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Organized Violence and Crime in Urban Nigeria: Patterns, Manifestations, and Drivers across Selected Cities

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Abstract

Organized violence and crime have emerged as major threats to urban security, social stability, and national development in Nigeria. Despite increasing scholarly attention to insecurity, there remains limited empirical evidence on the causes, manifestations, and dynamics of organized violence across major Nigerian cities. This study examined the causes and types of organized violence and crime in the cities of Aba, Benin, Kano, Kaduna, Abuja, Ibadan, and Lagos. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, utilizing quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected through the administration of 1,574 questionnaires, 28 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and 21 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted across the selected cities. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic content analysis. Findings revealed that political violence, ethnic and religious violence, kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, ritual killings, smuggling, human trafficking, cybercrime, and financial fraud constitute the major forms of organized violence and crime in the study areas. The study further found that organized crime is predominantly youth-driven, characterized by hierarchical leadership structures, coordinated recruitment patterns, and the increasing use of both improvised and sophisticated weapons. Major drivers of organized violence include poverty, unemployment, weak security and justice institutions, corruption, political exploitation, moral decline, and the growing quest for quick wealth. The consequences include loss of lives and property, psychological trauma, food insecurity, economic disruption, weakened national unity, and declining public trust in state institutions. The study concludes that organized violence and crime in urban Nigeria are rooted in structural governance and socio-economic challenges, requiring comprehensive interventions focused on good governance, youth empowerment, institutional reforms, and strengthened security architecture.

Keywords: Organized violence, organized crime, urban insecurity, political violence, youth criminality, Nigeria.

Introduction

Globally, urbanisation has accelerated the development of cities, yet it has also been associated with rising levels of organised violence and crime. The growth of modern cities, supported by technological advancement and demographic concentration, has increasingly become linked to sophisticated criminal networks, gangsterism, and various forms of collective violence (Wirth, 1938). Urban violence, particularly in its organised forms, has come to dominate social life in many cities, weakening social bonds and creating conditions that encourage crime (Paroni & Tulumello, 2020). Across the world, organised violence manifests in political violence, armed banditry, kidnapping, drug trafficking, human smuggling, cybercrime, extortion, and ritual killings, among others (Schultze-Kraft, 2016). In developing countries, especially former colonial capitals characterised by structural dualism, organised violence often assumes peculiar, culturally ambivalent, and traditionally rooted forms, overlapping with existing ethno-religious tensions and demanding sophisticated institutional responses.

In Africa, experiences from major cities such as Nairobi, Lusaka, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cairo, Lagos, and Kano demonstrate that organised violence poses one of the most significant threats to stable urban social, political, and economic life (Schultze-Kraft, 2016). Within the African context, where many societies grapple with identity crises and ethno-religious tensions, organised violence not only threatens urban security but also spills over into wider communal and regional conflicts, deepening divisions along ethnic, religious, and sectional lines, thereby undermining projects of national unity, cohesion, and integration (Lawrence & Karim, 2007). The criminalisation of the state, wherein governance, patronage, and organised coercion fuse, has been observed across postcolonial African political systems (Bayart et al., 1999), and this hybrid governance structure often delegates violence to militias, vigilantes, or private actors, making violence a mechanism of rule rather than a breakdown of order (Reno, 1998).

Nigeria exemplifies this troubling trajectory. The country has witnessed widespread insecurity manifesting in political violence, electoral thuggery, ethnic and religious clashes, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, cultism, and cybercrime (Seiyefa, 2020). Barring occasional ethno-religious clashes in parts of Kaduna and Kano, there was relative peace in Nigerian cities such as Aba, Benin, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, Ibadan, and Abuja during the late 1980s and 1990s, and organised violence in its current pervasive and sophisticated form was little known. However, from the onset of democratic dispensation in 1999 to the present, organised violence and crime have escalated dramatically. Criminal groups and violent networks now operate across these cities with clear leadership hierarchies, assigned operational roles, sophisticated methods, and technological capabilities. They perpetrate deep-rooted organised crimes including political violence, kidnapping for ransom, armed banditry, cultism, drug abuse, ritual killings, assassination, cybercrime, human trafficking, smuggling, extortion, and pipeline vandalism.

Despite a plethora of scholarly works on dimensions of banditry, terrorism, and kidnapping, their precipitating factors, implications, and policy measures, most existing studies remain general, based mainly on secondary sources, limited in scope, lack depth, or have no bearing on policy. Consequently, there is a critical gap in empirical, policy-driven research

that examines the specific causes and manifestations of organised violence and crime in Nigeria's major urban centres using primary mixed-methods data. This study therefore seeks to bridge that gap by investigating the causes and types of organised violence and crime in the cities of Benin, Aba, Kano, Kaduna, Abuja, Ibadan, and Lagos, exploring their trends and patterns, analysing how they feed into identity crises and ethno-religious tensions, examining their impacts on security and national unity, and designing policies to address the tides of organised violence while improving national integration.

Literature Review

Organised violence remains one of the most persistent and complex phenomena in human history, shaping the evolution of states, societies, and global systems of power. In the twenty-first century, it has emerged as a defining feature of global insecurity, manifesting in insurgencies, terrorism, civil wars, organised crime, and hybrid conflicts that blur the lines between state authority and non-state coercion (Kaldor, 2012). For countries such as Nigeria, the concept of organised violence has both theoretical and empirical resonance. The proliferation of insurgent movements, bandit networks, secessionist militias, and armed vigilantes reflects a deeper structural reality: that violence in contemporary Africa is neither random nor purely criminal, but organised, institutionalised, and sustained by economic and political logics (Okoi & Oriola, 2023; Okoli & Nwangwu, 2023; Reno, 1998). The study of organised violence is as old as the study of political order itself. From the early sociological works of Weber (1919) to contemporary analysis by theorists such as Kaldor (1999), Shaw (1988), and Mbembe (2003), the concept has evolved from describing formalised warfare to encompassing broader and more diffuse systems of coercion. At its core, organised violence refers to the structured, deliberate, and collective use of physical or structural force by an organised entity—state or non-state—to pursue identifiable political, ideological, economic, or social objectives (Shaw, 2009; Galtung, 1969; Tilly, 1985). Violence becomes "organised" when it operates within systems of norms, rules, or strategies that make it both predictable and purposeful (Kaldor, 2012).

Weber's (1919) definition of the state as the entity that "claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" anchors modern thinking on organised violence. Tilly (1985) expanded this reasoning by arguing that "war made the state, and the state made war." Through processes of organised coercion—taxation, conscription, and protection—states consolidated authority and institutionalised violence. Mann (1986) reinforced this view by distinguishing between the despotic and infrastructural power of states, both sustained by organised coercion. These foundational insights laid the groundwork for understanding organised violence not as chaos but as a structured component of social and political order. Galtung's (1969) introduction of "structural violence" represented a paradigm shift: he argued that violence is not only direct or physical but can also be embedded in social institutions that systematically harm or marginalise groups. Organised violence, therefore, may operate invisibly through economic exploitation, social exclusion, or political repression. Similarly, Arendt (1969) differentiated between power and violence, suggesting that while power arises from collective consent, violence appears when legitimacy is lost and authority must be imposed through force. In this sense, organised violence reflects both the failure of consent and the persistence of control.

Within the Nigerian academic context, the concept of organised violence provides a framework for understanding why insecurity persists despite extensive military and policy interventions. As scholars such as Onuoha (2019), Abdu (2019), and Ojo (2024) note, violence in Nigeria is sustained by overlapping political, economic, and social structures that make it profitable and self-perpetuating. It functions as a political economy, a system of governance, and a cultural form. This perspective aligns

with global theories of war economies (Keen, 2008) and hybrid governance (Tapscott, 2021), situating Nigeria's experience within wider patterns of organised coercion.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2024), organised violence refers to:

The intentional use of physical force threatened or actual, against another person or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. This violent act is committed by a member of a group of three or more people at any time with a common purpose and knowledge violence will be used to pursue it. (p. 3)

According to the Nigeria Conflict Trends (2021) database, organised violence and crime include banditry, civil unrest, communal clash, domestic violence, farmer-herder conflict, and terrorism. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP, 2015) identifies three categories of violent conflict: state-based conflict, conflict between non-state actors, and one-sided violence (organised violence in which an organised actor kills unarmed civilians). One-sided violence includes violence committed by militias, as well as by groups such as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (Boko Haram), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in Nigeria.

Moser (2004) classifies violence into four distinct categories: political violence (by state and non-state actors, including guerilla conflict and political assassinations); institutional violence (including extra-judicial killings by police and lynching of suspected criminals); economic violence (organised crime, robbery, kidnapping, car theft, small arms deals); and social violence (illicit activities by gangs, intimate partner violence, sexual violence). Organised crime constitutes a worldwide, widespread phenomenon involving criminal activities by entrepreneurs to make profits with attendant social and economic consequences (Gopikrishna & Shrvastava, 2023). The use of violence by specialists is regarded as a major characteristic of organised crime groups (OCGs), which constitute a necessary resource that they cannot do without (Hobbs, 2013; Massari, 2019).

Research on organised violence and crime has focused on three distinct issues: (i) criminal activities and organisations' propensity for violence; (ii) the violence related to illicit markets; and (iii) the role of the state and political and social institutions in spurring or regulating violence associated with criminal activities (Topic Guide, 2016). According to the World Bank and United Nations (2018), violent conflicts in many contexts take place against the background of domestic grievances, particularly a breakdown in the prevailing social contract. These conflicts have been exploited by extremist groups and have drawn in regional and global powers (World Bank & United Nations, 2018; Watts, 2017). The United Kingdom Government (2015) identified the following factors as likely to influence the nature and extent of violent conflict: the increasing threat posed by terrorism, extremism and instability; the resurgence of state-based threats; the impact of technology, especially cyber threats; and the erosion of the rules-based international order. In Nigeria, myriad conflicts increasingly weaken the country's political and socio-economic development. With the rise of non-state actors and the expanding acreage of ungoverned spaces, the Nigerian state no longer retains the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence (Nigeria Conflict Trends, 2021).

Empirical studies have identified specific structural determinants of violent crime. Tcherni (2011) conducted a study on structural determinants of homicide and discovered that poverty and low education were the primary factors influencing violent crime rates in cities. Hannon and deFina (2005) examined violent crime in African American and White neighbourhoods and discovered that irrespective of racial composition in a neighbourhood, the alleviation of poverty resulted in the reduction of violent crime rates. Feldmeyer et al. (2013) carried out research on racial/ethnic composition and violence, finding that the more racially heterogenous an area was, the higher the occurrence of violent crime. In the

Nigerian context, Odekunle (2004) examined the trends of crimes in Nigeria, explaining that since the mid-1970s, the incidence of crime has passed from normal or tolerable to pathological and become a social problem. He enumerated crimes to include assassination, assault, armed robbery, theft, and burglaries. Alemika and Chukwuma (2000) elaborated on official violence being perpetrated by the Nigeria Police Force, noting that police violence is widespread, including beating and kicking citizens, unnecessary use of restraints, torture of suspects to extract confession, and extortion.

The increasing complexity of modern-day social interaction because of growth of cities has come with attendant challenges of increase in violence and crimes in urban centres. Violence has reached certain levels in some major cities and urban centres in both developed and developing countries across the world (Moser, 2014). Obadiah et al. (2022) argued that though urbanisation is good for the growth of industries and development, it also encourages crime since crime normally occurs in large cities and urbanised areas. Wirth (1938) argued that the distinctive characteristics of cities—namely large population size, density, and heterogeneity—tend to weaken social bonds and create conditions that may encourage violence. Urban life, which remains a major aspiration for many global citizens, has in many contexts become unruly, chaotic, and disorderly (Paroni & Tulumello, 2020). The rate of urban violence and crimes is not evenly distributed in different cities in the world (UNODC, 2011). Studies show that property crime is higher in cities in developed countries, while violent crime is often higher in cities in developing countries (Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, 2007).

The discourse on organised violence and national unity occupies a central place in the social sciences because the endurance of any political community depends upon its capacity to manage coercion and dissent. Tilly's (1985) claim that "war made the state and the state made war" demonstrates that sustained, organised coercion can consolidate national identity by compelling rulers to centralise administration, extract resources, and cultivate loyalty. However, Arendt (1969) warned that coercion "can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it. For Arendt, durable unity arises from shared legitimacy and collective will, not from domination. In the African context, post-colonial African states inherited boundaries and institutions forged through imperial violence, and their cohesion has been continually tested by the legacies of that origin. Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou (1999) argue that post-colonial regimes internalised colonial coercion, transforming it into "the criminalisation of the state. Reno (1998 extends this logic in his theory of "warlord politics," positing that African rulers fragment coercive authority to maintain personal power. National unity under such conditions is nominal; real cohesion lies in networks of patronage and violence.

For Nigeria, successive governments have attempted to forge unity among more than 250 ethnolinguistic groups, yet coercion has remained a recurrent instrument of integration. The civil war of 1967–1970 constituted the first large-scale attempt to impose unity through organised force. Kirk-Greene (1971) and Siollun (2009) note that the federal victory preserved territorial integrity but left enduring cleavages in political trust and regional identity. The war thus produced what Ake (1981) called a "unity of coercion"—a fragile consensus maintained by the threat of renewed violence rather than by shared national ideals.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts social disorganisation and anomie theories as the relevant frameworks of analysis in explaining the concepts and variables of organised violence and crime in Nigeria.

Social Disorganisation Theory, developed by Shaw and McKay in 1929 (Kubrin & Wo, 2015), is closely associated with the ecological school of criminology which focuses on the conditions within urban settlements and communities that determine the dynamics of crime. According to the theory,

certain neighbourhood characteristics—most notably poverty, residential instability, and racial heterogeneity—can lead to social disorganisation, which in turn causes crime, especially in cities (Kubrin & Wo, 2015). Sampson and Groves (1989) put forward that neighbourhood structural characteristics, such as low socio-economic status, residential mobility, racial heterogeneity, and family disruption, are exogenous sources of social disorganisation. The disruption of local organisations is characterised by weak local friendship networks, low organisational participation, and unsupervised groups, especially youth. Indicators of social disorganisation include high unemployment, high school dropout rates, deteriorated housing, low-income levels, and large numbers of single parent households (Schmalleger, 2002; Siegel, 2003).

Strain Theory (Anomie Theory) Originated from Durkheim's notion of anomie—a Greek word "a nomos" meaning without norms or normlessness. According to Durkheim, normlessness arises when a society experiences rapid social change or social crises such as war and famine, and is not able to control human behaviours, aspirations and demands (Tierney, 2009). Merton (1938) applied the concept of anomie to explain criminology. According to Merton, two elements of culture interact to produce anomic conditions—culturally defined goals and socially approved means for obtaining them—and the disjuncture between these creates deviance. Merton asserted that although social and economic goals are common to people in all economic strata, the ability to obtain these goals is class dependent. Some members of society desire wealth, prestige, status, power, and other material possessions which make life comfortable, but members of the lower class cannot achieve these symbols of success through conventional means. Consequently, they feel frustration, anger, and resentment which are strains, and are therefore left with options of either accepting their condition or choosing alternative means of achieving success, even if considered abnormal such as theft, violence, drug trafficking, and other anti-social activities (Siegel, 2003).

Clearly, the concepts of social disorganisation and anomie provide useful explanations for the prevalence, trends, and patterns of organised violence and crime in the mega cities of Nigeria. These two theories therefore remain relevant analytical tools for understanding the factors that drive individual involvement in organised violence and criminal activities, particularly when examined within the prevailing socio-economic and political context of Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the causes and types of organised violence and crimes in selected Nigerian cities, namely Aba, Benin, Kano, Kaduna, Abuja, Ibadan, and Lagos. Data were collected through questionnaire administration, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving community members, security personnel, traders, victims of crime, and other relevant stakeholders. A total of 1,574 respondents participated in the quantitative survey. For the qualitative component, 28 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and 21 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted across the seven study locations, involving security agents, community leaders, traders, victims of crime, youths, men, and women. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, while qualitative data were analysed through thematic content analysis using NVivo software. The combination of both methods enabled a comprehensive understanding of the causes and manifestations of organised violence and crime in the selected cities.

