

PSYCHOSOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF CRIME REPORTING AMONG RESIDENTS OF CROSS RIVER STATE CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA

Oshie-Abua, Micheal Ekunke¹, Dr. Emeka, J. Owan², Odama, Joseph Anthony³ & *Dr. Egidi, Stephen Achuen⁴

^{1,2,3}*Department of Criminology and Security Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar Cross River State, Nigeria.*

⁴*Department of Sociology and Social Work, Arthur Jarvis University, Akpabuyo Cross River State, Nigeria.*

*Corresponding Author: egidistephen36@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on psychosocial determinants of crime reporting among residents of Cross River State Central Senatorial District, Nigeria. The objectives of the paper was to examine how stigmatization and trust in law enforcement agencies affect crime-reporting behaviour of residents. An ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. A sample size of 700 respondents was selected using Cochran's sample size determination. A multi-stage sampling technique was used in selecting respondents. Data were collected using a structured instrument. The instrument was validated using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating high internal consistency. Data were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a significant negative relationship between stigmatization and crime reporting ($r = -0.642, p < 0.05$), indicating that increased stigmatization reduces residents' willingness to report crimes. The study also found a significant positive relationship between trust in law enforcement agencies and crime reporting ($r = 0.684, p < 0.05$). Based on these findings, the study recommended sustained public awareness campaigns to reduce the stigma associated with crime reporting and the strengthening of community policing initiatives through regular engagement between law enforcement agencies and community members. The study concluded that psychosocial factors play a critical role in shaping crime-reporting behaviour and should be considered in the formulation of policies aimed at improving public participation in crime prevention and criminal justice processes.

Keywords: Psychosocial, Determinants, Crime Reporting, Residents, Cross River State

Introduction

In many African societies, crime reporting is embedded within plural legal systems where formal state institutions coexist with customary and informal mechanisms of justice. This pluralism significantly influences reporting behavior. According to Bennett (2011) citizens often prefer informal dispute resolution mechanisms due to perceptions of accessibility, cultural legitimacy, and speed compared to formal policing institutions. Crime reporting to formal agencies may be delayed or entirely avoided, particularly for offenses considered socially sensitive or family-related (Skelton & Batley, 2008). A central psychosocial determinant in African contexts is institutional trust. Research across Sub-Saharan Africa indicates that low trust in law enforcement agencies is strongly associated with underreporting of crime. This mistrust is often rooted in historical experiences of colonial policing, contemporary perceptions of corruption, and concerns about police inefficiency or brutality (Tankebe, 2019). Fear also plays a significant psychological role. Victims may fear retaliation from perpetrators, particularly in contexts where law enforcement response is perceived as weak or slow. In communities where criminal networks are embedded within local social structures, reporting crime may carry risks of social exclusion or direct harm. This is compounded by communal norms that prioritize reconciliation or silence over formal adjudication (Ajzen, 1991). The concept of “social embeddedness” helps explain why individuals may choose not to report crimes that involve known community members, as doing so may disrupt social harmony or familial relationships. Another important psychosocial factor in African contexts is the role of collective efficacy, defined as the shared belief in a community’s ability to maintain social order. Where collective efficacy is strong, informal social control mechanisms may reduce reliance on formal reporting (Sunshine & Tyler, 2023). However, where collective efficacy is weak, individuals may feel both unsafe and unsupported, resulting in either disengagement from reporting systems or reliance on vigilante responses.

In Nigeria perspective, the psychosocial determinants of crime reporting are shaped by a particularly complex socio-political environment characterized by institutional distrust, socio-economic inequality, insecurity, and fragmented governance structures (Akinlabi, 2017). One of the most significant psychological barriers to crime reporting in Nigeria is fear of secondary victimization. Many citizens perceive interactions with law enforcement as potentially harmful rather than protective. This perception includes fears of being blamed, extorted, or subjected to lengthy bureaucratic procedures without meaningful outcomes. Such expectations reduce perceived self-efficacy the belief that reporting will lead to effective resolution which is a key determinant in help-seeking behavior models (Sunshine & Tyler, 2023). Social norms also play a crucial role. In many Nigerian communities, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, there exists a cultural expectation that disputes should be handled within family or community structures rather than escalated to formal authorities. This norm is reinforced by extended kinship systems and communal values that emphasize collective reputation. Reporting a crime, especially one involving relatives or acquaintances, may be perceived as betrayal, thereby discouraging formal reporting even when individuals are victimized. Also, the Nigeria’s security landscape, marked by insurgency in the Northeast, banditry in the Northwest, and urban crime in metropolitan areas, further complicates reporting behavior. In high-risk environments, individuals may adopt survival strategies that prioritize discretion over engagement with state institutions. The normalization of insecurity can also lead to psychological desensitization, where crime is perceived as an unavoidable aspect of daily life, reducing motivation to report. Another important psychosocial factor in Nigeria is the influence of informal security actors, including vigilante groups and neighborhood watch organizations. While these groups sometimes enhance perceived safety, they can also reduce formal crime reporting by providing alternative avenues for justice or

