



AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING CRIME IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the concept of crime in Northern Nigeria using depictions in literature emerging from Northern Nigeria and also through a criminological study of data on crime obtained from the region. The study involved a critical analysis of the points of convergence and divergence of the depiction of crime in Abubakar Ibrahim's Season of Crimson Blossoms and data on crime collected from 321 respondents using questionnaires to explore crime in terms of its causatives, process, impacts, and measures for managing it. The central question that guided this research was: how do people in Northern Nigeria understand crime, its causes, and possible solutions to preventing it? Thus, this study was both qualitative and quantitative. From the thematic analysis of the selected novel and the findings from the analysed data, the study discovered that crime is a social issue that plagues Northern Nigeria. In addition, the perpetration of crime is a violation of the cultural norms in Northern Nigeria, which is the Hausa culture influenced by Islamic practices. Among other causes, low level of formal education is the major cause of crime in the region. While it does not necessarily mean that formally educated persons do not engage in crime, the proclivity is lower among persons who have acquired formal education compared to those who have not. This study, based on the findings, maintains that there is a need for attainment of higher levels of education to enhance the development of thinking which deepens knowledge, furthers personality, changes attitudes and trains special skills. It is such a development that would attenuate crimes in the study area.

Keywords: Literary Studies, Criminology, Crime, Novel, Northern Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Crime is a macabre that has bedevilled the human society and scholars from several fields have engaged in critical discourse to understand the foundation for the manifestation of crime, the processes of crime and the measures to curb or reduce the occurrence of crime. The process of understanding the causatives, the consequences and the counter actions to crime is not restricted to disciplines such as Law and Criminology and this is because, even in the fields of science, arts, and the humanities, crime remains a topical issue. Thus, while studies in criminology explore crime from a quantitative perspective, studies in crime in the humanities, for example, literary studies, centres on exploring critical thoughts, postulations, and theories that explain the phenomenon of crime. It is on this note that this

study examines the concept of crime in Northern Nigeria from the perspectives of criminological and literary studies. The paper seeks to critically provide answer to the question: how do people in Northern Nigeria understand crime in terms of its causes, its processes and its possible solutions either to curb or to mitigate its occurrence? This will be achieved through a thematic analysis of Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, which is a microcosm of the socio-political milieu of Northern Nigeria and an analysis of crime data obtained from the Northern Nigeria.

The choice of Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* is as result of several factors. First, the novel won Nigerian prize for Literature in 2016 among other several awards. This is as a result of the novel's apt engagement with issues that permeate the Nigerian society – specifically Northern Nigeria. Second, Abubakar Ibrahim was born into a Hausa

ethnic group and he grew up in Jos, Plateau State, a city notorious for ethnic and religious unrests. Aside the novel's concerns with the riots and its attendant destruction and trauma, it also captures the manifestation of crimes. Therefore, this paper explores how the conception of crime in the novel aligns with the findings of the crime data towards understanding the causes, processes and solutions to crime in Northern Nigeria.

In essence, this study demonstrates how the analytical perspectives of different disciplines can be used to offer a discourse on a single concept and occurrence. The specific objectives of the study are: to portray data regarding crime obtained from Northern Nigeria, to explore the conception of crime in Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, and to understand the perception of crime in Northern Nigeria using the portrayal of crime in the selected novel and the crime data obtained from the region.

The concept of crime

The everyday use of the term 'crime' might give the impression that the meaning of the term is obvious or that the term is self-explanatory. The concept of crime has proven to be a polemical concept in criminology. Many definitions have been advanced but none has been certified to be universally acceptable, yet defining of crime is pivotal to the understanding of criminology as a discipline and in criminological discourse. According to Fattah (1997, p.29), Criminology may be loosely defined as the study of crime and a definition of crime is therefore essential for our understanding of what criminology is all about, and in determining who is a criminal, and for delineating the subject matter of criminology. To Fattah, the problem with defining crime is a "thorny issues" dating as far back as the beginning of criminology. In The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, it was argued that:

...crime is not a single simple phenomenon that can be examined, analyzed and described in one piece. It occurs in every part of the country and in every stratum of society. Its practitioners and its victims are people of all ages, incomes and backgrounds. Its trends are difficult to ascertain. Its causes are legion. Its cures are speculative and controversial (President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967).

