

# Traditional Crime Control Measures and Criminality in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

The study examined traditional crime control measures and criminality in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It identified various traditional crime control measures practiced by Akwa Ibom people. The research made use of primary data which were collected through in-depth interview with the use of interview schedule. Four hundred (400) study respondents were engaged as calculated sample size, Four hundred respondents were randomly selected from twelve (12) purposively selected villages across twelve (12) Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State. The state was divided into three clusters namely: Annang, Ibibio and Oron ethnic groups. Routine Activity (RA) theory of crime by Cohen and Felson (1979) was used in the study. Data collected were analyzed thematically in line with the objectives of the study. Findings revealed that there were traditional crime control measures among Akwa Ibom people which include; Idiong, Mbiam, Ukang. Ekpo, Akata, Ekpe, Iban Ison, Nka Nkparawa, Asian Uboikpa, Ayai, Adagha, Ibed Ukot, and Ibed Eyeyen. It was discovered that the rise in crime in the state is due to the abandonment of some traditional crime control measures. It was discovered also that, there exist poor relationship between the police and traditional institutions and this has caused increase in crime in the state. It was recommended that there should be partnership and synergy among traditional and modern crime control agencies in the study area to increase crime control effectiveness Also, government should develop policies that creates avenue for partnership between the police and other traditional institutions toward effective crime control.

**Keywords:** Traditional crime control measures, Criminality, Crime, Akwa ibom state, Nigeria.

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## INTRODUCTION

Crime is a term that refers to many types of misconduct forbidden by law; these include murder or homicide, robbery, theft, the possession and sales of illegal drugs just to mention a few (Clarke and Eck, 2005). It is generally accepted that a crime is an act which breaks the criminal law (Braga and Bond, 2008). However, what constitutes crime varies not only from society to society but from time to time as well as from strict enforcement to non-enforcement of laws (Ayuk *et al.*, 2013). Legally, crime is often defined as acts or omissions forbidden by law that can be punished by imprisonment or fines or both (Dambazau, 2009). The key to understanding crime is to focus on fundamental attributes of all criminal behaviours rather than on specific criminal acts (Gok, 2011). Most past researches on crime have been confounded on account of their focus on politico-legal rather than behavioural crime definitions whereas the behavioural definition of crime focuses on criminality, as a certain personality profile

that causes the most alarming aspects of crimes. Criminal behaviours involve the use of force to obtain material resources.

It is the views of Agnew and Cullen (2011), that criminality is a type of strategic behaviour characterized by self-centeredness, indifference to the suffering and needs of others, and low self-control. More impulsive individuals are more likely to find criminality as an attractive type of behaviour because it can provide immediate gratification through simple strategies. This conception of criminality explains the wide variety of criminal activities and the fact that individuals tend not to specialize in one type of criminal behaviour only, constitute the complexity in the very nature of crime (Clark, 2008). For instance, some executive officers in most establishments who commit white-collar crimes probably are more impulsive, self-centered, and indifferent to the suffering of others than those who do not take advantage of similar opportunities. In other crimes such as theft, individuals forcefully take material

resources such as land from the owner due greed without considering the effect of such act on the individual (Ekblom, 2012). Those who commit such crimes as drug abuse and narcotics trafficking and gambling attempt to obtain money that can be exchanged for material resources. In crimes such as assaults associated with theft, sexual assaults, and illicit drug use and trafficking, some people tend to obtain resources that increase pleasurable feelings and decrease unpleasant feelings (Dambazau, 1994). Also, political crime such as terrorism and election malpractices attempt to obtain symbolic resources such as power and prestige by the use of force and coercion (John, 1991). Generally, crime has high and diverse costs (Fenwick, 2004).

The direct physical, mental, and emotional injury suffered by victims of crime is usually deplorable and require the involvement of diverse authorities to tackle crimes. The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2009) defines crime as an offence, which goes beyond the personal into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws, to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached, and which requires the intervention of a public authority. Crimes and criminals must come to the knowledge of, and be legally processed through, an administrative system or law enforcement agency.

Furthermore, the normative definition views crime as a deviant behaviour that violates prevailing norms and cultural standards that prescribes how human beings ought to behave normally (Adebayo, 2013). The complexities surrounding the concept of crime are enormous to understand in the changing society, and usually may affect the current definitions of crime and the form of legal, law enforcement and penal responses made by society. For example, as cultures change and the socio-political environment shifts, certain behaviours may be either criminalized or decriminalized, which may directly or indirectly affect the statistical crime rates, determine the allocation of resources for the enforcement of such laws and influence general opinion on crime.