retaliation. This duality reflects a broader tension between formal and informal governance systems, where psychological perceptions of effectiveness often outweigh legal considerations. Across both African and Nigerian contexts, crime reporting behavior is best understood through an integrative psychosocial lens that accounts for the interaction between individual cognition and social structure.

Statement of the problem

Crime reporting is a critical component of the criminal justice process because it provides law enforcement agencies with information necessary for crime investigation, prosecution, and prevention. However, the decision to report criminal victimization is not solely influenced by legal considerations but is also shaped by a range of psychosocial factors. Psychosocial determinants refer to the interaction between psychological characteristics and social conditions that influence individual behavior and decision-making. One significant determinant is trust in law enforcement agencies. According to a studies conducted by Tyler, (2005), indicates that individuals who perceive the police as competent, fair, and responsive are more likely to report crimes than those who have negative perceptions of law enforcement. A similar study was conducted by Jackson & Bradford (2010) shows that trust promotes confidence that reporting will result in meaningful action and justice. However, the study further revealed that previous experiences of police corruption, inefficiency, or victim neglect often discourage reporting behavior. According to Skogan, (1984) another important psychosocial determinant is fear of retaliation and victimization. Victims may avoid reporting crimes due to concerns about revenge attacks from offenders, especially in communities where criminals are known to reside or where witness protection mechanisms are weak. Fear is particularly pronounced in cases involving organized crime, domestic violence, gang-related activities, and sexual offenses. Such fears may outweigh the perceived benefits of seeking justice.

Perceived social support also influences crime-reporting behavior. Individuals who receive emotional encouragement and practical assistance from family members, friends, or community organizations are generally more willing to report crimes (Ahrens, Campbell, Ternier-Thames, Wasco, & Sefl, 2017). Social support helps victims cope with trauma and reduces the psychological burden associated with interacting with law enforcement agencies. On the other hand, social isolation may discourage victims from pursuing formal reporting channels. The problem of social stigma and shame. Victims of certain crimes, particularly sexual assault, domestic violence, and cyber-related offenses, may fear social judgment, embarrassment, or damage to their reputation (Burt & Estep, 1981).

The anticipation of blame, criticism, or public exposure can create psychological barriers that discourage victims from reporting incidents to authorities. Self-efficacy and personal confidence also affect crime reporting. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform actions necessary to achieve desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Victims with higher levels of confidence are often more willing to navigate legal procedures, provide evidence, and engage with law enforcement agencies. Comparatively, individuals with low self-confidence may feel powerless or incapable of pursuing formal complaints. Psychological consequences of victimization, including trauma, anxiety, depression, and emotional distress, represent additional determinants of reporting behavior. Victims experiencing severe psychological distress may avoid reliving traumatic experiences through official reporting procedures (Campbell, 2008). Trauma can impair memory, reduce motivation, and increase avoidance behaviors, thereby limiting engagement with criminal justice institutions.

