



## **AWARENESS OF JUNGLE JUSTICE AS A STRATEGY FOR CRIME CONTROL IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

The study examined the awareness of jungle justice as a strategy for crime control in Imo State, Nigeria. The study was anchored on scapegoat theory. Mixed method design was employed in this study. The sample size of 384 was generated using Fisher Lang, Stockel and Townsend method of obtaining sample size. Questionnaire schedule was used to collect quantitative data while in-depth interviews were used to collect qualitative data. The quantitative data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows, version 17. Also, descriptive statistics like frequency tables, simple percentages and graphic illustrations were used to analyze the quantitative data while manual content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. Findings of the study indicate that majority of the residents were aware of jungle justice because they had witnessed cases of jungle justice in the study area. The study therefore recommended that there should be adequate campaign using traditional and social media platforms to sensitize people on the consequences of jungle justice as a strategy for controlling crime. Also, efforts should be made by the government to set up highly effective law enforcement operatives to combat crime.

**Keywords:** awareness, crime, crime control strategy, jungle justice, law enforcement agency

### **Introduction**

Jungle justice or ochlocracy refers to an instantaneous infliction of bodily and mental pains, suffering or death on a person arrested, or otherwise physically overpowered by a mob as punishment for his alleged offence or wrongdoing. It is a global phenomenon, in that no continent or country of the world can be said to have a zero occurrence of the practice both in the past and in the present times (Canneti,1962). The term is an age long practice that is predominant in various parts of Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa. However, the difference between jungle justice in Africa and other parts of the world is simply the degree of its prevalence. So, while jungle justice practices are high and flowing



from the cultural and historical experiences of the people of Africa, the practice is low and seriously checked in most parts of the world especially in Europe and North America (Anthia, 2005; Collins, 2008).

Coming home to Nigeria scenario, jungle justice abounds in every part of the country. Osazuwa (2016) opined that all it takes is for somebody to scream “thief” and anyone seen running away is apprehended by a surging crowd and beaten to a pulp almost immediately. In most cases, such a suspect is bludgeoned to death or burnt alive with exciting youths taking photographs and filming the acts. It is clear that the rule of law has been jettisoned in Nigeria, while the rule of man is the guiding principle. It is evident that many dreams have been brutally cut short with no opportunity for a fair trial. For Osazuwa, the mob play the role of both the jury and the executioner.

Sanni (2017) noted that incidents relating to jungle justice have recently taken a part in national discourse. He further added that within three months in the year 2017, over 38 cases of jungle justice have been recorded around the country, with the South Western part experiencing more incidents. Jungle justice has been condemned from various quarters and sections of the citizenry and the state, yet it is still waxing strong because of its ability to deliver swift justice; as the horror associated with the practice is strong enough to deter other criminally minded persons from performing their nefarious acts.

Bringing the discussion home, Imo state has one of the highest cases of jungle justice in the whole of South East and South-South. So, while statistical figures from NOI Polls shows that Lagos is leading not only in the South West but the whole country in jungle justice cases, it is unarguably true that Imo state has a unique rate of jungle justice practices that are above normal (NOI,2014). Related to this is the fact that the high rate of crime that has ravaged the state especially Okigwe in terms of armed robbery and kidnapping has made the state to be a hub for jungle justice as residents device various means to protect themselves from hoodlums since the criminal justice system, especially the police is grossly ineffective in dealing with security challenges. Jungle justice has been persistent in the study area and there is need to examine the awareness of jungle justice by residents of Imo state, Southeast Nigeria



## **Objectives of the Study**

Two related objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the awareness of jungle justice as a strategy for crime control in Imo State, Nigeria
2. To find out the major sources of information / awareness of jungle justice as a strategy for crime control in Imo State, Nigeria

## **Theoretical Orientation**

The study is anchored on scapegoat theory. This theory was propounded by Girard (1977). This theory holds that for a society to settle existing conflicts, its members quickly handpick an individual (the scapegoat) to blame for its misfortune and thereafter kill the person. Girard held that the scapegoat is a resultant effect of already increasing cycle of violence that occurs in the community (the double). The theory posits that the anger and hostility of the members of the group must be vigorously dispersed or vented, as opposed to being a process open to transformation by introspection or mediation. This scapegoat according to the theory is an arbitrary victim, the creation that ignited their fury was chosen only because it is vulnerable and close at hand. For Girard, the community has a single goal which is to eliminate the violence that has developed among the community members since it is inappropriate for them to kill each other; they choose someone else to attack. Scapegoat theory has been adopted as the theoretical orientation for this study because it is relevant, appropriate and best explains the phenomenon at hand.