The conflict approach sees crime in the perspective of the ruling class (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1995). Crime is an act or behaviour selectively identified by the few who governed in the society (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1995). Society consists of competing interest groups which are in conflict with each other, due to unequal distribution of wealth and resources which results in inequality in economic and social powers. The dominant class creates laws that will protect their own interests. Crime is also seen by Dambazau (1994), as an act or omission against public interest, which is prescribed by law enacted by the legislature in the overall interests of the society, and to which prescribed punishment is attached in the event of violation. It involves four major principles which are public wrong, moral wrong, law and punishment for the offenders (Dambazau, 1994). Furthermore, crime is seen

as a violation of the rules agreed to be respected by all members of the society, upon which the rest of the society mete out sanction upon those guilty of the violation. It is for the same reason that the legal system views crime as a public and moral wrong (Reiss and Roth 1993).

Persons who commit crime habitually are usually regarded as individuals that are socially maladjusted (Dambazau, 2009). These sets of individuals are termed anti-social because they deviate from societally approved norms. Criminality is about acting out and it is about eliminating filters of control (inside and outside the individual). Every society has specific measures by which the behaviour of its members is regulated in the overall interest and well-being of the populace (Adebayo, 2013). There is no known society where individuals are left to do as they like without some form of control as noted in Essien (2009). Before the advent of western civilization and penal system to Africa and indeed Nigeria, traditional African societies had means of social control, which served as instruments for crime prevention and control.

African culture is embedded in strong moral considerations. It has a system of various beliefs and customs which every individual ought to keep in order to live long and to avoid bringing curses on them and others (Adebayo, 2013). Adultery, stealing and other forms of immoral behaviour are strongly discouraged and whenever a suspect denies a charge brought against him, he or she would be taken to a soothsayer or made to take an oath for proof of innocence (Essien, 2009).

In Ibibio land, for instance, *ukang* (ordeal) is very popular as a method of crime detection. The soothsayer who specializes in it sets a pot of boiling oil, drops a stone into it and asks the suspects to attempt to retrieve the stone. The guiltless can reach to the bottom of the pot and retrieve the stone without the hair on his arms getting burnt. But when the culprit approaches the pot, it rages and boils over in a manner that even the most daring criminal would hesitate to make an attempt at retrieving the stone. The fear of being made to go through such ordeal or to be stripped naked and taken round the community as in the case of stealing, adequately checks crimes of some sort (Idang, 2007). African culture has moral codes that forbid doing harm to a relative, a kinsman, an in-law, a foreigner and a stranger, except when such a person is involved in an immoral act; and if that is the case, it is advisable to stay away from such an individual and even at death, their corpses would not be dignified with a noble burial in a coffin and grave. Mothers of twins were not welcome and were regarded as the harbinger of evil, hence unacceptable (Idang, 2009).

During the old Calabar province of which Akwa Ibom State was part, when traditional crime control measures were functional, there was no formal penal

code (Inyang, 2004). Inyang noted that there were various traditional crime control mechanisms which the traditional societies utilized to control crime and antisocial behaviour. These include the elders, chiefs, village heads as well as traditional secret societies of Ekpo, Ekpe and Akata among others, whose functions were the interpretation of the code of conduct and behaviour of the community as laid down from generation to generation. Observable evidence shows that traditional societies had no written laws to guide their conduct but crime suspects had tough time as most suspects were severely punished and publicly disgraced (Inyang, 2004). Flogging was said to be a mild punishment while ostracism, sale into slavery were regarded as severe punishment to serve as deterrent to others. Akwa Ibom State up till date, engages in traditional practices as they assist in controlling anti-social and criminal activities, using diverse methods which include: *Mbiam, Ukang, Ekpe-Abon, Ekpo* among others (Essien, 1999). These traditional crime prevention or crime tackling methods have remained the hope of many rural communities in Akwa Ibom State today.

### Statement of the Problem

Akwa Ibom State was viewed with dignity by the forebears, who frowned at criminal activities and ensured that perpetrators of violent crime were severely punished and often times their punishments were extended to their immediate close relatives. Offenders were never allowed to be at peace with them; survival was difficult in most instances because most times offenders had to flee the community to avoid shame and save their lives. Taboos were to check human behaviours against going beyond the moral boundary of the community. Crime and criminal activities were forbidden and families were ashamed of having children who were known or noted to be engaged in crime and criminal activities.

In recent times, the state has witnessed a rise in crimes and criminal activities within the communities as a behavioural shift from the urban areas to the rural communities. This scenario has influenced the dynamic character of culture, thereby bringing about cultural shift from what was forbidden to what is gradually becoming a new way of life in various rural communities. The urban centres in Akwa Ibom State have witnessed various criminal activities. These criminal activities range from kidnapping, armed robbery, burglary, theft, to rape. In Uyo, the State capital, the Plaza is gradually becoming a den of criminals who harassed people by night and do away with their belongings. The criminal situation within the state has been calling for more input by the security agencies, as some rural communities are being invaded by criminal youths; to steal, rape, kill and terrorize people.

