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Traditional Crime Control Methods among Akoko Communities of Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract
Traditional Crime control methods among Akoko Communities of Ondo State Nigeria are rooted in the various beliefs, norms and customs of the Akoko people. The methods used by these people are well organized to maintain peace, order, and social harmony prior to the inception of formal crime control measures by the British colonial masters. The Akoko people believe in these methods because they emphasize restorative justice, reconciliation, fairness and social order. Their belief is further reinforced by the fact that justice was administered quickly, swiftly, and restoratively rather than just punitively; there is no human interference and manipulation. These methods which are embedded in their culture, enjoyed high community trust and rapid response despite facing challenges such as being seen as black magic by modern religion which came with colonization, lack of recognition by the government, concern over human rights, lack of specific role for traditional institutions under which some of these methods are submerged, while modernization and western education have contributed to the reduction of their influence. Incorporation of aspects of these methods in criminal justice system in the present-day modern democracy is hereby recommended.

Keywords: Akoko Communities, Crime Control Methods, Punishment, Tradition.

1. Introduction

Prior to the establishment of the British colonial system, traditional societies in Nigeria had various traditional methods through which the people maintained social order and communal safety (Ogbonna, Mba, Chukwunka & Ajayi, 2023; Etim, Hussaini & Sunday, 2024). Akoko, being one of the sub-ethnic groups within the Yoruba of the south-western Nigeria, has a culture and tradition which is deeply rooted in various beliefs, norms, and customs which every individual of the sub-ethnic group strives to maintain, to avoid bringing curses on themselves and others, and to maintain group solidarity (Adebayo, 2013). Akoko like other groups within the larger Yoruba society had established social norms and value, which comprised a clear system of control of crime. The traditional crime control methods used by various Akoko communities were home-grown, culturally embedded and community based. These methods refer to the processes and institutions, through which crimes were identified, investigated, judged, and punished according to custom and traditions of the Akoko people. It consisted of unwritten laws and sanctions passed from one generation to another, with justice administered through community consensus, respect for elders, and belief in supernatural sanctions.

Akoko communities had a well-organized traditional crime control method that maintained peace, order, and social harmony long before the introduction of Western formal crime control systems. Crime control was regarded as a sacred responsibility involving the family, community, traditional rulers, elders, and religious institutions. The primary aim of traditional crime control methods was not merely to prevent crime from being occurred but to punish offenders and restore harmony, compensate victims, and preserve the moral values of society. The growing frequency of different types of crime and the shortcomings of the current criminal justice system in Nigeria had led communities to take responsibility for their local security and revert to long-forgotten means of indigenous control of crime methods. This paper therefore, X-rayed the crime control methods among the Akoko communities of Ondo State of south-western Nigeria. The paper is structured into six segments; introduction, literature, theoretical foundation of the paper, methods of crime control in Akoko communities of Ondo State, Nigeria, challenges, conclusion and recommendations.

2. Literature

In traditional Yoruba society which the Akoko people belong, life is sacred (Nweke & Nwachukwu, 2020), and communities established social mechanism to manage, control, and prevent social disorganization (Oke, 2021). Traditional Yoruba communities address issues of social order through informal traditional control practices (Ricken, 2012). The use of indigenous control of crime and punishment of offenders is widespread among the Yorubas and predated the laws that British colonial masters used to establish the more formal criminal justice system and to modernise

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advanced societies. The Yoruba traditional society had various indigenous control of crime measures as part of the communal mechanism for maintenance of social order. such as *"Epe*" (The Traditional curse), "*Egungun*" (masquerade), traditional deities, 'ibura' (Oath-taking) satire, and culture of shaming, banishment, ostracism, rituals, age-grade, etc. (Oke, 2021; Olutayo & Jegede, 2014). Oke (2021) observed that fines and compensation, ritual cleansing, trial by ordeals, ridicule and gossip, masquerade institutions, confinement, ostracism, banishment, etc., are the common forms of the traditional methods of crime control in many communities in Nigeria.