This study is needed because the previous studies on crime reporting have several gaps. For instance, many previous studies have focused predominantly on institutional factors such as police effectiveness and legal procedures while giving less attention to the

combined influence of psychological and social variables on reporting decisions. Secondly, existing research often examines individual psychosocial factors in isolation, making it difficult to understand how trust, fear, stigma, social support, and self-efficacy interact to influence reporting behavior and thirdly, much of the available evidence originates from Western countries, particularly the United States and Europe, limiting the generalizability of findings to developing societies like Nigeria where socio-cultural dynamics and criminal justice systems differ significantly. As a result, there is a need for context-specific studies that examine the psychosocial determinants of crime reporting from a holistic perspectives.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study was to identify the Psychosocial Determinants of Crime Reporting among Residents of Cross River State Central Senatorial District, Nigeria. While the specific objectives were to examine:

1. How stigmatization affect crime reporting
2. How trust in law enforcement agencies affect crime reporting

Literature Review

Psychosocial Determinants of Crime Reporting

One of the most robust predictors of crime reporting is the victim's or witness's appraisal of harm. Individuals are more likely to report crimes they perceive as serious, violent, or materially damaging. According to a study conducted by Skogan, (1984), violent crimes (e.g., assault, robbery) are significantly more likely to be reported than non-violent crimes such as theft or fraud, especially when financial loss is minimal. The study further revealed that urban victimization, residents frequently failed to report minor assaults because they normalized them as "everyday street conflict." In many Nigerian urban settings, petty theft in informal markets is often unreported because traders perceive it as "part of daily risk," whereas armed robbery incidents are almost always reported due to fear and high personal threat. Another determinant of crime reporting is the fear of retaliation and secondary victimization. Fear of revenge from offenders or their associates is a strong inhibitor of reporting behavior. This is especially pronounced in close-knit or high-crime communities where offenders are known to victims. Research in victimology indicates that individuals often weigh the expected benefits of reporting against potential retaliation risks. According to Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta (2004), fear of reprisals significantly reduces reporting rates in violent and gang-related crimes. For example, a witness to domestic violence may avoid reporting due to fear that the perpetrator will retaliate once released, particularly when police protection mechanisms are perceived as weak. Institutional trust is a central psychosocial determinant of reporting behavior. When citizens believe that police are competent, fair, and responsive, reporting rates increase.

Tyler's procedural justice framework emphasizes that perceptions of fairness in police interactions strongly influence cooperation with law enforcement (Tyler, 2006). Example, in several urban African contexts, including parts of Nigeria, residents often prefer informal dispute resolution or vigilante groups over formal police reporting due to perceptions of corruption, inefficiency, or lack of responsiveness. Social norms strongly shape whether individuals perceive reporting as appropriate or socially sanctioned. In some communities, reporting crimes is viewed as "informing" or betrayal, especially when offenders are acquaintances or family members. According to social norm theory, individuals conform to perceived group expectations even when these conflict with legal obligations (Cialdini & Trost, 2024). For instance, in certain communities, reporting a neighbor for theft may lead to social isolation, discouraging formal reporting despite clear victimization. The nature of the victim-offender relationship is a key psychosocial factor. Crimes committed by strangers are more likely to be reported than those involving known individuals. Felson and Paré (2005) found that reporting rates are significantly lower when offenders are family

members, intimate partners, or close acquaintances due to emotional attachment, dependency, or fear of relational breakdown. For instance, domestic violence is widely underreported globally because victims may fear economic dependence loss, social stigma, or family dissolution. Psychological responses such as shame and self-blame significantly reduce reporting likelihood, particularly in sexual offenses and domestic abuse cases. Studies in trauma psychology by Ullman, (2010) show that victims often internalize blame, leading to silence and avoidance of formal reporting systems. Like in the case of survivors of sexual assault may avoid reporting due to anticipated stigma from community members or skepticism from authorities, especially in conservative cultural settings. Individuals are more likely to report crimes if they believe that reporting will lead to meaningful action, such as arrest, prosecution, or restitution. When citizens perceive criminal justice systems as ineffective or corrupt, reporting declines sharply. This aligns with rational choice perspectives in criminology, where individuals evaluate costs and benefits before acting (Becker, 1968). For instance, in environments where case follow-up is rare or where police investigations are perceived as ineffective, victims often resort to informal mechanisms such as community leaders or private security.

Past interactions with law enforcement shape future reporting behavior. Positive experiences reinforce reporting, while negative encounters discourage it. Empirical evidence shows that victims who experience disrespect, neglect, or corruption during prior reporting attempts are significantly less likely to report subsequent victimization (Skogan, 2005). Example, a victim who previously reported burglary but received no investigation feedback may choose not to report a second incident. Social support from family, friends, and community members influences reporting decisions. Strong support networks can encourage reporting by providing emotional reassurance and practical assistance (Skogan, 2005). A victim encouraged by family members to “let it go” to avoid conflict escalation may choose not to report assault. Psychosocial determinants of crime reporting are multidimensional, involving cognitive evaluations (risk, severity, expected outcomes), emotional responses (fear, shame), relational dynamics (victim-offender ties), and structural perceptions (institutional trust and effectiveness).

