



Research Article

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Examining the Traditional Methods of Crime Control in an Identified Traditional Community: An Invitation to the Socio-Anthropological Jurisprudence of Mpam Community of Ahiazu Mbaise, Imo State

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Abstract

The paper focuses on assessing the traditional methods of crime control in an identified traditional community. Its main objective is to examine critically the traditional methods of crime control in a particular traditional community so as to appreciate the effectiveness of the traditional methods in crime control. To achieve this objective, the traditional community of Mpam in Ahiazu Mbaise L.G.A of Imo state was identified. An ethnographic non-participant descriptive method of analysis was used. Its sources of information included observations as well as secondary sources (books, journals, and the internet). A few theories were identified and reviewed, and the Control theory of Crime was adopted as the theoretical framework. In its investigation, some findings were made; these include: Crime Control measures serve as deterrents to prevent people from criminal behaviors; crime control methods in traditional societies may be primitive in nature, but they help in effectively controlling crimes among the natives; besides, society itself may be contributory in causing people to engage in criminal behavior. The paper therefore concludes that, in as much as crime is inevitable in all human societies (modern or traditional) effective crime control methods are the remedy to combat crime to achieve societal harmony. And thus, recommends: government should encourage traditional societies to retain some of their traditional crime control methods that have proved to be effective in controlling crime among the people; the leadership of traditional societies should review and adjust some of their traditional crime control methods that may infringe on the individual's human rights, *inter alia*.

Keywords: Crime; Crime Control; Traditional Method, Socio-anthropological, Jurisprudence

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Hobbesian problematique has always been to find plausible answers to the age-long question: “How is social order possible, giving man’s wickedness, brutality, selfishness, and unreasonableness in his state of nature?” Thomas Hobbes (1589 - 1679) in his great scholarship, *‘The Leviathan’* (Appadorai, 2003), provided us an inspiring answer with his ‘Social Contract’ thesis as a plausible solution to his intellectual curiosities with regard to the possibility of social order giving the wicked nature of man in his state of nature; as he informs us, “man is essentially selfish, moved by his passion not by reason, living without any common power set over them; it becomes a perpetual struggle of all against all, a situation of warre [anarchy]” (Appadorai, 2003:22). And to curb these excesses of man in his state of nature, men must give up their natural rights to a constituted body [by way of social contract] that can help, with the authority conferred on it, curb the excesses of man. Thus, in traditional societies, it is not uncommon to find some people who still give expressions to their wicked, selfish, and brutal nature that threaten the harmony of the society and individual freedom. That is, in traditional societies, there existed deviant behaviors which deviate from the norms and values of the people, and which society frowns at. The traditional people had behaviors they could regard as “crime” in their primitive era (of which some of these “crimes” in the traditional era have been co-opted into the criminal laws of the modern state); and as Hobbes suggested, there must have been a “constituted body” (Appadorai, 2003: 22) and/or some crime control methods among the traditional people to help curb man’s ‘selfish’ and ‘unreasonable’ behavior to maintain societal harmony. So what is crime?

In simple terms, crime can be referred to as, any wrongs against society (Okere, 1995). To be sure, all the modern states of the world were once traditional: right from the advanced nations to the modern states of Africa, were once traditional societies; and as such, had some deviant behaviors regarded as “crime” within their indigenous cultural milieu. They may not have had formal criminal laws like the present day modern states, but there were behaviors they could regard as having broken the indigenous norms or that have gone *extra juridical* to what is acceptable by the natives. For instance, the native Americas (The American Indians) had deviant behaviors they could regard as “crime” and methods of controlling them in their traditional era (as we shall see later in the furtherance of the discourse). Similarly, the traditional African societies, like the Ancient Kingdom of Ghana (as we shall see later), and other African countries, Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, etc had behaviors in their traditional setting they could regard as “crime” even though they may not have had formal criminal codes then. Typically, in traditional Nigerian society, prior to the advent of the British colonial masters and their formal laws, acts like incest, murder, adultery, witchcraft, etc were regarded as behaviors (“criminal behaviors”) that have crossed the societal normative boundary, and attracted some traditional crime control measures so as to maintain societal harmony. Therefore, traditional method of crime control connotes the olden day methods or primitive crime control measures by which the native people controlled or punished behaviors that have broken their indigenous norms. Thus, in the light of the foregoing utterances, and for the sake of stating the ‘reason for being’ of this paper, we shall be focusing on discussing the traditional methods of crime control in an identified traditional community in Nigeria.