This shows that no single definition is capable of explaining all the dimensions of crime. To deal with the problem, it has been suggested that crime is whatever the criminal law say it is. Michael and Adler (1993) argue that the most precise and least ambiguous definition of crime is that which sees crime as any act "prohibited by the criminal code" (cited in Watts, Bessant and Hil, 2008). Walsh (2006) states that the most often quoted legal definition of crime comes from Paul Tappan who defines crime as an intentional act in violation of the criminal law (Statutory and case law), committed without defence or excuse, and penalised by the state as a felony or misdemeanour. This implies that, crime is an act in violation of the criminal law for which a punishment is prescribed; the person committing it must have intended to do so and must have done so without legally acceptable defence or justification.

The conception of crime as a violation of the criminal law has the merit of being unambiguous and simple. It reflects a realistic approach to the thorny issues in the definition of crime (Watts, *et al*, 2008). However, this perspective has been criticized for its failure to explain why certain acts are incriminated and made punishable by the law while similar acts are not. For instance, in countries like USA and Australia, which operates a Federal System of state government with their own criminal law and multiple jurisdictions, the same act may not be treated as crime. Likewise in a third world country like Nigeria, acts that are prohibited in the criminal code, applicable in the Southern Nigeria may not be prohibited in Penal Code, applicable in Northern Nigeria.

For scholars like Durkheim who explain crime from within social prism, restricting the definition of crimes to acts that violate the law is too limiting. They further argue that if we are interested in knowing why people engage in behaviour that is detrimental to society, then we must go beyond the strict legal definition of crime. Mannheim maintains that:

The subject matter of criminology can[^t] be confined limited to the study of criminal behaviour as defined by the criminal law...it should rather be extended to the study of what Sell in calls "conduct norms" i.e. norms of behaviours laid down by all the various social groups to which the individual belong and of which the state ...is only one (Watts, *et al*, 2008,pp. 16-17).

Therefore, crime, to scholars from this camp, is a deviant behaviour that violates prevailing norms – cultural standards prescribing how human beings ought to behave normally (Adebayo, 2013). It is also an antisocial behaviour that is injurious to those social interests which rules of behaviour (including legal codes) are designed to support (Omoyibo, 2010). In essence, crime is any act that goes against social norms and or interest of the society. Similarly, Durkheim asserts that crime is capable of being controlled only in social terms (cited in Okeshola, 2013). These social terms include all measures put in place by the social institutions such as family, to fight crimes and criminality in the society.

Types of crime

Like the concept itself, the categories of crime differ with societies. In the United States, crimes are classified into two namely; Part I and Part II crimes. Part I crimes are violations of laws which are derive from common law. They are further divided into Part I Violent Crimes and Part I Property Crimes. Example of the former includes crimes such as murder and criminal homicide (voluntary manslaughter), forcible rape, aggravated assault, and robbery; the latter are burglary, arson, larceny/theft, and motor vehicle theft. All other crimes count as Part II crimes (cited in Usman, Yakubu and Bello, 2012). Dambazau (2007) documents the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) typology of crimes and offences as follows:

- i. Offences against Persons: under this category, there are about thirteen (13) specific types of crimes or offences. They are: Murder; Attempted Murder; Manslaughter; Suicide, Attempted Suicide;

- Grievous harm/wounding; Assault; Child Stealing; Slave dealing; Rape/Indecent assault; Kidnapping; un-natural offences; and others.
- ii. Offences against Property: There are specifically twelve (12) types of crimes or offences in this category. These are: Armed robbery; Demand with menace; Theft/stealing; Burglary; House breaking; Store breaking; False pretence/Cheating; Forgery; Receiving stolen property; Unlawful possession; Arson and other offences.
 - iii. Offences against Lawful Authority: There are eight (8) specific types of crimes or offences listed under this category. These are: Forgery of currency notes; coining offences; Gambling; Breach of peace; Perjury; Bribery and Corruption; Escape from custody and other offences.
 - iv. Offences against Local Acts: There are usually reports on seven (7) specific offences against "Local Act". They are as follows: Traffic offences; Township offences; liquor offences; Dogs Act; Firearms Act; Narcotics and others offences.

According to Omoyibo (2010), the criminal law of Nigeria classified crime in accordance to:

- i. Severity or seriousness of the crime: this category entails classifying crimes in terms of the degree of severity. They include: treason, felonies and misdemeanours
- ii. Types of victims: this entails classification into three major categories as follows: crimes against persons, crimes against properties; and crimes against public safety and morals.