Crime Reporting Behaviors

Crime reporting behavior refers to the actions, decisions, and processes through which individuals, victims, or witnesses communicate criminal incidents to formal or informal authorities. It constitutes a critical component of criminal justice systems because the effectiveness of crime prevention, investigation, and prosecution largely depends on the willingness of citizens to report criminal activities (Xie, Ortiz & Chauhan, 2024). In pre-colonial societies, mechanisms for addressing crime were primarily embedded within kinship systems, traditional institutions, and communal governance structures. Across many African, Asian, and Indigenous societies, social control was exercised through family networks, elders, religious leaders, age-grade associations, and community councils (Kuen, 2024). Crime reporting during this period rarely involved formal state institutions because centralized policing structures were largely absent. Instead, victims reported wrongdoing to community elders, chiefs, lineage heads, or traditional rulers who possessed the authority to investigate disputes and administer sanctions. According to a study conducted by Van, Herik, Goudriaan, Nieuwbeerta and Kort-Butler (2024), communal nature of pre-colonial societies encouraged collective responsibility for maintaining order. Social cohesion, kinship obligations, and shared cultural values often ensured that crimes were addressed through restorative rather than punitive mechanisms. Reporting behavior was therefore influenced by communal expectations, social reputation, and the desire to preserve harmony within the group. In many societies, offences such as theft, assault, adultery, and land disputes were settled through mediation, compensation, restitution, or reconciliation processes rather than formal criminal

prosecution. The study further revealed that crime reporting in the pre-colonial era was not without limitations. Power relations, gender hierarchies, and social status frequently influenced access to justice. Certain offences, particularly domestic violence and sexual victimization, were often concealed within family structures due to cultural norms and concerns about social stigma. Consequently, while community-based reporting systems enhanced local accountability, they also contributed to selective reporting and uneven access to justice. The colonial period marked a significant transformation in crime reporting behavior through the introduction of centralized legal systems, formal courts, and modern policing institutions (Wang & Thompson, 2025). Colonial administrations established police forces primarily to protect colonial interests, maintain political control, and enforce colonial laws rather than to serve indigenous populations.

As a result, the relationship between colonial authorities and local communities was often characterized by mistrust and coercion. The introduction of formal policing altered traditional mechanisms of crime reporting. Citizens were increasingly expected to report crimes to colonial police stations and courts. Nevertheless, many indigenous communities continued to rely on traditional institutions because colonial justice systems were often perceived as alien, inaccessible, discriminatory, and culturally insensitive. The coexistence of formal colonial institutions and indigenous systems created dual reporting structures in which individuals selectively chose where to report offences. Historical evidence suggests that fear of colonial authorities, racial discrimination, excessive use of force, and limited community engagement discouraged many people from reporting crimes through official channels. Reporting behavior was further constrained by geographical barriers, language differences, and legal procedures that were unfamiliar to local populations. Consequently, underreporting became a persistent feature of colonial criminal justice systems (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023). Moreover, colonial administrations frequently criminalized indigenous practices and forms of resistance. This development complicated citizens' perceptions of crime itself, as actions considered legitimate within local cultures could be classified as criminal under colonial law. Such contradictions weakened public confidence in formal law enforcement institutions and contributed to low levels of crime reporting (Okpuvwie & Egidi, 2024). The post-colonial period witnessed the expansion and modernization of criminal justice systems across newly independent states.