In the face of these challenges, security agencies like the Nigeria Police and the Civil Defence Corp have tried to live up to their responsibilities in

protecting lives and property. The truth remains that, their efforts have not been able to eliminate crimes and criminals or restore the old sacred society where crime and criminal activities were considered forbidden and shameful to be associated with. It is on record that the Nigeria Police Force has made series of efforts aimed at controlling crime yet, not much has been achieved. The inability of the Nigeria Police to achieve a crime-free society is merely a reflection of the world wide crime problem. The Police Force was formed or created based on colonial masters' philosophies, culture and adopts inherited structures from colonial government before and after the nation's independence in 1960. On this account of historical backdrop, the prevailing social problems (including crimes) have shown the inability of successive governments to successfully handle the security responsibility as shown by the ineffective formal policing. This has led to the adoption of community policing with the hope of improving on the security of lives and property of the people.

The adoption of community policing by the Nigeria Police Force has forced the question; could it be that the traditional crime control measures adopted in the traditional society were more efficient than the modern day security agencies crime prevention methods? Is the Nigeria Police Force partnership with communities to tackle crimes today recreating the needs for traditional methods of crime control? In whatever case, the rise in crime and criminal activities especially among our youths in Akwa Ibom State and the inability of the Police Force to tackle crime problems, by eliminating crimes or reducing crimes to the lowest possible level, is pointing to the fact that there is a need for supplementary efforts by the communities through community policing partnership initiative. Failure by the communities to adopt measures to curb crimes and criminal activities at community level is also posing challenges in this security project.

Against this backdrop, this research work sought to examine the various traditional crime control measures which include *Mbiam, Ukang Ekpri Akata, Ekpo, Ekpe-Abon, Ekong, Ibed Ukot, Ibed Eyeyen, Adahga*, among others within Akwa Ibom State which were and are effectively employed by some communities in order to curb crimes and criminal activities within in their environs. Hence this work on traditional crime control measures and criminality in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria is aimed at suggesting traditional crime control measures that could be incorporated into the modern day crime control measures to help in the reduction of crime in the State.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

Asika (2009) postulated that research design is the structuring of investigation aimed at identifying variables and their relationships to one another. This study examined the traditional crime control measures

and criminality in Akwa Ibom State. It was devoted to examine the relationship between choice variables using the survey method. The researcher adopted two (combine) methods for the research. Qualitative research design was adopted for the study, hence, interview schedule was the main instrument used. Primary data were obtained by means of in-depth interview of the study respondents. The interview schedule was structured with open-ended questions in simple English for the respondents to answer. The questions asked were in line with the objectives of the study. The data collected were analysed. Interviews were conducted in the three major languages (Ibibio, Annang and Oron) of Akwa Ibom people as the cases demanded, but later translated into English language for analysis.

### Population of the Study

Akwa Ibom has a projected population of 5,451,000. The population is projected from 3.9 million counted in the 2006 national census (NPC, 2006). However, the 5,451,000. Estimate comprises 2,770,400 men and 2,680,600 women.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

In determining the sample size, the researcher used Alien Taro Yamane method. Asika (2009) Yamane provides a simplified formula to calculate sample size. The formula was used to calculate the sample size for this study and is shown below. A 95% confidence level and level of maximum variability ( $P= 0.5$ ) was assumed. Where  $n$  is the sample size,  $N$  is the population size, and  $e$  is the level of precision (allowable error) that is 5% or 0.05.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

$$N = 5,451,000$$

$$e = 5\% = 0.05$$

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{5,451,000}{1 + 5,451,000(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{5,451,000}{5,451,001 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{5,451,000}{13,627.5025}$$

$$n = 399.9$$

$$n = 400 \text{ (Approximate)}$$

Hence, the sample size for this study was four hundred (400) and respondents were randomly selected. The state was divided into three clusters: Annang, Ibibio and Oron clusters. Using the purposive sampling technique, three (3) Local Government Areas out of the eight Local Government Area (7) being occupied by the Annangs in the State. Also, three (3) Local Government Areas out of the seven (6) Local Government Areas being occupied by Oron speaking ethnic group and six (6) Local Government Areas out the eighteen (18) Local Government Areas being the Ibibio speaking ethnic group which is the largest ethnic group in the State, making a total of twelve (12) LGAs. Then, one (1) village was purposively selected from each of the Local Government Areas to make a total of twelve (12) villages. The villages share similarities in terms of rural status. From each of the villages selected from the Ibibio cluster, 34 respondents were randomly selected, 33 were randomly selected from the Oron cluster and 32 were randomly selected from the Annang cluster. Thus, a total of 400 respondents were randomly selected for the study.

### Data Collection Technique

The data for this study were obtained through personal in-depth interview, which lasted for about twenty minutes. The reason for using interview was that it establishes rapport with the respondents and provides an atmosphere in which real opinion can be communicated. Interview method equally allowed the interviewer to modify the questions according to the mood of the interviewee, as well as obtain detailed responses and observe the non-verbal communication clues which is the bodily language of the respondents. Interview was conducted in vernacular and the questioned were structured in such a way that the objectives of the study were realized. Data obtained were coded in English language, and used in the analyses of the study.

### Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was interview schedule. The interview schedule contained questions that assessed the background characteristics of the respondents, as well as questions that required candid

opinion of the respondents on the subject matter of the study. The interview schedule contained open ended questions which sought to collect information on the opinion of the respondents.

### Method of Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were presented using qualitative analysis. Descriptive analysis was engaged by the researcher on the socio-demographic data of the study respondents. Thematic analysis was employed by the researcher with extract of verbatim responses from some of the study respondents.

### Ethical Issues

The researcher sought the consent of the study respondents before engaging them in the interview.

Confidentiality of the respondents was properly made known by the researcher to the respondents. The researcher ensured that the right instrument was adopted for data collection toward achieving the objectives of the study.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Socio-Demographic Distribution of Respondents

The socio-demographic distribution of the sampled respondents (Table 1) indicates that the total number of participants was 400, constituting of 231 (57.8%) males and 169 (42.2%) females. Thus, the views being expressed in this study are representative of both male and female with the male respondents in majority.

**Table 1: Respondents' Socio-Demographics Data**

Demographic profile	Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	231	57.8
	Female	169	42.2
<b>Age of Respondent</b>	18-25yrs	42	10.5
	26-32yrs	56	14.0
	33-50yrs	179	44.8
	51 yrs and above	123	30.8
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	92	23.0
	Married	153	38.3
	Divorced	44	11.0
	Widow	39	9.8
	Separated	48	12.0
	Co-habiting	24	6.0
<b>Religion</b>	Christian	270	67.5
	Traditional Religion	55	13.8
	Islam	35	8.8
	Others	40	10.0
<b>Educational Status</b>	No Formal Education	55	18.7
	Primary Education	120	30.8
	Secondary Education	155	39.8
	Tertiary Education	70	17.5
<b>Occupation</b>	Farming	142	35.5
	Trading	76	19.0
	Civil servant	38	9.5
	Pensioner	80	20.0
	Others	64	16.0
<b>Ethnic Affiliation</b>	Annag	190	47.5
	Ibibio	112	28.0
	Oron	98	24.5

Source: Author's Fieldwork

Result also reveals that the majority of respondents (44.8%) were between ages 33 and 50 years. Similarly, 30.8% of respondents were aged 51 years and above, 14.0% of participants were 26-32years of age, and 10.5% were aged 18 - 25years. This implies that majority of participants in this study were considered old enough, wise and informative. Given these characteristics, they were expected to be of sound mind and sound body to understand the central theme of this investigation and to make meaningful contribution, accordingly.

It is also observed that 92 (23%) of the respondents were single, 153 (38.3%) were married, 48(12%) were separated, 39 (9.8%) were widowed, 44 (11.0%) were divorced while 24 (6%) were co-habiting. Therefore, a large proportion of the respondents were married. The result on the religious affiliation of the respondents shows 270 (67.5%) were Christians, 55 (13.8%) were traditional worshippers, 35 (8.8%) practiced Islam while 40 (10%) were into other form of religion. The educational status of the respondents could be

categorized into four groups: a) Those without any formal education (b) Primary- those having only 1- 6 years of formal education; c) Secondary education, having 6-12years of post primary education; d) Tertiary education, those having more than 12years of formal education and may include: those with diploma certificate, bachelor and post graduate degrees. Consequently, 55(13.7%) of respondents in this study had no primary education. 126(31.5%) had primary education being First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) holders, 152(38.0%) had secondary education with GCE/SSCE certificate. In like manner, 70(17.5%) of participants were holders of either National Certificate and Diploma (NCE/ND) holders, bachelor degree holders HND/B.Sc, and Masters Degree. The educational distribution of respondents implies that most participants in this study were of average educational status, and were schooled enough to respond to the questions and give valid opinion on traditional crime strategies and crime control.

The distribution of respondents' primary occupation was grouped into five occupational mixes, namely, farming, trading, civil servant, pensioner and others. As indicated in Table 4.1, farming was the primary occupation of respondents under survey with majority 142 (35.5%). 19.0% of the surveyed respondents were traders. Apart from petty traders, pensioners and respondents who were either self-employed or had any other occupation constitute 20% and 16% respectively. Civil servants constituting 38(9.5%) were the least in the occupation distribution statistics. Accordingly, it is clear that the study cut across large segments, and a variety of occupational areas were also considered. This is important in obtaining a balanced and unbiased view from respondents on the phenomenon of study.