For Ojah (2013), crime has also been classified into predatory, occupational service, organised, companionate and episodic crime. Predatory crime is that which does harm to another and benefits only the offender. Occupational crime is committed by a person in the process of his occupation which utilizes his occupational skills. Service crime encourages the purchase of illicit or illegal goods and services. Organized crime is that which has an administrative structure. Companionate crime involves accomplices. Episodic crime is a type of crime with low probability of repetition by the same.

Methodology and conceptual framework

This study, being an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the concept of crime, adopts both qualitative and quantitative paradigms that enable the analysis of data from the field and also of the literary text (novel). For the quantitative aspect, the study population is Northern Nigeria comprising of three geo-political zones namely; north-west, north-east and north-central. To obtain the data, survey method involving questionnaire was used to collect data from three hundred and twenty one (321) respondents in the study area. The questionnaire was generated using the Google Online Form and the link to the questionnaire was sent to respondents via mail and social media groups and communities within the study area. The online questionnaire allowed the respondents to fill at their comfort and allowed the researchers to save time and cost. The quantitative data collected were collated, organised, processed, analysed and

presented using percentage and frequency tables.

The qualitative aspect of this research is predicated on the idea of realism. According to Gikandi (1980, p.126), realism is a representation of observable features of the human society from which a creative work of art emerges and this is achieved through the "selection of facts and details from ordinary life". This accentuates the fact that literature and all creative art should be a reflection of fidelity to actuality in their representation of events and concept. Thus for Scheidenhelm (2016), realism is about recreating life in literature:

Realism focuses on the truthful treatment of the common, average, everyday life. Realism focuses on the immediate, the here and now, the specific actions and their verifiable consequences. Realism seeks a one-to-one relationship between representation and the subject. This form is also known as mimesis. Realists are concerned with the effect of the work on their reader and the reader's life, a pragmatic view. (np)

While formalists and new critics would argue for the idea of art for art sake, the idea of realism focuses on the functionality of art. Thus, the above excerpt reveals that a literary work of art ought to depict actualities of any aspect of life, free from subjective prejudice, idealism, or romantic color. Such art treats the commonplace truthfully and uses characters from everyday life. This explains Gray (1994, p.65)'s assertion that realism "emphasizes the interpretation of real life problems in society, comprehensive and meaningful to the masses."

Scheidenhelm (2016) highlights some features of a realist literary text:

- It contains empirically verifiable
- Causality is built into text (why something happens foreshadowed). Foreshadowing in everyday events.
- Representative people doing representative things
- Insistence on experience of the commonplace
- Emphasis on morality, usually intrinsic, relativistic between people and society

In the light of the above, literature is a reflection of the socio-political and historical milieu of the cultural space it emerges from. This portends that there is a nexus between the events in a society and the sequence of actions in a literary text. Thus, observable facts portrayed in literary texts can be traced to the society the writer of such text belongs. One of such texts to chronicle events, especially the proliferation of crime in the society, is Abubaker Adam Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms*. The literary elements of the text lend credence to the fact that the text is a multidimensional space where strands of culture are depicted and in the case of the text, the Northern region of Nigeria.

Analysis of crime data and the portrayal of crime in the novel

The data collected from the field are presented and analysed concomitantly with the depiction of crime in *Season of Crimson Blossoms*.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Data of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 20	9	2.8
20 – 29	201	62.6
30 – 39	81	25.2
40 – 59	15	4.7
50 – 59	12	3.7
60 and Above	3	0.9
Total	321	100
Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	191	59.5
Female	130	40.4
Total	321	100
Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	13	4.0
Primary	56	17.4
SSCE	98	30.5
Undergraduate	117	36.4
Postgraduate	37	11.5
Total	321	100
Region of Residence	Frequency	Percentage
North-west	141	44
North-east	98	30.5
North-central	82	25.5
Total	321	100

Table 1 shows that 62.6% of the respondents are between 20–29 years, 30 – 39 years constitute 25.2%, 40 – 49 years are 4.7%, 50 – 59 years were 3.7%, while those below 20 years and those aged 60 years and above were the least categories of respondents represented by 0.9% and 2.8% respectively. This means that majority of the respondents are youths. This is in tandem with the reports from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2011) which shows that as at 2010, the proportion of the young population (14 – 29 years) in Africa is about 70%. In corroboration to this statistics, the protagonist of *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, Hassan Reza is twenty five (25) years old. In addition, all his cohorts at San Siro (the location where they engage in criminal activities in the novel) are also below the age of thirty (30).