1.2 Objective of the paper

The main objective of the paper is to examine critically the traditional methods of controlling criminal behavior in an identified traditional community so as to appreciate the effectiveness of the traditional methods in crime control.

1.2.1 Conceptual Clarifications

In the articulation of this paper, there are a few terms that are preponderant; and for the purpose of proper understanding, we shall like to clarify them. These include as follows, crime; crime control; traditional method. We shall address them in sequence:

1.2.2 Crime

In ordinary language, it is an action or omission which constitutes an offence and is punishable by law. In simple terms, it refers to wrongs against society (Okere, 1995). An action can only be considered a crime if declared as such by the relevant applicable law (Farmer, 2008). A crime is a public wrong which are forbidden and punishable by law (Martin, 2003). In contemporary societies (modern states), for any action to be considered as crime, there must be presence of the element of “action of doing something wrong” (i.e. ‘*actus reus*’) accompanied by the element of “the intent to do something wrong” (i.e. ‘*mens rea*’) (Martin, 2003). However, it should be noted that, while every crime violates the law, not every violation of the law is crime. Substantively, under public law, crime is any wrongful action against the state; while wrongful acts between individuals are regarded as ‘civil wrongs’ and are punishable under civil procedures within the private law (actions like breach of contract between individuals, etc).

1.2.3 Crime Control

This refers to methods or measures taken to reduce crime in society. Similarly, it connotes a form of social control which includes a broad range of methods used in society that aim to reduce or prevent the occurrence of criminal behavior. Modern methods of controlling crime include those used by the state, such as policing strategies, courts, the use of punishment, etc (Christie, 2017). Additionally, crime control is also an approach that focuses on protecting society from criminals by regulating criminal conduct and justice; the idea is that by punishing those who commit crime, the rest of the people will be deterred from committing crime frequently.

1.2.4 Traditional Method

This implies an olden method of doing something or carrying out a task. Hence, traditional method of crime control would suggest the olden day’s method or primitive method of crime control as opposed to modern methods.

1.2.5 Socio-anthropological

Socio-anthropological refers to the sociological and anthropological way of viewing reality or social fact. For the sake of our study here, it entails gaining insight into the social realities of a traditional society and its institutions/systems. Especially, and as the scope of this study permits, it refers to as, gaining insight into the social realities of the traditional crime control systems of a particular traditional society.

1.2.6 Jurisprudence

Simply defined, it means a philosophy of law. That is, an idea of law or system of law of a particular social group. Thus, ‘socio-anthropological jurisprudence’ here, refers to: a system of law or an idea or philosophy of law within the socio-structure and/or within the social realities of a traditional society. (Anthropology concerns itself with the study of traditional or cultural institutions of man).