### **Traditional Crime Control Measures and Crime Control in Akwa Ibom State**

Peters *et al.*, (1999) posits that there exist traditional measures in which communities engaged in crime control. Determining participants' level of knowledge on traditional crime control measures and how these measures have assisted in crime prevention in Akwa Ibom State was essential as parameter for obtaining the right set of responses for this study. Data gathered through interview show that majority of the study respondents 348 (87%) indicated good knowledge of traditional crime control measures in Akwa Ibom State and their roles in crime control. Idiong, Mbiam, Ukang, Ekpo, Akata, Ekpe, Iban Ison, Nka Nkparawa, Asian Uboikpa, Ayai, Adagha, Ibed Ukot, and Ibed Eyeyen. One of the female respondents in her statement stated that:

In our community even today, if anybody steals your goods or property and you do not want to engage the police what we normally do is to visit our Idiong Priest who will consult the gods of our fathers and will tell us the person responsible for the crime right there and

we will go and confront the person with the report from Idiong. Since everybody knows that the Idiong will not lie, nobody will argue and most times the culprit always accepted to committing the crime.

A male respondent in his responses on the knowledge of traditional crime control measures and the roles of such measures in crime control stated thus:

Who wants to go and waste time at the police station and spend unnecessary money without any result when you can visit Idiong and get your problems solved? If anybody steals or destroys my property, or kills anybody that relates to me, we have Idiong priest in my village here, I will just go there and know the culprit, and then confront the person. If he or she refuses to accept, I will then tell the criminal the source of my confirmation and will hand over such cases to the gods who know how to punish better than any police or soldier.

Udo (1991) maintained that when Abia - Idiong (Priest) consults the gods and makes pronouncement of the perpetrators of a criminal act, the pronouncement is valid and the culprit faces the penalty. Some of the respondents 159(693.7%), agreed that, in case of falling victim of any criminal activities, they prefer going to Idiong first before reporting their cases to any authority. This they confirmed was to be rightly guided in the process of trying to know the criminal(s) or recover their lost item. One of the male respondents in his responses reported that:

If you want to be rightly guided at any time you fall victim of any criminal activity, the first place to go is Idiong. This is because, Idiong will tell you the correct person involved and even show you exactly how the person or group of persons went about the crime. You may even watch it as a movie if you can pay for it. From there you will know the culprit(s) and then go about reporting the case to the police or any other authority to carry out their responsibilities in getting the culprit(s), and punishing them accordingly. Idiong first will guide you very well. (Iton, 2018).

Mbiam which is usually of oath taking or invocation of divine punishment on culprit(s) is one of the traditional crime control measures among Akwa Ibom people. According to Peters *et al.*, (1994), Mbiam may be poured against a hidden criminal in the community that is against someone who has committed some crime but whose identify is unknown and who is unwilling to reveal himself or herself. From the information gathered by the researcher through in-depth interview, majority of the respondents 271(67.7%) in their responses agreed that Mbiam has been a long standing practice of traditional crime control among Akwa Ibom people, and has proven to be trusted among the people. It is always considered as last resort especially when people refuse to accept testimonies rose against them or refuse to come out and accept

responsibility for criminal offence after a given period. One of the female respondents in her report stated that:

We grew up to meet our forefathers with Mbiam. Our fathers trusted Mbiam and used it to control crimes and criminal activities among our people for generations now. Today we use Mbiam to control crimes in such a way that if any crime occurs in our land. Those who are key suspect are called upon to swear by the Mbiam or if there is no key suspect, an announcement is made in the community that who so ever is responsible should come and report his or her self. Certain numbers of days are given by the community leaders. Failure to have any response will lead to the pouring of Mbiam. That the gods of the land through Mbiam punishes the culprit(s) in any way the gods deems right.

Ukang, has been a major measure of crime control among Akwa Ibom people. Majority of the study respondents 283(70.8%) agreed that Ukang has been an ancient tradition in crime check and control among the people. According to Oku (1992), this measure was most effective as it scared people from stealing. Ukang was usually hung on tress, fruits or on farmlands to prevent people from trespassing farmlands, steal or harvest any fruit without the owner's consent (Oku, 1992). One of the males study respondents in his narratives stated that:

Ukang used to be very active and good for our society. This was because everybody was scared of committing crime. If any crime is committed, Ukang will surely point out the criminal as everybody passes through the Ukang or Ukang is sent to locate the criminal in person or the criminal's house. Due to this power of revealing criminals, people were scared of committing crime and there was a great reduction in the rate at which crime was committed.

#### **Another Respondent, a Female, in Her Narratives Explained That**

We used to have a safe and a more secure community those days because people were afraid of committing crime so that Ukang will not disgrace them in the public. We used to leave our goats and other domestic animals out in a bamboo fenced tent. Today, you cannot do so because, thieves will pull down the bamboo tent and do away with your animals.