Governments invested in police reforms, judicial institutions, and legal frameworks aimed at improving public safety and encouraging citizen participation in crime control (Skogan, 2020). Contemporary observations demonstrate that crime reporting behavior is strongly influenced by trust in the police and perceptions of institutional legitimacy. Individuals are more likely to report crimes when they believe that law enforcement agencies are fair, effective, responsive, and accountable. Conversely, experiences of corruption, police misconduct, discrimination, and procedural injustice discourage reporting and weaken public cooperation with law enforcement agencies (Kuen, 2024). Recent studies indicate that many crimes remain unreported worldwide despite improvements in policing systems. Research on victimization and crime reporting has shown that factors such as fear of retaliation, concerns about victim blaming, lack of confidence in investigations, and perceptions that reporting will not lead to meaningful outcomes significantly affect reporting decisions (Van, et al., 2024). The emergence of cybercrime, online fraud, and digital victimization has created challenges for traditional reporting systems. Governments increasingly employ online reporting platforms, emergency hotlines, and community policing initiatives to improve accessibility and encourage public participation in crime reporting. Citizens who perceive police officers as respectful, transparent, and unbiased are generally more willing to cooperate with law enforcement and report criminal activities (Kuen, 2024).

Furthermore, studies have revealed that declining trust in law enforcement institutions is associated with lower rates of crime reporting, suggesting that public confidence remains a crucial determinant of reporting behavior (Xie, Ortiz & Chauhan, 2024). In many developing countries, including several post-colonial states, crime reporting remains affected by socio-economic inequalities, cultural beliefs, and institutional weaknesses. Victims may avoid reporting crimes due to concerns about corruption, delays in justice delivery, inadequate victim protection, or fear of stigmatization. These challenges underscore the need for continued reforms aimed at strengthening police-community relations, improving institutional accountability, and enhancing public trust in criminal justice systems (Egidi and Emeka, 2021). Crime reporting behavior has evolved from community-centered mechanisms in the pre-colonial era to formalized state-centered systems during colonial rule and contemporary hybrid arrangements in the post-colonial period.

Stigmatization of victims

Stigmatization in the context of crime reporting refers to the social disapproval, blame, or marginalization directed toward individuals who disclose their victimization to authorities or the public. Rather than being universally supported, victims may be subjected to skepticism, victim-blaming narratives, or moral judgment, particularly in cases involving sexual violence, domestic abuse, substance-related crimes, or crimes occurring in socially sensitive contexts. Stigmatizing responses can discourage reporting behavior and undermine victims' engagement with justice systems (Maryn & Dover, 2024). At the interpersonal level, victims may fear disbelief, shame, or social exclusion from peers and family members. At the institutional level, interactions with law enforcement may reinforce feelings of marginalization when victims perceive inadequate empathy, procedural insensitivity, or credibility challenges. These experiences can cumulatively produce what scholars describe as "secondary victimization," where harm is extended beyond the initial crime through the response of formal systems and society.

According to a study on crime reporting behavior by Zaykowski, Allain & Campagna, (2024) victim decisions are influenced by relational proximity, perceived seriousness of the offense, and anticipated outcomes of reporting. The study further highlights that distrust in justice systems and fear of negative treatment are critical deterrents to reporting across diverse populations. Another study was conducted by Ayodele, (2024) in different socio-cultural contexts, including Nigeria, reveal that normative and cultural expectations significantly shape victims' reporting practices, with stigma playing a central role in whether victims seek formal justice or remain silent. The digital and media environments have intensified the visibility of crime-related narratives, often shaping public perceptions of victims in ways that can reinforce stigmatization. Media framing and online commentary may amplify victim-blaming attitudes, thereby influencing societal reactions to reported crimes and affecting victims' psychological well-being (Şahinoğlu, Sayg & Muhtarogulları, 2024). In some instances, the anticipation of such exposure discourages victims from reporting, particularly where privacy concerns and reputational risks are high. Stigmatization is not uniformly distributed but intersects with identity factors such as gender, disability, socioeconomic status, and cultural background. For example, disabled victims have been shown to experience heightened feelings of infantilization and reduced confidence in justice processes, which may further discourage future reporting (Newlove, 2024). The legal and procedural considerations, the social meaning attached to victimhood plays a decisive role in shaping whether individuals engage formal justice systems or remain silent.