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Crime – An Overview

The concept of crime is quite complex – in that it is perceived differently from different quarters, and is relative to time and spatial contexts. The functionalists (like Emile Durkheim), for instance, perceive crime as acts which depart from the value consensus of the society, which strongly offend the ‘collective conscience’ (Haralambos and Horlborn, 2004). To them, criminal laws and the control agents like the police, the court, etc are playing legitimate roles in society as they are translating shared values into action. On the contrary, those of the Marxian tradition/conflict perspective (like, William Chambliss, Frank Pearce, and John Young, etc) perceive crime and its social control agencies as reflecting and serving the ruling class interests (Haralambos and Horlborn, 2004). That is, the political class will define any behavior which does not serve their vested interests as crime. The nuanced views of crime notwithstanding, the concept of crime connotes the intentional commission of an act usually deemed socially harmful or dangerous, and is specifically prohibited and punishable under criminal law. By criminal law, we refer to a body of laws that define criminal offences and fixes punishment for convicted persons. That is, an act can’t be said to constitute a crime except it is contained in a state’s criminal codes. For instance, in Nigeria, some acts considered as crime include, kidnapping, murder, human trafficking, child sexual abuse, corruption, domestic violence, organized crime, smuggling, burglary, cyber crimes, money laundering, etc (Doris, June 27 2022). For the sake of clarifications, criminal offences may be grouped into three broad types (Okere, 1995: 111) namely, the first group: acts of physical violence (e.g, murder, rape, assault, etc); second group: acts of infringements on property rights (e.g, theft, burglary, etc.); and third: a broad range of actions labeled as crimes against health, morals, and public safety (e.g, prostitution, gambling, pornography, drug abuse, drunkenness, and in some areas, homosexuality).

Thotakura (2014) in his own persuasion sees crime as, a public wrong. That is, an act against what the state considers as criminal in its criminal law. Although, each society may define what constitute a crime relative to time and space, the following elements must be present in any act considered as crime: i). the individual – crime cannot be committed without a person; for there to be an act of crime there must be an individual who has an intention, and is prepared to commit crime. ii). The ‘intent’ element (Latinized as, ‘mens rea’) – that is, the ‘guilty mind’; for a crime to be committed “intention” to commit such a crime must be established. iii). The ‘action’ element (Latinized as, ‘actus reus’) –that is, the “guilty act”. For a crime to be committed, there must be “an action” (usually, physical; e.g injury: mental or physical or monetary which violates the state’s law) alongside with the “intent” to commit such act. Social factors like, family disorganization, poor upbringing, drug abuse, poverty, unemployment, etc may induce individuals to commit crime.

The above utterances may define what crime in a modern state is. However, modern states were once traditional societies, having their native norms and values that define what crime to them is: in traditional communities, all actions that disrupt communal harmony are considered as crime to them (Masitera, 2019). In the traditional society of North America (the American Indian natives), what was regarded as anti-social behavior or crime among them was usually determined through a tribal consensus (USA Dept. of Justice, 1996). Among the indigenous Americans, acts of alcoholism, family violence, incest, sexual assault, and homicide were considered as crime in their traditional era (Poupart, 2002). Similarly, African societies in their traditional era have actions they considered as crime. The African legal culture frowns at any improper behavior viewed as capable of being inimical to the legal norms and disrupting social equilibrium (Chinyere, 2022). In the Ancient Kingdom of Ghana, for instance, denial of debt or shedding of blood were considered as crime among the natives of the Ancient Kingdom of Ghana in 9th and 11th century (USHistory.org, 2022); and part of their justice system was to give the accused a concoction to drink at the trial at the king’s court: if he vomited; he was declared innocent of the crime; but if he didn’t vomit at all, he was declared guilty of the crime (USHistory.org, 2022). By the same token, traditional Nigerian societies in their traditional

era had actions they considered as crime like, witchcraft, incest, assault, adultery, theft, evasion of duties, marital abuse, cruelty, etc (Chinyere, 2022). And some of their traditional crime control methods include, fine payment, banishment, death penalty, oath taking at shrines, etc. Among the Igbo tribe, for example, the institutions or authorities that initiate such control methods include, the king (the Eze), Umunna, (council of elders), Okpala (first sons of each extended family), the masquerades (Nmanwu) etc. Thus, from the backdrop of the foregoing, the common denominator among all traditional societies (be it the traditional societies of the North Americas or traditional societies of Africa) as regards what constitutes the concept of crime in their traditional setting, are actions which are against the society.

