



PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE JUDICIARY AND CRIME CONTROL IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This work investigated public perception of the judiciary and crime control in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study adopted the mixed methods research design, using the multistage sampling procedure in the selection of 378 respondents. The questionnaire and In-Depth Interview (IDI) guide served as instruments for data collection. The quantitative data were coded and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Frequency tables were used to analyze, describe and present the quantitative data, while the qualitative data were transcribed manually and analyzed using thematic analysis. This study found that there is generally a negative perception of the judiciary in Anambra State. Erosion of public trust was found to be the major consequence of the negative perception of the judiciary in Anambra State. Finally, this study found that to reduce corruption in the judiciary, other arms of government should not unduly interfere in the activities of the judiciary. Based on the findings of the study, the work recommended that financial autonomy for the judiciary must be prioritized to ensure that courts have the necessary resources to function efficiently. The work further recommended that implementing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation and arbitration can alleviate the burden on courts by providing litigants with faster and more cost-effective means of resolving disputes.

Keywords: Crime control, Judiciary and crime control, Justice, Law, Public Perception

INTRODUCTION

According to Edosa and Fenemigbo (2014), the judiciary plays a very important role in crime control all over the world. It is the branch of government responsible for interpreting laws and administering justice, made up of a system of courts and a body of judges. In Nigeria, studies have shown that the judiciary faces much challenges (Ezenwa, 2019; Adegboruwa, 202; Ojelu & Dania, 2022; Okenyodo, 2023). These challenges ranges from independence, credibility, poor remuneration to interference by the executive arm of government, among others. However, there seems to be dearth of empirical studies on how these challenges affect the role of judiciary in crime control. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate public perception of the judiciary and crime control in Anambra State, Southeastern Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The judiciary plays a very important role in crime control all over the world. It is the branch of government responsible for interpreting laws and administering justice, made up of a system of courts and a body of judges (Edosa & Fenemigbo, 2014). According to Omoregie (2022), the Judiciary is an indispensable part of every nation-state and nation-building effort. Of all the branches of government, the Judiciary occupies a very special place. It is the only institution that is traditionally charged with formally dispensing justice according to law and facts. However, the Judiciary faces a lot of challenges as an agent of crime control. Ojelu and Dania



(2022) discovered that the major challenge for the judiciary will remain its potential to be truly independent and deliver just decisions with speed. They also noted that lack of credibility, poor remuneration, and interference of the executive arm of government are all challenges that have warped people's perception of the judiciary.

Adegboruwa (2021) decried that of all the challenges facing the judiciary, the government's strong-arm tactics are the most potent way the judiciary is influenced in its performance as a fearless and impartial arbiter. He further regretted that it has become the norm that a sitting judge can be abruptly stripped of his immunity without recourse to the provisions of the law. Okenyodo (2023) similarly averred that the judiciary has experienced innumerable challenges, ranging from perceived corrupt practices by judicial officers to interference by politicians; low level of public trust in the judiciary, and the poor state of infrastructure which includes inefficient filing and case management systems. Adegboruwa (2021) revealed that the Criminal Justice System in Nigeria, especially the Judiciary is perceived as corrupt and inefficient.

Salau (2022) reported that a recent survey on citizens' perceptions of governance in Nigeria found that about 71 percent of Nigerians lack trust in the Judiciary and the entire criminal justice system. Okenyodo (2023) revealed that incidents of partisanship, corruption, and incompetence have worsened the already negative public perception of the Judiciary as an agent of crime control in Nigeria. Ayodeji and Odukoya (2014) stated that the spate of judicial corruption in the country has deepened the lack of trust that people have in the Judiciary and has contributed to the generally negative perception people have towards the Judiciary. They further opined that there is a widespread perception that judges are easily bribed and litigants hardly rely on the courts to render impartial judgments. According to Aver and Orban (2014), the Judiciary in Nigeria has manifested gross ineptitude and inefficiency in the fight against crime. The image of the Judiciary in Nigeria today is that of an institution where anything goes, thus deepening the lack of trust Nigerians have for the Criminal Justice System generally and the Judiciary in particular. Zubairu (2020) argued that the corrupt practices pervasive among the Nigerian Judiciary include; bribery, fraud, nepotism, and cronyism.