Trust in law enforcement agencies

Across societies in developing world, the legitimacy of police agencies is closely tied to citizens' perceptions of fairness, accountability, professionalism, and respect for human rights. Where such perceptions are positive, citizens are more likely to cooperate with

law enforcement through information sharing, compliance with the law, and participation in crime prevention efforts. On the other hand, where trust is weak, policing effectiveness is undermined by public avoidance, resistance, and reliance on informal or non-state security arrangements (Oshodi, 2025). In the African context, trust in law enforcement agencies is shaped by a complex interaction of historical, political, and socio-economic factors. Many policing systems on the continent evolved from colonial administrative structures designed primarily for control rather than service delivery, a legacy that continues to influence contemporary public perceptions (Elphick, Philpot, Zhang, Stuart, Walkington, Frumkin, Pike, Gardner, Lacey, Levine, Price, Bandara, & Nuseibeh, 2020). Several African countries are often viewed not as protectors of citizens' rights, but as instruments of state coercion and political enforcement. This perception has contributed to persistent legitimacy deficits in many national police organizations, particularly in contexts where accountability mechanisms remain weak and institutional reforms are inconsistent (Oshodi, 2025).

In Nigeria, trust in law enforcement particularly the Nigeria Police Force has remained a longstanding concern within both academic discourse and public debate (Nwachukwu & Afamukoro, 2025). The widespread public dissatisfaction with policing practices, often linked to perceptions of misconduct, corruption, excessive use of force, and inadequate responsiveness to citizens' security needs (Adebusuyi, Oluwafemi, & Aigboje, 2023). These factors collectively weaken confidence in the institution and reduce citizens' willingness to engage cooperatively with police officers, thereby reinforcing cycles of distrust and ineffective policing outcomes. Distrust is not merely attitudinal but behavioural, as individuals who perceive the police as untrustworthy are less likely to report crimes, provide testimony, or rely on formal justice mechanisms (Tiwaa, 2024). Trust in law enforcement in Nigeria is significantly shaped by broader structural and governance challenges, including political interference, uneven law enforcement practices, and socio-economic inequalities that influence how policing services are delivered across different communities.

The politicization of policing operations, combined with concerns about procedural fairness and accountability, has further complicated efforts to build durable public confidence in the Nigeria Police Force (Ojedokun & Aderinto, 2024). In settings such as Nigeria, where distrust remains widespread, the gap between police and communities often widens, limiting the effectiveness of security interventions and contributing to alternative forms of informal justice and self-help security practices (Kenneth, 2024; Nwachukwu, 2025). Therefore, understanding trust in law enforcement agencies in Africa, and particularly in Nigeria, is critical not only for theoretical advancement in policing and governance studies but also for informing policy reforms aimed at strengthening legitimacy, accountability, and public confidence in security institutions.

Methodology

This study adopted the Ex Post Facto Research Design. The ex post facto design is considered appropriate because the variables under investigation already exist and cannot be manipulated by the researcher. The design enabled the researcher to collect data from participants regarding existing psychological and social factors such as trust in law enforcement agencies, fear of victimization, perceived effectiveness of the criminal justice system, social support, and community cohesion, and to determine how these factors influence crime-reporting behaviour. The study was conducted in Cross River State Central Senatorial District, Nigeria. The district comprises six Local Government Areas (LGAs), namely: Abi, Yakurr, Obubra, Ikom, Boki, and Etung. The area is characterized by a mixture of urban and rural settlements with diverse socio-cultural and economic activities including farming, trading, civil service, and small-scale entrepreneurship. The district experiences varying levels of criminal activities such as theft, assault, domestic violence, land disputes, cult-related activities, and other forms of social misconduct. These occurrences make the area

suitable for investigating psychosocial factors influencing residents' decisions to report crime to law enforcement agencies.

The population of the study comprised all adult residents (18 years and above) living in the six Local Government Areas of Cross River State Central Senatorial District. The target population included male and female residents who had lived in the area for at least one year and possessed adequate knowledge of crime occurrences and reporting practices within their communities. A sample size of 700 respondents was selected for the study. The sample was determined using Cochran's (1977) sample size determination formula. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents for the study. The procedure involved the following stages: The six Local Government Areas that make up Cross River State Central Senatorial District—Abi, Yakurr, Obubra, Ikom, Boki, and Etung were treated as strata to ensure adequate representation. From each Local Government Area, four communities were selected through simple random sampling using the balloting method. This resulted in a total of twenty-four communities. Within each selected community, enumeration areas or residential clusters were identified. Two residential clusters were randomly selected from each community. Thereafter, a systematic sampling was used to select households within the chosen residential clusters. Every fifth household was selected after determining a sampling interval.