Table 1: Distribution of Survey Respondents by Study Location

S/N	City	Population	Sample Size
1	Aba	1,150,000	225
2	Benin	1,841,000	225
3	Kano	4,219,000	225
4	Kaduna	1,158,000	225
5	Abuja	3,652,000	224
6	Ibadan	3,756,000	225
7	Lagos	5,388,000	225
	Total	**21,164,000**	**1,574**

Source: United Nations (2019); Macrotrends (2022)

Socio-Demographic Attributes of the Respondents

This section presents the key characteristics of respondents by focusing on the profiles or socio-demographic and economic profiles of the respondents. Considering that the respondents are derived from seven different states across Nigeria, as explained in the earlier chapters, it remains significant to examine the similarities and differences that exist in the characteristics of respondents across the focal states under investigation. Hence, the findings would reflect the commonalities and variations that abound about the manifestation and experiences of communities in the focal states with regards to the phenomenon of organized violence and crime viz a viz its nature and consequences on security and national unity in Nigeria.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents according to Age

	18-20 years		21-30 years		31- 40 years		41-50 years		51 years and above		Total (%)
Aba	0	0.00%	55	9.58%	99	18.93%	39	16.53%	1	0.97%	12.33%
Benin	17	12.32%	99	17.25%	140	26.77%	36	15.25%	11	10.68%	19.25%
FCT	13	9.42%	98	17.07%	26	4.97%	13	5.51%	1	0.97%	9.59%
Ibadan	51	36.96%	136	23.69%	58	11.09%	28	11.86%	23	22.33%	18.81%
Kaduna	10	7.25%	35	6.10%	56	10.71%	27	11.44%	19	18.45%	9.34%
Kano	28	20.29%	86	14.98%	82	15.68%	47	19.92%	35	33.98%	17.66%
Lagos	19	13.77%	65	11.32%	62	11.85%	46	19.49%	13	12.62%	13.02%
Grand Total	**138**	**100%**	**574**	**100%**	**236**	**100%**	**103**	**100%**	**1574**	**100%**	**100%**

As indicated in table 2, youths aged 21–30 years and those in the 31–40 years age group represent the majority of the respondents. Together, these two groups account for 69.83% of the total respondents. The youth-centric sample of the population indicated they are the majority class of the population most likely to be directly involved in or impacted by organized violence and crimes, either as perpetrators, victims, or key actors in violence prevention and conflict resolution efforts. In addition, this suggests a strong representation of younger individuals, who are often more vulnerable to engaging in or being impacted by urban violence and organized crime. With 78.6% of the respondents under the age of 40, the study highlights that youth are at the center of security challenges in Nigeria. Youths are often more vulnerable to recruitment into violent organizations**,** armed groups, or criminal networks, either as a means of survival or due to social and economic pressures.



Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents according to Gender by City of the Respondents

The data shows a clear gender disparity in participation across the study locations, with male respondents (67.08%) significantly outnumbering female respondents (32.92%)**.** This imbalance is consistent in all locations, though the gap is widest in Kano and Benin, where male representation is notably higher than female. Ibadan and Benin recorded relatively better female participation compared to other cities, while locations like Lagos, Kaduna, and FCT had the lowest percentages of female respondents. The gender imbalance suggests that the findings of the study may reflect a predominantly male perspective, potentially overlooking how organised violence and insecurity uniquely affect women. This limits the depth of analysis on gendered impacts such as sexual violence, displacement of women and children, or women's role in peacebuilding.

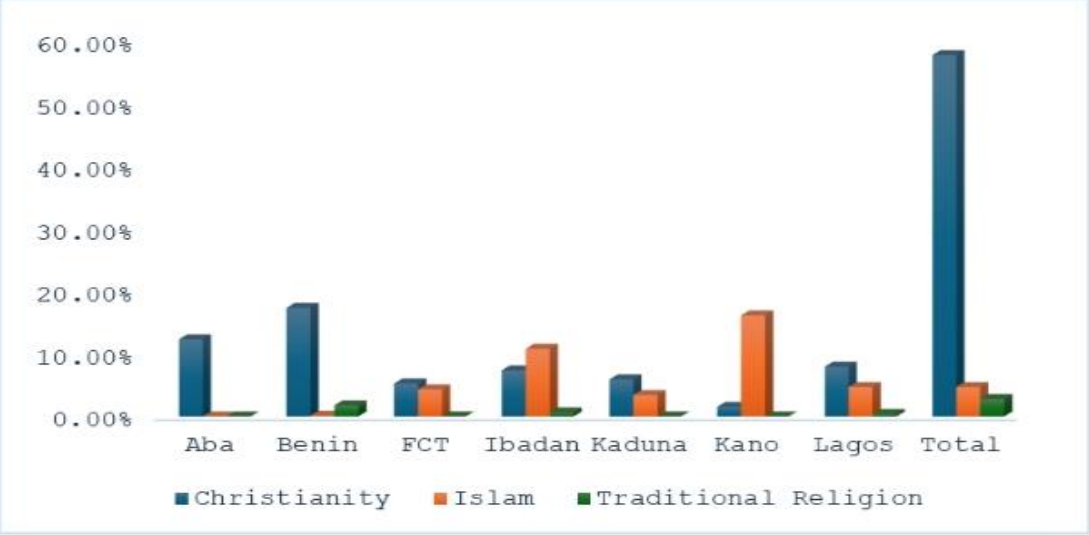


Fig. 2. Educational Attainment of Respondents

The data presents the religious affiliation of respondents across selected cities in Nigeria, showing that Christianity (57.69%) is the most represented religion among the participants, followed by Islam (39.51%) and Traditional Religion (2.80%)**.** Christianity dominates in cities like Aba (100%), Benin (majority), FCT, Ibadan, Lagos, and Kaduna. Islam has its strongest representation in Kano (16.14%) and Ibadan (10.80%), while Traditional Religion appears in only a few locations like Benin.

The implication of such finding is that the religious distribution reflects the broader religious demographics of Nigeria, where certain regions are predominantly Christian or Muslim. However, the dominance of Christian respondents, especially in cities like Aba and Benin, may influence the interpretation of findings, particularly in understanding how organized violence and crime affect communities with differing religious identities. The underrepresentation of Muslims in some cities (e.g., Aba, Benin) and the low visibility of traditional worshippers could result in a limited understanding of their experiences, needs, and coping mechanisms in the context of insecurity.

Table 3: Educational Attainment of Respondents

Educational Attainment of Respondents

	Primary Education	**Qu'ranic Education only**	**Diploma /NCE**	**Secondary Education**	**Tertiary Education**	**Others**	**Total**
Aba	0.13%	0.00%	4.83%	1.02%	6.35%	0.00%	12.33 %
Benin	0.89%	0.00%	3.81%	2.92%	10.55%	1.08%	19.25 %
FCT	0.13%	0.06%	1.97%	0.95%	6.35%	0.13%	9.59%
Ibadan	0.76%	2.35%	0.32%	6.42%	8.32%	0.64%	18.81 %
Kaduna	1.08%	0.25%	2.67%	2.73%	2.10%	0.51%	9.34%
Kano	1.97%	1.33%	6.10%	4.51%	3.75%	0.00%	17.66 %
Lagos	1.08%	0.83%	0.44%	3.24%	7.12%	0.32%	13.02 %
Total	**6.04%**	**4.83%**	**20.41%**	**21.79%**	**44.54%**	**2.67%**	**100.00 %**

The most significant finding from the table indicates respondents with tertiary education make up the largest proportion, accounting for 44.54% of the total sample. This suggests that nearly half of the individuals surveyed have attained the highest level of formal education. Following this, respondents with secondary education (21.79%) and diploma/NCE (20.41%) also form a substantial part of the population, indicating that the majority of respondents have at least a post-primary educational background. The implication of this finding is that the perspectives captured in the study are more likely to reflect the views of the educated population, who may have better access to information and more analytical approaches to issues of organized violence and crime. However, this also means that the voices of less-educated or informally educated individuals—who may be more directly affected by insecurity - are not adequately represented.

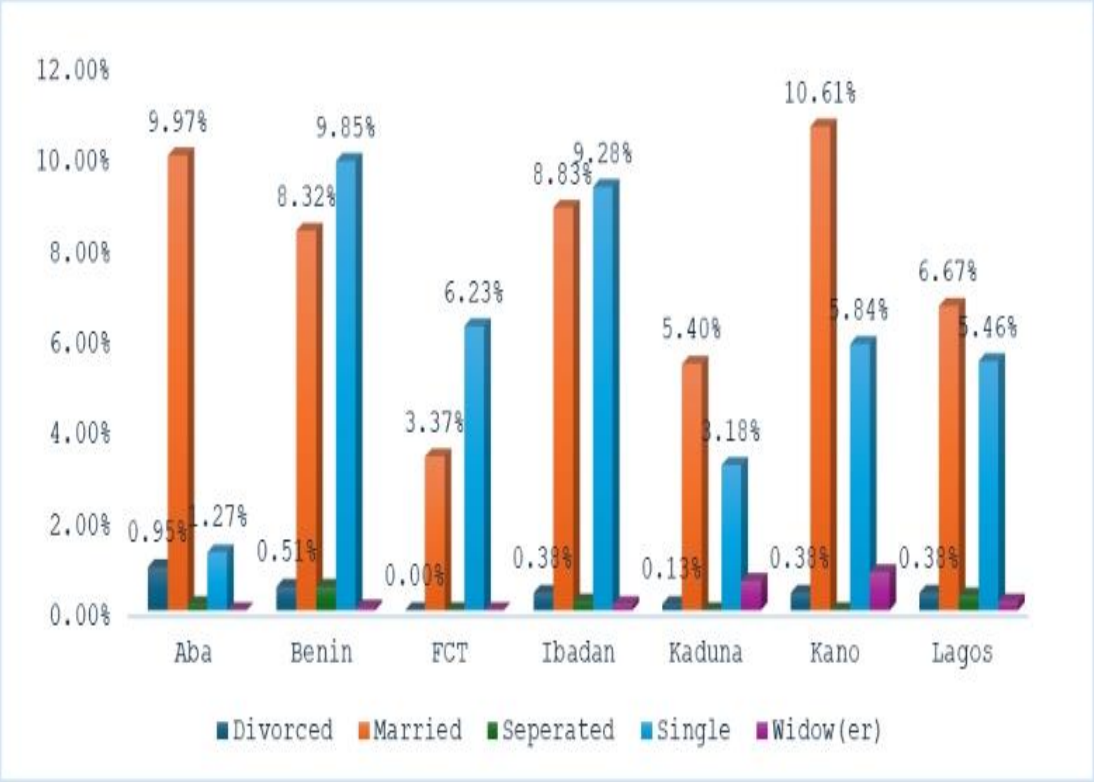


Fig 3: Marital Status

The marital status distribution reveals that married respondents constitute the majority, making up 53.18% of the total sample. This suggests that more than half of the participants are likely to have family responsibilities and may face distinct security concerns, particularly related to the safety and well-being of their households. Single respondents also represent a significant portion, accounting for 41.11% of the total. Their perspectives might be influenced by concerns about personal safety, mobility, and social freedoms, especially in urban areas with high crime rates. The dominance of married and single individuals in the respondent pool implies that the data primarily reflects the experiences of those actively involved in family life or those navigating security as independent individuals.

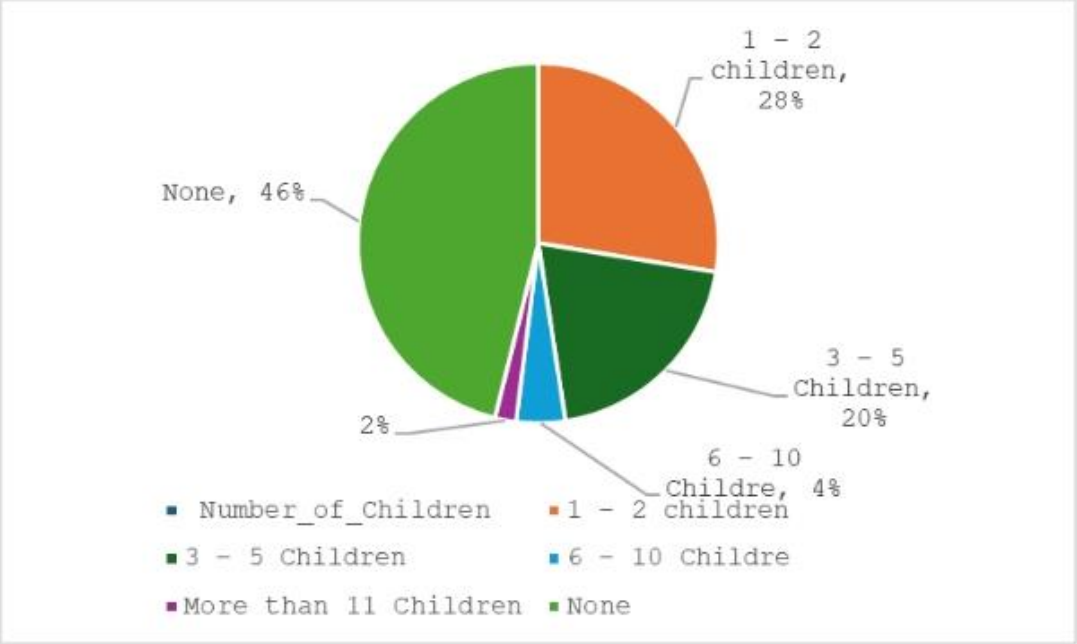


Fig 4: Average Family size



Fig 5: Distribution of Respondents by Tribe

Table 4: Employment Status of the Respondents by Location

	Aba	Benin	FCT	Ibadan	Kaduna	Kano	Lagos	Total
Employed	3.56%	2.29%	4.57%	6.48%	2.29%	4.32%	4.32%	**27.81%**
Others (not on the list)	0.00%	0.19%	0.25%	0.19%	0.51%	0.38%	0.19%	**1.71%**
Self-employed	7.68%	13.33%	3.56%	6.79%	3.62%	6.29%	5.71%	**46.98%**

	Aba	Benin	FCT	Ibadan	Kaduna	Kano	Lagos	Total
Unemployed	1.08%	3.30%	1.21%	5.33%	2.92%	6.67%	2.79%	**23.50%**
Total	12.32%	19.30%	9.49%	18.79%	9.33%	17.65%	13.02%	**100**

The employment distribution across the study locations reveals several significant results. Self-employment is the most dominant occupation category, accounting for 46.98% of the total respondents. This indicates a high level of entrepreneurial activity, possibly due to limited formal job opportunities or the need for flexible income sources in the face of economic and security challenges. Notably, cities like Benin (13.33%), Aba (7.68%), and Lagos (5.71%) contribute heavily to this trend. Employed respondents make up 27.81%, with Ibadan (6.48%), FCT (4.57%), and Kano (4.32%) leading in this category. This suggests that while formal employment exists, it is relatively less common compared to self-employment, possibly due to the scarcity of structured job markets or insecurity disrupting formal sectors. Unemployment remains a serious concern, representing 23.50% of the respondents. The highest rates are seen in Kano (6.67%), Ibadan (5.33%), and Benin (3.30%), which may indicate that these areas are particularly affected by joblessness. High unemployment rates could lead to increased vulnerability to organized crime and violence, especially among youth seeking alternative means of survival. The dominance of self-employment and unemployment across the locations highlights economic fragility, which can exacerbate insecurity and threaten national unity. With fewer people in formal employment, economic instability may increase dependence on informal networks that could intersect with criminal activities. The high rate of unemployment in violence-prone areas also implies a potential link between joblessness and recruitment into organized crime, suggesting the urgent need for targeted economic empowerment and job creation as part of security interventions.