Okenyodo (2023) argued that political interference by the executive arm of government especially has weakened the Judiciary in Nigeria. Monye et al (2020) further opined that delay in the trial of criminal cases has rendered the Judiciary largely ineffective in Nigeria. They further decried that delays in court cases pose a significant challenge to the Nigerian Judiciary, undermining its credibility, efficiency, and the rule of law. Ani (2022) further stated that in such situations most of the time, the suspect is incarcerated and left to languish in custody. Some of the suspects even die before the case is concluded or spend more time than the term of imprisonment they would have served if they had been convicted. Many, even when finally discharged and acquitted, may have learned more criminal tendencies than they had before apprehension by the Police. Incarceration in Nigeria correctional facilities has a way of making deviants full-fledged criminals (Imumolen, 2020).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work adopts the theory of separation of powers as its framework. The theory is apt and suitable for this work because it clearly advocates for the separation of governmental powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial arms of government. It also advocates the important principle of checks and balances which is key in checking the excesses of the government, and in preventing the unconstitutional use of governmental powers to oppress people. It has often been argued that the Judiciary over the years has had their independence breached through the incessant interferences of the other arms of government. It thus becomes



necessary to clearly delineate and separate the powers of the three arms of government to ensure that each arm, especially the Judiciary, which is the focus of this study retains the right to act independently, free from external interference. The interference of the executive and legislative arms of government in the activities of the Judiciary continues to influence the negative perception and narrative the public has about the Judiciary.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the mixed methods approach of data collection which entails a combination of quantitative and qualitative approach in data collection and presentation. A sample size of 378 was mathematically derived for this study. The sample size was determined statistically using the Taro Yamane formula. A questionnaire schedule was used to collect the quantitative data, while the In-Depth Interview (IDI) was used to collect the qualitative data. The quantitative data collected from the field was processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25. However, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution tables and simple percentages. The data was also presented using tables and charts. Furthermore, the hypotheses were tested using the chi-square (χ^2) inferential statistics. This was done to test the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. On the other hand, the qualitative data collected through IDI was analyzed thematically. This involved first transcribing the interviews, and thereafter reading the interview notes and transcripts to gain an overview of the body and context of the data collected. Subsequently, the variables and ideas in the data were coded and organized under distinct themes. Each theme was discussed and necessary illustrative quotes were extracted to support and elucidate the quantitative data.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Three hundred and seventy-eight (378) copies of questionnaire were administered by the researcher. Only 365 (96.56%) of the questionnaires were correctly filled and returned. The analysis for this study was consequently done with the 365 correctly filled and done questionnaire.

Socio-demographic Data of Respondents

This sub-section deals with the socio-demographic data of respondents like gender, age, marital status, educational attainment, religious affiliation, occupation and place of residence as presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: Socio-demographic data of respondents

| Variables | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------|
| GENDER | | |
| Male | 209 | 57.3 |
| Female | 156 | 42.7 |
| Total | 365 | 100 |
| AGE | | |
| 18-25 | 71 | 19.5 |
| 26-33 | 105 | 28.8 |
| 34-41 | 22 | 6.0 |
| 42-49 | 100 | 27.4 |
| 50-57 | 56 | 15.3 |
| 58-65 | 10 | 2.7 |
| 66 years and above | 1 | 0.3 |