Where more than one eligible respondent was found in a household, simple random sampling was employed to select one participant. This process continued until the required number of respondents was obtained. The 700 respondents were proportionately distributed across the six Local Government Areas according to population size to ensure fair representation. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Psychosocial Determinants of Crime Reporting Questionnaire (PDCRQ)" The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section A: Contained demographic information of respondents such as age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, occupation, and place of residence. Section B: Contained items designed to measure the psychosocial variables and crime-reporting behaviour. The items were structured on a four-point Likert scale as follows:

- Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points
- Agree (A) = 3 points
- Disagree (D) = 2 points
- Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point

The instrument was designed to elicit responses capable of providing information on the psychosocial determinants influencing residents' willingness to report crime. The validity of the instrument was established through face and content validity. Copies of the questionnaire, along with the research objectives and hypotheses, were submitted to experts in Sociology, Criminology, Measurement and Evaluation, and Research Methodology. The experts critically examined the relevance, clarity, adequacy, and appropriateness of the items in relation to the variables being measured. To establish the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted among 50 residents from a Local Government Area outside the study area but with similar socio-demographic characteristics. Data obtained from the pilot test were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability method to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficients obtained was 0.84. The values indicated a high level of internal consistency and confirmed that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

Data collected for the study were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The statistical tool was considered appropriate because the researcher is set determine to know the relationship between psychosocial variables and crime-reporting behaviour among the residents within the study area. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Result of finding

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Decision	df
Trust in Law Enforcement Agencies	700	3.82	0.74				698
Crime Reporting	700	3.67	0.81	0.684*	0.000	Significant	

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis on stigmatization and crime reporting

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between stigmatization and crime reporting ($r = -0.642$, $p < 0.05$, $N = 700$). The obtained correlation coefficient indicates a moderately strong inverse association between the two variables. This implies that as the level of stigmatization increases, the likelihood of reporting crime decreases among residents.

The p-value of 0.000 is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, indicating that the observed relationship is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between stigmatization and crime reporting is rejected.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis on Trust in Law Enforcement Agencies and crime reporting

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Decision	df
Stigmatization	700	24.86	5.41				698
Crime Reporting	700	21.73	4.98	-0.642	0.000	Significant	

The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between trust in law enforcement agencies and crime reporting among the residents ($r = 0.684$, $p < 0.05$). The positive correlation coefficient indicates that as citizens' trust in law enforcement agencies increases, their likelihood of reporting criminal activities also increases.

Discussion of findings

The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant and moderately strong negative relationship between stigmatization and crime reporting ($r = -0.642$, $p < 0.05$, $N = 700$). This indicates that higher levels of stigmatization are associated with lower levels of crime reporting among residents. The mean values (Stigmatization = 24.86; Crime Reporting = 21.73) further suggest that while stigmatization is relatively pronounced within the study context, willingness or tendency to report crime is comparatively lower. This finding aligns with the social psychological understanding that stigma produces fear of exposure, reputational damage, and secondary victimization, all of which reduce help-seeking and disclosure behaviors. The statistical significance ($p = 0.000$) confirms that this relationship is not due to random variation but reflects a consistent pattern within the sampled population ($df = 698$). The strength of the correlation ($r = -0.642$) further suggests that stigmatization is not a marginal factor but a substantial predictor of crime reporting behavior in the study area.

The findings are consistent with earlier empirical works that have documented the suppressive effect of stigma on help-seeking and reporting behaviors. For instance, Tyler (2006) emphasized that perceived social judgment and anticipated labeling reduce citizens' willingness to cooperate with legal authorities, particularly in environments where procedural

justice is weak. Similarly, Okafor and Ugwueze (2019) found that fear of social labeling significantly reduces crime reporting in urban Nigerian communities, reinforcing the idea that informal social sanctions often outweigh formal legal obligations. In a broader sense, this result aligns with Goffman's (1963) classic theory of stigma, which posits that individuals avoid situations that may expose them to discrediting social identities. More recent studies by Boateng (2018) also confirm that trust deficits and stigma jointly reduce public cooperation with policing systems in African urban settings. The implications of this finding are significant for crime prevention, policing strategies, and community development. First, the strong negative relationship suggests that stigmatization undermines informal surveillance systems, thereby weakening community-based crime control mechanisms. Second, the findings highlight the need for stigma-reduction interventions in crime reporting systems.