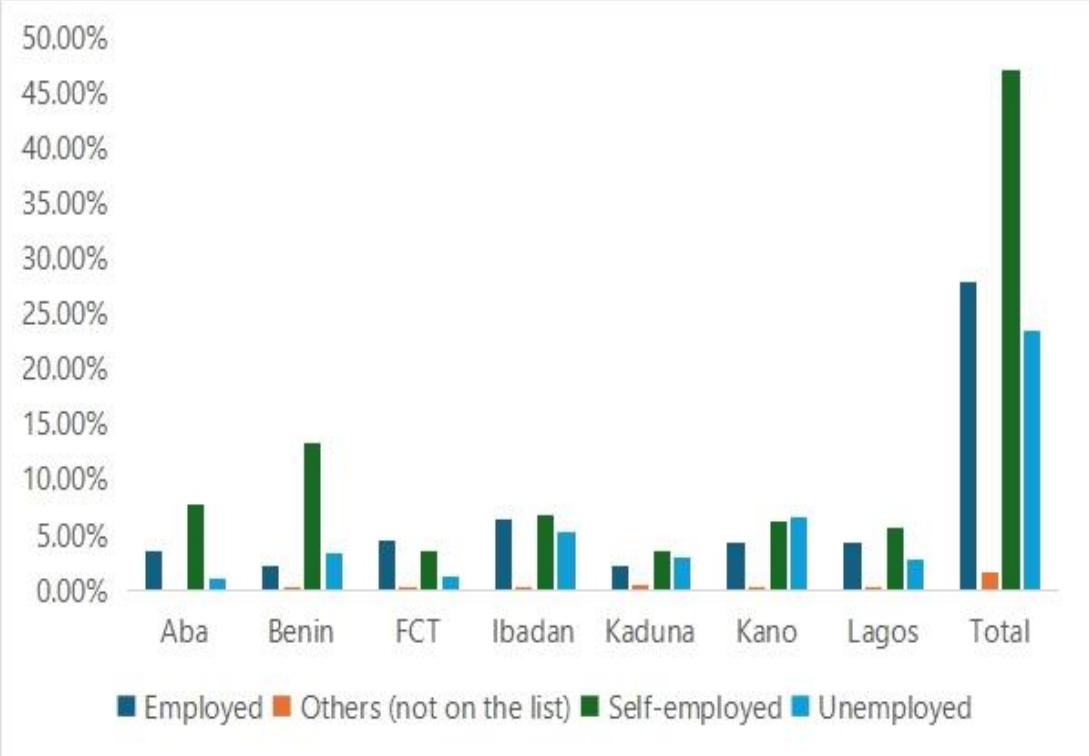


Fig 6: Employment Status of the Respondents by Location

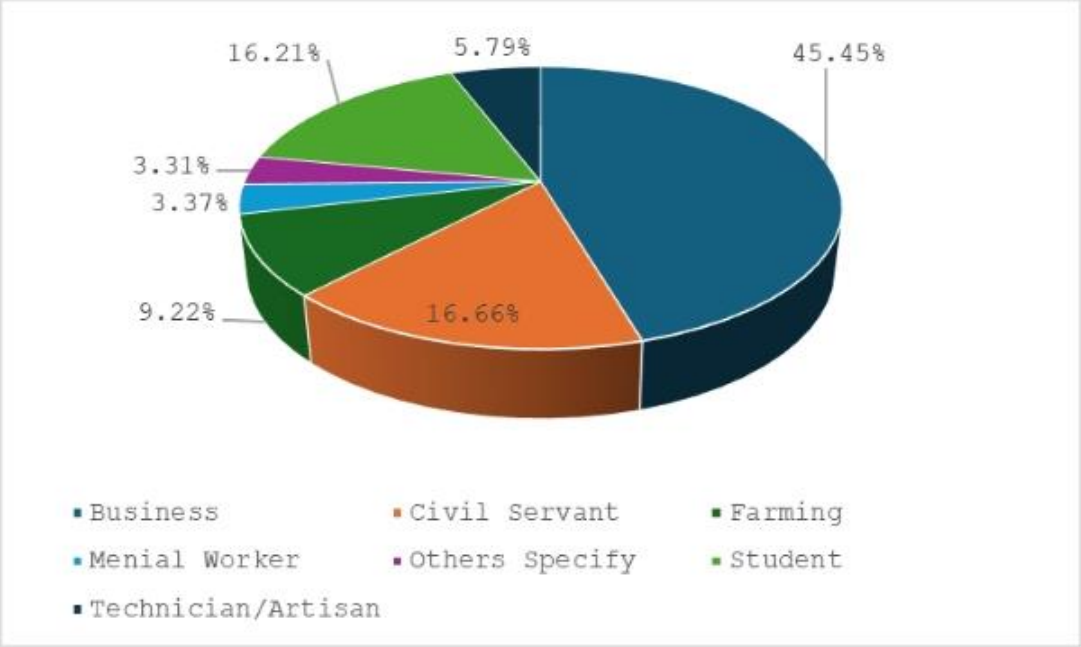


Fig 7: Occupational Distribution of Respondents

The occupational distribution of respondents across the seven cities shows that business activities dominate the economic landscape, accounting for 45.45% of all respondents. Cities like Benin (11.32%), Aba (8.71%), and Ibadan (10.17%) contributed significantly to this trend, suggesting a strong reliance on trade, retail, and informal commercial ventures. This high engagement in business may reflect a response to limited formal job opportunities or a coping strategy in insecure and economically unstable environments. Civil servants constitute 16.66% of the total respondents, with higher concentrations in FCT (4.13%), Ibadan (3.12%), and Kano (3.05%). This reflects the presence of administrative institutions in these locations, particularly in the FCT, which is expected due to its status as the nation's capital. However, the relatively low overall percentage highlights limited absorption into government jobs. Students make up 16.21%, notably in Lagos (3.18%), Ibadan (4.96%), and Kano (2.92%), pointing to an active youth population engaged in education. This is a promising indicator of future workforce development but also underscores the need for post-education employment opportunities to prevent frustration and potential vulnerability to negative influences. Farming (9.22%) remains relevant in cities such as Aba, Benin, and Kano, although its representation is much lower compared to business and civil service. This might be due to urbanization or insecurity affecting rural livelihoods and agricultural productivity. The dominance of business and the low representation of formal civil service positions indicate an economy largely dependent on the informal sector. This poses challenges for taxation, job security, and long-term economic planning. The sizeable student population is a potential asset, but only if matched with adequate job creation efforts. Additionally, low involvement in farming might suggest a drift from agrarian livelihoods, possibly due to insecurity in rural areas or migration to urban centers. These findings stress the need for policies that strengthen the informal sector, expand formal employment opportunities, and revitalize agriculture to ensure inclusive and sustainable development.

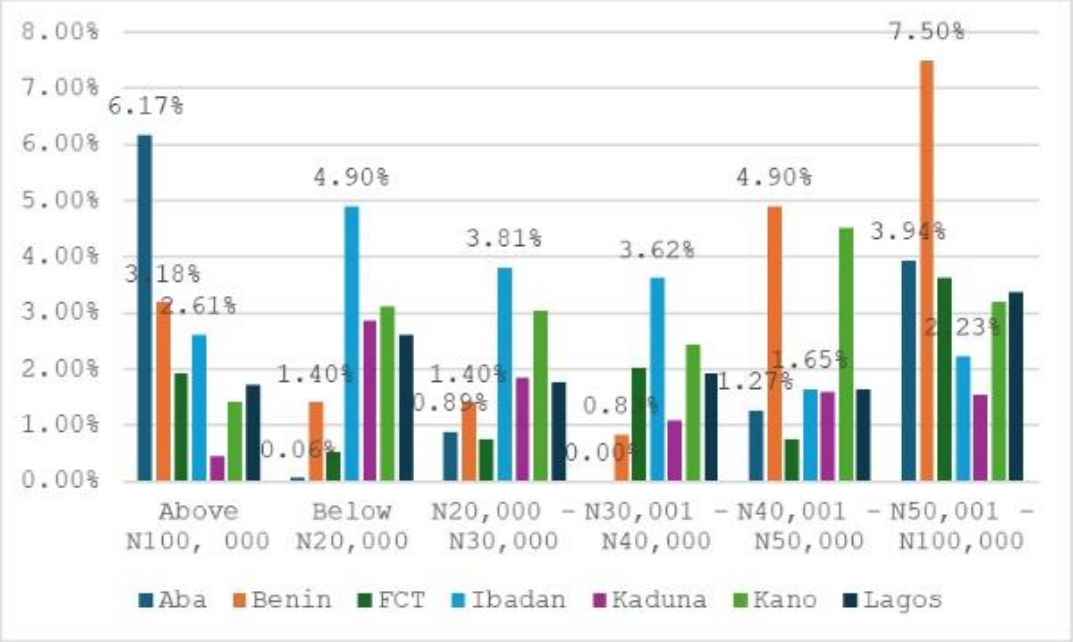


Fig 8: Income Distribution of Respondents by City

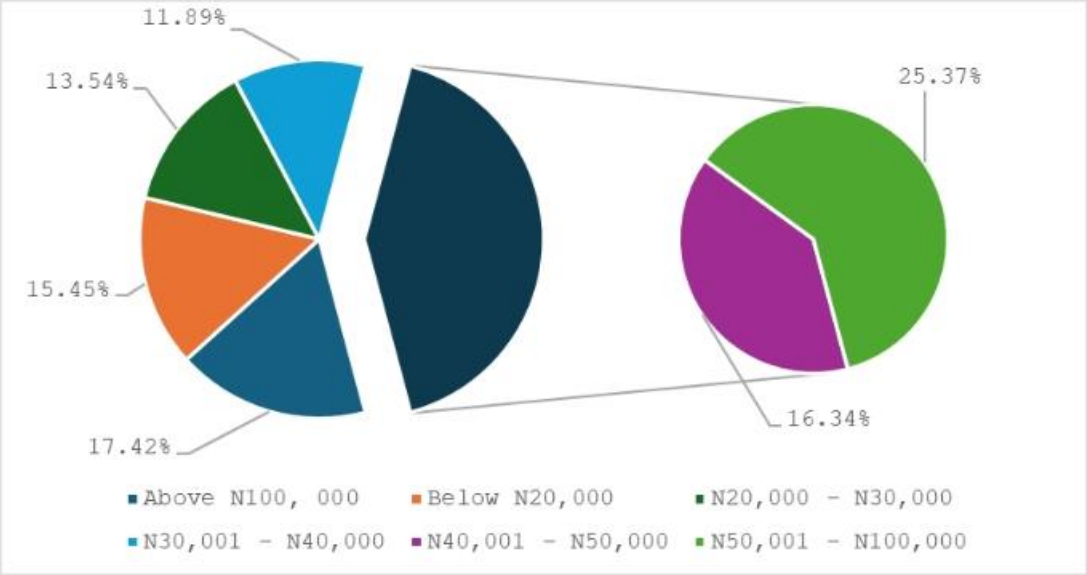


Fig 9: Income Distribution of the Respondents in Aggregate

From the preceding diagrams, the study findings indicates that the largest proportion of respondents (25.37%) earn between ₦50,001 and ₦100,000, indicating a moderate-income bracket that could afford basic necessities but may still struggle with inflation, healthcare, or emergencies. This category was highest in Benin (7.50%), followed by Aba (3.94%), FCT (3.62%), and Lagos (3.37%), reflecting relatively better economic activity or access to mid-range income opportunities in these cities. The second most common group (17.42%) earns above ₦100,000, suggesting a smaller but notable segment

of higher-income individuals. Aba (6.17%) and Benin (3.18%) again stood out here, implying that some cities have thriving business or professional sectors capable of supporting higher earnings.

On the other hand, a significant 15.45% earn below ₦20,000, a critical threshold of poverty. This group was heavily concentrated in Ibadan (4.90%), Kano (3.12%), and Lagos (2.61%), indicating heightened financial vulnerability in urban poor communities. Such low-income levels may correlate with food insecurity, lack of access to healthcare, and a higher risk of being exploited during periods of social instability. Other mid-level income brackets such as ₦20,000–₦30,000 (13.54%), ₦30,001–₦40,000 (11.89%), and ₦40,001–₦50,000 (16.34%) represent segments of the population that are barely above subsistence and susceptible to slipping into poverty due to economic shocks, job losses, or rising living costs. The data indicates a polarized income structure, with a large group clustered in low to moderate income brackets and a much smaller proportion in higher income categories. This uneven distribution suggests significant economic inequality and a pressing need for inclusive economic policies. The high proportion of low-income earners may fuel insecurity, especially in urban centers where cost of living is high and access to social services is limited. Conversely, the presence of a modest high-income segment offers an opportunity for local economic stimulation if policies support reinvestment and inclusive growth.

Table 5: Nature of Residence of the Respondents

City	Indigene	Others	Settlers/Migrants
Aba	3.62%	0.00%	8.71%
Benin	5.34%	0.38%	13.48%
FCT	0.89%	0.13%	8.58%
Ibadan	12.02%	0.00%	6.80%
Kaduna	5.09%	0.00%	4.26%
Kano	15.19%	0.06%	2.42%
Lagos	6.23%	0.06%	6.74%
Total	48.38%	0.64%	50.99%

The data on the nature of residence among respondents reveals an almost equal distribution between indigenes (48.38%) and settlers/migrants (50.99%), with only a negligible presence of those classified as "others" (0.64%). This distribution holds significant implications for understanding community dynamics, access to resources, and potential sources of tension or resilience. Cities like Kano (15.19%) and Ibadan (12.02%) have high concentrations of indigenes, suggesting strong local roots and possibly more access to traditional support systems, cultural alignment, and influence in community decision-making. In contrast, cities such as Benin (13.48%), Aba (8.71%), and the FCT (8.58%) have higher proportions of settlers or migrants, indicating greater diversity and more fluid population movement. These migrant-dominant areas may be more economically dynamic but could also face issues of integration, marginalization, or competition for limited resources.

Interestingly, FCT Abuja shows a very low indigene rate (0.89%) and a high migrant rate (8.58%), consistent with its status as a capital city drawing people from across Nigeria for work and administrative opportunities. This could result in both social pluralism and potential cultural fragmentation, requiring deliberate inclusion policies. Kaduna and Lagos, though economically and demographically important, show a more balanced mix of indigenes and settlers, suggesting potential for both community integration and tension depending on governance, access to services, and political

representation. The implications of the study findings indicates that the near-equal distribution between indigenes (48.38%) and settlers/migrants (50.99%) across the surveyed cities suggests a highly diverse population landscape. This diversity, while beneficial for economic vibrancy and cultural exchange, presents unique governance challenges. It necessitates inclusive policy frameworks that ensure equal access to public services, representation, and economic opportunities for both groups to foster community cohesion and prevent marginalization.

In cities such as FCT, Aba, and Benin where migrants constitute a larger portion of the population, there may be increased pressure on infrastructure, housing, and essential services. If not adequately addressed, this could lead to competition for limited resources and social tension. Development planning in such areas should therefore prioritize equitable distribution and accessibility to prevent deepening inequality. Furthermore, the integration of settlers into local governance and community systems is critical for social stability. Efforts must be made to build trust and cooperation between indigenes and migrants through community dialogues, inclusive decision-making, and peacebuilding initiatives. Without such measures, identity-based divisions could hamper community policing, crisis response, and overall development efforts.

Nature, Pattern and Dynamics of Organized Violence.

This section examines the nature, pattern, and dynamics of organized violence in Nigeria across the selected study locations. Specifically, it explores the various forms, operational patterns, structures, and changing dimensions of organized violence and crime, as well as the actors involved and the methods through which these violent activities are carried out in different communities.