## **Materials and Methods**

The study adopted mixed method design. However, the target population were adult residents who have attained the age of 18 years and above in the study area. This set of people were matured enough to understand the concept of jungle justice either because they were victims or observers and easily responded to the questions. The sample size for this study is 384. Probability and non probability sampling methods were used to select respondents. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used in selecting respondents



who were administered questionnaire while purposive sampling was used to select IDI respondents. Questionnaires and in-depth interviews were the major instruments used in collecting quantitative and qualitative data in the study. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) windows, version 17. Frequency tables and simple percentages as well as graphic illustrations were also used to analyze data collected from the field study. The data from the in-depth interviews were analyzed using content analysis.

### Research Results/Findings

The results and findings of the study were presented in the tables and graphic illustrations below:

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents.**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	180	48.3
Female	193	51.7
Total	373	100
<b>Age</b>		
18-27	156	41.8
28-37	114	30.6
38-47	77	20.6
48-57	21	5.6
58 and above	5	1.4
Total	373	100
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	227	60.9
Married	135	36.2
Separated	5	1.6
Widowed	6	1.3
Total	373	100
<b>Educational qualification</b>		
FSLC	64	17.2
WASC/SSCE>GCE	129	34.6



NCE/OND	11	2.9
B.Sc/HND	139	37.3
M.Sc/Ph.D	24	6.4
No formal education	6	1.6
Total	373	100
<b>Occupation</b>		
Unemployed	11	2.9
Student	144	39
Business/Trading	75`	20.1
Public/civil servant	114	30.6
Apprentice	17	4.6
Farming	6	1.6
Others	6	1.6
Total	373	100
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>		
Christianity	369	98.2
Islam	—	
African Traditional Religion	4	1.8
Total	373	100
<b>Ethnic Affiliation</b>		
Igbo	362	97
Hausa	—	
Yoruba	5	1.4
Others	6	1.6
Total	373	100

### Field Survey,2019.

Table 1 shows that 180(48.3%) were male respondents while the female respondents were 193(51.7%). This implies that the study achieved a near perfect gender balance scenario with the female respondents being 3.4% higher than their male counterpart. The table indicates that the respondents who were within the ages of 18-27 years are 156(41.8%), the respondents within the ages of 28-37 years are 114(30.6%), the respondents within the ages of 38-47 years are 77(20.6%), those within the ages of 48-57 years are 21(5.6%), and finally the respondents within the ages of 58years and above



are 5(1.4%). This implies that majority of the respondents were within the ages of 18-27. This age category is made up of matured adults who can respond to the questions in the questionnaire. The table also shows that 227(60.9%) of the respondents indicated that they were single, 135(36.2%) of the respondents indicated that they were married, 6(1.6%) of the respondents indicated that they were widowed, while 5(1.3%) of the respondents indicated that they were separated. This shows that majority of the respondents were single.

Also, the table indicates that 64(17.2%) of the respondents had First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC), 129(34.6%) of the respondents had WASSCE/SSCE/GCE as their highest educational qualification, 11(2.9%) of the respondents had obtained NCE/OND, 139(37.3%) of the respondents had also obtained B.Sc./HND as their highest educational qualification, 24(6.4%) of the respondents obtained M.Sc./Ph.D. as their highest educational qualification, while the respondents that had no formal education are 6(1.6%). This implies that majority of the respondents had obtained B.Sc./HND as their highest educational qualification, which also raises high expectation to the quality of data to be collected from this group since they are well educated. Also, it could be observed that people in the study area appreciate and understand the importance of education, this explains the reason for having majority of respondents as holders of B.Sc. and HND.