Also, the study revealed that 59.5% of the respondents are males and only 40.4% are female. This finding may be connected with cultural and religious practices in Northern Nigeria that discourage female involvement and participation in public affairs or interaction. Therefore, it is the males that are most readily available for this survey. With regards to the level of education of the respondents, the numbers of respondents who had undergraduate degrees constitute 36.4%, 30.5% had Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE), 17.4% had primary education, 11.5% had postgraduate education, while 4.0% had no formal education. Apparent from this finding is that, a larger proportion (51.9%) of the total respondents had no formal education, had primary education and SSCE. This is consistent with the common knowledge as the Northern Nigeria has been said to be educationally disadvantaged region of the Nigerian state as evident in low percentage of respondents who had first degree (See Olibie, Eziuzo,

Enueme, 2013). Finally, the distribution of the region of the respondents shows that 44% of the respondents are from the north-west, 30.5% are residents in the north-east and the least being 22.5 % of the respondents who reside in the north-central. This is not surprising because the north-west has been reported to be the most populous region in Nigeria.

The events of the novel, *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, are recounted using specific places in Northern Nigeria. The geographical setting of the story spanned from the ancient city of Jos, the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja and passing references to the commercial centre of Nigeria, Kano. The time setting of the novel also reveals an engagement of a time in history of Nigeria when the country was under military rule in addition to the plethora of ethnic and religious crises that have rocked Nigeria, particularly in Jos. While the several deaths, maimings, burnings and displacement of characters resulting from the ethno-religious crises are replete in the novel, this accentuates that the novel engages with actual locations that exist in Northern Nigeria. This resonates with the data obtained from the respondents who reside either in North West, North East or North Central. In terms of the educational level, Hassan Reza, the protagonist of the novel is formally uneducated at the age of twenty five. This is symptomatic of the low level of education among youths in Nigeria.

Table 2: Awareness of What Crime Entails

Awareness of crime	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	291	90.7
No	30	9.3
Total	321	100

Table 2 indicates that an overwhelming majority (90.7%) of respondents are aware of what crime entails, while a low 3.7% of the respondents are not. This shows that majority of the respondents are clear about what constitutes a crime in their area. Some respondents further reveal that crime is any action or omission which goes against the criminal law and is punishable by the law. This is consistent with the legal definition of crime as advanced by Tappan who defined crime as a wilful act of violating the law (Statutory and case law) which is punishable by the state (Walsh, 2006). Others associated crime with absence of peace, acts of disobedience, acts in contravention of established rules and regulations, violation of God's injunctions and violation of group or societal norms. This shows that crime is conceived in the area in different ways. This agrees with scholarly assertion that crime is not a single simple phenomenon that can be examined, analyzed and described in one piece. It occurs in every part of the country and in every stratum of society (Winters, Globakar, & Roberson, 2014).

The above awareness of crime is also depicted in the novel. Hassan Reza understands that his acts of misdemeanours are criminal acts. This explains why he returns items he had earlier stolen from the house of Hajiya Binta. In addition, Hassan Reza also kidnaps Leila but became remorseful later when she made him aware that he is a tool in the hands of the politicians that ordered him to kidnap Leila. Thus, he becomes aware of the crime he had committed.

Table 3: Awareness of the Prevalence of crime in Northern Nigeria

Awareness of Prevalence of crime	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	291	90.7
No	12	3.7
I do not know	18	5.6
Total	321	100

Table 3 shows that a significant proportion (90.7%) of the respondents is aware of the prevalence of crime in the area while 3.7% were not. In addition, 5.6% were indecisive on the question asked. Crime, as recorded in literature, is phenomenal in most third world countries, Nigeria inclusive. It is also a major social problem in Northern Nigeria where the finding in Table 1 has shown that majority were without formal education, hence a significant connection between crime rate and lack of formal education in Northern Nigeria.

Table 4: Types of Crime Prevalent in Northern Nigeria

Types of Crime	Yes (%)	No (%)
Theft	245 (76.32)	76 (23.68)
Rape	221 (68.85)	100 (31.15)
Kidnapping	194 (60.44)	127 (39.56)
Election violence	156 (48.60)	165 (51.40)
Murder/manslaughter	81 (25.23)	240 (74.77)
Drug abuse	178 (55.45)	143 (44.55)
Burglary	91 (28.35)	230 (71.65)
Prostitution	34 (10.59)	287 (89.41)

Table 4 presents types of crime prevalent in the study area, where majority affirm that theft (76.32%), rape (68.85%), kidnapping (60.44%) and drug abuse (55.45%) are the most prevalent crimes. However, majority of the respondents do not agree that prostitution (89.41%), murder/manslaughter (74.77%), burglary (71.65%), and election violence (51.40%) are prevalent in the study area. This means that, except for theft which seldom involves violence, majority of the crime discovered to be prevalent in the study area were violent crimes.