2.2 Traditional Methods of Crime Control in Nigeria

According to Uyang et al (2013), prior to Western colonization, African traditional societies had various traditional channels through which the native people controlled crime and maintained social order. These include, the elders council, chiefs, village heads, etc. who function to interpret the norms of behavior in a particular community and adjudicate justice, as passed down from generation to generation. Man in the state of nature (according to Hobbes) (Onwe and Eze, 2019; Appadorai, 2003), is wicked, brutal, and selfish. Therefore, the indigenous people in their state of nature (primitive society/traditional era) must have put in place crime preventive measures to curb the excesses of those who may turn to be 'wicked', 'brutal' or 'selfish' –whose actions break the social harmony of the people. Among the major ethnic groups in traditional Nigerian society, like the Hausa/Fulani, for example; their crime control methods revolved around their constituted political institution and agents of social control which included, the Waziri (head of all the officials), the Galadima (in charge of the capital), the Madaki (the commander of the army), the Dogari (head of the police), etc (Dibie, 2018). Similarly, the Yoruba traditional society, had their Oyomesi (the kingmakers), the Oba and Baale (who had spiritual powers to check the excesses of any autocratic Alafin), the Are-Ona-Kakanfo (head of the army), the Ogboni society (who had judicial powers for preservation of their cultural values, and administer the 'occultic calabash' as a crime control measure), etc. (Dibie, 2018). By the same token, the Igbo traditional society had their traditional crime control measures discharged through their traditional institutions like, the Eze's court, the council of elders, Okpala, Umuada, age grade, the masquerade, etc.

According to Onwe and Eze (2013), the traditional crime control methods in typical traditional Nigerian society include, fine payment/compensation, ritual cleansing, trial by ordeal, ridicule and gossips, the masquerade institution, banishment, confinement, ostracism, capital punishment, etc. We shall briefly explain some of them, in sequence:

1. Fines and Compensation
This involves the imposition of damages (in monetary value) on offenders to compensate the victim or as a ransom to the entire society.
2. Ritual Cleansing
In traditional Nigerian society, violation of certain norms and values were regarded as, "land desecration or defilement" (in Igbo parlance, "Ime ru ala). The remedial measure was a form of ritual cleansing; the offences that could require ritual cleansing include incest, adultery, murder, etc.
3. Trial by Ordeals
This involves proving the innocence of the accused. It involved, oath taking, administration of concoction, or invocation of juju, etc.
4. Ridicules and Gossips
Deviation from certain societal norms and values usually attracted an unfavorable or negative reactions/disapprovals from one's significant others (family relatives, friends, or age mates). This could serve as both a punitive and preventive measures in controlling criminal or deviant behaviors. One, could as a result of what people would say, conform to

- the normative behaviors of society.
5. The Masquerade institution
The use of Masquerades in traditional societies of Nigeria acted as a social control mechanism for control of criminal behaviors. The Masquerade would appear in the night as a supernatural being and attack the offender.
 6. Ostracism
This involved severing social contact with the offender – that is, deliberately isolating the offender in every socio-economic activity like, markets, farm, and community gatherings, etc. This has very high psychological or emotional implications on the offender. It can further lead the offender to kill himself/herself or suffer depression.
 7. Banishment
In traditional Nigerian societies, this involved sending the offender away from his community (what modern states could call, 'Exile'). This may include cases of persistent stealing, murder, cases of poisoning another member of the community, etc.