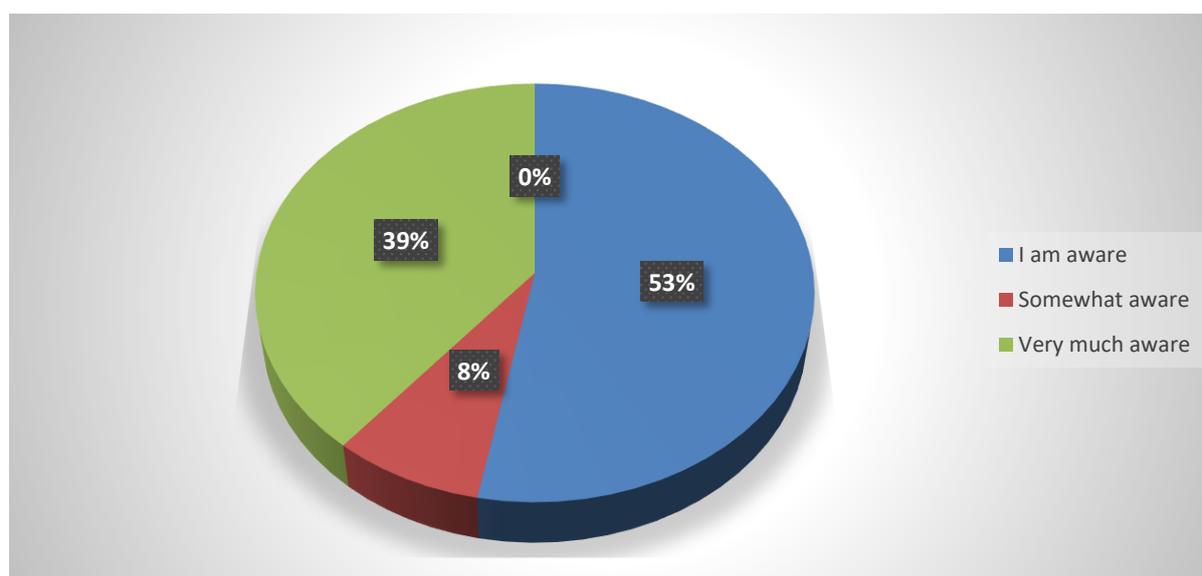
A further look at table 1 on occupation of the respondents shows that 11(2.9%) of the respondents were unemployed, 144(39%) of the respondents were students, 75 (20.1%) of the respondents were engaged in business/trading, 114(30.6%) of the respondents were public/civil servants, 17(4.6%) of the respondents were apprentices, 6(1.6%) of the respondents were farmers, while other occupations, are 6(6.1%). This is not surprising since there are many educational institutions in the study area and people from this geographical area know the value of education and so the high number of students as respondents may be attributed to this fact. In terms of religious affiliation, 369(98.2%) of the respondents were Christians, while 4(1.8%) were observers of African traditional religion. This was expected as Imo state is dominated by Christians which is a major religion practiced in the South Eastern states of Nigeria. On ethnic affiliation, the table indicates that 362(97%) of the respondents were Igbo; 5(1.4%) are Yoruba while other

ethnic groups were 6(1.6%) respondents. This is an indication that the major ethnic group in this part of the country is Igbo

### Analysis of Study Objectives

**Study Objective 1:** To examine the awareness of jungle justice as a strategy for crime control in Imo State, Nigeria

Figure 1 below summarizes findings in respect to the above objective in Imo State, Nigeria. It shows that 197(53%) of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the use of jungle justice as a strategy for crime control in Imo State, 145(39%) indicated that they were very much aware of the practice, and 30(8%) indicated that they were somewhat aware. From the findings, the answers to the research question revealed that all the respondents were aware of the use of jungle justice as a strategy for crime control, though at varying degrees of awareness. The implication is that jungle justice is a common phenomenon in Imo State and virtually everybody is aware of its occurrence because it is very rampant.



**Fig. 1: Respondents' views on awareness of the use of jungle justice as a strategy for crime control in Imo State.**

**Field Survey, 2019**



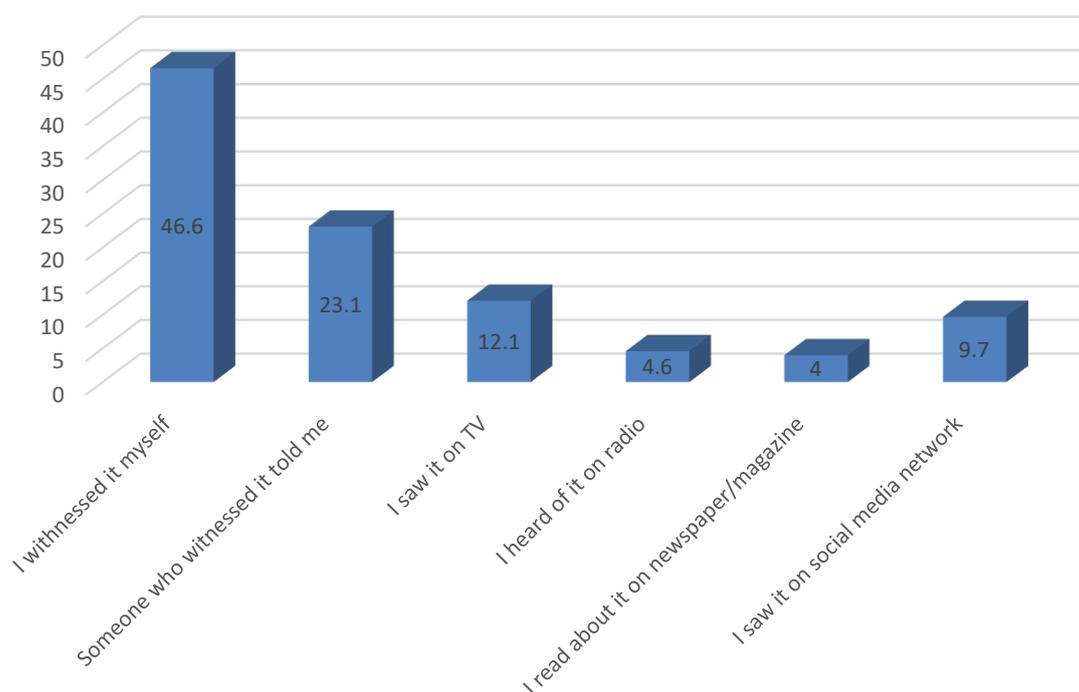
According to the response of an IDI interviewee;

Yes, jungle justice practices exist in Okigwe and even in various parts of the state. It is a practice that has lasted for several years-from my secondary school days.