Table 6: Types of Violence Prevalent in the Study Areas based on City

	Frequency	Freq(%)
Aba	**194**	**12.33%**
Others (not on the list)	112	7.12%
Political violence	62	3.94%
Political violence Others (not on the list)	19	1.21%
Religious violence	1	0.06%
Benin	**302**	**19.20%**
Others (not on the list)	14	0.89%
Political violence	160	10.17%
Political violence Others (not on the list)	37	2.35%
Political violence Religious violence	3	0.19%
Political violence Tribal/ethnic violence	48	3.05%
Political violence Tribal/ethnic violence Others (not on the list)	8	0.51%
Religious violence	6	0.38%
Religious violence Others (not on the list)	2	0.13%
Tribal/ethnic violence	16	1.02%
Tribal/ethnic violence Political violence	8	0.51%

	Frequency	Freq(%)
FCT	**151**	**9.60%**
Others (not on the list)	7	0.45%
Political violence	42	2.67%
Political violence Others (not on the list)	1	0.06%
Political violence Religious violence	9	0.57%
Political violence Religious violence Tribal/ethnic violence	17	1.08%
Political violence Tribal/ethnic violence	28	1.78%
Religious violence	15	0.95%
Religious violence Tribal/ethnic violence	4	0.25%
Tribal/ethnic violence	28	1.78%
Ibadan	**296**	**18.82%**
Others (not on the list)	6	0.38%
Political violence	142	9.03%
Political violence Others (not on the list)	1	0.06%
Political violence Religious violence Tribal/ethnic violence	3	0.19%
Political violence Tribal/ethnic violence	6	0.38%
Political violence Tribal/ethnic violence Others (not on the list)	1	0.06%
Religious violence	34	2.16%
Religious violence Political violence	1	0.06%
Religious violence Tribal/ethnic violence	10	0.64%
Tribal/ethnic violence	89	5.66%
Tribal/ethnic violence Political violence	2	0.13%
Tribal/ethnic violence Religious violence	1	0.06%
Kaduna	**147**	**9.35%**
Others (not on the list)	43	2.73%
Others (not on the list) Political violence	1	0.06%
Political violence	24	1.53%
Political violence Others (not on the list)	7	0.45%
Political violence Religious violence	15	0.95%
Political violence Religious violence Tribal/ethnic violence	43	2.73%
Political violence Tribal/ethnic violence	7	0.45%
Political violence Tribal/ethnic violence Religious violence	1	0.06%
Religious violence	1	0.06%
Religious violence Political violence	1	0.06%
Religious violence Tribal/ethnic violence	2	0.13%

	Frequency	Freq(%)
Tribal/ethnic violence Others (not on the list)	1	0.06%
Tribal/ethnic violence Political violence	1	0.06%
Kano	**278**	**17.67%**
Others (not on the list)	1	0.06%
Others (not on the list) Political violence	2	0.13%
Political violence	146	9.28%
Political violence Others (not on the list)	90	5.72%
Political violence religious violence	24	1.53%
Political violence religious violence Tribal/ethnic violence	4	0.25%
Political violence Tribal/ethnic violence	4	0.25%
Religious violence	4	0.25%
Religious violence Others (not on the list)	1	0.06%
Religious violence Political violence	2	0.13%
Lagos	**205**	**13.03%**
Others (not on the list)	9	0.57%
Others (not on the list) Tribal/ethnic violence	1	0.06%
Political violence	89	5.66%
Political violence Others (not on the list)	2	0.13%
Political violence religious violence	2	0.13%
Political violence Religious violence Tribal/ethnic violence	9	0.57%
Political violence Tribal/ethnic violence	3	0.19%
Religious violence	26	1.65%
Religious violence Political violence	1	0.06%
Religious violence Tribal/ethnic violence	6	0.38%
Tribal/ethnic violence	55	3.50%
Tribal/ethnic violence Others (not on the list)	1	0.06%
Tribal/ethnic violence Religious violence	1	0.06%
Grand Total	**1573**	**100.00%**

From the data provided, violence in the study areas is categorized mainly into political, religious, tribal/ethnic, and other unspecified forms. Political violence dominates across all locations, particularly in Benin (10.17%), Kano (9.28%), and Ibadan (9.03%), suggesting heightened political instability or conflict during elections or governance disputes in these areas. Tribal/ethnic violence is notably higher in Ibadan (5.66%) and Lagos (3.50%), indicating that identity-based tensions still influence social dynamics in these urban centres, likely due to competition over resources, indigeneship claims, or settlement disputes.

Religious violence appears relatively lower across all locations, with the highest being in Ibadan (2.16%), followed by Lagos (1.65%) and FCT (0.95%). However, the frequent combinations of political, tribal, and religious violence—especially in Kaduna, Kano, and the FCT—reflect complex conflict dynamics, where disputes may have overlapping triggers or be manipulated for political or ethnic gain. Others (not on the list) made up a notable proportion of incidents in Aba (8.71%), Kaduna (2.73%), and Kano (5.72%), which may indicate criminal or gender-based violence, economic-related unrest, or social agitation not captured by the primary categories.

The data reveals that political violence is the most pervasive form of conflict across the surveyed Nigerian cities, underscoring the urgent need for electoral and governance reforms. Strengthening democratic processes, fostering transparent leadership, and ensuring equitable political participation could reduce tensions around political events. The prominence of tribal/ethnic and identity-based conflicts, especially in urban centers like Lagos and Ibadan, highlights the need for robust social integration strategies. These should include promoting inclusive policies, community-based peacebuilding, and equitable resource distribution to reduce the risks of exclusion and grievance-based conflict. The intersectionality of violence—where political, religious, and ethnic issues converge—particularly in Kaduna, Kano, and the FCT, indicates deeper systemic problems tied to governance, security, and historical grievances. Conflict resolution in these areas requires multi-stakeholder collaboration involving religious leaders, traditional authorities, civil society, and government actors.

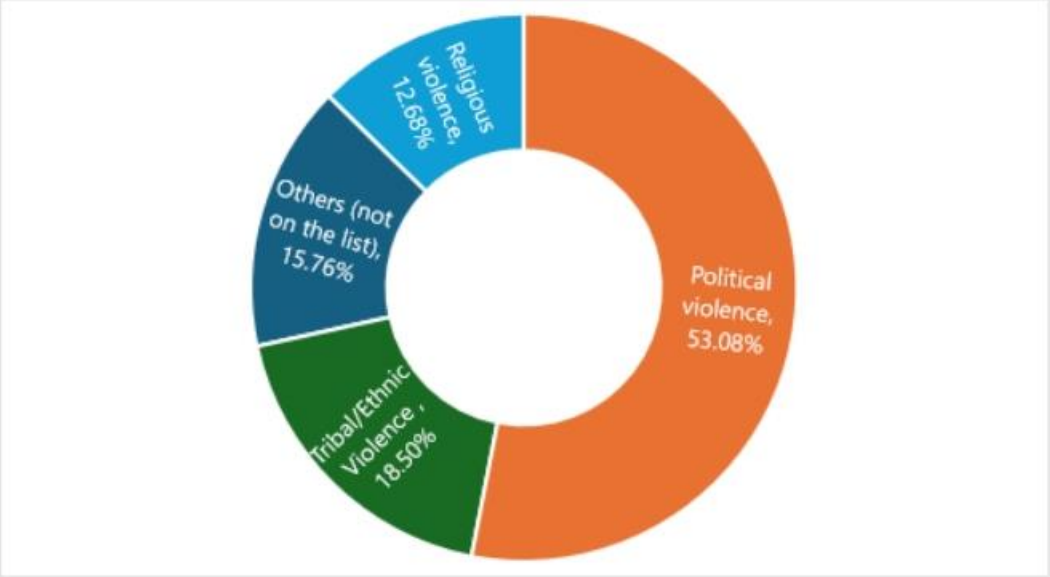


Fig 10: Prevalence of Various Types of Organised Violence

The chart reveals that political violence overwhelmingly dominates as the most prevalent form of organized violence, accounting for 53.08% of all recorded cases. This is followed by tribal/ethnic violence at 18.50%, suggesting a considerable contribution of identity-based conflict to the overall violence landscape. Religious violence makes up 12.68%**,** while 15.76% is classified under "others," representing forms of violence not specifically listed. The data indicates that over half of organized violence incidents are politically motivated, with a significant portion also driven by identity-related tensions, whether ethnic or religious in nature.

The predominance of political violence (53.08%) underscores the volatility of political competition and governance structures in the region, reflecting deep-seated issues such as electoral malpractice, leadership struggles, exclusionary politics, and a breakdown in democratic institutions. This trend has far-reaching implications, including weakened public trust, reduced political participation, and long-term instability. The notable levels of tribal/ethnic and religious violence suggest that identity-based divisions remain potent triggers for conflict, often manipulated by political elites to incite unrest or consolidate power. The presence of other unspecified forms of violence (15.76%) highlights the complex and evolving nature of organized violence, which may include criminality, economic grievances, or vigilante actions.

Table 7: Respondents' Views about Different Types of Organised Violence existing in their Areas

	Aba	Benin	FCT	Kaduna	Kano	Lagos	Ibadan	Total
Others (not on the list)	57.73%	6.56%	4.11%	19.62%	23.04%	5.41%	2.19%	**310**
Political violence	41.75%	71.31%	40.59%	36.67%	66.67%	44.17%	48.90%	**1044**
Tribal/Ethnic Violence	0.00%	19.13%	28.82%	20.37%	1.96%	31.67%	33.23%	**364**
Religious violence	0.52	3.01%	26.47%	23.33%	8.33%	18.75%	15.67%	**249**
Total	**100%**	**366**	**170**	**270**	**408**	**240**	**319**	**1967**

Political violence emerged as the most widely reported form of organized violence, with the highest recognition in Benin (71.31%), followed by Kano (66.67%), Ibadan (48.90%), and Lagos (44.17%). Even in relatively less affected areas like the FCT (40.59%) and Kaduna (36.67%), political violence remains a key concern. This trend affirms that political competition and governance-related disputes are major drivers of instability across urban centers in Nigeria. Tribal/ethnic violence is more pronounced in Ibadan (33.23%), Lagos (31.67%), and the FCT (28.82%), showing that identity-based conflicts remain significant, especially in multi-ethnic urban environments. Benin (19.13%) and Kaduna (20.37%) also show notable concern, while Kano (1.96%) and Aba (0.00%) report very low levels of such violence, possibly due to demographic composition or regional factors. Religious violence is reported most in the FCT (26.47%), Kaduna (23.33%), and Ibadan (15.67%), indicating tension among religious groups, especially in more religiously mixed or volatile regions. Kano (8.33%) and Lagos (18.75%) also show moderate levels. Interestingly, Aba (0.52%) and Benin (3.01%) report very low religious violence, suggesting it is not a significant concern in those areas. A strikingly high percentage of respondents in Aba (57.73%) identified "Other" forms of violence, which is significantly higher than in any other city. This implies that respondents in Aba may be experiencing forms of violence not traditionally categorized—possibly criminal violence, cultism, youth restiveness, or economic crimes. Kano (23.04%) and Kaduna (19.62%) also have notable mentions under this category. The data indicates that political violence remains the most pervasive and universally recognized form of organized violence in Nigeria's urban areas. This points to the need for electoral reforms, better political accountability, and peacebuilding mechanisms especially around election cycles. Ethnic and tribal tensions are more prominent in diverse urban areas like Ibadan, Lagos, and the FCT, suggesting a need for more inclusive governance, inter-ethnic dialogue, and anti-discrimination policies to foster peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups. The high perception of religious violence in Kaduna and the FCT reflects long-standing religious tensions that require active interfaith engagement, religious tolerance education, and peace initiatives, especially in schools and public institutions. The 'Others' category, especially in Aba, indicates the emergence or dominance of alternative violence types—related to cult activities, armed robbery, economic hardship, or gang conflicts. This signals the

importance of updating violence classification tools to include evolving urban threats and tailoring interventions to local realities.

Beyond the quantitative identification of the major forms of organized violence and crimes in Nigeria, qualitative findings from KIIs and FGDs provided detailed explanations of how these crimes are structured, coordinated, and experienced across different regions. Participants identified multiple forms of organized crime including cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, drug and human trafficking, ritual killings, smuggling, and financial fraud (e.g., internet fraud/yahoo yahoo). These crimes were consistently linked to group coordination and planning, often involving informants, enablers, and facilitators across various communities. A distinction was made between violent crimes—such as ritual killings, assassination, and armed robbery—and non-violent but equally harmful crimes**,** such as financial fraud and smuggling. While violent crimes were often associated with physical harm and psychological terror, non-violent crimes like Yahoo Yahoo and human trafficking were seen as organized crimes with broader economic and reputational implications for the nation. Some participants also challenged this binary, arguing that even financial or kidnapping crimes could become violent depending on the context (e.g., death of hostages or resistance during operations). The prevalent forms of organisation are discussed below:

i. Smuggling

Smuggling is one of the prominent forms of organized crime identified by the study. This is characterized by a high level of coordination and specialization among those involved. It is not limited to the illegal movement of goods such as contraband or restricted items but also includes the smuggling of arms and the trafficking of humans across borders. These activities are structured, involving multiple actors who play distinct roles in planning and execution. Typically, such operations require a master planner, individuals who conduct surveillance, and others who carry out the physical movement of the goods or persons. This complex and strategic approach differentiates organized smuggling from petty crimes like burglary, which are often spontaneous and opportunistic.

Organized smuggling networks are often well-structured and may take months of preparation, including careful surveillance of targets or routes before any action is taken. The smuggling of ammunition and human beings, particularly for exploitation, underscores the dangerous and exploitative nature of these crimes. These acts are not only criminal but also socially destabilizing, as they contribute to insecurity and human rights violations.

ii. Kidnapping

Kidnapping, as revealed through the diverse narratives across different regions, emerges as one of the most pervasive and troubling forms of organized crime in contemporary Nigeria. The most comprehensive insight comes from the South-West, particularly in the Ibadan area, and the few areas in the North-Central particularly the FCT where kidnapping is described as a highly organized criminal enterprise. It is portrayed not as a random or opportunistic act, but as a calculated and deliberate operation involving several actors playing distinct roles. Kidnappers reportedly target individuals perceived as wealthy or economically thriving—such as successful business owners—based on intelligence provided by informants within the community. These informants are sometimes financially compensated for their role in identifying and tracking potential victims. The actual kidnapping operations are then executed by armed collaborators, often backed by financial sponsors who fund logistics, weapon procurement, or ransom negotiations.

iii. **Ritual Killings**

Study findings revealed that ritual killings have evolved into a disturbing and organized form of crime, particularly prevalent in the South-West region of Nigeria. While ritual killings have historically existed across various regions, current trends suggest an alarming rise in both frequency and organization. What was once a rare occurrence has now become increasingly normalized within some communities, with as many as 23 cases recorded within three months—an indication of its growing prevalence. The killings are primarily associated with money-making rituals, targeting vulnerable individuals—often the recently deceased—whose corpses are exhumed for body parts. Unlike politically motivated assassinations, ritual killings are committed to harvesting human organs or body parts believed to hold spiritual power to generate wealth.

This form of crime has been described as highly organized, involving a network of actors including observers who identify targets, "merchants" who retrieve human parts, and herbalists who either request the parts for rituals or act as intermediaries for clients seeking wealth. The process often involves grave robbing, with perpetrators coordinating the timing and location of their actions carefully. In some instances, suspects have been apprehended while in possession of severed human parts, which they claim were sourced to meet a herbalist's demands. These individuals often collaborate across multiple communities and local governments, reinforcing the notion that ritual killings are no longer isolated acts but syndicated operations.

Youth are notably at the centre of this criminal activity, with perpetrators commonly falling within the age range of 18 to 40. This trend reflects a deeper societal issue tied to the "get-rich-quick" mentality, where desperation, unemployment, and a distorted value system push young individuals into horrifying acts in pursuit of wealth. The challenges of combatting this form of crime are compounded by the clandestine nature of the networks involved, the absence of clear documentation linking clients to the crime, and the potential for legal defence to exploit procedural gaps.

iv. **Robbery, Stealing, and Burglary**

The phenomenon of robbery, stealing, and burglary across various communities reveals both petty and violent dimensions of crime, often influenced by socioeconomic pressures and inadequate law enforcement responses. In some communities, such as those in Abuja, petty thefts involving individuals known locally as *baba bolas* (scavengers), phone snatching, and burglary are reported as common but relatively low-threat crimes. These incidents are generally addressed by local vigilante groups, indicating a level of community-based security that helps maintain relative peace.

However, in more urbanized and densely populated areas such as Ibadan and Lagos, the dynamics of crime are more aggressive and calculated. In Ibadan, armed robbery and burglary occur frequently, particularly at night. A recurring tactic involves criminals posing as passengers to lure commercial motorcyclists (*okada* riders) into secluded areas where they are attacked and dispossessed of their motorcycles, often with the use of weapons like knives, guns, hammers, or even chemical agents. These attacks typically target unsuspecting or inexperienced riders, and the use of strategic deception indicates a level of premeditation and organization, albeit not always sophisticated. This correlates with the view of a participant who alluded that:

Yes, we do experience armed robbery and burglary because whenever it is 9:00 PM, then they start operation. I think what usually happens here is that the criminals will stop an OKADA person to take him to a place, on their way to the place, the criminals will stop them along the road with their knife and rob the OKADA person or collect the motorcycle. This is common here as it happens to most of our children. What they usually do to collect our motorcycle is that they will take us to a place where people do not roam and show us a gun, or knife or hit the OKADA person with a hammer, or spray cocaine on the person's face. They use all these tactics, so the OKADA persons should avoid going to a place that is not safe. It usually happens to people who are new in the business or strangers **(FGD with Men, Ibadan)**

In Lagos, the discussion around stealing reflects deeper structural and economic issues. Stealing is identified as the most prevalent crime and is often viewed not simply as criminal behavior but as a symptom of systemic neglect and poverty. The absence of adequate social services, job opportunities, and government intervention has led many to resort to theft as a means of survival. Here, crimes such as stealing and even kidnapping are rationalized by some community members as desperate acts driven by the need to meet basic needs—food, clothing, and shelter. This perception, while not justifying criminal behavior, underscores the blurred lines between economic survival and criminality in impoverished settings.