The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis indicates a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between trust in law enforcement agencies and crime reporting among residents ($r = 0.684$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that individuals who exhibit higher levels of trust in law enforcement agencies are considerably more likely to report criminal activities. This implies that trust is not merely a peripheral factor but a central determinant of citizens' willingness to engage with law enforcement structures. In practical terms, when citizens perceive law enforcement agencies as fair, effective, and non-corrupt, they are more likely to believe that reporting crime will lead to meaningful action and personal safety rather than retaliation or neglect. This relationship can be understood through procedural justice theory, which posits that individuals' cooperation with legal authorities is shaped more by perceived fairness in processes than by outcomes alone (Tyler, 2006). The findings are consistent with a substantial body of empirical literature emphasizing trust as a key predictor of public cooperation with police authorities. For example, Tyler and Huo (2002) found that trust in legal authorities significantly predicts willingness to obey the law and cooperate with police, including reporting criminal incidents. Similarly, Sunshine and Tyler (2003) demonstrated that legitimacy closely tied to trust is a stronger predictor of compliance and cooperation than fear of punishment. In a more recent cross-national analysis, Jackson, Bradford, Stanko and Hohl, (2012) reported that trust in police legitimacy is strongly associated with citizens' readiness to report crime and participate in crime prevention efforts. Likewise, Bradford, Jackson and Hough (2014) observed that procedural fairness and trust significantly influence public engagement with policing institutions, especially in urban environments with diverse populations. In the African context, Tankebe (2009) highlights that trust in police is often fragile due to concerns about corruption, inefficiency, and abuse of power. However, where trust exists, it significantly enhances citizens' willingness to cooperate with law enforcement, including reporting crime. The present findings align with this observation, reinforcing that trust remains a universal mechanism influencing police-citizen cooperation across different socio-political settings. The implications of this result are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the findings reinforce procedural justice and legitimacy frameworks, demonstrating that trust is not a peripheral attitude but a core mechanism driving cooperative behaviour in criminal justice systems.

Conclusion

The study highlights the significant role of psychosocial pressures such as fear of stigma, community norms, and interpersonal relationships with offenders. In closely knit communities, social ties can either facilitate reporting through collective responsibility or inhibit it due to fear of social exclusion and reprisal. Perceived personal risk and low self-efficacy in navigating formal complaint systems contribute to underreporting, particularly in cases involving sensitive crimes. At the community level, the presence or absence of social cohesion and informal support structures was found to shape reporting decisions. While

strong communal bonds can promote shared vigilance, they may also reinforce silence when criminal acts involve known individuals within the social network. This duality reflects the complexity of social capital in shaping crime reporting behaviour. Crime reporting in Cross River State Central Senatorial District is deeply influenced by a combination of psychological perceptions and social realities rather than legal awareness alone. Strengthening crime reporting behaviour therefore requires more than institutional reform; it demands rebuilding public trust, enhancing perceived safety in reporting processes, and fostering community environments that support accountability without fear of reprisal.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that Law enforcement agencies, community leaders, and civil society organizations should conduct quarterly public awareness campaigns aimed at reducing the stigma associated with reporting crimes. These campaigns should target at least 70% of households within the study area through town hall meetings, radio programs, social media platforms, and community outreach activities. Also, security agencies should establish and promote anonymous crime-reporting channels, including toll-free hotlines, mobile applications, and online reporting platforms. A measurable target would be to increase the use of anonymous reporting channels by at least 30% within one year of implementation.

Based on the findings from the study, it was recommended that law enforcement agencies should increase community policing initiatives by organizing regular community engagement fora at least once every quarter in each district or locality. These fora should provide opportunities for residents to interact directly with officers, discuss security concerns, and receive updates on crime prevention efforts. The effectiveness of these programs should be evaluated through annual community trust surveys, with a target of increasing public trust ratings by at least 20% within two years. It was also recommended that Law enforcement agencies should establish transparent complaint-handling and feedback systems that allow citizens to monitor the progress of reported cases. Agencies should aim to provide updates on at least 80% of reported cases within 30 days of reporting. Regular publication of crime statistics and case resolution reports on a quarterly basis can further strengthen public confidence and accountability.

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