Igbokwe-Ibeto and Ogbuagu (2021) identified deterrence (preventing individuals from committing crimes by imposing severe punishments), retribution (punishing offenders for their wrongdoings and providing justice for victims), public safety (protecting individuals and communities from harm), incapacitation (removing offenders from society through imprisonment or banishment), and individual responsibility (offenders are held accountable for their actions), etc., as core values that underpin the traditional crime control methods. Similarly, Ogbonna, Mbak, Chukwunka and Ajayi (2023) argued that traditional crime control methods are based on principles and strategies to prevent and investigate criminal behaviour and punish offenders. The prevention mechanism of traditional crime control practices includes using punishment as a deterrent to prevent individuals from committing crimes, monitoring public spaces in the form of surveillance and using community policing to enforce the law in the community to enhance conformity with collective conscience-those beliefs, symbols and sentiments shared by all member of society (Poggi, 1972).

Olutayo and Jegede (2014) observed that traditional crime control methods in Nigeria were rooted in community-based methods, which emphasized social cohesion, mutual support, and collective responsibility. Similarly, Oke (2021) highlighted community involvement, restorative justice, rehabilitation, respect for elders, and use of indigenous resources as core in-depth values of traditional crime control methods in Yoruba land.

Traditional Yoruba communities' views on justice were based on deep-rooted indigenous cultural norms and customs. Usually, justice is served quickly; at times, minor cases are settled at family level, whereas theft and other criminal cases are handled at higher levels. According to Okafo (2017), serious offenders are summarily executed in a case where guilt is apparent. Numerous community members, particularly, the elders, as well as relatives of the offenders and their victims, are involved in the legal process. Oloruntimehin (1984) observed that the dispensation of justice often involves the contribution of those present at the proceeding that can participate through cross-examination and offer suggestions for proper settlement. Traditional methods of crime control had contributed to community safety and social order in the past (Oke, 2021). The rising crime rates in Nigeria, especially at the rural level has ignited a call for the re-examination of indigenous control of crime methods. This paper adds to the corpus of current knowledge on traditional control of crime methods in Nigeria, especially among the Akoko communities of Ondo State.

3. Theoretical Foundation

This paper is premised on Robert King Merton's (1938) Anomie-strain theory. This theory offers a framework for operationalising the analytical tasks required to comprehend the subject matter. This theory captures the essence of the paper as it addresses why an individual frequently accept the cultural goals set by society but reject the legal ways to achieve them, factors that predisposes individual to break the rule, and when a rule is broken, it should be addressed immediately to prevent more rules and regulation breakdowns in society. Anomie-strain theory is predicted on the idea that society fosters deviance/crime by encouraging aspirations without offering corresponding legal means of achieving them. The disconnection between socially prescribed goals and the legitimate means to attain such goals in turn, puts pressure on the individual to deviate (Merton, 1938). The Anomie-Strain theory was created by Robert King Merton (1968). According to Merton's Anomie-strain perspective, there is a gap between culturally defined objectives and the institutionalised methods that can be used to accomplish them.

Etymologically, "anomie" has its origin in French language; it implies the absence of law or normlessness. Emile Durkheim (1897) conceptualized "anomie" as the absence, weakening, and violation of norms/laws and the core values regulating human action in society. In 1938, Robert King Merton adopted and altered the theory for a means-end paradigm. Merton created a typology classification system to make the theory easier to comprehend. According to Merton, people can react to the pursuit of success in five different ways: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion.

Conformity is a mode of adaptation in where a person decides to use institutional and acceptable cultural methods to accomplish culturally acceptable goals. Those who choose to follow the rules are known as conformists. Innovation is a type of adaptation where a person wants to accomplish culturally acceptable goals but does so without using the established methods. Such a person embraces and pursues socially acceptable objectives, but they forgo using legal methods in favour of illicit ones.

Ritualism is an adaptation strategy where a person loses interest in pursuing socially acceptable objectives but is content to follow the routine of using institutionalised methods. Retreatism explains a situation where a person reject both the goals and the

means of achieving the goals. Rebellion is a unique situation in which the person actively replaces both aspects of society with alternative objectives and methods while rejecting both cultural goals and the conventional ways to achieve them.