| | | |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Total | 365 | 100 |
| MARITAL STATUS | | |
| Single | 250 | 68.5 |
| Married | 99 | 27.1 |
| Divorced | 3 | 0.8 |
| Separated | 5 | 1.4 |
| Widowed | 8 | 2.2 |
| Total | 365 | 100 |
| EDUCATION | | |
| FSLC | 40 | 11.0 |
| SSCE/GCE | 132 | 36.2 |
| OND/NCE | 84 | 23.0 |
| Bachelor's degree/HND | 88 | 24.1 |
| Postgraduate degree | 21 | 5.8 |
| Total | 365 | 100 |
| RELIGION | | |
| African Traditional Religion | 40 | 11.0 |
| Christianity | 321 | 87.9 |
| Islam | 4 | 1.1 |
| Total | 365 | 100 |
| OCCUPATION | | |
| Unemployed | 6 | 1.6 |
| Student | 117 | 32.1 |
| Self-employed | 41 | 11.2 |
| Civil/Public servant | 47 | 12.9 |
| Farmer | 40 | 11.0 |
| Trader | 81 | 22.2 |
| Other | 33 | 9.0 |
| Total | 365 | 100 |
| RESIDENCE | | |
| Rural area | 156 | 42.7 |
| Urban area | 209 | 57.3 |
| Total | 365 | 100 |

Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 shows that 57.3% of the respondents were males, while 42.7% were females. Thus, there were more male respondents than female respondents for this study. In terms of the age distribution of the respondents, 19.5% are aged 18-25 years, 28.8% are aged 26-33 years, 6% are aged 34-41, 27.4% are aged 42-49, 15.3% are aged 50-57 years, 2.7% are aged 58-65 years, while 0.3% are aged 66 years and above, revealing that a substantial proportion of the surveyed population was made up of young people. For marital status, 68.5% are single, 27.1% are married, 0.8% are divorced, 1.4% are separated, while 2.2% are widowed. These statistics provide insight into current marital trends within the surveyed population, highlighting a predominance of single individuals and suggesting potential shifts in societal values regarding marriage and relationships. In terms of educational attainment, 11% have FSLC, 36.2% have an SSCE/GCE, 23% have an OND/NCE, 24.1% have a Bachelor's degree/HND, while 5.8% have a postgraduate degree, revealing an appreciable disposition towards higher education. In terms of religion, 87.9% are Christians, 11% are adherents of African Traditional Religion, while 1.1% are Muslims. This shows that majority of the respondents are Christians. This is not surprising given that Anambra is a south-eastern state in Nigeria, a region known for having a



predominant Christian population. By their occupation, 1.6% of the respondents are unemployed, 32.1% are students, 11.2% are self-employed, 12.9% are civil/public servants, 11% are farmers, 22.2% are traders, while 9% belong to other occupations that were not specified. This illustrates a diverse occupational structure with significant representation from students and traders, alongside stable contributions from self-employed individuals and civil servants. In terms of place of residence, 42.7% are rural dwellers, while 57.3% are urban dwellers, **indicating a trend toward urbanization that brings both opportunities and challenges for both urban and rural populations**

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question 1: How do the public perceive the role of the judiciary in crime control in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Respondents’ views on whether they have a positive perception of the Judiciary

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| Strongly agree | 6 | 1.6 |
| Agree | 53 | 14.5 |
| Neutral | 6 | 1.6 |
| Disagree | 150 | 41.1 |
| Strongly disagree | 150 | 41.1 |
| Total | 365 | 100.0 |

Field Survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 2 reveals a predominantly negative perception of the judiciary among respondents, with a significant majority expressing disagreement with the notion that they have a positive view of the judicial system. Specifically, only 16.1% of respondents (1.6% strongly agree and 14.5% agree) perceive the judiciary positively, while an overwhelming 82.2% (41.1% disagree and 41.1% strongly disagree) express negative sentiments towards it. The neutral response rate is notably low at just 1.6%, indicating that respondents are largely polarized in their views rather than ambivalent or indifferent about the judiciary’s performance or integrity. This stark contrast suggests a crisis of confidence in the judicial system, which may stem from various factors such as perceived corruption, inefficiency, lack of access to justice, or inadequate legal representation. The high percentage of disagreement signals potential systemic issues within the judiciary that could undermine public trust and confidence in legal institutions, which are fundamental to upholding rule of law and ensuring justice in society. This finding resonates with the submission of an IDI participant:

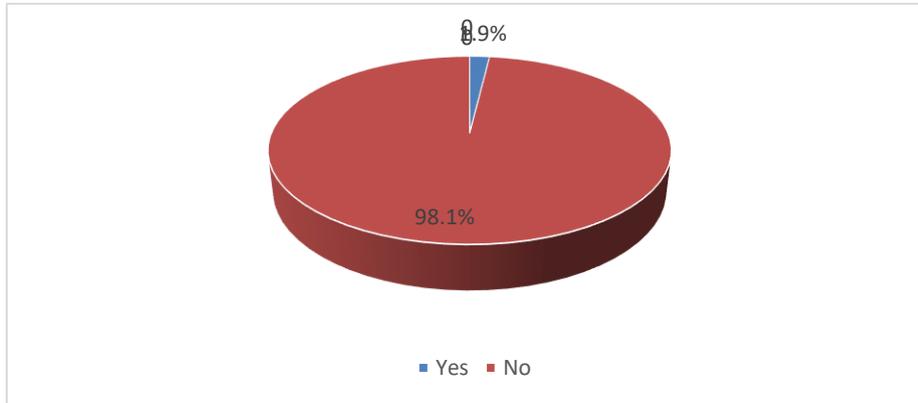
I have always felt that our judicial system is not working for us; it feels like it’s more about who you know than what is right or wrong. I remember when my uncle had a land dispute; he went to court thinking he would get justice because he was rightfully entitled to his property according to the law. But after years of hearings and delays, he realized that no matter how strong his case was, he would not win simply because he did not have connections or money to bribe anyone involved in the process. This experience left him disillusioned and made me question whether we can ever rely on our courts for fair treatment. I often hear people say they prefer settling disputes outside of court because they believe it’s faster and less corruptible than going through what we call ‘justice.’ It’s sad because I want to believe in our laws and our judges; I want to feel safe knowing that if something happens to me, I can go to court and get help without fear of bias or corruption influencing the outcome (Female, 38 years, Civil Servant, Awka).

According to another IDI participant:

I used to think that if you go to court with evidence and truth on your side, you would win your



case. But after witnessing one particular trial over some business issues where the person was clearly wronged but lost because he couldn't afford bribes for the judges or lawyers involved, it opened my eyes. The whole process felt rigged against ordinary people like us who can't play those games. Now I tell my friends not to bother going to court unless they have money to throw around; otherwise, it's just a waste of time (Male, 47 years, Businessman, Nnewi).



Field Survey, 2024

Figure 1: Respondents' views on whether they see the judiciary as transparent

The data presented in Figure 1 reveals a stark perception of the judiciary's transparency among respondents, with an overwhelming 98.1% indicating that they do not view the judiciary as transparent, while only a mere 1.9% believe it is. This significant disparity suggests a profound distrust in the judicial system, which could stem from various factors such as perceived corruption, inefficiency, or lack of accountability within the judiciary.

According to an IDI participant:

Honestly, I don't trust our courts at all. Whenever I hear about a case being decided, I just think about how much money was involved or who knows who. It's like justice is for sale here. Just look at Peter Obi's case. We all know that Peter Obi won the election and was supposed to win the case, but see how the whole thing ended. The judges are supposed to be impartial but it feels like they are part of the problem (Male, 59 years, Businessman, Awka).

Table 3: Respondents' views on how they would rate the performance of the judiciary in curbing the rate of crime in Anambra State

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Very High | 4 | 1.1 |
| High | 4 | 1.1 |
| Very low | 152 | 41.6 |
| Low | 205 | 56.2 |
| Total | 365 | 100.0 |

Field Survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 3 indicates a significant level of dissatisfaction among respondents regarding the performance of the judiciary in curbing crime in Anambra State. With only 1.1% rating the judiciary's performance as "Very High" and another 1.1% as "High," it is evident



that a mere fraction of the population holds a positive view of judicial effectiveness. In stark contrast, a combined total of 97.8% of respondents rated the judiciary’s performance as either “Very Low” (41.6%) or “Low” (56.2%). This overwhelming majority suggests a pervasive sentiment that the judiciary is failing to adequately address crime rates in the region, which may be attributed to various factors including perceived corruption, inefficiency, and lack of trust in legal institutions.