Study findings also reveal a link between these crimes and drug use, particularly in urban centers. Drug abuse and trafficking are noted to be intertwined with other forms of crime, especially among youth gangs. Substance abuse is seen both as a motivator for criminal behavior and as a contributing factor that impairs judgment and encourages participation in unlawful activities.

v. **Financial Crime**

Financial crime, particularly internet-related fraud, has emerged as a significant and growing concern across Nigeria, with participants identifying it as both a domestic issue and part of a broader network of transnational organized crime. Commonly referred to as *Yahoo-Yahoo*, this form of internet fraud is characterized by deceptive practices aimed at defrauding individuals or institutions, often beyond Nigeria's borders. This trend has not only tarnished the country's international reputation but has also become a normalized criminal pathway for many young people, especially in commercial hubs.

In urban centres such as Lagos, Abuja, and Benin, financial crimes are perceived as deeply embedded in Nigeria's criminal landscape. Participants noted that the country continues to battle financial crime on multiple fronts—domestically through local scams and internationally through cybercrime syndicates. The increasing sophistication of these activities, and their cross-border nature, classify them as organized crimes that require significant coordination and technological skills. In Aba, a city recognized for its vibrant commercial activity, the prevalence of financial crime is closely linked to the economic aspirations of its youth. Study findings revealed a surge in internet fraud among young men, largely driven by the quest for quick wealth and the influence of peer networks. The socio-economic context—marked by limited job opportunities, peer pressure, and the glorification of sudden wealth—contributes to the widespread appeal of cyber fraud in the region.

Table 8: Causes of Organised Violence and Crimes

	Ineffective Security architecture	Ineffective Judiciary	Collapse of Cultural ethos & Values	Lack of Inclusion
Agreed	53.93%	55.49%	49.71%	48.15%
Disagreed	3.89%	5.33%	7.54%	8.51%
Strongly agreed	34.76%	27.88%	29.11%	31.25%
Strongly disagreed	1.43%	1.43%	1.30%	4.16%
Unsure	5.98%	9.88%	12.35%	7.93%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

The data reveals that a significant proportion of respondents attribute the causes of organised violence and crimes to four key factors: ineffective security architecture, an ineffective judiciary, collapse of cultural ethos and values, and lack of inclusion. Notably, the highest agreement was recorded under ineffective security architecture, with a combined 88.69% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing. This suggests widespread dissatisfaction with the country's security system and indicates that the failure of security institutions to prevent and respond to threats is a major contributor to violence and instability. Similarly, 83.37% of respondents agreed that an ineffective judiciary is a major cause, reflecting a deep-seated mistrust in the justice system and its ability to uphold the rule of law and deter criminal activities. The collapse of cultural ethos and values also featured prominently, with 78.82% of respondents in agreement. This implies that the erosion of societal norms and traditional moral frameworks may be contributing to the rise in anti-social behaviours and lawlessness. Furthermore, 79.40% of respondents identified lack of inclusion as a significant factor. These highlights growing concerns about marginalisation, especially among youth and minority groups, who may feel excluded from political, economic, and social processes—conditions that can foster grievances and provoke violent expressions. The implications of these findings point to the urgent need for comprehensive reforms in the security and judicial sectors, a revival of societal values through civic and moral education, and the implementation of inclusive governance strategies that promote equity and social cohesion.

The quantitative findings on the causes and dynamics of organized violence and crimes in Nigeria were further substantiated by qualitative evidence obtained through KIIs and FGDs, which provided deeper insights into the political, institutional, and community-level dimensions of insecurity. While the quantitative data identified factors such as weak governance, unemployment, poor security infrastructure, and political instability as major drivers of organized violence, participants in the qualitative sessions explained how these factors operate in practice and shape everyday experiences of insecurity across communities. The security situation in Nigeria continues to deteriorate under the weight of political interference, unequal responses, and localized manifestations of violence and crime. While national security agencies may be lauded for their efforts, their effectiveness is often undermined by systemic failures and the pervasive influence of politics. In several instances, the success or failure of security interventions appears to depend on the "body language" of political leaders. Security operatives may be constrained in certain crisis areas due to political affiliations or interests, leading to selective enforcement of law and order. This politicization weakens institutional responses and fosters a climate of impunity, where those with influence are shielded from accountability. As a result, certain groups exploit their political or financial connections to perpetuate violence and injustice without facing

repercussions, particularly in regions where chieftaincy disputes, land conflicts, or communal tensions are involved.

This situation is particularly evident in cases where individuals backed by powerful figures in government can provoke or escalate conflict, yet remain untouched by law enforcement. Such a dynamic erodes public trust in security institutions and reinforces a dangerous narrative that justice in Nigeria is not blind but is heavily skewed by status and influence. The manipulation of the justice system in this manner fuels cycles of retaliation and entrenched conflict, especially in communities with unresolved traditional leadership tussles or long-standing rivalries. Beyond elite-level dynamics, insecurity in Nigeria also manifests in more immediate, day-to-day threats that affect ordinary citizens. The emotional and psychological toll is profound, as citizens no longer feel safe in what should be secure spaces: their homes, roads, markets, or even houses of worship. Fear of kidnapping, banditry, and senseless violence has normalized anxiety in public and private life. The uncertainty of moving safely from one place to another, whether on highways or within towns, speaks to a complete breakdown in the basic social contract where the state is meant to guarantee the protection of lives and property. The tragic reality is that in many parts of the country, Nigerians live with the constant fear of being attacked—on the road, at places of prayer, or even during mundane daily activities. A male security agent in Abuja corroborated this claim on the ground that:

Nigeria is faced with more security challenges than ever before in the history of this nation. Boko Haram, kidnapping, human trafficking, and bandits have contributed to the decay of our security structure. (Sic). The government has failed to put the necessary infrastructure in place to protect lives and properties. More can be done if the government rises to take up their responsibility. Kidnapping and petty crimes are more common in my community. One of the fundamental reasons is unemployment. Misguidance and a lack of family structure. No matter how bad the economy might be if we have a good family structure to raise children and youths well on the right path to live. It will reduce a lot of the menaces we have in our society today **(KII with Male Security Agent, Abuja).**

In urban communities, the face of insecurity takes on another dimension—petty crimes, street robberies, and the actions of unregulated youth. These manifestations of violence, while sometimes dismissed as minor, significantly impact the sense of safety in local environments. Opportunistic crimes such as phone snatching or late-night ambushes by hoodlums, often carried out by young, idle individuals, contribute to an overall atmosphere of disorder. Many of these youths operate with little fear of consequence, emboldened by the lack of consistent law enforcement presence or community accountability structures. The normalization of these petty crimes' feeds into broader public disillusionment with the state's capacity to maintain peace and order, reinforcing feelings of abandonment. This is commensurate with the view of a Security agent in a KII session who revealed that:

The security situation, not from my understanding, let me say generally and from experience, the security situation is getting higher. It's getting worse every day. I don't want to say I'm supporting anything because, because of the extent what is holding these boys from taking part in these gruesome attacks is internet fraud. Because most of these boys are now in different houses carrying out what we know as this whole soul kingdom. They are kept in a place teaching them internet fraud or carrying out internet fraud. So I think these organized crimes like robbery, courtesan and gangster have been reduced to some measure. But if you expunge this, you're going to find out that these people will add to what we have. I pray it doesn't get to that place. **(KII with Male Security Agent, Benin).**

Interestingly, in some urban areas, there is a perception that the prevalence of organized violent crimes like armed robbery or cultist attacks has slightly reduced. This is partly attributed to the rise of

cybercrime, which has absorbed many youths who would have otherwise engaged in physical violence. While this shift may appear to be a reduction in one form of insecurity, it underscores the fluid and adaptive nature of criminal behaviour. As one form of crime recedes, another emerges—equally disruptive, but perhaps less visibly violent. This raises deeper questions about the structural and economic factors driving youth involvement in crime. With limited access to education, employment, and social mobility, many young people turn to any available means of survival, including criminal enterprise. Unless these underlying socioeconomic drivers are addressed, criminality will continue to take on new forms, sustaining a cycle of insecurity.

The current security crisis in Nigeria is thus a multi-layered phenomenon. It is shaped by high-level political manipulation, mid-level institutional weaknesses, and grassroots-level socioeconomic failures. It spans from elite-driven impunity to youth-led opportunism and from rural insurgency to urban criminality. This complex reality implies that no single solution can address the problem. Efforts must be made to depoliticize security responses and ensure that justice is not compromised by connections or influence. At the same time, there is a need to strengthen local law enforcement and community-based security mechanisms to tackle urban crimes and petty offences.

Further qualitative evidence also revealed widespread perceptions of institutional weakness, delayed security responses, corruption, and declining public trust in the capacity of government agencies to effectively address insecurity in Nigeria. A key finding that emerges from the data is the perceived weakness and ineffectiveness of the Nigerian government and its security institutions in responding to crises and maintaining law and order. Participants described prolonged periods of violent conflict in various communities without any timely intervention from law enforcement agencies. Several accounts highlighted the failure of the police or military to act promptly, especially in cases where the government or local political leaders had vested interests. This failure is interpreted by many as a sign of deliberate neglect, selective protection, or lack of political will. Participants emphasized that even when security operatives are aware of violent incidents, they often arrive late or without adequate weapons and equipment. This inefficiency has led to widespread public distrust in the ability of the government to protect its citizens, contributing to the view that people are essentially left to fend for themselves during security crises.

This non-challan attitude by the government led to the growing prevalence and normalization of organized criminal activities such as kidnapping, extortion, and armed robbery. Participants repeatedly pointed to the systematic nature of these crimes, noting that they are no longer random or spontaneous but rather well-planned operations often involving collaboration between criminals and insiders within the banking system, law enforcement, or other institutions. The examples of kidnappings where ransoms were paid into banks without being traced, or instances where kidnappers anticipated police reports due to internal leaks, were cited as evidence of a deeply entrenched network. Organized crime is thus viewed not only as a product of individual criminal behaviour but also as a reflection of a broader structural breakdown, where state institutions are either complicit or unable to intervene effectively. This has fueled public fear and the belief that the security crisis is beyond the control of ordinary law enforcement mechanisms. This reflects the view of a female participant who revealed that:

If I am sincere, Nigerians at large or the people in charge are not doing a good job when it comes to security. On Twitter for example, you can see how kidnapping has gone far in Nigeria, where everybody is talking about how people are becoming more and more or creating new tactics about kidnapping/talking about how they use the SIENNA car, they are also using *DANFO*, so, Nigeria is not secured, everybody is on his own, even when you are going for camp, NYSC official said you should not travel at night, you should not go to some certain places at night else you will call for your family

members to pay for ransom. So, this shows that the security situation in Nigeria is at falling. So, the government and law enforcement agencies should do better! **(FGD with Women, Lagos)**

On a further note, Participants expressed concerns that even when crimes are reported and investigated, justice is rarely served. Offenders, especially those with connections or resources, often go unpunished, while victims are left with no recourse. This culture of impunity is seen as a major driver of insecurity, as it emboldens perpetrators and leaves communities vulnerable. Participants cited instances where police investigations confirmed crimes but no arrests were made, pointing to systemic corruption and political interference. The failure to prosecute or even detain known criminals erodes public confidence in the rule of law and reinforces the notion that justice in Nigeria is selective and inaccessible to the poor and marginalized.

The overwhelming perception among participants is that Nigeria is experiencing a full-blown national security crisis. Insecurity is no longer seen as confined to conflict zones or rural areas—it now affects urban centres, religious spaces, markets, highways, and even private homes. Participants lamented that they live in constant fear, unable to move freely or feel safe even in places traditionally considered secure. Many recounted personal experiences or those of close relatives who were kidnapped, robbed, or attacked. These lived realities have generated a climate of fear and helplessness, where the average Nigerian believes they could be a victim at any moment. Participants emphasized the need for the government to show genuine commitment to tackling organized crime, starting with internal cleansing of the security agencies, better equipment and training for personnel, and the use of modern surveillance technologies. Many were critical of government pronouncements that appear to delay action under the guise of procurement or planning, arguing that such statements only give criminals more time to regroup and evolve. There is a clear consensus that without radical reforms, improved transparency, and stronger enforcement of laws, the security situation will continue to deteriorate, placing more lives at risk and further undermining the social contract between the state and its citizens.

Additional qualitative findings further revealed that the causes of organized violence and insecurity in Nigeria are multidimensional, involving complex interactions between economic hardship, family disintegration, political corruption, weak institutions, environmental conditions, and shifting social values. Based on the study findings, there are several causes of crime and insecurity in Nigeria and findings from the study reveal a rich interplay of interrelated structural, economic, political, social, and cultural factors. Below is an elaborate discussion of the major emergent causes discovered by the study:

i. **Breakdown of Family and Moral Values**

   One of the most recurring findings from the participants is the decline in family structure and moral upbringing. Many participants attributed criminal behaviour to a failing domestic environment, where children are either neglected, raised by irresponsible parents, or not guided by values of discipline and empathy. This breakdown contributes to early exposure to deviant peer groups, substance abuse, cultism, and criminal tendencies. The normalization of unethical behaviour, including sending children on errands such as buying cigarettes, was mentioned as a seedbed for future misconduct.

ii. **Economic Hardship and Poverty**

   Economic deprivation, expressed through poverty, was unanimously identified as a fundamental driver of insecurity. Participants highlighted how hunger, inflation, and the inability to meet basic needs push individuals into crime as a survival strategy. The economic downturn in Nigeria was said to have created a climate of desperation, where "quick money" schemes like cybercrime (*Yahoo Yahoo*), robbery, and ritual killings thrive. This desperation especially affects youth who are unable to meet material aspirations through legitimate means.

iii. **Unemployment and Underemployment**

The study revealed deep concerns about youth unemployment. The lack of jobs for graduates and skilled workers results in widespread frustration, leading many to take to crime to survive. Participants emphasized that idle youth are particularly vulnerable to recruitment into organized criminal networks, cultism, political thuggery, or armed robbery. Many lamented that despite having formal education, they were unable to find employment, forcing them into low-paying jobs like commercial motorcycling or outright criminality.

iv. **Political Exploitation and Corruption**

Another strong finding was the complicity of political actors in fueling insecurity. Participants accused politicians of arming and using young men for election-related violence, only to abandon them post-election. These politically recruited thugs, still in possession of weapons, often become criminal entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the embezzlement of public funds, absence of political will, and failure to implement pro-poor policies were noted as significant contributors to insecurity, as they create feelings of exclusion, injustice, and resentment among the population.

v. **Greed and Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome**

Several responses described a growing cultural shift towards materialism and greed, particularly among the youth. Beyond poverty, the desire to live above one's means and to enjoy the lavish lifestyle seen on social media or exhibited by politicians was highlighted as a strong motivator for crime. The youth are no longer interested in gradual success but are driven by urgency to achieve wealth quickly, through rituals, fraud, or crime. This points to a deeper value crisis and moral decay in society.

vi. **Weak Security and Justice Systems**

Participants consistently mentioned the failure of the security and judicial institutions as an enabler of crime. Issues raised include the lack of proactive policing, insufficient crime detection tools, corruption among law enforcement agents, and the failure to prosecute or punish offenders effectively. When criminals are not held accountable, impunity reigns, and crime becomes normalized. This systemic weakness not only emboldens offenders but also diminishes public trust in the justice system.

vii. **Influence of Environment**

The environment itself emerged as a factor contributing to crime. Abandoned buildings, uncompleted structures, and slum settlements were described as hideouts for gangs and criminal meetings. Poor urban planning and lack of infrastructural development in rural and peri-urban communities provide fertile ground for crimes to flourish.

viii. **Education and Illiteracy**

While some participants noted that illiteracy alone is not the root cause of crime, they acknowledged that lack of access to education—especially in Northern Nigeria—exacerbates susceptibility to crime. Educated individuals are not immune, but education is viewed as a tool for moral and civic development. The general perception was that ignorance due to lack of education leaves many youths vulnerable to manipulation and radicalization.