The acts of theft and armed robbery are the major crimes portrayed in *Season of Crimson Blossoms* prominently in the novel. The major character who perpetrates this crime is Hassan "Reza" Babale, the leader of a hive of criminals and drug dealers. The novel opens with a narration of how Reza scales the fence of Hajiya Binta Zubairu, a fifty-five year old widow, carts away with her jewellery, DVD player and phone and unintentionally injures her. Though he later returns the stolen items, the act of theft, set at the beginning of the novel, herald the spate of crime depicted in the novel. There is also Musa Danlami, another occupant of San Siro, the place where the drug dealers stay, "who had the knack for turning up at meal times, or just when his mother had put away money or his siblings' school fees, only to disappear with the money afterwards" (*Seasons of Crimson Blossoms*). Another miscreant in the novel, Marufu, also scales Hajiya Binta's fence and steals her generator, prompting her son to fix barbed wires on the fence of the compound. This instance is narrated thus: "she saw the expanding blotch of machine oil

that had trickled from the generator. But the machine wasn't there" (*Seasons of Crimson Blossoms*, p.138). There are also cases of armed robbery in the novel. For example, Reza's father is attacked on the highway by armed bandits who steal his money and leave him with one eye after they strike a club in his eye.

The fight against taking of hard drugs is one which has intensified over the years in Northern Nigeria and this rampant case of abuse of hard drugs is captured in the novel. Nearly all the occupants of San Siro, in the novel, are drug users. The narrator of the novel describes San Siro thus:

San Siro as the place became known, was special... in the evenings, it teemed with young men whose motorcycles would crowd the entrance and take up most of the streets. The riders, and many others besides, would be inside enjoying thick joints and lively arguments about life seen through cannabis fumes. They debated football and ganja-inspired philosophies plucked gingerly from the precipice of inebriation. Dealers, too, came for the serrated leaves. At San Siro, weed was supreme. On the side, some of the boys dealt with other things – codeine, solution, tramol and other assorted mixtures... (*Seasons of Crimson Blossoms*, p.36)

All the hard drugs mentioned above such as cannabis, tramol, codeine and solution are banned substances yet a number of characters engage actively in taking them. Even one of Hajiya Binta's son, Murtala Yaro, is into drugs, as depicted in the novel and there is an occasion when she finds him taking "ganja". There are also young boys at the San Siro who "were sucking *sholishoglu*e and cough syrup while passing on joints" (*Seasons of Crimson Blossoms*, p.175). On a whole, cases of hard drug usage and abuse are well documented in the novel. Related to this crime is the issue of corruption. In the novel, rather than cease and confiscate the codeine, tramol, weed, and joint of the inhabitants of San Siro, the police officers cease these banned substances and sell them to other users. There is also the unfortunate act of the law enforcers making a pact of with the law breakers. Rather than prosecute the likes of Reza, the police in the novel receive money to even protect the miscreants. This corrupt act is captured using the words of Reza in the novel thus:

You understand OC? You took my money and my goods. I know your men sold my stuff to those boys at the junction. You took my things and sold them and you ask me to pay for protection. The others never took my stuff, that's why I paid them. But not you, you understand? Not you" (*Seasons of Crimson Blossoms*, p.71).

The words, "goods" and "things", in the excerpt above refer to banned substances such as weed, and codeine. After Reza utters the words above, Baleri, the Assistant Superintendent of Police in the novel threatens to lock up and shoot Reza with the claim that nothing will happen, Reza fires back "what sort of night has the bat not seen?... we've been in this business for long, long before you even joined the police" (*Seasons of Crimson Blossoms*, 71). This instance reveals the nagging challenge of corruption where a law breaker is bold to speak to a law enforcer as a result of the menace of corruption.

The issue of prostitution is another crime depicted in the novel and this further reveals that the issue is prevalent in the society it emerges from – Northern Nigeria. The character that is used to depict this crime is Laure. The narrator describes her as “the petite whore from Magajiya brothel on Bappa Avenue” (*Seasons of Crimson Blossoms*, p.125). That she has a definite location where she carries out her “whore” activities, shows that she has been in the illicit act for long and she is well known. In addition, the naming of the character, Laure, reveals that the act of prostitution is quite foreign to the society of Northern Nigeria (since the name “Laure” is alien to the Northern Nigeria) which the novel reflects.

