reinforcement, and

social approval (Salami & Adekeye, 2023). Studies also show that peer pressure, family instability, low self-esteem, and adverse social environments jointly contribute to juvenile offending and recidivism (Aderinto, 2018; Ojedokun, 2020).

Generally, criminal behaviour in Nigeria is best understood as a product of interconnected sociopsychological processes involving family dysfunction, economic hardship, community disorganization, and deviant peer associations. These factors interact to create conditions that increase criminal involvement, highlighting the need for integrated interventions such as family-strengthening programmes, poverty reduction initiatives, youth empowerment schemes, community development efforts, and institutional reforms (Agnew, 1992; Alemika, 2013; Sampson et al., 1997).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Social Disorganization Theory, which offers a robust framework for understanding how weakened family systems, community disintegration, and ineffective social institutions create conditions that foster criminal behavior in Nigeria. In the early 1900s, Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay, members of the Chicago School of Sociology, propounded the Social Disorganization Theory. Their groundbreaking study, *Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas* (1942), looked at the geographical distribution of crime rates in Chicago and discovered that neighborhoods with high rates of poverty, ethnic diversity, and residential instability also had much higher crime rates. They maintained that informal social control collapses and abnormal behavior become accepted when local institutions like families, schools, and religious organizations are undermined or rendered ineffectual. Many Nigerian metropolitan and peri-urban regions are very relevant to the central thesis of Social Disorganization Theory, which maintains that the breakdown of conventional institutions creates an atmosphere that is conducive to criminal activity. Slum areas in cities like Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt, and Onitsha usually have inadequate housing, healthcare, education, and enforcement systems. Crime thrives because of this institutional neglect, which erodes ties within the community and limits the ability to respond collectively. For instance, research has indicated that young people in Ajegunle (Lagos) and Sabon Gari (Kano) who live in chaotic neighborhoods with little parental supervision and no youth engagement initiatives are disproportionately active in cult activities and street crimes (Akinlabi & Murphy, 2022). Broken family structures and a lack of community-based restrictions cause criminal subcultures to be internalized as acceptable ways of life. Nonetheless, Shaw and McKay's approach emphasizes how the microstructure of the family is affected by macro-level disarray. Family groups are frequently broken up in high-crime Nigerian neighborhoods as a result of overpopulation, forced migration, and poverty. As a result, children's moral development is disrupted and parental monitoring is compromised, making them ideal targets for criminal gangs.

Global Perspectives on the Patterns and Trends of Criminal Behaviour

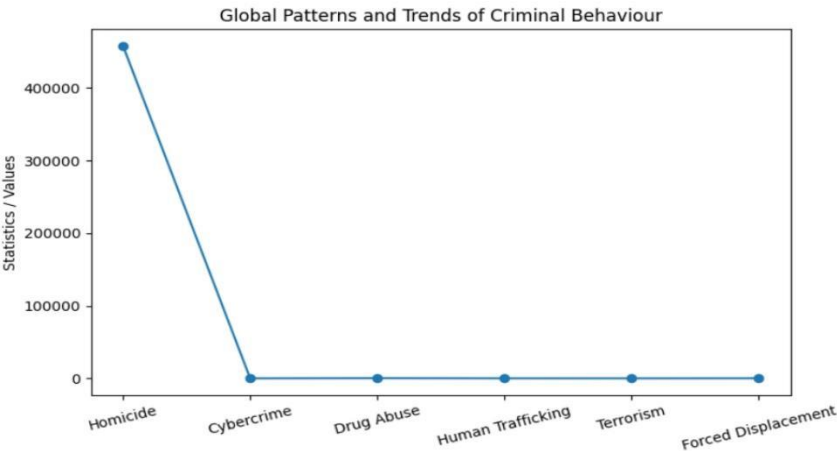
Global criminal behaviour has become increasingly complex, transnational, and technology-driven as a result of globalization, urbanization, economic inequality, political instability, migration, and changing social structures. Contemporary criminal activities now extend beyond traditional offences such as theft and homicide to include cybercrime, terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, financial fraud, organized crime, and transnational criminal networks. Globally, approximately 458,000 people are killed annually through homicide, while about 296 million people use psychoactive substances (UNODC, 2023). Cybercrime losses are projected to reach approximately \$10.5 trillion annually (Cybersecurity Ventures, 2024), nearly 50 million people live in conditions of modern slavery (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022),

and over 120 million people are forcibly displaced due to conflict and humanitarian crises (UNHCR, 2024).