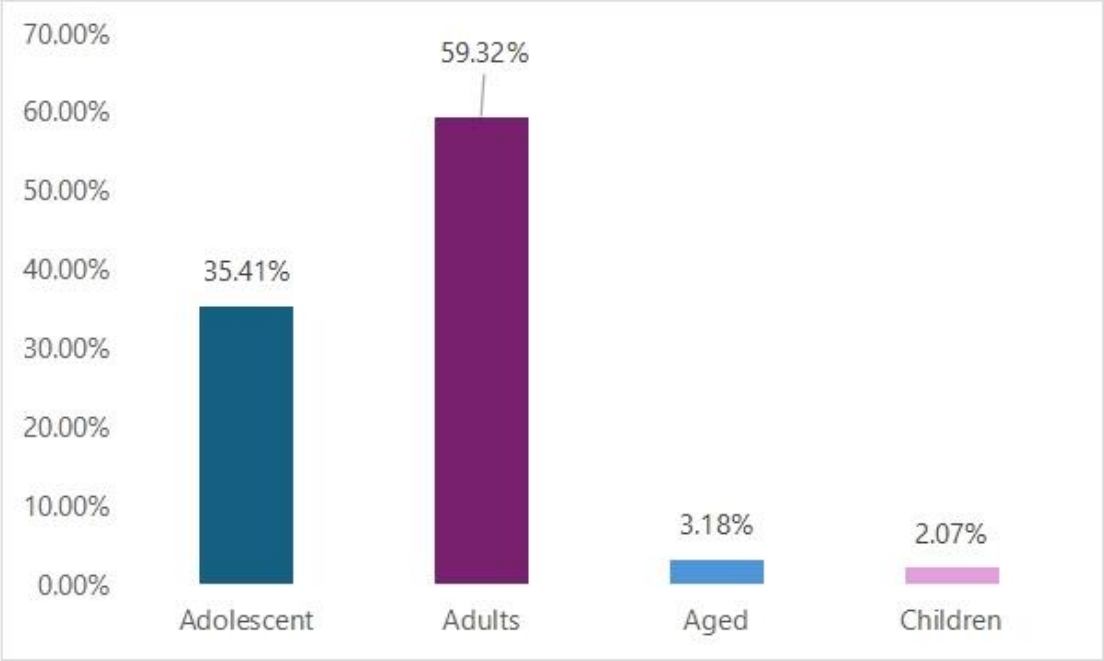


Fig 11: Aged Group of the Perpetrator of the Organised Violence and Crime

The chart illustrates the age distribution of perpetrators involved in organised violence and crime. The majority of perpetrators are adults, accounting for 59.32**%**, followed by adolescents at 35.41**%**. A significantly lower percentage of perpetrators are among the aged (3.18**%**) and children (2.07**%**). The dominance of adults in organised violence and crime suggests that these acts are largely driven by individuals within the most active and economically engaged age group. This trend may reflect issues related to unemployment, political manipulation, economic pressures, or disillusionment with the system—factors that often push adults toward violent or criminal networks. The substantial proportion of adolescents (over one-third) is particularly concerning, as it indicates the growing involvement of young people in violence and crime, possibly due to peer pressure, lack of education or job opportunities, or recruitment by older criminal elements. The minimal involvement of children and the aged may reflect their limited capacity, physical strength, and social positioning, yet the presence of any figure at all in these groups is an alarming indicator of a deeply entrenched culture of violence that touches all age groups.

Qualitative findings further reinforced the quantitative evidence indicating that youths constitute the dominant actors in organized violence and crimes across Nigeria, while also revealing the processes of recruitment, motivations for involvement, and the emerging gender dimensions of criminal participation. One of the clearest discoveries is that organized crime is largely youth-driven. The majority of actors involved fall within the age bracket of 16 to 35 years, with some cases involving individuals as young as 12. The respondents repeatedly noted that the young population forms the operational base for most organized criminal networks—from cultism, armed robbery, and kidnapping to political thuggery and cybercrime. This age group represents a segment of society that is both economically marginalized and socially vulnerable, making them easily exploitable.

Recruitment often begins early, especially in urban slums and poor neighbourhoods. Some respondents revealed that children in secondary schools and even in upper primary are targeted for cultist recruitment, as they are considered more impressionable and easier to manipulate. These children serve

as “foot soldiers” and are gradually groomed into hardened criminals. Over time, they either graduate into full criminal operatives or continue with multiple intersecting forms of criminal behaviour. This corresponds to a statement of a trader who reveals that:

The class of people involved is all those street children who do not go to school, are homeless or do not have parental affection that will keep them at home. They are the class of people who are easily drowned or recruited into violence and crime. The means of recruitment is by using thins to attract them. It is all about attraction, maybe money, power, and other things; some might be even drinks, all these smokes (smokers), or you want to control, be in charge, so things are like that. Mostly power and money. **(KII with Female Trader, Ibadan).**

While males are the predominant actors in organized crime, the involvement of females—both directly and indirectly—is increasingly notable. Women are rarely the masterminds, but they play critical roles in execution. One striking finding is the use of women as tools for deception and entrapment. In cases of kidnapping or armed robbery, women may be used to disarm potential victims psychologically, creating a false sense of safety. For instance, a victim entering a vehicle might feel reassured by the presence of a female, unaware she is part of a criminal setup. A security agent corroborated this finding on the ground that:

Thank you very much. In terms of gender, it is predominantly male-oriented, but these people involved in organized crime, are using women to lure people in. They are using women to lure people because when you see a woman, you are automatically disarmed. So, why, for example, in kidnapping, if you want to enter a vehicle and you see a woman there, you feel safe, but that woman is used, that lady is used to trap you in. It's mainly youths and also some persons within the range of 45 to 50 and I've seen cases like that too. **(KII with Male Security Agent, Ibadan).**

Similarly, a female participant in an FGD session also corroborated this claim on the ground that:

Most perpetrators committing these crimes are youths and young boys. Even women participate in these crimes, making it a general problem. Two weeks ago, in our community, a strange woman tried to abduct Mama Zara's daughter. A neighbor who knew the girl shouted at the woman, asking who she was and why she was taking Mama Zara's daughter. The stranger immediately left the girl and ran away **(FGD with Women, Abuja)**

This strategic deployment of women reveals the tactical sophistication of these networks and challenges traditional assumptions that criminality is a male-exclusive sphere. Nonetheless, women are still largely represented as secondary actors, with fewer of them engaged in violent crimes compared to men. A common profile of criminal actors includes youth from impoverished or broken homes, school dropouts, homeless individuals, and those without parental guidance or emotional support. These individuals are more likely to **be** lured by material incentives, such as money, power, drugs, and a sense of belonging. Criminal groups prey on economic desperation, using financial inducements, promises of protection, or peer pressure to recruit new members.

Many of those involved in crime are motivated by peer influence, aspiration for quick wealth, and a desire to escape the stigma of poverty. There is a societal glorification of sudden wealth, and many young people are drawn into criminality through the admiration of peers who flaunt expensive gadgets, clothes, and luxury lifestyles. Without understanding the long-term consequences, these youths view crime as a legitimate hustle or path to success. In some cases, there is no formal recruitment; attraction through visibility plays a stronger role. Simply seeing others benefit from crime—materially or socially—creates curiosity and desire in vulnerable observers. Criminals often lure others not only with money but with narratives of “becoming untouchable,” especially in cultist and politically-backed groups. This emotional and psychological manipulation was found to be more effective than coercion.

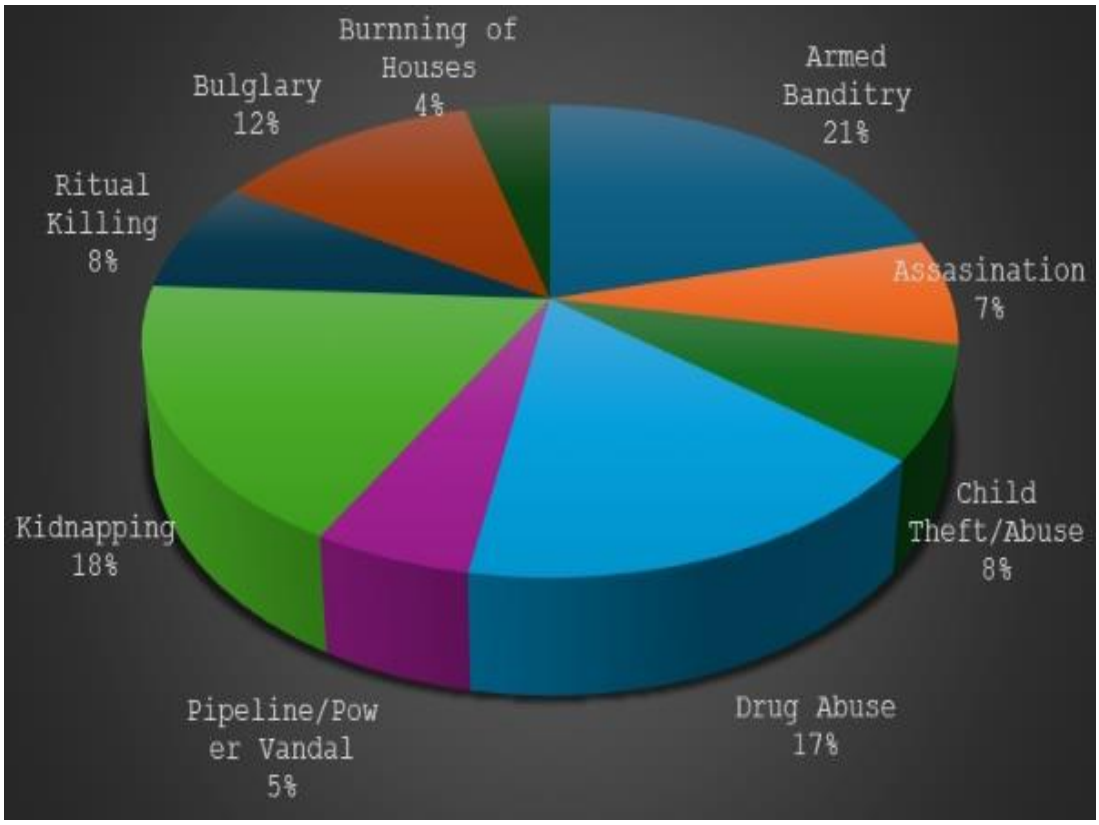


Fig 12: Prevalence of other Types of Organised Violence and Crime in Nigeria City

The pie chart presents the prevalence of various types of organised violence and crime in Nigerian cities. The most prominent form is armed banditry, accounting for 21% of the reported cases. This is closely followed by kidnapping (18%) and drug abuse (17%), indicating that violent and profit-driven crimes are widespread. Burglary (12%) and child theft/abuse (8%) also constitute significant portions, while ritual killing (8%), assassination (7%), and pipeline/power vandalism (5%) are somewhat less prevalent. Burning of houses, though the least reported, still accounts for 4%. The dominance of armed banditry, kidnapping, and drug abuse highlights a serious security and social crisis in urban Nigeria. These crimes not only threaten lives but also destabilize communities and hinder economic development. Armed banditry and kidnapping, in particular, suggest the presence of well-organized criminal networks that operate with relative impunity, often in areas with limited state control or ineffective security measures.

The significant share of drug abuse points to a growing public health concern and its strong link with youth involvement in crime and violence. Similarly, the prevalence of burglary and child theft/abuse reflects rising insecurity in urban homes and the vulnerability of children—issues that demand urgent attention from law enforcement and child protection services. The presence of ritual killings and assassinations, though less frequent, indicates that certain parts of the country still grapple with socio-cultural and political forms of violence, likely tied to superstition, political rivalry, or criminal syndicates. Meanwhile, pipeline and power infrastructure vandalism poses a significant threat to national assets, affecting economic productivity, public utilities, and investor confidence.

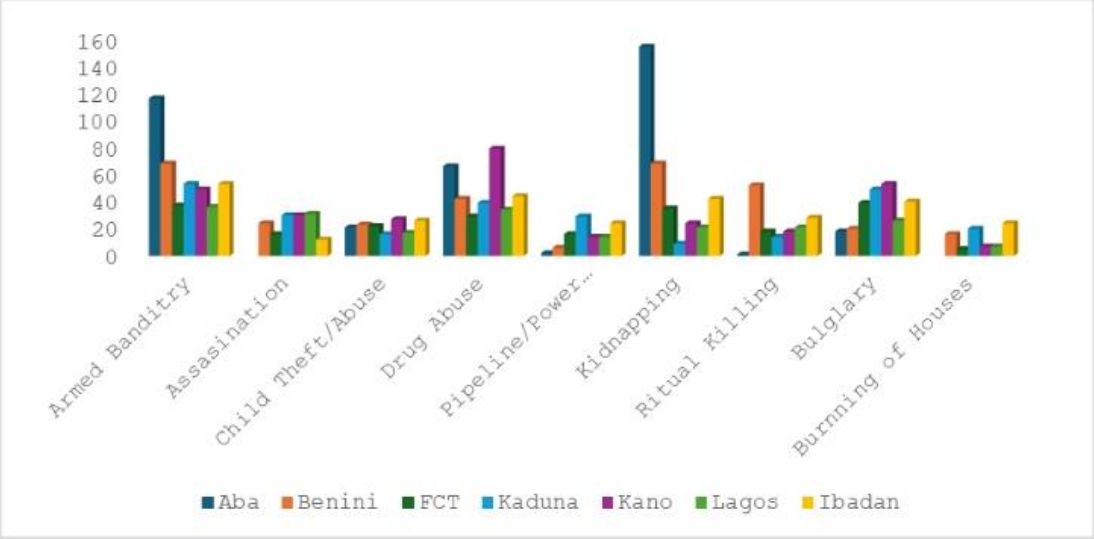


Fig 13: Frequency of Respondent Opinions on Various Types of Crime in their Cities (MultiChoice)

Table 9: Types of Crime Prevalent in Various Nigerian Cities (Multi-Choice)

	Armed Banditry	Assassi-nation	Child Theft /Abuse	Drug Abuse	Pipeline/ Power Vandal	Kid-napping	Ritual Killing	Burglary	Burning of Houses	Total
Aba	116		21	66	2	154	1	18		378
Benini	68	24	23	42	6	68	52	20	16	303
FCT	37	16	22	29	16	35	18	39	5	212
Kaduna	53	30	16	39	29	9	14	49	20	239
Kano	49	30	27	79	14	24	18	53	7	294
Lagos	36	31	17	34	14	21	21	26	7	200
Ibadan	53	12	26	44	24	42	28	40	24	269
Total	**412**	**143**	**152**	**333**	**105**	**353**	**152**	**245**	**79**	**1895**

The bar chart/table illustrates the frequency of respondent opinions on various types of crime across several Nigerian cities, namely Aba, Benin, FCT, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, and Ibadan. The most frequently mentioned crime across all cities is kidnapping, with Kaduna standing out as the most affected, followed by armed banditry which is highly reported in Aba and FCT. Drug abuse and burglary also show relatively high frequencies, particularly in Lagos and Kaduna, suggesting these urban centers are significantly impacted by both violent and property crimes. Other crimes such as child theft/abuse, ritual killing, and assassination are moderately reported across cities, with no single city overwhelmingly dominant. However, pipeline/power vandalism and burning of houses receive lower frequencies overall, though still present in the crime landscape, particularly in Aba and Lagos. The implications of these findings suggest regional patterns in crime prevalence influenced by local governance, security dynamics, and socioeconomic conditions. The variation in reported crimes underscores the need for localized and strategic responses, with urban areas like Lagos requiring focus on drug control and property crime, while regions such as Kaduna and Aba may benefit from intensified security operations against violent crimes like kidnapping and banditry. Additionally, the complexity of urban crime points to the necessity of community engagement, improved policing strategies, and intelligence-led interventions to address these challenges effectively.