Research Question 2: What are the consequences of the negative perception of the judiciary in crime control in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Respondents’ views on the consequences of the negative perception of the judiciary

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------|--------------|
| Erosion of public trust | 178 | 48.8 |
| It undermines the rule of law | 79 | 21.6 |
| It negatively impacts access to justice | 57 | 15.6 |
| It erodes the legitimacy of the Judiciary | 51 | 14.0 |
| Total | 365 | 100.0 |

Field Survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 4 reflects a significant concern among respondents regarding the negative perception of the judiciary and its consequences. The most prominent response, accounting for 48.8%, indicates that many believe this negative perception leads to an erosion of public trust in the judicial system. This erosion of trust can have far-reaching implications, as public confidence is essential for the effective functioning of any legal system. When citizens do not trust the judiciary, they may be less likely to seek legal recourse or comply with judicial decisions, thereby undermining the rule of law itself, which was noted by 21.6% of respondents. Furthermore, a negative perception can hinder access to justice (15.6%), as individuals may feel discouraged from pursuing legal action if they believe the system is biased or ineffective. Lastly, 14% of respondents highlighted that such perceptions erode the legitimacy of the judiciary, suggesting that when people view judges and courts as untrustworthy or corrupt, it diminishes their authority and effectiveness in upholding justice.

An IDI participant stated:

You see, when people start to lose faith in our courts, it creates a dangerous cycle. They begin to think that justice is only for those who can afford it or those who know someone in power. This belief is not just harmful; it’s destructive because it means that many will choose to settle disputes outside the legal framework rather than trusting that they will get a fair hearing in court. The erosion of public trust is alarming; almost half of those surveyed feel this way! If we don’t address this issue head-on, we risk creating a society where people no longer respect or adhere to court rulings (Female, 38 years, Civil Servant, Awka).

According to another IDI participant:

The negative perception surrounding our judiciary does indeed undermine the rule of law. When citizens perceive judges as biased or corrupt, they start questioning every ruling made by our courts. This skepticism not only affects individual cases but also has broader implications for our democracy and governance. People begin to think that there’s no point in seeking justice through formal channels because they believe outcomes are predetermined by favoritism rather than fairness and legality. It’s heartbreaking to see how this mindset limits access to justice;



many individuals simply give up before even trying because they feel like they're fighting against an unfair system (Female, 33 years, Legal Practitioner, Awka).

Table 5: Respondents' views on whether they would be eager to settle any dispute in court

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes | 11 | 3.0 |
| No | 354 | 97.0 |
| Total | 365 | 100.0 |

Field Survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 5 indicates a significant reluctance among respondents to settle disputes in court, with only 3% expressing eagerness to pursue legal action, while a staggering 97% indicated they would prefer not to engage in the court system. This overwhelming preference against litigation may reflect various factors, including perceptions of the judicial process, concerns about costs and time involved, or a belief in alternative dispute resolution methods.

Research Question 3: What measures can be put in place to rid the judiciary of negative perception in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Table 6: Respondents' views on whether the judiciary can be strengthened to be more effective

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes | 259 | 71.0 |
| No | 106 | 29.0 |
| Total | 365 | 100.0 |

Field Survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 6 indicates a significant majority of respondents, 71%, believe that the judiciary can be strengthened to enhance its effectiveness, while only 29% disagree with this notion. This overwhelming support suggests a widespread recognition of the potential for reform within the judicial system, reflecting a collective desire for improvements that could lead to more efficient and fair legal processes. The responses may stem from various concerns regarding current judicial practices, including delays in case processing, perceived corruption, and inadequate resources. The belief that strengthening the judiciary is possible implies an acknowledgment of existing weaknesses but also a sense of optimism about reforms that could address these issues. It highlights a public sentiment that values justice and is hopeful for systemic changes that could bolster the integrity and functionality of the judiciary.