Table 1: Global Patterns and Trends of Criminal Behaviour

S/N	Indicator	Statistics/Data	Trend/Pattern	Source
1	Global Homicide	458,000 deaths annually	Persistent violent crime globally	UNODC (2023)
2	Cybercrime	\$10.5 trillion projected annual cost	Rapid increase in digital crime	Cybersecurity Ventures (2024)
3	Global Drug Use	296 million drug users worldwide	Rising substance abuse	UNODC (2023)
4	Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking	50 million victims globally	Increasing transnational exploitation	ILO (2022)
5	Terrorism	High terrorism-related deaths in conflict regions	Persistent global insecurity	Global Terrorism Index (2024)
6	Forced Displacement	120 million forcibly displaced persons	Increasing migration and humanitarian crises	UNHCR (2024)

Figure 1: Graphical Illustration of Global Patterns and Trends of Criminal Behaviour



Sources: UNODC (2023), Cybersecurity Ventures (2024), ILO (2022), Global Terrorism Index (2024), and UNHCR (2024).

These global trends suggest that criminal behaviour is strongly shaped by socioeconomic inequality, unemployment, poverty, weak institutions, family instability, psychosocial dysfunction, and social exclusion. Youth involvement in gangs, cybercrime, terrorism, and organized criminal networks is often linked to economic frustration, peer influence, and marginalization, while family dysfunction, trauma, abuse, and poor emotional attachment further increase vulnerability to antisocial and violent behaviours. The growing prevalence of cybercrime, organized violence, human trafficking, and drug-related offences reflects the interaction between social pressures and technological advancement. Consequently, addressing contemporary criminal behaviour requires integrated interventions that combine law enforcement, mental health support, family strengthening, youth empowerment, economic development, institutional reforms, and international cooperation (Cybersecurity Ventures, 2024; ILO, 2022; UNHCR, 2024; UNODC, 2023).

Nigerian Context and Contemporary Trends in Criminal Behaviour

Nigeria continues to face significant challenges related to criminal behaviour, insecurity, and social instability, driven largely by poverty, unemployment, family instability, corruption, weak institutions, urban disorganization, and psychosocial distress (Merton, 1938; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Approximately 133 million Nigerians, representing 63% of the population, live in multidimensional poverty, a condition that increases vulnerability to criminal activities such as theft, kidnapping, cybercrime, cultism, drug trafficking, and armed robbery (NBS, 2022; Okolie & Ogbonna, 2021). High levels of youth unemployment and underemployment have further intensified frustration and blocked social mobility, contributing to the rise of internet fraud, robbery, and youth violence (NBS, 2023; Uche & Ibrahim, 2022). Cybercrime, popularly known as “Yahoo Yahoo,” has become particularly prevalent among educated but unemployed youths, driven by economic hardship, peer influence, materialism, and social pressure (Adeniran, 2021; Uche & Ibrahim, 2022). Similarly, kidnapping and banditry have escalated across the country, with thousands of incidents recorded in recent years, reflecting the effects of weak security systems, rural poverty, institutional failure, and the proliferation of arms (NHRC, 2025; SBM Intelligence, 2024).

Table 2: Nigerian Context and Contemporary Trends in Criminal Behaviour

S/N	Indicator	Statistics/Data	Trend/Pattern	Implication for Criminal Behaviour	Sources
1	Multidimensional Poverty	133 million Nigerians (63%) are multidimensionally poor	Rising poverty and hardship	Increased vulnerability to theft, kidnapping, cultism, and survival crimes	NBS (2022)
2	Youth Unemployment	Persistent high youth unemployment and underemployment	Increasing frustration among youths	Greater involvement in internet fraud, robbery, and gang violence	NBS (2023); Uche & Ibrahim (2022)
3	Kidnapping and Banditry	3,012 kidnappings and 3,584 killings recorded between 2024–2025	Increasing nationwide insecurity	Expansion of organized criminal networks	NHRC (2025)
4	Exposure to Violence	6 out of 10 Nigerian children experience violence	Persistent domestic violence	Higher risk of aggression and antisocial behaviour	UNICEF (2024)
5	Drug Abuse	14.4% of Nigerians aged 15–64 use psychoactive substances	Increasing substance abuse among youths	Rise in violent crime and gang activity	UNODC (2022)
6	Cybercrime	Nigeria remains a major hub for internet fraud	Rapid expansion of cybercrime networks	Normalization of online fraud among youths	Adeniran (2021)
7	Cultism and Gang Violence	Frequent cult clashes in Rivers, Edo, Lagos, Delta, and Anambra	Increasing urban gang activities	Youth violence and territorial conflicts	Akinlabi & Murphy (2022)
8	Political Violence	Frequent electoral violence during elections	Persistent recruitment of youths by politicians	Reinforcement of violent political culture	Human Rights Watch (2023)
9	Terrorism and Insurgency	Continued Boko Haram and bandit attacks	Persistent insecurity in Northern Nigeria	Displacement and trauma	Research Reports (2024)
10	Inflation and Economic	Inflation reached 34.19% in 2024	Severe economic pressure on	Increase in deviant survival strategies	HRW (2025)