Ekpo (masquerade) has been one of the oldest societies in traditional history of the people of Akwa Ibom State. The Ekpo society is a sacred society that had controlled the communities in checking and controlling crimes and criminal activities before the advent of Christianity. Peters *et al.*, (1994), maintained that social functions performed by the Ekpo society included sanctions against such offences as murder, prostitution, theft, adultery, wilful damage of public property, indiscriminate and out of season harvesting of palm fruit or indiscriminate burning of public bushes. Majority of the study respondents 391(92.8%), agreed that Ekpo

performed many functions in crimes check and control. One of the male's respondents in his narratives reported that:

Ekpo has been a long standing society among our people. This society was like today's police. They arrested and punished those found guilty of crime or criminal offence. Their punishments were severe and hard in such a way that nobody would want to be arrested by the Ekpo. Therefore, people were scared of committing crime in order not to have a case to answer before the Ekpo society.

There are many traditional crime control measures employed by the people of Akwa Ibom State to check and control crime. According to data being gathered by the researcher, Akwa Ibom people were safer and had fewer rates of crime and criminal activities when these measures were in their places or employed by the respective communities.

#### **Traditional Crime Control Measures and Conflicts Management among the People of Akwa Ibom State**

Traditional crime control measures had served the people as measures of resolving and controlling conflicts among the people. According to Fukuyama (2000), the traditional institutions were very active and helped in the reduction of crime during the traditional era. Traditional adjudication was able to compete with that of the state courts primarily due to cost, but also due to the legitimacy of traditional leaders and customary law (Fukuyama, 2000). Most individuals could not afford the fees, fines and lawyers associated with state courts. Chiefs were also law-makers with respect to customary law, and they became the hope and option of the people. According to gathered data through interview by the researcher, majority of the study respondents 267(66.8%) agreed that members of Ekpo, Ekpe, Iban Isong, Nka Mkparawa, among others, were controlled by the rules guiding their operations both within the cult and in the community. These rules and regulations served as measures for conflict control and conflict resolutions between members of the society. The implication of this is that, the community experienced peaceful co-existence among the members of the society. One of the females study respondents in her narratives stated that:

In our community, there used to be peace and peaceful co-existence among all the members of the society. People lived together, shared things together, ate together, and we hardly had conflict among members of the community because, you will either be a member of one society or the other. Like among the Ekpo society, you were not allowed to do harm to any member of the society or have quarrel or dispute with members of the community. This is because Ekpo was held in high esteem since they oversaw the activities in the community in term of crime check and crime control.

Social functions performed by the Ekpo society included sanctions against such offences as murder, prostitution, theft, adultery, wilful damage of public property, indiscriminate and out of season harvesting of palm fruit or indiscriminate burning of public bushes (Peters *et al*, 1994). The Ekpo cult also helped to maintain morals among the youths by exposing any girl that had sexual intercourse as well as expose a girl that had committed abortion. These functions contributed to conflict check and conflict resolution. Another male respondent in his report narrated that:

Ekpo as a cult had contributed greatly in maintaining peace among our people and had served as a medium of conflict control and resolution among members of our community and neighbour communities. As a member of Ekpo society, you could not instigate conflict or be part of criminal activity. The reason is that, it is forbidden that Ekpo members should be a source of problem, since Ekpo as a cult was known for crime check, crime control and enforcement of law, norms and order among members of the society.

Ekpe is an old institution among Akwa Ibom people. It functioned as an institution for enforcing traditional authority, law and order. Membership was for adult male and specifically for free born (Ekong, 2001). Ekpe society was not opened to strangers. Ekpe council constituted the highest law and decision making body. This council also performed the judicial function of settling disputes brought to it by members of the community. Ekpe as an institution, helped to maintain peace and order in the community as well as protect the rights of individuals and those of the community in general. Its masked members were occasionally used to perform such social functions as those now taken over by the modern police (Ekong, 2001).

From the data collected through interview, majority of the study respondents 320(80%) agreed that Ekpe contributed to enforcement of law and order among the people of Akwa Ibom State. One of the males respondent in his narratives, reported that:

Ekpe society is an honourable society among our people. In fact, it is like a royal institution among the people. This institution oversees enforcement of traditional laws, norm, custom and order in our community. It is part of their functions to ensure that there is no conflict among members of the community, and if there is such, they take it upon themselves to resolve whatever that might be the case or cause of such conflict.

Ekpe society plays functions such as those of the modern security operatives (Ekong, 2001). Majority of the study respondents 283(70.8%) in their narratives agreed that, Ekpe society functions enabled the society to actively participate in conflict resolutions and enforcement of peaceful co-existence among the people

of Akwa Ibom State. A male respondent in his report narrated thus:

We were having a more conflict free community in those days when Ekpe was given free authority to govern the land in this part of the State before this modern Police and other Agencies came in. we used to dialogue among ourselves and with our neighbouring communities on issues bothering our communities. This was possible because, we were all members of Ekpe society and as such nobody was permitted by the Ekpe code of conduct to do evil, harmful or be part of conflict.