The above delineated traditional crime control measures are typical of Nigerian traditional societies. Although, the crime control methods of some of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria may in some aspects be similar with one another, in some aspects they are different from one another due to disparate ethnic cultures. For instance, in some of them, the structural institutions through which the traditional crime control measures are being discharged are centralized (like among the Hausas and Yoruba crime control/justice system); while in other ethnic group like among the Igbos, the structural institutions through which the crime control measures are being discharged are rather decentralized or fragmented. However, in spite of their peculiarities, one general thing among them is the religious permissiveness in the structural discharge of the crime control measures. That is to say, according to Okere (1995: 166), "religion aspect of power is institutionalized in their traditional crime control methods." Religion is so institutionalized among the natives that it becomes often impossible to distinguish their customs from religion. Thus, as Okere (1995: 166) rightly puts it, "the traditional religious head or priest is almost always associated with the interpretation and enforcement of rules of social behavior. He is able to supplement the sanctions of customs and religion by calling on some reservoir of organized spiritual force to enforce his decrees". For example, in almost Igbo community, 'Ala' (the earth goddess) serves as the principal legal sanction or lawgiver. Acts like adultery, kidnapping, stealing, homicide, poisoning, rape, are examples of offences against 'Ala'. The priest of 'Ala' (the religious head) is designated as the spiritual custodian in the name of 'Ala', ensures that violators are purged or cleansed by undertaking some expiatory rites in the honour of 'Ala'. Even among the Yorubas, the Ogboni society and the Obas held certain spiritual powers to coerce any erring official into order. Thus, religion permeates the entire fibres of the customs and norms of the traditional Nigerian societies that they are often inseparable. In what follows, we shall embark on the *raison d'être* of the discourse; that is, identifying a particular traditional community with its traditional crime control methods.

2.3 *Traditional Methods of Crime Control in an Identified Traditional Community in Nigeria*

Under this headline, we shall focus on the traditional crime control methods of a particular community in Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria. A particular community known as, Mpam community in the South Eastern part of Nigeria, within Ahiazu Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo state, is hereby identified. The justification for choosing this community is because of the traditional nature of its crime control measures that is still in vogue and co-exists with the modern crime control systems. To be sure, a good ethnographic account of any cultural society should first begin with its historical account with particular attention to its main institutions. We shall therefore begin, by first capturing a brief historical account of 'Mpam Community' paying attention to some relevant institutions.

2.3.1 *Brief History of Mpam Community*

Mpam, popularly known as ‘Mpam Ekwerazu’, is a community in Ahiazu Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo state, located at the South Eastern region of the six geo-political regions in Nigeria. It is situated at the northern part of Ahiazu Mbaise L.G.A. In terms of its population, due to lack of statistics, the exact population of Mpam Community is yet unknown; however, its population is embedded within the Ahiazu Mbaise population size of 259,339 (European Commission JRC, 2015). The occupation of its people is mainly farming and trading, with a few indigenes that have white collar jobs. Its family institution is well structured around the extended family type; marriage is usually exogamy (that is, they marry outside their clan not from within as they frown against incestuous relations among relatives). Their inheritance system is organized along patrilineal lines (from the father’s side). Its political institution is dually structured: that is, it recognizes both the modern and traditional political structures: having the ‘Eze’ (the king) representing the traditional political head, and still subject to the modern political structures of the state and the local government. Apart from the political institution being dually structured, it is also permeated by the religion institution, with the village chief priest being the custodian of the community’s religious values, who gives advice to the ‘Eze’ on spiritual matters concerning the affairs of Mpam people. Their education institution is both informal and formal. That is, the informal socialization of the younger generation into the norms and values of Mpam community through their family system, and the formal education which equally exist in forms of the primary and secondary schools in the area.

2.3.2 *The Traditional Methods of Crime Control among the Traditional Society of Mpam Community in Imo state*

In concrete terms, before we discuss the traditional crime control methods of the traditional people of Mpam community, it will be very helpful and instructive to first, identify what the traditional people of Mpam regard as crime among them. Among the native people of Mpam community, several levels of offenses exist that the people consider as crime. These include as follow:

1. Nmehie (Negligence/Mistake); This literally means “missing the mark”. It is an offense committed by omission without consciously planning to do so. Acts like allowing your domestic animals (e.g, goat, sheep, etc.) to stray into your neighbor’s farm (without your knowledge) and destroy your neighbor’s crops. Though it is act of negligence, it attracts fine payment or compensation to your neighbor.
2. Aru (serious offense); It is an Igbo term used to describe an intentional act by someone to do what is grievously unacceptable by the community. In fact, any act described as “Aru” among Mpam people typically defines the modern state criminal act elements – the ‘mens rea’(the intent), and the ‘action element’ (the ‘actus reus’). That is to say, for an offence to be tagged as ‘Aru’ among Mpam people, the ‘intent’ to commit such offense must be established by the adjudicating council as well as the ‘action element’ that proves as evidence that such crime was committed. However, ‘Aru’ offense can sometimes, equally include grave offenses committed by omission; that is, unintentional but yet grievous offense. For example, a traditional medicine man treating a pregnant woman with herbs but mistakenly gives her herb that aborts her baby. It will equally attract grave punishment, even though it was unintentional because he has committed ‘Aru’.
3. Nso ala (taboo or abomination); Among the traditional people of Mpam, these are actions that desecrate the sanctity of their customs or cosmic beliefs. Thus, ‘nso ala’ or taboos are classified in the following forms:
 - Actions that violate the law of nature or what the Mpam community consider as against their cosmic beliefs. These include, acts like climbing of a palm tree by a woman, suicide by hanging, etc.
 - The taboo which regulate the sexual life of the community –such as, incest (sexual

relations among family members: e.g, father and daughter, mother and son, or among siblings) or bestiality (sexual relationship between a human being and animals).

- Taboos that regulate unnatural behavior on the part of animals like, a hen hatching only one chicken; a female goat suffering the pains of parturition while tied by the rope; a dog crossing a corpse, etc.
- The taboo that regulate and protect the economic life of the community, which is regarded as desecration of 'Ala', which include stealing yams, stealing of palm wine from the palm tree, etc.
- The taboo that protects the reverence due to the supernatural beings or gods of the land. These include killing a sacred animal dedicated to the spirits, ancestors or the gods.
- Taboos that regulate the domestic life of the community and ensure harmony in the home –that include, acts of adultery, patricide (killing of one's father), matricide (killing of one's mother), a willful abortion by a married woman, and a woman getting pregnant during the first year of her husband's death.

2.3.3 *Traditional Crime Control Methods among the Traditional people of Mpam Community*

In Mpam community, anyone who commits the aforementioned crimes or offenses are usually sanctioned with the following crime control methods. The essence as it is in every Igbo society is to use these measures as social control mechanisms, both as a punitive as well as a preventive measure.

These include:

1. Spiritual reparation or land cleansing; The traditional people of Mpam community view their relationship with the spirit world as a sacred bond. They regard any serious offence like 'Aru' or 'Nso ala' as offence committed against 'Ala' (the earth goddess); such a crime, to them, has weakened the bond between the native people and 'Ala'. The offender is mandated to provide items like goats, sheep, cow, or fowl plus pieces of kolanuts, etc (depending on the gravity of the offence). The purpose is to use these items to cleanse the polluted land and restore the relationship of Mpam people with the spirits. No matter how costly the prescribed ritual items might be, the offender as a punishment for his acts must provide the prescribed items. If he is incapable of affording the prescribed ritual items, that is where the collective responsibility of his kinsmen ("onye aghala nwanne ya"; or what Durkheim called, 'social solidarity' (Haralambos and Horlborn, 2004)) comes in. His kinsmen or extended family must rally round him to support him to provide the prescribed ritual items for land cleansing.
2. Restitution/Compensation; This is a measure used by the traditional people of Mpam to compensate the victim who has wrongfully suffered damage by the offense of the offender. Like in the case of manslaughter (i.e, unlawful but unintentional killing of a fellow kinsmen), the offender is mandated to spend the rest of his life laboring for the family of the victim, performing all the tasks or services the deceased would have done for his family were he alive. In the case of stealing items like yam; the thief is mandated to restore back the exact number stolen, with some fine payment attached to it.
3. Fine Payment; This is one of the most common forms of crime control measures among the traditional people of Mpam. It serves as both a punitive and a preventive measure of addressing criminal behavior in the land. Criminals who cannot pay the fine were sold into slavery. This fine was called 'nra'. For instance, my late grandfather who was the warrant chief of Mpam community during the advent of the 'white men' (British colonial master) in Nigeria, was polygamous – that is, he had many wives, as a result of some women brought to his palace court for certain offences: in the determination of their cases, any of the women who could not pay the fine levied on them as a punitive measure for their offences, becomes one of his wives.
4. Ostracism /Excommunication; This is an extreme degree of crime control method among