	Hardship		households		
11	Urban Social Disorganization	Rapid urbanization and slum expansion	Weak informal social control	Rise in robbery and gang activities	Shaw & McKay (1942)
12	School Kidnappings	Hundreds of schoolchildren abducted in 2024–2025	Escalating attacks on schools	Educational disruption and trauma	Reuters (2025)
13	Crime Arrest Statistics	371-armed robbery suspects, 186 kidnappers, and 167 cultists arrested	Rising organized criminality	Pressure on law enforcement systems	NPF (2024)

Source: Compiled from National Bureau of Statistics (2022, 2023), UNICEF (2024), UNODC (2022), NHRC (2025), Human Rights Watch (2023), and related literature.

Other contemporary forms of criminal behaviour in Nigeria include cultism, gang violence, political thuggery, electoral violence, and drug-related crimes, particularly among youths in urban and semi-urban communities (Eneh & Ugwuoke, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2023). Drug abuse involving substances such as cannabis, tramadol, methamphetamine, and codeine has been linked to aggression, impulsivity, and violent criminal activities (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency [NDLEA], 2023; UNODC, 2022). Family instability, including domestic violence, neglect, abuse, and poor parental supervision, further increases the risk of antisocial behaviour, substance abuse, and juvenile delinquency among young people (Bowlby, 1969; UNICEF, 2024; Widom, 1989). Additionally, rapid urbanization, overcrowding, weak educational systems, inadequate policing, and ineffective community institutions have contributed to social disorganization, creating environments where criminal subcultures and deviant peer networks thrive (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Overall, contemporary criminal trends in Nigeria reflect the interaction of structural inequality, economic hardship, family dysfunction, psychosocial stress, and weak institutional systems, highlighting the need for integrated interventions focused on poverty reduction, youth empowerment, family strengthening, educational reform, mental health support, and institutional accountability (Merton, 1938; Shaw & McKay, 1942).

Psychosocial Intervention Strategies for Combating Criminal Behaviour

Psychosocial intervention strategies are essential for addressing the psychological, social, economic, and environmental factors that contribute to criminal behaviour. Since criminality is often associated with poverty, family instability, unemployment, trauma, peer influence, social disorganization, and emotional maladjustment, effective interventions must adopt a multidimensional and integrated approach involving families, schools, communities, mental health professionals, and government institutions. The major psychosocial intervention strategies are as follows:

- i. **Family-Based Interventions:** These interventions focus on strengthening family relationships, improving parenting practices, and enhancing parental supervision. Parenting education, family counselling, and emotional support programmes help reduce child neglect, domestic violence, and antisocial behaviour among youths.
- ii. **School-Based Psychological Interventions:** Schools can help prevent criminal behaviour through counselling services, behavioural monitoring, anti-bullying programmes, and moral education. Guidance counsellors and psychologists assist students in developing emotional regulation, self-control, and positive social behaviour.
- iii. **Community-Based Interventions:** Community interventions involve youth empowerment programmes, vocational training, neighbourhood watch initiatives, and recreational

- activities. These programmes strengthen social cohesion and reduce youth involvement in gangs, cultism, and violence.
- iv. **Mental Health and Trauma-Focused Interventions:** Psychological services such as counselling, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), anger management, and trauma rehabilitation help individuals cope with emotional distress, aggression, substance abuse, and antisocial tendencies associated with criminal behaviour.
 - v. **Youth Empowerment and Employment Programmes:** Providing employment opportunities, entrepreneurship training, and vocational skills reduces frustration, poverty, and economic strain among youths. Economic empowerment discourages involvement in cybercrime, kidnapping, theft, and political thuggery.
 - vi. **Drug Abuse Prevention and Rehabilitation:** Drug prevention programmes educate individuals about the dangers of substance abuse, while rehabilitation services help addicted individuals recover and reintegrate into society. Reducing drug abuse lowers violent behaviour and criminal tendencies.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this review indicate that criminal behaviour in Nigeria is largely shaped by the interaction between dysfunctional family environments and broader social conditions. Evidence from the reviewed literature shows that poor parental supervision, ineffective parenting, family instability, domestic violence, neglect, and broken homes significantly increase the likelihood of delinquent and criminal behaviour among children and adolescents (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2021; Ojedokun & Balogun, 2020; Okorodudu, 2019). These family-related risk factors are further compounded by poverty, unemployment, inequality, inadequate educational opportunities, urban overcrowding, and social exclusion, which weaken family functioning and expose young people to deviant peer groups and criminal networks (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2022; Alemika, 2020; Conger et al., 2019; Ezeh & Nkamnebe, 2023; NBS, 2024; UNDP, 2024; World Bank, 2024). The findings therefore reinforce the view that criminal behaviour is not solely an individual problem but is deeply rooted in family and socioeconomic circumstances (Akers, 2017; Ugwuoke, 2021).