The relevance of the theory to this paper lies in emphasising how social structure shapes people's behaviour. It emphasizes how cultural disruption contribute to deviancy among indigenous communities. The theory clarifies deviance, especially in terms of how the structure and objectives of society can result in abnormal behaviour. The pressure to succeed is exerted by the moral obligation to do so, either by fair means if feasible or by corrupt means if required. Similarly, cultural disorganization in the form of disruption of the traditional norms and values as well as the breaking down of community structures is responsible for increase in deviance rates. The traditional crime control methods which form the criminal justice system mechanisms among the Yorubas including the Akokos, are submerged within the indigenous belief, cultures and traditions of the people. When cultural disorganization in the form of breaking down of the community structures which includes its mechanisms of justice management occurs, it poses challenges to the effective use of these indigenous methods to control deviant behaviour. Merton's framework for understanding cultural disorganization caused by the stipulation of cultural goals without providing corresponding cultural means to achieve them align with the challenges of traditional crime control methods among the Yoruba communities. While the theory was essentially developed to explain deviance in the context of the American dream, its core premise-that normative breakdown and blocked means produce pressure toward deviance remains relevant for understanding traditional mechanism for controlling crime in particular and criminal justice system in the traditional Yoruba societies in general.

4. Traditional Crime Control Methods among the Akoko Communities of Ondo State, Nigeria

"Ibura" (Oath-Taking): Among the Akoko people, '*Ibura'* (Oath-taking) is one of the major traditional crime control methods. This is a serious pledge or declaration of commitment that uses religious language to describe how a person plans to act in a particular situation. It entails calling upon divine or spiritual beings to attest to a declaration or pledges with a conviction that those who break these vows will suffer supernatural repercussions. Similarly, an oath, which has a long history in Akoko culture, is considered a formal solemn agreement between two people, groups, or communities. They are typically employed as a curse when there is uncertainty about a matter, primarily when those involved are unwilling to say the truth. Oath-taking is used in a variety of situations, such as contractual agreement between two parties, legal proceedings where witnesses are asked to swear to an oath in accordance with their religious beliefs, and dispute resolution. The belief that involving spiritual entities in a matter or issue carries significant power and places greater obligation on an individual is the basis for the practice of oath-taking as an indigenous crime control mechanism. The belief that anyone who violates the oath or is found to have committed wrongdoing will face divine retribution serves as a powerful disincentive for potential offenders to engage in behaviour that would consider criminal. Oath-taking is an important form of social control among the Akoko people because it promotes trust and social cohesion in communities. It is mostly employed when stealing occurs, mysterious death, witchcraft or fornication. To determine their guilt or innocence, offenders are compelled to swear or drink medicinal concoctions. *Ibura* **i**s mostly done either at the family level or at the palace of the traditional ruler, according to the gravity of the offence committed. In case of adultery, dispute over family lands and inheritance, it is taken at the family level. But in the case of mysterious death, witchcraft and other offences deemed as sacrilegious by the Akoko people*, ibura* is done at the palace of the traditional head of the community where such offence is committed.

"*Aafin Oba*" (The King's Court): Like other traditional communities in the Yoruba society, *Aafin Oba* (The King's Court) plays a significant role in crime control among Akoko Communities of Ondo state. *Aafin Oba* refers to the palace of the king. The King and his chiefs make up the King's Court. They deal with both civil and criminal cases and administer punishment in accordance with the community's traditions and customs. When a crime threatens the community's peace and solidarity, the court has a variety of mechanism at its disposal, including sanctions, fines, compensation, banishment, and in certain cases, death. It is the highest authority in term of crime control, prevention and application of sanctions on erring community's members.