Table 7: Respondents' views on measures to strengthen the judiciary

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------|--------------|
| Justice should be accessible to everyone | 7 | 2.7 |
| Judges should be appointed based on merit | 52 | 20.1 |
| Other arms of government should not unduly interfere in the activities of the Judiciary | 102 | 39.4 |
| The Judiciary should be reformed totally | 98 | 37.8 |
| Total | 259 | 100.0 |

Field Survey, 2024



The data presented in Table 7 reflects the perspectives of respondents regarding measures to strengthen the judiciary, highlighting a significant concern for judicial independence and reform. The highest percentage of responses (39.4%) indicates that many believe other arms of government should not unduly interfere in the activities of the judiciary, suggesting a strong desire for judicial autonomy. This is closely followed by those advocating for total reform of the judiciary (37.8%), which underscores a recognition of systemic issues that may hinder effective justice delivery. In contrast, only 20.1% support the notion that judges should be appointed based on merit, indicating a potential lack of confidence in current appointment processes or criteria. Lastly, a mere 2.7% believe that justice should be accessible to everyone, which raises concerns about equity and accessibility within the judicial system itself. Overall, these findings suggest a pressing need for both structural reforms and safeguards to ensure that the judiciary operates independently from political influences while also being responsive to the needs of all citizens.

According to an IDI participant:

The integrity of our judiciary is paramount; however, it has been compromised by undue interference from other branches of government. When politicians meddle in judicial appointments or decisions, it erodes public trust and undermines justice. We need to establish clear boundaries that protect judges from external pressures so they can make impartial decisions based solely on law and facts. Reforming our judiciary is not just about changing laws; it's about creating an environment where judges can operate without fear or favour. We must prioritize merit-based appointments to ensure that only qualified individuals serve on the bench (Male, 42 years, Legal Practitioner, Awka).

According to another IDI participant:

Access to justice remains a critical issue in Nigeria; unfortunately, many citizens feel alienated from the legal system due to its complexities and perceived biases. I am an advocate of judicial reform, but we must also focus on making justice accessible to everyone, this means simplifying processes and ensuring legal representation for those who cannot afford it. Moreover, it is essential that we keep politics out of our courts; when government officials intervene in judicial matters, it creates an environment ripe for corruption and injustice. A truly independent judiciary is key to upholding democracy and protecting citizens' rights (Female, 33 years, Legal Practitioner, Awka).

Another IDI participant suggested a different strategy:

I believe that if we want to restore faith in our judiciary, we must start by holding those who betray their oath accountable. Corruption has become so rampant that people no longer trust the courts to deliver justice. When judges are caught taking bribes or engaging in unethical behaviour, they should face severe consequences. It is not just about punishment; it is about sending a strong message that corruption will not be tolerated. Only then can we begin to rebuild our legal system and ensure that it serves the people fairly (Female, 38 years, Civil Servant, Awka).

Another IDI participant supported the idea of punishing corrupt judicial officers:

It is crucial for our country to take decisive action against corrupt judges. If these individuals are allowed to operate without fear of repercussions, it undermines everything our judiciary stands for. I think every case of corruption should be investigated thoroughly, and those found guilty must face appropriate penalties. This is not only about justice for those affected but also about creating a culture where integrity is valued and upheld in our courts. We need to show



that there are real consequences for corruption, which will hopefully deter others from engaging in such practices (Male, 71 years, Retiree, Nnewi).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study found that there is generally a negative perception of the judiciary in Anambra State. This finding aligns with the findings of various studies. For instance, a study by Ijwereme (2015) on public perceptions of judicial integrity in Nigeria highlighted that many citizens view the judiciary as susceptible to political influence and corruption. Moreover, a research conducted by Abdullahi (2014) examined public trust in institutions across different Nigerian states and found that the judiciary consistently ranked low compared to other institutions such as law enforcement and educational bodies. The findings suggest that systemic issues within the judiciary contribute to a broader distrust among citizens. In Anambra State specifically, this distrust may be exacerbated by high-profile cases where judicial outcomes appeared to favour certain political elites over ordinary citizens, further entrenching negative perceptions. Additionally, a study by Ameh (2023) explored how socio-economic factors influence perceptions of justice delivery in Nigeria. The study revealed that areas with higher levels of poverty and unemployment tend to exhibit more pronounced skepticism towards judicial institutions. Furthermore, international perspectives on judicial perception can also shed light on this issue.