the traditional people of Mpam. Extreme, because the close corporate kinship pattern among the Igbos is so strong that denying or preventing one from having contact with his kinsmen is akin to taking a fish out of the waters. Mpam people call it 'Iwuchi' or 'Ikpikirinkwu'. When one is ostracized, his relationship with other fellows is completely cut off. Everyone will boycott the offender in all manner of socio-economic affairs including, isolating him at the market, at the streams, at the farm; it may even affect his nuclear family also where no one would have contact with his family because of him. Acts like incest, poisoning of a fellow kinsmen, may attract this kind of punishment.

5. Death Penalty; This crime control measure is usually administered when someone has willfully killed another person. The offender is mandated to kill himself by himself – the people of Mpam tag it as “do it yourself” (ya mee ya n'onwe ya): a rope is handed over to his family who conducts him to hang himself. It serves as a deterrent to others that no mortal has the right to take his fellow man's life, except only God who gives life.
6. Banishment ; Banishment is as grievous as death penalty. It is akin to what the modern state call, 'exile'. It means a process by which an offender is expelled from his clan temporarily or permanently. Only offenders who commit the crimes considered as defiling the land get banished. When the land is polluted, the earth goddess ('Ala') gets angry. So the offender must be whisked off from the community immediately before the anger of the gods spread throughout the entire community. For instance, in year 2008; a young man (a native of Mpam) was accused of beheading the head of an elderly man (a kinsman) in Mpam community. While the police were still making their procedural investigation and arrest, the young man and his entire family were banished from the community permanently. Their house and properties were burnt down by the natives. This is common among Igbos: as late Chinua Achebe re-enacted in his great literary scholarship, *Things Fall Apart*, the case of Okonkwo when he unintentionally killed a clansman – “the only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the clan. It was a crime against the earth goddess ('Ala') to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land” (Okere, 1995: 182). In fact, banishment is worse than death penalty, especially where it entails banishment for life: the banished person will no longer return to his community all his life time; and at the event of his death, he is buried outside his homeland.
7. Igba ndu (community sacred communion); This method serves mainly as a crime preventive measure. Usually when there is suspicion or rumour among the natives about anyone intending to commit evil against a clan member. The community would convene a gathering, and prepare a sacred food portion; everybody in the community would be asked to eat from the same food portion; as you eat from the portion, you make a declaration saying, “anytime I intend any evil against my brother, may my evil return back to me”. Thus, by so doing, if anyone among the people was intending any act of evil before, this “Igba ndu” deters him from going ahead with his evil intentions.
8. Oath Taking; This is the main crime control method among the traditional people of Mpam. Usually the chief priest is summoned to conduct the oath taking. The setting can be at the village square or shrine. It is better for the accused to say the truth before time than to take the oath; because if he is guilty of the crime and takes the oath, he will die. For instance, in year 2011 in Mpam community; a kinsman was accused of having a hand in the mysterious death of another kinsman. He tried denying the accusation (though, the entire clan believed strongly that he was guilty); he was summoned to take an oath. He agreed to take the oath (but prior to the oath taking, he secretly went to his personal spiritualist to give him an antidote so that if he takes the oath nothing will happen to him to cover his crime: his spiritualist asked him to get his own faeces and eat it as an antidote to the oath effect; which he did). During the time of the oath taking, with the false courage from his so called “antidote”, he took the oath and died two days after.

The list of traditional crime control methods among the traditional people of Mpam community

may not be exhaustive, but the above enunciated methods reflect the traditional crime control methods of the Mpmam community in Ahiazu Mbaise L.G.A of Imo state, Nigeria.

3. Theoretical Orientation

Under this rubric, two sociological theories are hereby identified namely:

- The Strain theory of Crime (by Robert Agnew); and
- The Control theory of Crime (by Hirschi).