Only the king's court has the authority to apply the death penalty, and it renders decision based on the type of offence. Cases decided at the family or quarter level are appealed to it. Serious matters of community interest are, nevertheless, occasionally brought before the court directly. Native unwritten laws made up of customs, traditions, and norms serve as the foundation for the King's Court. The court's goal is to arrive at a ruling that both parties would find acceptable. The king oversees the trial process and confirm the court's ruling. When it comes to identifying criminals, the court employs a variety of conventional techniques, including oath-taking and dreaded deities. It uses ritual cleansing and sacrifice to prevent crime. While it employs a number of mechanisms including monetary fines, and other crime control measures. In Ikare-Akoko for instance, the 'Ajo Ilu' (Community meeting) takes place inside *Aafin Oba* where all issues affecting the community is taken, discussed and approved including crime management.

"Ipade Omo'ba" (The Family Court): This is a

social control agency at the family level that handles situation such as quarrels among spouses, domestic violence, disagreements over family inheritance, small-time theft, damage of farm trees, etc. among the Akoko communities of Ondo state. The adjudicator is the chief or head of the family. In Akoko communities, the oldest male is referred to as "*Opon*". With the help of other adult males in the family, the eldest male (*Opon)* or the chief oversees matters at the family level. Within the family, the "*Opon*" is well-respected for his judgments and opinions regarding disagreements among family members, this is based on the fact that wisdom is associated with age in Akoko communities same as the large Yoruba society. The family court sometimes refers cases that cannot be decided at this stage and sent to the king's court for additional consideration. It serves as the initial point of contact for conflict resolution and is a practical platform for social control within the family context in the Akoko communities. Its two main purposes are to resolve conflict that arise between family members and to disciple any member who are thought to have violated the family's culture or engaged in any behaviour that could damage the family's reputation. In Ikare-Akoko, *Ipade Omo'ba* is crucial to the stability of the family because it helps to make members of the family to uphold shared family cultural norms, value and tradition. Cases of indiscipline that could tarnish the name and image of the family are handled and dealt with at this level.

"*Ajagbo* Festival" Traditional Dance: Many traditional Akoko communities use this indigenous method of crim prevention to stop criminal activity. It entails young people from the community performing songs and dances at an offender's door to make fun of and humiliate them for committing a crime. The fear of reputational damage is the underpinning principle of this type of punishment as part of traditional crime control methods in Akoko communities. Shaming and ridicule involve subjecting offenders to a routine abuse, ridicule songs and other denigrating manners to ensure that they suffer reputational damage for the wrong they have committed.

Various songs are composed to make fun of and humiliate criminals who commit crimes or engage in activities that are thought to be detrimental to the community's common good. Community members identify and locate the houses of offenders. The young people in various groups will take turns visiting the homes or compounds, singing, dancing, and making fun of anyone who has broken the law. The proper authorities, including the traditional head of the community, quarters chiefs, police, and leaders of various age-groups, are duly informed prior to the event. An offender who is being ridiculed and shamed cannot attack or report the young people to any authority because doing so would result in harsher community penalties. The community expresses its disapproval of people or groups that have engaged in inappropriate behaviour by using shame and ridicule as social control. The duration of the festival varies from community to community. In Ese, Afin and Ogbagi-Akoko. *Ajagbo* festival could last for two weeks, while in Irun-Akoko community, it could last for a whole month. The festival is usually held between the months of September and October every year.

***"Egungun* Masquerade:** Among communities in Akoko, *Egungun* traditional masquerade plays an important role as agent of social control. In some communities they are used mainly for entertainment but in others, they are used for crime control. Among Akoko communities, masquerade such as *Sheeru; 'Gaingain', 'Aooyo'*, '*Awo Ologun;* etc are used for entertainment. *'Oke'* masquerade in Ikare-Akoko is used for crime detection relating to infidelity. These masquerades are revered and dreaded because they performed specific rituals relating to crime management and prevention. They are sometimes used as appeasement to gods and cleansing of the land when a serious crime has been committed.