Another traditional institution that played great role in crime control and conflict resolution among the people as noted through collected data was Iban Isong. Its main social function was to regulate the conduct of its members and to ensure discipline and morals among the members of the community (Ekong, 2001). Majority of the respondents 329(82.3%) established the fact that Iban Isong regulate behaviours among women and are part of the institution that partake in resolving conflict across communities in Akwa Ibom State. One of the female respondents in her narratives explained that:

Iban Isong was a strong traditional institution among our people. This institution has been part of our society since the days of our mothers and has played great role in regulating women behaviour toward moral attainment and conflict free homes, community, and the entire society at large.

#### **Another Female Respondent in Her Report Stated That**

Iban Isong are strongly behind most of the good behaviour our mothers and some of us have exhibited today. This is because you cannot be part of evil, commit crime, cheat on your husband, cause conflict in other people's houses or family, or be part of evil report to the community. Iban Isong will discipline you; cause you to know what it is to be responsible and respectful. Iban Isong will teach you the place of a woman both at home and in the society at large.

Nka Mkpawara was another traditional institution that controlled crime, and partake in conflict resolution and control. Nka Mkpawara was expected to exhibit good morals and conduct the mselves well, the group frowned at misconduct and the defaulters were made to face the punishment meant for such misconduct ranging from fines to flogging. The members were not allowed to steal, rape, and molest others. They were trained to be protective to women rather than abuse them (Ekong, 2001). Majority of the study respondents 283(70.8%) in their responses agreed that Nka Mkpawara had been instituted to regulate the behaviour of young people in the society. The primary aim of this Nka Mkpawara, according to the respondents was set on enforcing good moral conducts among the youths in the society. According to one of the male respondents:

Nka Mkparawa was a strong traditional institution among our people. It was established on the notion of enforcing good moral standard among our youths and regulating youths' activities within the community. These functions placed this institution in a position whereby they become core part of the community structure. They were part of crime control institution and were always called upon to resolve or undertake conflict control among the youths in our community.

Most of the traditional crime control measures and institutions performed dual functions among Akwa Ibom people. These traditional institutions checked and controlled crimes in the communities. These institutions regulated the activities of humans within the society. Their functions contributed to peaceful co-existence and reduction in conflict situation among the people of Akwa Ibom State.

### **Incorporation of Traditional and Modern Crime Control Measures in Akwa Ibom State**

Aki and Gary (2001) is of the view that crime management is the hallmark of every successful society, and that the police cannot perform their duties without having a good relationship with the community wherein they dwell. There is need to maintain and sustain a mutual relationship between the police and the public. Anvar (2014) maintained that the Nigeria Police have a very poor relationship with the people right from time. According to Oku (1992), crimes these days in Akwa Ibom State are disturbing and frightening this was never the case in the olden days when I was young. No one in the ancient Akwa Ibom State, no one dare enter any village in the state to forcefully abduct a victim successfully, because there were effective crime control mechanisms to check-mate such activities. Considering both Oku (1992) and Anvar (2014) as quoted above, there exist need for incorporation of traditional with modern crime measures toward crime control and reduction in Akwa Ibom State. From data gathered during interview, majority of the study respondents 383(95.8%) agreed that for Akwa Ibom State to achieve effective and efficient crime control within the state, there has to be a way by which traditional crime control measures can be incorporated into modern crime control measures.

### **One of the Male Respondents in His Responses Narrated That**

We can stop crime in our state only if we can find a way to combine our traditional and modern crime control techniques. This is because for instance, we can use Ekpo which can scare the people to death because of the fear of their operations and the police. Ekpo is an indigenous traditional institution which understands the rural terrain and each member of the community per family. This will help the police to trace and locate criminals in the rural terrain.

### **Another Male Respondent in His Narrative Reported That**

To me I see Ekpo partnership with the Police as a great way to curb crime in our communities. This is because Ekpo in a society will lead the police through the nooks and crannies of our communities and inform the police on the kinds of crimes and criminals operating in the community, and how the criminals operate within a specific community. This will place fear in the hearts of the people, mostly those with criminal tendencies will be deterred due to the fear Ekpo.

Miro (2014) lamented that the practice of the police does not help matters in promotion of cordial relationship with the people. The modern mechanisms of crime control which the police are one of them should cooperate with the public for effective policing (Miro, 2014). Inability of the police to effectively curb crime is as a result of poor relationship and partnership between the police and other traditional institutions. Majority of the study respondents 316(79%), agreed that the challenge before the Nigeria Police Force in curbing crime lies within the poor relationship between its officers and traditional institutions especially in Akwa Ibom State. One of the male respondents through interview stated that:

The way our police officers operate sometimes I have pity on them because they think they know everything, everybody, and everywhere and can attack everybody, anyhow simply because they are Police Force. But the question is how successful are they in fighting crime and criminal activities in our society today? Especially our sons and daughters, who feel that they shouldn't have respect for our traditions, instead of them to collaborate with traditional institutions for effective policing, they are often against working with us to curb crime. But we can assist with our Idiong, Mbiam and others to make their work easy for them.