Erosion of public trust was found to be the major consequence of the negative perception of the judiciary in Anambra State. Aligning this finding with other studies reveals a broader trend observed in different places. For instance, a study conducted by Edosa and Fenemigbo (2014) emphasizes that public trust in the judiciary is crucial for maintaining social order and compliance with laws. They argued that when individuals believe that the legal system operates fairly and justly, they are more likely to adhere to its rulings and engage positively with legal institutions. Conversely, when trust erodes due to perceived injustices or corruption, individuals may resort to alternative dispute resolution mechanisms or even vigilante justice. Moreover, a study by Filgueiras (2013) revealed how perceptions of judicial integrity directly impact community engagement with law enforcement and judicial systems. His findings indicated that communities with low trust in their judicial systems experience higher rates of crime and lower levels of cooperation with law enforcement agencies. This correlation suggests that the erosion of trust not only affects individual attitudes towards the judiciary but also has broader implications for societal stability and safety. Additionally, a study by Adeleke and Olayanju (2014) found similar patterns where public confidence in the judiciary was linked to perceptions of fairness and effectiveness.

This study found that to reduce corruption in the judiciary, other arms of government should not unduly interfere in the activities of the judiciary. This finding aligns with a substantial body of research indicating that judicial independence is essential for reducing corruption. When political entities exert influence over judicial processes, it undermines the integrity of legal systems, leading to biased rulings and a lack of public trust in judicial outcomes (Adegboruwa, 2021). One significant study by Barnes and Bracewell (2013) emphasized that countries with independent judiciaries tend to have lower levels of corruption. They further noted that when judges are free from external pressures, they are more likely to make decisions based on legal merits rather than political considerations. They also argued that an independent judiciary serves as a check on governmental power, thereby fostering an environment where corruption can be effectively addressed. Furthermore, a study conducted by Bazuaye and Oriakhogba (2016) found that when politicians have the ability to sway judicial decisions, it creates an environment ripe for corruption. Their research indicated that strengthening judicial



independence can mitigate these risks by ensuring that judges are insulated from political pressures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Financial autonomy for the judiciary must be prioritized to ensure that courts have the necessary resources to function efficiently. This includes timely budget approvals and direct access to funds, which would enable courts to invest in infrastructure, technology, and human resources. The establishment of a dedicated judicial fund could provide a stable financial base for ongoing improvements and innovations within the system.
2. There is an urgent need for judicial reforms aimed at streamlining processes and reducing delays in case resolution. Implementing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation and arbitration can alleviate the burden on courts by providing litigants with faster and more cost-effective means of resolving disputes.

CONCLUSION

In examining the public perception of the judiciary and crime control in Anambra State, Nigeria, it becomes evident that the relationship between citizens and the judicial system is complex and multifaceted. The judiciary is often viewed through a lens of skepticism, primarily due to historical issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and a perceived lack of accountability. These factors contribute significantly to the public's trust—or lack thereof—in the legal system. Many citizens feel that justice is not always served equitably, leading to a general disillusionment with legal processes. This sentiment is exacerbated by high-profile cases where judicial outcomes appear influenced by political or economic pressures rather than being grounded in law and fairness. Moreover, crime control measures implemented by law enforcement agencies are frequently scrutinized. The public perception of these agencies is often marred by allegations of human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, and a heavy-handed approach to policing. Such actions can lead to a cycle of mistrust where communities become wary of engaging with law enforcement for fear of victimization rather than protection. This dynamic creates an environment where crime may flourish unchecked due to the lack of cooperation between citizens and police forces. The implications of these perceptions are profound. When citizens do not trust their judiciary or law enforcement agencies, they are less likely to report crimes or seek legal recourse when wronged. This reluctance can result in underreporting of criminal activities and a failure to hold offenders accountable, ultimately undermining efforts at crime control. Additionally, this erosion of trust can lead to alternative forms of justice emerging within communities such as vigilante groups which may further complicate the landscape of law enforcement and judicial effectiveness.

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