Traditional Gods/Deities: Among the Akoko communities, there are different types of gods/deities worshipped by the people, and which formed part of the traditional local belief. These gods/deities are different from the traditional *Ogun* (god of Iron), *Sango* (god of Thunder) and *Esu* (god of Trickster) deities worshipped by the larger Yoruba society. in Ipe-Akoko, the *Okpara* deity is worshipped and revered by the people as a strong deity used for community safety. '*Ipata Osan'* and '*Gudugbe'* deities in Ikare -Akoko served as medium for social control in the community. '*Otolomi' and'Okota'* goddess in Arigidi and Ikaramu-Akoko respectively are traditional deities used for community safety and protection. Sacrifices are made to appease these gods and to invoke them in crime management and prevention. The efficacy of the invocation of traditional gods/deities in crime prevention amongst the Yoruba society which the Akoko people belong to was highlighted by Okunola and Ojo (2012). The study examined the relevance and efficacy of Yoruba gods as agents of punishment. It revealed that *Sango* (god of Thunder) and *Ogun* (god of Iron) are prominent gods whose punishments are severe and swift.

Divination: The practice of consulting oracles and supernatural forces to explain what happened in the past, or what will happen in the future form part of the indigenous belief among the traditional Akoko communities of Ondo state. Divination includes the use of *Opele (Ifa chain)*, sand, water in a white calabash or the consultation of traditional priest (*Babalawo)* and *Onimole* (Imole devotee) The diviners are highly respected men and women versed in the Africa traditional ways of consulting gods to unravel the past and tell the future. Divination is one of the indigenous mechanisms of crime management used in pre-colonial communities. It uses supernatural means to unearth mysteries surrounding unexplainable offences and wrongdoings (Ugah & Umeh, 2018).

"Magun" (Thunderbolt): The need to protect family bloodline and to prevent married women from bringing a bastard child into the family brought about the idea of *Magun* (Thunderbolt) in traditional Yoruba society, Akoko inclusive. When a woman is laced with *Magun* (Thunderbolt), any man that has sexual intercourse with her, will ultimately die, either instantly or a few days later. In Ipe-Akoko*, magun* is believed to be naturally laced on all women of the community the moment they are married. Therefore, any Ipe-Akoko women involving in sexual intercourse with any man apart from her husband could result to the death of such men while the woman could be afflicted with strange sickness that may leads to death if she did not confess to her fornication on time. *Magun* is a potent mechanism of traditional crime control system in Akoko especially against adultery in communities.

"Epe" (Traditional Curse): *Epe* (Traditional Curse) is a potent mechanism of crime prevention in many Akoko communities. It is a verbal invocation of evil or negative effects upon a person believed to have committed a serious crime in the community. "Epe" (Traditional Curse) is used for offences such as theft, witchcraft, Killings, adultery etc. The repercussion of the *Epe* serves as deterrence for other potential offenders thereby preventing further offence. *Epe* is not randomly use by the most communities in Akok but in a case when an offence/crime deems sacrilegious had been committed and nobody is willing to confess to such crime. It is a potent spiritual weapon used by communities in Akoko in cases of extreme offence/crime. The repercussions of the *Epe* (traditional curse) are not only on the offender/criminal but sometimes on his or her family. Communities does not use this method of crime control often but in a very rare case as means of seeking justice. *Epe* ((traditional curse) serve as a deterrent to other potential criminals, thereby preventing future crimes. Traditional curse (*Epe)* at community level as used in many Akoko communities is a potent mechanism of crime prevention considering the dangerous effect it has on the offenders and their families.

Ode Abalaye: These are traditional local hunters that exist in many traditional communities in Akoko communities. The local hunter is divided into two folds: those whose occupation is hunting and those used for the security of communities. *Ode Abalaye* are different from the local vigilantes group that exist in many communities in Nigeria. Though most members of the local vigilantes are members of the local hunters, but the mode of operation of the two is quite different. In most traditional Akoko communities, the head of *Ode Abalaye* is "*Olu-Ode*", while a vigilante has a commander. The *Ode Abalaye* possess mystical power and are fearless. They serve as agent of social control and protection of lives and property. They also serve as night guard for communities where they exist. In pre-colonial traditional Akoko communities, *Ode Abalaye* is used to secure communities from outside invaders, enforcers of the community's sanctions, especially in the case of banishment. Today, it has been organised into community-based security mechanism. *OdeAbalaye* uses traditional method of surveillance and knowledge of their local terrains to gather information that is often shared with the formal security agents in crime control. Many remote Akoko villages lack adequate presence of formal security agency and they have relied on tradition hunters as mechanism of social control. Despite being faced with series of encumbrances, *Ode Abalaye* has provided security for many Akoko towns and villages using local tools and knowledge with little or no assistance from the government.