3.1.1 *The Strain theory of Crime*

Prominent here is Robert Agnew (1992). According to the Strain theory, people engage in criminal behavior because they experience strain or stress; as a result, they become upset and engage in a criminal act as an escape route. For example, they may engage in violence to end harassment from others; they may steal to reduce financial stress or they may engage in crime to seek revenge against those who have wronged them, or engaged in drug abuse to feel better from their strain. Agnew (1992) in his thesis described two main types of strain that could lead people to commit crime namely, 1). When others prevent you from achieving your goals, and 2). When others take from you things you value. For instance, in terms of money, society approves for people “to make it” and be rich but does not provide equal opportunities to achieve the goal of making money; such strain imposed by others (societal structure) may lead the unfulfilled individual to actions of crime like stealing, kidnapping in order to “make it”. In the second case, some may value respect or recognition, but others may take it away from them by belittling them – this strain may lead them into crime of drug abuse to feel better from their rejection.

3.2 *Critique*

The main drawback of the Strain theory of crime is that, the theory dwelt more on crime causation than on methods that can control crime, which is the main thrust of this paper. However, in spite of its limitations, it has contributed to the discourse by enlightening us on certain factors that cause people to commit crime.

3.2.1 *The Control Theory of Crime*

The Control theory of crime lays emphasis on why people do not commit crime. Prominent here are Travis Hirschi and Michael Gottfredson (2018). According to their thesis, people restrain from committing crime because of the controls/restraints placed on them which prevents them from committing crime even when they may have the urge or temptation to do so. To Hirschi, this controls placed on them may be of 3 dimensions: one, direct control; two, stake in conformity; and three, internal control. The direct control mechanisms may involve sanctions placed by societal social control institutions like the police arrest, courts, and the prison system or control from family members. The second type, stake in conformity control, may involve the level of achievement one may have attained in life. Example, a university Professor may recognize that he has attained a high social status and may not like to engage in rape for fear of reputation risk; and the third type, internal control measure – this entails internalization of normative values by an individual overtime as a result of undergoing socialization process under the tutelage of one’s significant others (family and friends) which help to shape one’s conscience to always conform and refrain from deviant behavior. Thus, control theory focuses on the methods or measures by which crime can be controlled.

The weakness of the theory lies on the fact that, it dwelt more on the control measures of crime without letting us know what can cause crime: there has to be the existence of crime before it can be controlled. However, it has helped to fill the gap left by the Strain theory of crime: that is, while

Strain theory dwelt on causes of crime without how to control them, Control theory filled the gap by furnishing us with the measures to control the existing crimes.

4. Theoretical Framework

Having examined the two theories, the Control theory of crime is adopted as the theoretical framework for the paper. The justification for adopting it as the theoretical framework is because its thesis is more relevant in discussing the control methods of crime which this discourse focuses on. Thus, from the inferences of control theory, one may conclude that the establishment of traditional methods of crime control in traditional societies will help restrain people from committing crime.

5. Findings

- Crime control measures serves as deterrent to prevent people from criminal behaviors.
- Traditional crime control methods of traditional societies may be primitive in nature, but they help in effectively preventing criminal behaviors among the traditional communities.
- Society itself may also be contributory in causing people to engage in criminal behaviors.

6. Conclusion

Having made some relevant findings from our investigation, the paper therefore concludes that, in as much as crime is inevitable in all human societies (modern or traditional) crime control methods are the remedy to combat crime to achieve societal harmony.

7. Recommendations

The paper therefore recommends as follows:

- Traditional societies and their institutions should be encouraged by government to retain some of their traditional crime control methods as some of these measures have proved to be effective in controlling crime at the community levels (the grassroots level of governance). There should be a synergy between the traditional and modern crime control methods to effectively curb crime to the grassroots.
- Some aspects of crimes in the jurisprudence of some traditional societies and their control measures can also be co-opted into the nation's criminal codes and justice system since the ideas surrounding some of these traditional crimes spring from the customs or cultural values of the people.
- The traditional societies can also review and adjust some of their crime control methods that infringe on individual's human rights.

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