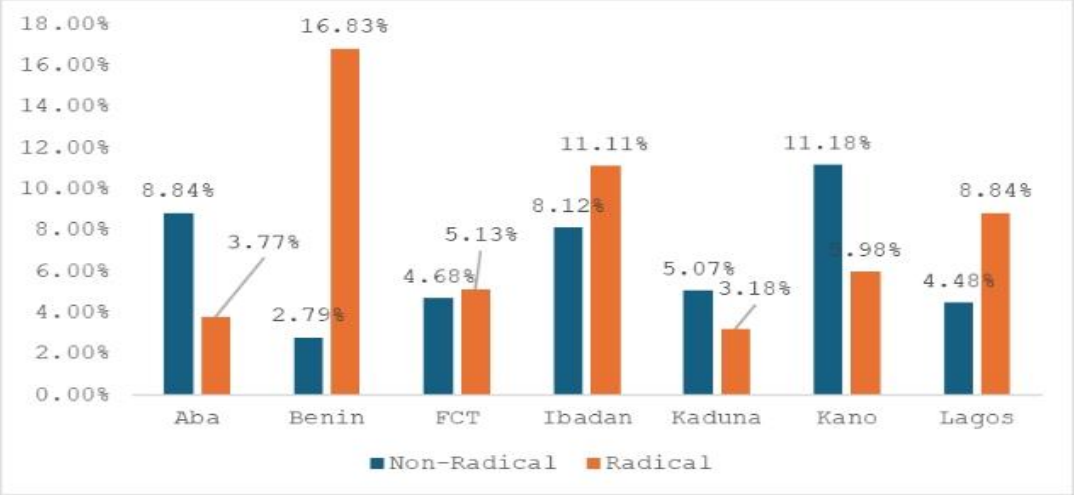


Fig 14: Nature of Violence in Nigerian Cities

The chart presents the nature of violence commonly experienced in various Nigerian cities, distinguishing between non-radical and radical forms. In Benin, radical violence is significantly higher (16.83%) compared to non-radical (2.79%), indicating a major concern with extreme forms of violence in that region. Kano and Ibadan also report notable levels of radical violence (9.98% and 11.11% respectively), though they also experience substantial non-radical violence (11.18% and 8.12%). In contrast, Kaduna, Lagos, and FCT display relatively balanced experiences of both types, while Aba shows a higher incidence of non-radical (8.84%) than radical violence (3.77%). These patterns suggest that while radical violence may be prominent in certain cities like Benin, many urban centers are grappling with both forms, requiring tailored intervention strategies. The implications are that policy responses should be context-specific: in areas like Benin, deradicalization programs, conflict resolution initiatives, and security intelligence are crucial, while cities like Aba and Kaduna may benefit more from community policing, economic empowerment, and social cohesion efforts to curb everyday non-radical violence and prevent escalation into radical forms.

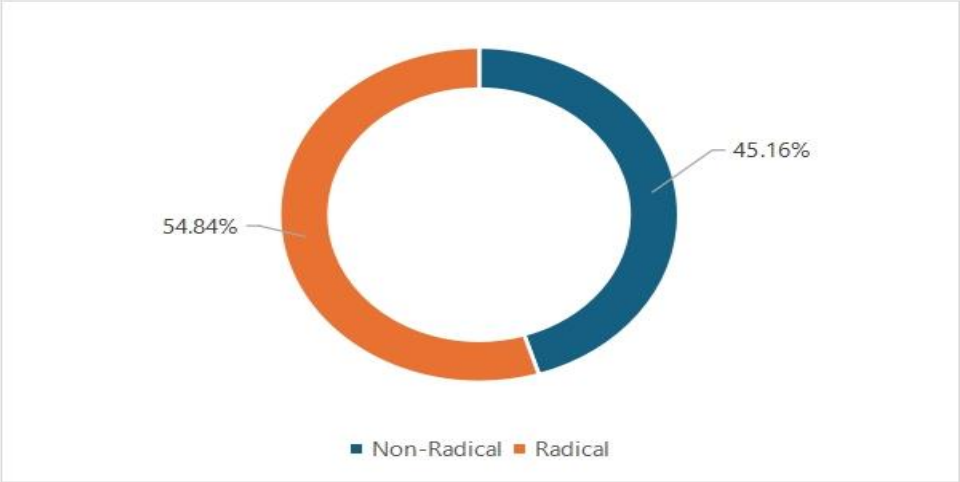


Fig 15: Nature of Violence commonly experienced in Nigeria.

The chart illustrates the overall nature of violence commonly experienced in Nigeria, showing that radical violence accounts for 54.84% while non-radical violence comprises 45.16%. This distribution indicates that radical forms of violence—such as terrorism, insurgency, and politically or ideologically driven attacks—are slightly more prevalent than routine or non-radical violence like theft, assault, or localized disputes. The implication is that Nigeria faces a complex security landscape where both immediate, everyday threats and broader, ideologically motivated violence coexist. Policymakers must therefore adopt a dual strategy: strengthening counter-radicalization and intelligence operations to dismantle extremist networks, while simultaneously addressing the socio-economic root causes of non-radical violence through education, job creation, and improved community policing. This comprehensive approach is crucial for ensuring long-term peace and stability.

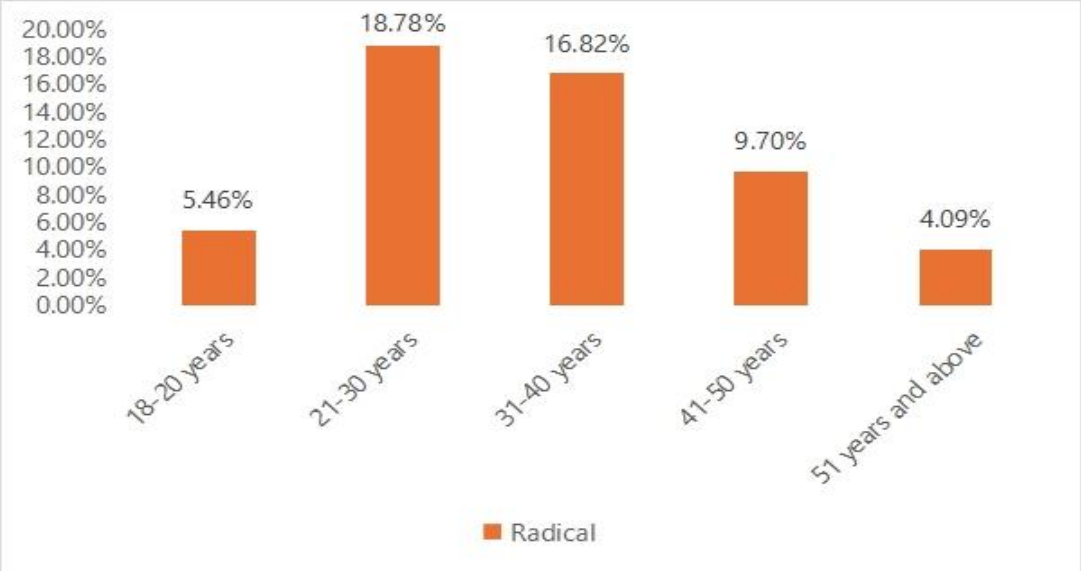


Fig 16: Distribution of People Involve in Radical Violence by Age group Violence

The chart illustrates a significant concentration of individuals aged between 21 and 40 years as the primary participants in radical violence. Specifically, the age group 21–30 years constitutes the highest proportion at 18.78%, closely followed by the 31–40 years group at 16.82%**.** This indicates that radical violence is most prevalent among young and early-middle-aged adults. The 41–50 years group accounts for 9.70%**,** showing a decline in involvement as age increases. In contrast, the youngest group (18–20 years) and the oldest group (51 years and above) have the lowest rates of participation, at 5.46% and 4.09%, respectively. This distribution underscores a generational tilt, with radical activities being largely driven by individuals in their productive and formative years.

The dominance of the 21–40 years demographic in radical violence raises critical concerns about youth vulnerability, socio-economic marginalization, and ideological exploitation. This age bracket typically represents individuals navigating major life transitions, such as higher education, job seeking, or establishing families. When systemic challenges—like unemployment, lack of access to quality education, or political exclusion—intersect with radical ideologies, it increases the likelihood of recruitment into violent movements. The lower participation of older individuals may reflect either a waning susceptibility to ideological influence or reduced physical engagement in violent acts. These findings imply a need for youth-centered preventive strategies, including employment creation, civic

engagement programs, and deradicalization initiatives tailored to the 21–40 years age group. Failing to intervene at this critical life stage could lead to the continued regeneration of radical actors, perpetuating cycles of violence.

Table 10: Frequency of Occurrence of Organised Crime

	Kidnapping	Armed Robbery	Assassination	Drug Abuse	Ritual Killing	Child Theft/Abuse	Powerline Vandal	Pipeline Vandal
More than once a month	13.57%	17.49%	17.15%	18.08 %	18.19 %	19.10%	17.09%	15.14 %
More than once a week	18.14%	32.44%	14.23%	33.09 %	13.00 %	17.67%	11.83%	18.32 %
once a month	56.70%	42.39%	57.50%	36.41 %	60.56 %	55.04%	60.04%	58.74 %
Once a week	11.59%	7.68%	11.12%	12.42 %	8.25%	8.19%	11.04%	7.80%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The table presents how often various forms of organised crime occur in Nigeria, categorized by frequency. For most crimes, the majority of respondents reported that incidents happen *once a month*. This is particularly high for ritual killings (60.56%)**,** child theft/abuse (55.04%)**,** pipeline vandalism (58.74%)**,** and powerline vandalism (60.04%)**.** However, drug abuse (33.09%) and armed robbery (32.44%) had the highest frequencies in the *more than once a week* category, indicating a more persistent and urgent security challenge. Kidnapping**,** assassination, and child theft/abuse are also significantly recurrent with over 13% reported for *more than once a month* and *more than once a week*. The data suggest that while many forms of organised crime in Nigeria tend to occur on a monthly basis, there is a concerning rise in more frequent incidences, especially for drug abuse and armed robbery, which are reported to occur more than once a week by over 30% of respondents. This highlights the widespread normalization and persistence of certain crimes, potentially due to systemic issues such as weak law enforcement, unemployment, drug addiction, and inadequate surveillance infrastructure. The regularity of ritual killings and child-related crimes further signals a societal breakdown in moral values and protective systems for vulnerable populations.

The quantitative findings on the trends and patterns of organized violence and crimes in Nigeria were further reinforced by evidence from the qualitative data. Participants in the KIIs and FGDs consistently emphasized that organized violence in Nigeria has evolved from a localized insurgency into a widespread and highly adaptive national security crisis. While the quantitative findings revealed increasing incidences of kidnapping, banditry, terrorism, and violent crimes across different regions, the qualitative narratives provided deeper explanations regarding the transformation, operational strategies, and geographical expansion of these violent networks. Participants observed that insecurity in Nigeria initially appeared limited to certain regions, particularly the North-East during the early stages of the Boko Haram insurgency. However, due to delayed and inadequate government responses, violent groups became more sophisticated, fragmented into multiple factions, and expanded their operations into other regions of the country. The qualitative findings suggest that organized violence in Nigeria has gradually shifted from ideologically driven activities to economically motivated criminal enterprises characterized by extortion, territorial control, informal taxation, and kidnapping for ransom.

This supports the quantitative evidence indicating increasing prevalence of kidnapping and organized criminality across the country.

The findings further revealed that many violent groups now impose levies on rural populations, especially farmers and local traders, while kidnapping has increasingly become commercialized and detached from earlier political or ideological grievances. Participants also noted that these groups continuously adapt their methods based on prevailing economic realities and security conditions. Such adaptive strategies explain the persistence and expansion of organized violence despite various military and security interventions. The qualitative evidence equally highlighted the political dimension of organized violence. Participants argued that some political actors exploit armed groups during electoral processes and political contests, thereby contributing to the normalization and institutionalization of violence within the political system. This finding corroborates the quantitative evidence on weak governance structures and political instability as contributing factors to insecurity in Nigeria.

Similarly, participants explained that the spread of violence from the North-East to the North-West, North-Central, and parts of Southern Nigeria reflects the existence of coordinated operational networks and the ability of violent groups to exploit weak state presence and local vulnerabilities across regions. A participant during a KII session in Lagos noted that:

It is very bad! The security situation is such that one can never tell that if this particular place is safe, even in Lagos here we normally think is safe but it appears it is no more safe, we have had a lot of incidences of watch outs, cases of kidnapping, even in Lagos talk less of other places, especially the middle belt, the plateau state, where people are being killed as if they are chickens, the fact that generally when you describe the security situation in Nigeria, you will find out that things are getting worse. (KII with Community Member, Lagos).

The current state of insecurity in Nigeria is thus the result of a confluence of unaddressed early warning signs, evolving tactics by violent actors, and systemic governance failures. It is not merely a security issue but a national crisis with deep political, economic, and social implications. The normalization of violence, whether for economic gain or political leverage, poses a grave threat to national cohesion, economic stability, and the future of democratic governance.

Qualitative findings further provided detailed insights into the temporal, spatial, and behavioural patterns through which organized crimes are executed across different communities in Nigeria. One of the most consistent patterns identified across the narratives is that organized crimes are predominantly committed during nighttime hours or under conditions of reduced visibility and public vigilance. Nighttime offers the advantage of concealment and reduced interference from security operatives and community members. Activities such as armed robbery, cultist operations, and ritual killings are particularly frequent during late nights and early mornings when targets are isolated and neighborhoods are less populated. A participant during a KII session revealed that:

As regards your question on the specific time, it usually happens at night however, some of them do not fear to operate on broad day, they have the confidence to come out in the evening and some in the afternoon. They would just put you on the spot, in a crowded place, and if you just want to get out of that situation then you must be vigilant **(KII with Community Member, Lagos).**

However, while the night is recognized as the peak time, there is also clear evidence that daytime crimes are increasingly common, particularly during late mornings and afternoons. Respondents reported that criminals exploit the hours when most residents are away at work or school to carry out burglaries, assaults, and even abductions. This suggests an alarming trend of increased boldness and impunity among perpetrators, reflecting a broader breakdown in deterrence and public security enforcement. This corresponds to the view of a female participant who asserted that:

The crimes are more predominant in the early morning and afternoon hours. At least in the evenings, everyone is with their families. But it's worse in the afternoon when nobody is at home **(FGD with Women, Abuja)**

Additionally, crimes in public spaces during broad daylight—including markets, motor parks, and even football viewing centers—underscore that organized violence is no longer restricted to the cover of darkness. Incidents such as gang attacks or retaliatory assaults can erupt from minor triggers like football arguments, community disputes, or personal grudges. This signals that organized violence can occur spontaneously, driven by communal tensions or localized grievances, without adherence to predictable timeframes.

Situational Triggers and Opportunistic Patterns

The findings also suggest that many forms of organized crime are opportunistic. Criminals strike when a favorable condition presents itself—such as an individual being alone, a location being isolated, or the presence of a vulnerable target. Cultists and gang members reportedly monitor the routines of their targets, waiting for them to step outside their zones of protection (such as their community or family circle) before striking. Similarly, ritualists often take advantage of lonely roads or secluded areas to lure victims, particularly females who, as noted, are disproportionately targeted. These crimes are often carefully timed and planned, with perpetrators leveraging quiet moments in neighborhoods, secluded paths, or times of public distraction. For example, ritual killings are said to increase around periods when people are expected to travel or when crowds are absent, such as early mornings or just after dusk.

Spatial and Social Contexts of Crime Execution

Another dimension observed is the geographical and social context in which organized crimes take place. Common hotspots include hotels, drinking parlors, motor parks, markets, and isolated streets. These are areas with high traffic, transient populations, or minimal surveillance—ideal environments for criminal actors to blend in and execute operations with minimal detection. This trend indicates that organized criminals often embed their operations within everyday urban and semi-urban routines, making it harder for authorities to isolate or disrupt their networks. Also, it was revealed that some criminal activities—especially ritual killings and cult violence—are embedded within social structures like community hierarchies or youth associations, enabling them to persist over time despite increased awareness.

Victim Selection and Behavioral Dimensions

The perpetrators of organized crime are not only strategic in terms of time and space but also in target selection. Specific groups, particularly women and young adults, are frequently targeted either for their perceived vulnerability or material susceptibility. For instance, ritual killers reportedly lure female victims with material offers or promises, exploiting their trust or desperation. Similarly, cult groups and gang members often rely on intelligence and calculated surveillance, identifying when a person is isolated or traveling outside their safe zone before attacking. This reveals a prevalent pattern of surveillance and targeting, which elevates the risk for unsuspecting individuals and complicates policing efforts.