Onimole: These are adherents of Yoruba traditional religion. The *Onimole*, as they are popularly referred to, are worshippers of the *Imole* deity, which they place on their heads during their procession. The devotees of *Imole* are mostly women, with a few men who serve as drummers. They used white colour like the Osun *Imole* devotees, but unlike the Osun devotees who only plaited their hair, the *Imole devotees* fix the deity to their hair and place it on their head during procession. The *Imole* deity is used for community cleansing and represents an intermediary between mankind and the supernatural. The devotees of *Imole* are often personified as "women of virtue " who use their purity for the sake of humanity. They consist of young maidens within the age of 9-15 years, supported by their mothers. The adherents of *Imole* are common in many Akoko communities. *Imole* procession is often used to mark the exit of a traditional king, chiefs, the beginning of traditional festivals, and other important activities. *Imole* deity plays a significant role in crime control in Akoko as cases of stealing, adultery and witchcraft are often brought before *Imole* shine for accusers to swear. The repercussion of taken a false oath before the deity is a potent means of instilling fear into the mind of a potential offenders, thereby reducing crime rate in traditional communities in Akoko.

Yeye Irukiru Shrine: This is a prominent shrine located in Irun Akoko. It is an ancient shrine in the community related to a once powerful woman reported to have defended the community during the *Are Ago Arikuyeri* war of the 18th century. *Are Ago Arikuyeri* was a powerful Ibadan war general who invaded many communities, including Irun Akoko, during the slave trade and took many captives from the community and sold them into slavery. *Yeye Irukiru* came to the aid of the community by instructing the digging of trenches around the community. She made a sacrifice of a cow and used her supernatural power to ward off the invasion of *Are Ago Arikuyeri.* It was reported that once any soldier of the *Are Ago Arikuyerii* fell into the ditch, an unseen spirit would immediately cover the spot without a trace. This action terrified *Are Ago Arikuyeri* and his troop, who fled and never returned. Yeye Irukiru became revered and worshipped by the community. The festival is always celebrated every August in Igbolu quarters of the community. The traditional king of the community, known as Onirun of Irun Akoko, provides a cow to the priest of the shrine

to be slaughtered as a sacrifice for *Yeye Irukiru.* Prayers are offered for the progress and development of the community. *Yeye Irukiru* shrine is one of the few shrines in Akoko and Yoruba land where a woman is a chief priest. The shrine plays an important role in crime management in the community. In cases of theft, stealing, adultery, murder, witchcraft etc., *Yeye Irukiru* shine is used by the community to unravel the culprits. The chief priestess is consulted while sacrifices are made to the shrine. Within seven days, the deity will reveal the identity of the culprit by afflicting him or her with strange sickness that will force a confession. Many locals from other Akoko communities patronise the shrine to solve cases of crime. The shrine has helped in crime reduction in Irun-Akoko community and other neighbouring communities.