The review also provides strong support for both Social Disorganization Theory and Strain Theory. Communities characterized by poverty, weak social cohesion, residential instability, and ineffective institutions tend to experience higher levels of crime because traditional mechanisms of social control become weakened (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2018; Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson, 2012; Otu, 2021; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Likewise, unemployment, economic deprivation, limited educational opportunities, and social inequality create strain that encourages some individuals to pursue illegitimate means of achieving socially valued goals, resulting in crimes such as armed robbery, cybercrime, kidnapping, and drug trafficking (Adebayo, 2023; Agnew, 2013; Economic and Finance Crimes Commission [EFCC], 2024; Merton, 1938; NBS, 2024; World Bank, 2024). Furthermore, weak institutional structures, corruption, ineffective law enforcement, and limited access to justice reduce social control and public trust, thereby sustaining criminal behaviour (Alemika, 2020; Igbo, 2021; Transparency International, 2024; World Justice Project, 2024). Overall, the findings highlight the need for integrated interventions that strengthen family systems, improve community cohesion, reduce socioeconomic inequalities, and enhance institutional effectiveness to achieve sustainable crime prevention in Nigeria (UNODC, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

Conclusion

The review concludes that criminal behaviour in Nigeria is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction of family dysfunction, socioeconomic hardship, community disorganization, and weak institutional systems. Factors such as poor parental supervision, family instability, neglect, domestic violence, poverty, unemployment, inequality, limited educational opportunities, and social exclusion collectively increase the likelihood of criminal involvement, particularly among youths. The findings support both Social Disorganization Theory and Strain Theory, demonstrating that weakened social institutions and blocked socioeconomic opportunities contribute significantly to the emergence and persistence of criminal behaviour. Furthermore, the review highlights that ineffective law enforcement, corruption, inadequate social welfare systems, and limited access to justice weaken social control mechanisms and create environments that enable criminal activities to flourish. Consequently, criminal behaviour in Nigeria should not be viewed solely as an individual or moral problem but as a product of broader sociopsychological, economic, and institutional conditions. The review therefore emphasizes the need for comprehensive and preventive interventions that simultaneously strengthen families, improve community cohesion, reduce socioeconomic inequalities, and enhance institutional effectiveness to achieve sustainable crime prevention.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by its reliance on secondary sources such as journal articles, government reports, institutional publications, and online documents. The absence of primary empirical data restricts the ability to establish direct causal relationships between family dynamics, social structures, and criminal behaviour. Additionally, some available statistics on crime and insecurity in Nigeria may be underreported or inconsistent due to weak data collection systems and institutional limitations. The study also focused primarily on the Nigerian context; therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other countries with different sociocultural and institutional conditions. Furthermore, criminal behaviour is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple biological, psychological, economic, political, and cultural factors, some of which were beyond the scope of this review.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby proposed:

- i. National and local governments should put in place family-strengthening initiatives like parenting classes, counseling, and support groups for families who are at risk in order to lessen the criminogenic impacts of family dissolution. Early childhood interventions, particularly in low-income areas, reduce juvenile aggression and behavioral issues by promoting pro-social parenting and attachment, according to evidence from UNICEF (2022) and WHO (2023)
- ii. Targeted economic solutions are necessary because of the widespread correlation between instrumental crime and youth unemployment. These consist of youth microcredit access, digital literacy initiatives, social enterprise incubation, and vocational training. According to recent World Bank research from 2023, a recommended practice for areas with high crime rates is to combine psychological assistance with training that is related to employment.
- iii. Community policing, neighborhood groups, and youth mentorship programs should all be purposefully funded in order to stop the decline of informal social controls. Local leaders, religious institutions, and traditional rulers should be activated not just as surveillance mechanisms but also as cultural educators and restorative justice facilitators.

- iv. Legal changes should decriminalize small infractions (such as loitering and street trade), which disproportionately impact the poor, in order to stop the justice system from making deviance worse. Furthermore, non-custodial sentencing, restorative justice, and first-time offender rehabilitation have to be given top priority in Nigeria's legal system.
- v. The exploitation of young people for political violence is one of the most pressing but little-discussed concerns. Election reforms that forbid and punish political players for supporting armed groups and thuggery must be implemented by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security services, and civil society.

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