Discussion

Organized violence in Nigeria, as revealed by the study, is neither random nor spontaneous but rather a highly structured and adaptive phenomenon. Political violence emerged as the most pervasive form,

accounting for over fifty-three percent of all reported cases, with particularly high concentrations in Benin, Kano, and Ibadan. This finding points to a deep-seated crisis of governance, where electoral competition, political thuggery, and the manipulation of ethnic and religious identities by elites have turned violence into a routine tool for acquiring and maintaining power. This finding is strongly corroborated by existing theoretical and empirical literature. Tilly (1985) argued that organized coercion is central to state-building and governance, and in contemporary Nigeria, political violence has become institutionalized as a mechanism for contesting and consolidating power. The also aligns with the observations of Okoli (2023), who characterized organized violence in Nigeria as a "language of politics" through which elites and marginalized groups alike articulate demands and negotiate legitimacy. The high concentrations of political violence in Benin, Kano, and Ibadan are consistent with the work of Alemika and Chukwuma (2000), who documented the widespread nature of political thuggery and electoral violence in Nigerian urban centers. The finding also corroborates the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's (2015) classification of one-sided violence, where organized actors kill unarmed civilians in pursuit of political objectives. The deep-seated crisis of governance identified in the finding reflects what Reno (1998) described as "warlord politics," where rulers fragment coercive authority and delegate violence to loyal clients to maintain control. The manipulation of ethnic and religious identities by elites, as noted in the finding, aligns with Kaldor's (2012) theory of "new wars," which emphasizes identity-based mobilization as a defining feature of contemporary organized violence.

Tribal and ethnic violence followed, representing nearly nineteen percent of cases, and was most pronounced in Ibadan, Lagos, and the Federal Capital Territory, where diverse populations compete for land, political representation, and economic opportunities. This finding is corroborated by the literature on identity-based conflict in Nigeria. Okoli and Nwangwu (2023) argued that ethnic tensions remain potent triggers for conflict, often manipulated by political elites to incite unrest or consolidate power. The prominence of tribal violence in Ibadan, Lagos, and the FCT reflects the reality of Nigeria's major urban centers as melting pots of diverse ethnic groups, where competition over resources and political representation frequently escalates into organized violence. This finding aligns with Feldmeyer et al (2013), who found that racial and ethnic heterogeneity is associated with higher rates of violent crime. The concentration of tribal violence in these cities also corroborates the indigene-settler dynamics documented in the sociodemographic findings, where settlers and migrants nearly equal indigenes in the combined sample. The competition for land, political representation, and economic opportunities identified in the finding reflects what Galtung (1969) termed structural violence, where social institutions systematically harm or marginalize certain groups. The finding partially extends the literature by providing city-specific percentage breakdowns of tribal violence, revealing that while Ibadan and Lagos experience high levels of ethnic conflict, cities like Kano and Aba report very low levels. This variation suggests that ethnic heterogeneity alone does not predict violence; rather, local governance structures, economic conditions, and historical relationships between groups mediate the expression of ethnic tensions.

Religious violence, though lower in overall prevalence at about thirteen percent, remained a significant concern in the FCT and Kaduna, where religious identities closely align with political and ethnic fault lines. This finding corroborates the extensive literature on religious dimensions of organized violence in Nigeria. Thurston (2020) documented how religious identity has become a powerful axis of mobilization for groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP, and the finding that religious violence persists in the FCT and Kaduna reflects the religiously mixed and volatile nature of these regions. The lower overall prevalence of religious violence compared to political and tribal violence does not diminish its

significance; as Kaldor (2012) noted, identity-based violence can be particularly destructive because it targets civilians based on their communal affiliations and erodes the social fabric necessary for coexistence. The finding that religious violence is most pronounced in Kaduna and the FCT aligns with the work of Okoli and Nwangwu (2023), who identified the Middle Belt and North-Central regions as hotspots of ethno-religious conflict.

Beyond these categories, a substantial proportion of respondents nearly sixteen percent identified other forms of violence not captured by the main typologies, including cultism, armed robbery, ritual killings, and youth gang activities, with Aba recording an especially high incidence of such unspecified violence, suggesting the presence of localized criminal economies and evolving threat landscapes. This finding significantly extends the existing literature by documenting forms of organized violence that fall outside conventional typologies. While scholars such as Odekunle (2004) have enumerated crimes including assassination, assault, armed robbery, theft, and burglary, the finding that nearly sixteen percent of respondents identified "other" forms of violence indicates that the landscape of organized crime in Nigeria is evolving faster than existing classification systems can capture. The high incidence of unspecified violence in Aba is particularly noteworthy. Aba is a major commercial hub in southeastern Nigeria, and the finding suggests that the city may be experiencing forms of organized crime related to cultism, youth gang activity, or economic sabotage that have not been systematically documented in the literature. This finding corroborates the work of the Nigeria Conflict Trends (2021) database, which identified banditry, civil unrest, communal clash, domestic violence, farmer-herder conflict, and terrorism as categories of organized violence. The finding also aligns with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2021) observation that organized crime represents a new emerging threat to global security where people can fall victim in many ways and places. The presence of localized criminal economies in Aba and other cities reflects what Reno (1998) described as the criminalization of the state and the fusion of governance, patronage, and organized violence in African political systems.

The qualitative data enriched these quantitative findings by revealing the inner workings of criminal organizations. Participants described kidnapping as a commercialized enterprise involving informants, financial sponsors, negotiators, and even banking insiders who facilitate ransom payments without detection. This finding strongly corroborates the literature on the political economy of organized violence in Nigeria. Keen (2008) argued that war and organized violence can be understood as systems that create benefits as well as costs, and the description of kidnapping as a commercialized enterprise with multiple specialized roles perfectly illustrates this logic. The involvement of banking insiders in facilitating ransom payments reflects what Transparency International UK (2011) identified as the relationship between organized crime and corruption, where criminal networks make extensive use of corruption to carry out criminal activities and avoid investigation. The finding that kidnapping involves informants, financial sponsors, and negotiators aligns with the work of Ojewale (2025), who described the "economization of insecurity" in northern Nigeria, where state officials, armed groups, and local communities are linked in a mutually reinforcing cycle of organized coercion. The finding that kidnapping operations are calculated and deliberate rather than random or opportunistic corroborates the conceptual definition of organized violence as structured, intentional, and collective use of force by organized entities to pursue identifiable objectives (Shaw, 2009; Galtung, 1969). The involvement of multiple actors with distinct roles reflects what Tilly (1985) described as the organizational logic of coercion, where effective violence requires coordination, specialization, and command structures.

Ritual killings, once rare, have become disturbingly organized, with networks of observers, grave robbers, herbalists, and clients operating across multiple local governments. This finding significantly extends the existing literature, as ritual killings have received less scholarly attention compared to

insurgency, banditry, or kidnapping. The description of ritual killings as highly organized, involving networks of actors across multiple communities, challenges the perception that such crimes are isolated or primitive acts. The involvement of observers who identify targets, merchants who retrieve human parts, and herbalists who either request the parts for rituals or act as intermediaries reflects a sophisticated division of labor that mirrors other forms of organized crime. This finding corroborates the qualitative evidence from FGDs and KIIs that youth are notably at the center of this criminal activity, with perpetrators commonly falling within the age range of eighteen to forty years. The finding that ritual killings are driven by a "get-rich-quick" mentality, desperation, unemployment, and a distorted value system align with the anomie theory framework adopted in the study. Merton (1938) argued that when individuals cannot achieve culturally prescribed goals through legitimate means, they may turn to innovation, which includes criminal activities. Ritual killings represent an extreme form of innovation, where the pursuit of wealth leads individuals to adopt means that are not only illegal but also morally abhorrent. The finding that ritual killings have become normalized in some communities, with as many as twenty-three cases recorded within three months, reflects what Collins (2008) described as the situational dynamics of violence, where collective emotions such as fear, solidarity, and domination bind participants and observers alike.

Armed robbery and burglary, while sometimes petty, also display calculated tactics, such as criminals posing as passengers to lure commercial motorcyclists into isolated areas. This finding corroborates the literature on the opportunistic and adaptive nature of urban crime in Nigeria. The tactic of criminals posing as passengers to lure commercial motorcyclists into isolated areas reflects what Wikstrom (2009) described as the situational logic of violence, where offenders exploit specific environmental conditions and victim vulnerabilities. This finding partially refutes the assumption that organized crime is exclusively a nighttime phenomenon. When individuals resort to theft as a means of survival due to the absence of adequate social services, job opportunities, and government intervention, the line between economic survival and criminality becomes blurred. This finding corroborates the qualitative evidence that drug abuse and trafficking are intertwined with other forms of crime, especially among youth gangs, reflecting what Tilly (2003) observed about the relationship between access to drugs and guns and the escalation of violence.

Financial crimes, particularly internet fraud known as Yahoo-Yahoo, have become so normalized that some communities now view them as a legitimate hustle, with mothers even forming associations to defend their children when arrested. This finding significantly extends the literature by documenting the social normalization of cybercrime in Nigerian communities. The emergence of Mothers of Yahoo-Yahoo Boys associations, where women lobby the government for leniency toward their sons engaged in internet fraud, represents a profound collapse of moral values that has not been extensively documented in the criminological literature. This finding corroborates the anomie theory framework, where the disjuncture between culturally defined goals and socially approved means creates conditions where deviance becomes normalized. The finding that financial crimes are perceived as deeply embedded in Nigeria's criminal landscape, both domestically and internationally, aligns with the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2021), which identified cybercrime as a transnational organized crime requiring significant coordination and technological skills. This finding partially refutes the assumption that organized crime is primarily violent in nature; financial crimes like Yahoo-Yahoo are non-violent but equally harmful, with broader economic and reputational implications for the nation.

The study further found that criminal groups possess clear leadership hierarchies, assigned roles, and operational units, with some groups demonstrating technological sophistication by using POS machines

and bank transfers to collect ransoms or extortion payments. This finding strongly corroborates the literature on the organizational structure of criminal groups in Nigeria. The description of criminal groups as having gang groups, leadership, segments, and squads reflects what Okoli and Nwangwu (2023) described as the "interstitial sovereignty" of bandit networks, where authority is fragmented and violence is negotiated. The finding that criminals assess physical infrastructure, exploit security gaps, and execute operations with precision reflects what Tilly (1985) described as the organizational logic of coercion, where effective violence requires strategic planning and coordination. The technological sophistication documented in the finding, including the use of POS machines and bank transfers to collect ransoms, represents an evolution in criminal methods that challenges traditional law enforcement approaches. This finding aligns with the work of the United Kingdom Government (2015), which identified the impact of technology, especially cyber threats and wider technological developments, as a factor likely to influence the nature and extent of violent conflict. The possibility of collusion with external actors, including bank officials or government insiders, reflects what Transparency International UK (2011) identified as the relationship between organized crime and corruption, where criminal networks make extensive use of corruption to carry out criminal activities and avoid investigation.

Temporally, organized crimes predominantly occur at night, when visibility is low and communities are less vigilant, but there is a growing trend of daytime crimes, particularly during late mornings and afternoons when residents are away at work or school. This finding corroborates the existing literature on temporal patterns of crime while also extending it by documenting the emergence of daytime offenses. The predominance of nighttime crimes aligns with routine activity theory, where offenders exploit conditions of reduced visibility and lower guardianship. However, the growing trend of daytime crimes, particularly during late mornings and afternoons when residents are away at work or school, indicates an alarming increase in criminal boldness and impunity. This finding partially refutes the assumption that organized crime is exclusively a nighttime phenomenon. The finding that crimes in public spaces during broad daylight, including markets, motor parks, and even football viewing centers, are increasingly common reflects what Wikstrom (2009) described as the situational logic of violence, where offenders exploit specific environmental conditions and victim vulnerabilities. The finding that organized violence can occur spontaneously, driven by communal tensions or localized grievances without adherence to predictable timeframes, suggests that temporal patterns are not fixed but evolve in response to changing security conditions and law enforcement strategies.

Spatially, crime hotspots include hotels, drinking parlors, motor parks, markets, isolated roads, and uncompleted buildings, which serve as hideouts and operational bases. This finding corroborates the literature on the spatial distribution of crime in urban areas. The identification of hotels, drinking parlors, and motor parks as hotspots reflects what Moser (2004) described as the social and spatial contexts where economic violence, including organized crime, robbery, street theft, and kidnapping, occurs in urban centers. The finding that uncompleted buildings and slum settlements serve as hideouts for gangs and criminal meetings aligns with the physical environment factors identified in the qualitative findings, where abandoned buildings and poor urban planning provide fertile ground for crimes to flourish. This finding reflects what Kubrin and Wo (2015) described as the ecological school of criminology, which focuses on the conditions within urban settlements and communities that determine the dynamics of crime. The study also documented a troubling evolution in the geography of violence: insecurity that once appeared limited to the North-East has now spread to the North-West, North-Central, and parts of Southern Nigeria, with violent groups adapting their tactics, fragmenting into factions, and shifting from ideologically driven insurgency to economically motivated banditry and

kidnapping. This finding strongly corroborates the literature on the diffusion of conflict and the regionalization of violence in Nigeria. Okoli and Nwangwu (2023) documented the emergence of banditry in the northwest as a significant form of organized violence, while Ojewale (2025) described banditry as "a system of organized coercion that regulates access to land, livestock, and protection." The shift from ideologically driven insurgency to economically motivated criminal enterprises reflect what Kaldor (2012) described as the transformation of modern conflicts, where distinctions between political and criminal violence have blurred. The spread of violence from the North-East to other regions of the country, facilitated by delayed and inadequate government responses, reflects what the World Bank and United Nations (2018) identified as the fluid nature of contemporary conflict, where the same networks that allow for increased trade and information flow can be exploited by organized crime and conflict entrepreneurs to spread violence across borders. This expansion has allowed criminal networks to grow more sophisticated and emboldened over time, a pattern that aligns with Keen's (2008) observation that violence persists because it is rational and profitable, redistributing wealth, consolidating power, and regulating markets.

Conclusion

This study examined the causes and manifestations of organised violence and crime in selected urban centres in Nigeria and found that the phenomenon is driven by a combination of socio-economic deprivation, unemployment, poverty, weak governance, corruption, identity-based tensions, and institutional failures. The findings revealed that organised violence manifests in diverse forms, including political violence, ethnic and religious conflicts, cultism, kidnapping, armed robbery, and other criminal activities, with significant consequences for national unity, social cohesion, and urban development. The study concludes that organised violence and crime are multidimensional challenges that cannot be addressed through security measures alone. Rather, effective responses require a holistic approach that combines good governance, economic empowerment, institutional strengthening, community participation, and social justice to promote sustainable peace, security, and national integration in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government should intensify efforts toward youth employment creation and economic empowerment through vocational training, entrepreneurship development, skills acquisition programmes, and support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This is necessary because unemployment, poverty, and economic hardship were identified as major drivers of organised violence and criminal activities.
2. Security institutions, particularly the Nigeria Police Force and other law enforcement agencies, should be adequately funded, equipped, and trained to improve intelligence gathering, crime prevention, and rapid response capabilities. Improved welfare packages and operational resources are essential for enhancing their effectiveness.
3. Government should strengthen accountability mechanisms within security agencies to address corruption, collusion with criminal groups, and abuse of power. Regular monitoring, professional training, and the deployment of modern surveillance technologies should be prioritised.
4. Community policing initiatives should be expanded and strengthened by promoting collaboration between security agencies, traditional institutions, community leaders, and local

residents. Community participation in intelligence gathering and crime prevention can significantly improve security outcomes.

5. Electoral and governance reforms should be implemented to reduce political violence, which emerged as the most prevalent form of organised violence across the study locations. Transparent electoral processes, political accountability, and inclusive governance can help reduce tensions associated with political competition.
6. Government should promote social cohesion through inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue, peace education, and inclusive development policies aimed at reducing identity-based grievances that often fuel ethnic and religious violence.
7. Traditional institutions, religious organisations, families, and educational institutions should be supported to promote moral values, civic responsibility, and peaceful coexistence among citizens, particularly young people who constitute the most vulnerable group to recruitment into criminal networks.
8. The Federal Government should adopt an integrated security strategy that combines good governance, poverty reduction, youth empowerment, intelligence-led policing, community policing, and stricter control of small arms and light weapons to address the root causes of organised violence and crime in Nigeria.

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