Aile (Researched Charm for Apprehending Thief/Criminal): Another method of crime control commonly used among Akoko communities is the *Aile* charm. It is used to secure items/goods and prevent trespass on farm lands. Akoko is agrarian communities with a large population of people, who are predominantly farmers. These communities are known for the cultivation of yam, cassava, cocoyam alongside cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, kolanut etc. The influx of people from neighbouring states into communities in Akoko for both commercial and subsistence farming also brought crimes. One of the most common crimes in most of these communities is theft of farm produce such as Yam, cocoyam, Cassava, and others. *Aile* (Researched charm for apprehending thieves/criminals) is therefore used to apprehend /thieves and other criminals. *Aile* (Researched charm for apprehending thieves/criminals) charm prevents unauthorized entering of farms, stealing of farm produce and cause spiritual attacks for any intruders. *Aile* charm can be in the form of lacing an item with palm leaves or the use of red cloth. The potency of *Aile* charm as traditional method of crime prevention is in no doubt. Another form of *Aile* charm used in some of these communities is *"Ti ibidanu*". This loosely means 'to avert danger. Some farmers are being careful of not wanting to put *Aile* charm that can cause spiritual attacks on their farms in the case that it is their children, wives or relatives that eventually enter the farm. Alternatively, they use "ti ibidanu". The charm will put away the intention of stealing anything on the farm from any potential thief, even if the thief's farmland is beside the person that laces his/her farm with "*ti ibidanu*". *Aile* has contributed to the reduction in farm produce's theft and destruction of farmlands by Fulani herders. The predominant used of *Aile* (Researched charm for apprehending thief/criminal) in many Akoko communities corroborate various studies (Adebisi & Babajide, 2018; Gbenemene, 2018; Friday & Eze, 2019) that the efficacy of *Aile* as indigenous method of crime control has made it commonly used by farmers to protect their farms from thieves.

5. Challenges

Traditional crime control methods among Akoko communities are facing some challenges, some of which are briefly mentioned below. Africans' social, cultural, political, and economic well-being were all affected by colonialism (Ebbe, 2010), and communities in Akoko in Ondo State, South-western Nigeria are not left out. The colonial administration not only portrayed everything African as barbaric, but also imposed a Western legal culture founded on Anglo-American jurisprudential philosophy on the people (Oye, 2023). This has impacted negatively on the traditional methods of crime control system in Akoko land. The advent of Christianity and Islam affected the influence, the use, and patronage of traditional methods of crime control system in these communities. The attention of the people on the use of a well-organized traditional methods of crime control system was largely shifted with the advent of Christianity and Islam (Akubor, 2016). The advent of these two religions led to the neglect of traditional methods of crime control system. African Traditional Religion (ATR) which these methods are embedded is often referred to as black magic, voodoo, and despised by the people in favour of Christianity and Islam while its adherents are called despicable names such as 'born against', 'idol worshippers' etc.

Before colonialism in African society, traditional institutions played a very significant role in the native administration of the people including crime management and security of lives and property (Saka-Olokungboye, Ilugbami & Olateru-Olagbegi, 2023). Apart from being the custodian of oral traditional history of the people, they help to sustain peace and harmony in their respective communities (Nweke & Nwachukwu, 2020). Traditional Institutions in Nigeria are characterized by Kingship system which was highly organized centralised administration (Osakede & Ijimakinwa, 2018). Modern democracy has weakened the influence of traditional institutions in Akoko land as well as in other Yoruba communities. The traditional institutions which are the custodians of culture, customs and traditions of the people within which these control systems are embedded have not been given a specific role in crime management in their respective communities. Also, modern democracy only recognised the western imposed criminal justice system which has made the use and deployment of traditional methods of crime control in most of these communities difficult to defend within the justice system. Similarly, the advancement in science and technology has greatly influenced criminal justice system. The impact of technologies such as Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), facial recognition software (FRS), and artificial intelligence on crime prevention, detection, and investigation has affected traditional crime control system in many communities in Nigeria (Ayinde & Agwu, 2016). In like manner, the excessive punishment of offenders and sometimes their family members by traditional methods of crime control has made people to run away from its usage. The western imposed criminal justice system has a fixed and appropriate punishment for each offence/crime. Punishment is

commensurate with offence committed in most cases. But in traditional methods of crime control, the punishment maybe generational. *Epe* (Traditional curse) for instance, if invoked by group or community as method of traditional crime control, its repercussion can sometimes not limit to the offender alone, but generational (Afatakpa & Olufunmilayo, 2026).