(Male, 36 years, Member, Market Union Executive, Umuokpara District.)

**Study Objective 2:** To find out the major sources of information / awareness of jungle justice as a strategy for crime control in Imo State, Nigeria

Findings in respect of the above objective is shown on Figure 2 below. Figure 2 indicates that 174(46.6%) of the respondents agreed to have witnessed the practice themselves; 86(23.1%) of the respondents asserted that someone who witnessed it told them, 45(12.1%) stated that they saw it on T.V, 17(4.6%) of the respondents stated that they heard of it on radio, 15(4%) of the respondents stated that they read about it on newspaper/magazine, while 36(9.7%) of the respondents stated that they saw it on social media network. One can rightly say that jungle justice occurs regularly in the study area since majority of the respondents confirmed that they have witnessed the act.



**Fig. 2: Respondents' views on how they became aware of the use of jungle justice as a strategy for crime control.**

**Field Survey, 2019.**

An IDI interviewee stated thus;

I have heard of it and have also witnessed the practice myself. To be frank, I have even witnessed it several times, because my shop is not too far from Okpara Square where most of the criminals were burnt. The height of it for me, was when three young boys were burnt for armed robbery in one week at the same Okpara Square. I also heard another was burnt in another location in town. (Female, 42 years, Trader, Ubahu District)

**Discussion**

In this study, it was revealed that jungle justice is an ineffective tool for crime control. That is to say, no matter the level of crime in an area, jungle justice which involves some members of the public taking laws into their hands will never proffer a long lasting solution to the escalation or prevalence of crime and violence. The findings of this study are in corroboration or in line with that of Adu-Gyamfi (2014) whose findings revealed that jungle justice is ineffective in curbing crime because the negative consequences



outweigh any possible benefit (if there is any). For Adu-Gyamfi, mob justice has given rise to a series of violence, reappraisal attracts punishment of these far above the weight of their crime and promoting the culture of fear among the people.

Moreover, the findings of this study indicated that a major factor igniting or giving rise to jungle justice is the type of crime committed. Findings indicated that crimes like armed robbery/theft, murder/homicide, kidnapping and rape are more likely to attract mob justice than other crimes with lesser gravity. These findings are in line with that of Ng'walali and Kitinya (2006) who observed that the most common reasons (crimes) for jungle justice include robbery 95.3% and socio cultural factors 1.9%. The findings of this study also support that of Chalya, Ngayomela, Rambu, Kakima, Kepessa and Ngallaba (2014). Their findings revealed that theft/robbery was the common reason for jungle justice with 63.3% followed by murder 12%, sociocultural factor 3.4%, rape 1.7% etc. This implies that the nature or type of crime committed is a major determinant of jungle justice practices.

The findings of this study also corroborate with the scapegoat theory propounded by Girard in 1977 which states that for a society to settle existing conflicts, its members quickly handpick an individual (the scapegoat) to blame for its misfortune and thereafter kill the person. Girard stated that the scapegoat may not have a complete direct bearing on the problems that are causing the community disturbance. For him, they include the poor, members of minority ethnic groups etc. This study revealed that majority of jungle justice victims are those who are poor, uneducated and/or members of outgroup are non indigenes and that majority of the perpetrators of this jungle justice are also from the lower strata of the society. This implies that jungle justice can only be tackled if the social welfare of the people is improved.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Findings from this study showed that jungle justice has a strong relationship with social class and crime. This is true as research findings showed that most victims of jungle justice are persons from the lower class with little or no education, job opportunities and access to the basic necessities of life. This now make them to seek for alternative criminal



means in order to survive the harsh economic realities which will definitely result to jungle justice if caught.

With reference to this research and its findings, the following recommendations are made so as to ensure that jungle justice which is a very serious menace in the society is properly tackled and its practice and prevalence reduced to the barest minimum. The following suggestions/recommendations should be carefully and seriously considered: There should be adequate campaign on various mass and social media platform against the practice as so many people do not even have an idea that it is an illegal/unlawful act. Efforts should also be made to set up highly effective law enforcement operatives to combat crime or else the people will resort to jungle justice as a means of combating crime. There should be adequate punishment for perpetrators of jungle justice so as to serve as a deterrent to others. This will be an effective check on the practice.



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