Similarly, Oku (1992), in his views on crimes these in Akwa Ibom State being disturbing and frightening compared crimes in modern day with crimes in the olden day by saying that no one in those days will dare enter any village to forcefully abduct a victim successfully, because there were effective crimes control mechanisms to check-mate such activities. The majority of the study respondents 331(82.8%) through interview agreed that, the rise in crime and criminal activities in Akwa Ibom State today is as a result of inability of the police to cooperate with traditional crime measures or institutions within the communities in the state. One of the female respondents in her narratives stated that:

Who would have believed that people can go into a rural community in this land to forcefully kidnap a community member when other members are there. Such crime would not have taken place if the police have allowed the communities to make use of their traditional crime control measures to curb crimes in their territory.

For instance if any one try it, Mbiam will kill you that same day you kidnap our brother and you will know that our community is not where you can come in and commit crime and go out like that. So I think the police should find a way to partner with traditional measures of crime control so that we can have peace in our State.

Effective crime control can be achieved through proper partnership between the Nigeria Police Force and most of the traditional crime control measures/institutions. This is derived from the information collected through interview by the researcher. The majority of the respondents in their narratives agreed that partnership between the police and their traditional institutions will enhance crime control and crime reduction in Akwa Ibom State.

### Discussion of Findings

Traditional crime control measures existed among Akwa Ibom people even in the pre-colonial era. These traditional measures were adopted for the purpose of regulating behaviour among different groups, some with gender references. The traditional crime control measures according to findings by the researcher have been found to be useful, effective and recommendable for crime control. These traditional measures include: Idiong, Mbiam, Ukang, Ekpo, Akata, Ekpe, Iban Ison, Nka Nkparawa, Asian Uboikpa, Ibed Ukot, and Ibed Eyeyen.

Among the listed traditional crime control measures, order of preference was discovered in the reports of the respondents. During the interview, most of the respondents 271(67.8%), in their reports agreed that there exist preference for these measures as employed by the people per community within Akwa Ibom State. Generalizing from the gathered information by the researcher, Idiong was discovered to be most preferred by Akwa Ibom people. This was followed by Mbiam which was preferred to Ukang. Ukang was preferred to Iban Ison, Nka Nkparawa and Asian Uboikpa. It was observed that among the traditional crime control measures adopted by the people of Akwa Ibom State, Ekpo has in this recent days lost its place of preference due to the shift in the cultural practices of the people toward crime control and security of life and property which have been over taken by the presence of the Nigeria Police Force.

Modernization has brought about a shift from traditions to civilization. These shifts have affected the cultural practices of the people. Traditional crime control methods are embedded in the cultural practices. It was discovered by the researcher that the extent to which the people have shifted from their culture is directly proportional to the acceptability and preference for the type and use of traditional crime control measures found among the people of Akwa Ibom State. Gathered information show that: Christian religion has a great impact on the acceptability, use and preference of

traditional crime control measures among the people today. This has brought about the relaxation of traditions and customs which some people now consider to be demonic. The absence of most of these traditional practices which created fear, and moral rightness among the people, has created conducive atmosphere or absence of guardian against criminal behaviour as stated by Cohen and Felson (1979). Hence, there exist the rise in crime and criminal activities in Akwa Ibom State, mostly in the rural areas which were known to be sacred and safe for communal existence.

The failure of the Nigeria Police Force in the fight against crimes, and crime reduction has shown that the police cannot crime alone, so it should be a combined effort of both the police as well as the traditional societies to instil fear of severe punishment and death to the criminals operating in Akwa Ibom State, and Nigeria at large. Information gathered by the researcher show that, majority of the respondents 317(79.3%), believe that the rise in crime and criminal activities in the state is as a result of the abandonment of most of the traditional crime control measures by the people and the government. Many of the respondents regret the advent of Christianity, as the major reasons for the abandonment of their traditional crime control measures which was handed down by their fore-fathers, to have a society that was free of crime and criminal activities, as compared to what is obtainable today.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main thrust of this study was to investigate traditional crime control measures and criminality in Akwa Ibom State. There are traditional crime control measures among Akwa Ibom people which include: Idiong, Mbiam, Ukang, Ekpo, Akata, Ekpe, Iban Ison, Nka Nkparawa, Asian Uboikpa, Ayai, Adagha, Ibed Ukot, and Ibed Eyeyen. These have also been forms of conflict control measures among the people. The rise in crime and criminal activities as stated in the findings of the study is directly proportional to the degree of use of traditional crime control measures or its absence.

The following recommendations are made from the findings of this research:

1. There should be partnership and synergy among traditional and modern crime control agencies in the study area to increase crime control effectiveness.
2. Traditional crime control measures should be re-organized through training, learning by experience and knowledge sharing as well as capacity building to increase their effectiveness.
3. Government should develop policies that create avenue for partnership between the police and other traditional institutions toward effective crime control.
4. Traditional institutions should be incorporated into conflict resolution programmes of the State and Nigeria by extension.

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