The advent of new ways of life, belief and values brought about by modernization and the preference for these values, seriously challenged and weakened traditional beliefs under which traditional methods of crime control system submerged. Modernization affects different aspects of the people's life, relationship, and culture. According to Wilson, Emeka and Okechukwu (2020), it produces a counteract effect on cultural orientation, erodes cultural heritage and counter traditional beliefs and practices. The introduction of western education and culture by the colonial administration in Nigeria effectively replace the informal education of the indigenous communities. This brought a significant challenge to traditional beliefs and values. Western type of education wrapped with religion portrayed Africa Traditional Religion (ATR) as inferior and evil, destabilized corporate morality and community solidarity, and introduced individuality (Wilson et al., 2020).

Concern for human rights has ignited a debate on the application of traditional methods in crime management especially in the area of punishment. The introduction of vigilante groups and traditional hunters into crime prevention also brought about the allegation of jungle justice which in some quarters are believed to have characterised the mode of operation of these informal groups (Anyo & Zumve, 2020). The respect for fundamental human rights within the application of traditional methods of crime control system has brought a significant challenge to the full application of these methods most especially in the area of punishment. Similarly, the high cost of items used as sacrifice to deities and the prevalence of fake diviners, priests, priestess etc., has been a challenge confronting the use of traditional methods of crime control in many local communities. The greedy for money has brought about many fake diviners who preyed on the helpless situation of their victims. In case of finding solution to a crime or offence, the cost of what are sometimes listed as items of sacrifice for the deities by these fake priests/priestess far outweigh the cost of involving formal security agents. According to Afunugo (2026), the rise in impostors who exploit spiritual traditions for crime, weakening religious integrity and threatening public safety.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that traditional deities, *Magun* (thunderbolt), *Egungun* (masquerade), *Ajagbo Festival* (shaming and ridicule festival), *Epe* (traditional curse), *Ibura* (Oath-taking*), Imole, Ode-abalaye* (traditional hunters), *Ipade Omo'ba* (Family court) and *Aafin Oba* (Palace Court) among others play a crucial role as traditional methods of crime control system of the Akoko communities of Ondo state, Nigeria. For time immemorial, the traditional Akoko communities have relied on traditional methods of crime control system to address crime. These mechanisms are tied to different sanctions that are intended to punish offenders, correct behaviours deemed inappropriate and ensure community solidarity. Sanctions applied in the traditional methods of crime control system are tied to the deities (gods) which are swift and almost certain thereby making them significantly more effective in deterring crime compared to the long and unpredictable processes of formal crime control mechanisms (legal systems).

It is important to recognize the significance of *Aafin Oba* (Palace Court) in crime control in these communities by converting customary courts to palace courts. This will give the traditional institutions (King) both traditional and legal power to investigate crime and appropriate punishment in their different communities. Therefore, it is recommended that palace court should be reinvigorated and strengthened to handle both civil and criminal related issues.

Traditional crime control methods unlike the western imposed formal justice system, which can be slow and time-consuming offer, rapid, restorative justice that focuses on reconciliation and social order rather than just punishment. Traditional methods such as family meeting, palace court, Oaths or council of elders are deeply rooted in the culture of the local Akoko communities. The people have trust in them because it is believed that justice offered by them are certain, swift and can never be compromised. It is hereby recommended that this should be formally recognised and incorporated into Nigerian modern democracy.

The cost of crime control is very expensive globally. The Nigerian constitution envisaged this through the provision of security votes for elected Governors of states. However, grassroots where crime rate is becoming alarming are left with nothing in term of support, saved for the meagre contribution made by the local people for their safety. This contribution barely provides the needed support for the various informal groups established by these communities to protect themselves. It is hereby recommended that government should provide logistics support for *Ode-abalaye* and other crime fighting groups, while security allowance is made available to each community on monthly or quarterly basis.

The traditional crime control methods among Akoko communities were wholly and comprehensive indigenous institution that combined law, morality, religion, and community participation to maintain peace and order. Although it differed significantly from the modern formal legal system, its emphasis on fairness, reconciliation, communal responsibility, and restorative justice offers enduring lessons for contemporary criminal justice administration in

Nigeria.

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