If all the above crimes do not involve the loss, the crime of murder endangers the lives of humans and this misdemeanour is portrayed in the novel. There are several cases of murder in the novel. For instance, Zurbairu, Hajiya Binta's husband, is brutally murdered and his body dismembered during one of the religious crises depicted in the novel. In addition, Yaro, Hajiya Binta's first son, is also wrongly killed by the police on account of drug abuse because he is not the one that they were actually looking for. Also, Reza stabs and kills Two Gunns on account that Two Gunns is oppressing the boys in San Siro. There is also murder for rituals in the novel. This is evident when a man, with whom Reza boarded a bus, is caught with the dead body of a little girl. When interrogated, the man claims she is his brother's daughter and he wants to use her for rituals. At the end of the novel, Reza also murders Munkaila, the son of Hajiya Binta, though unintentionally.

In addition, the life of Leila is endangered when she is kidnapped by Reza in the novel. Though she is not the original target, Leila is a victim of political gallivanting as her cousin was actually the target. She nearly dies in the custody of the assailants until she is rescued by the police. In essence, it is evident that the data about the nature of crimes perpetrated in Northern Nigeria resonates with the depiction of crime in Abubakar's novel.

Table 5: Causes of Crime in Northern Nigeria

Causes of Crime	Yes (%)	No (%)
Unemployment	176 (54.83)	145 (45.17)
Poverty	222 (69.16)	99 (30.84)
Drug abuse	182 (56.70)	139 (43.30)
Peer group pressure	232 (72.27)	89 (27.73)
Lack of formal education	191 (59.50)	130 (40.50)
Lack of parental care	177 (55.14)	144 (44.86)
Poor upbringing	167 (52.02)	154 (47.98)

Table 5 shows that there are multiple factors account for the prevalence of crime in Northern Nigeria. The study discovers that majority of the respondents agree that peer group pressure (72.27%), poverty (69.16%), lack of formal education (59.50%), drug abuse (56.70%), lack of parental care (55.14%), unemployment (54.83%) and poor upbringing (52.02%) are the causes of crime in the study area. It can therefore be deduced from the finding that the major causes of crimes in the study area are social-economic factors emanating from the failure of the family institution and lack of economic and social security.

The 59.5% of the respondents that regard the lack of formal education as the cause of crime in Nigeria, it is relatively lower compared to the 72.27% that regard peer pressure as the reason for crime and the 69.16% that believe that peer pressure is the chief cause of crime. A closer look will however reveal that a society's level of education, to a large extent, influences the poverty rate in that society. In addition, youths that are formally and soundly educated may not easily succumb to peer pressure. In the light of this, low level of education can easily be regarded as the foundation of crime in the region under study.

The above factors are also portrayed in the novel. Some of these include the lack of formal education, lack of entrepreneurship, unemployment, and peer pressure, which are all in tandem with the causes of crime obtained response of the respondents. All of these are embedded in the words of Senator Maikudi, the political godfather of Reza. He recounts:

Young people like you [Reza] who are entrepreneurs, who have business acumen, should not waste their lives chasing illusions. That was why when I heard that policeman was messing with your business, I had to intervene. You have heard of Bill Gates, haven't you? ... see, he is one of the richest men in the world and did he not drop out of school? The problem with us is that everything becomes a fad. Because Mr. A goes to school, everyone else wants to go to school, so we lose farmers, lose businessmen, lose all sorts of people who will all rush to school and when they come out, there is nothing for them to do (*Seasons of Crimson Blossoms*, 178).

While the above excerpt does not entail that the novel refutes the fact that formal education is important, he advocates for entrepreneurship. This is because there are so many graduates but with limited jobs available. As such, there is a need to infuse vocational training into formal education so as to improve the employability and also job creativity ability of youths. Thus, while formal education is pertinent, there is a need to create a balance.

Similarly, there is a need for greater parental care for children as the lack of it is identified as a subtle factor that promotes crime. This is reflected using two characters. Reza's mother abandons him at a very young age for her licentious trysts in Saudi Arabia as such he grows up into a hardened criminal who does not show emotion. This is evident in the illicit acts of drug abuse, murder and kidnap which he engages. In addition, he continually abhors his mother for not showing him motherly love. In addition, Yaro, Hajiya Binta's son, also becomes a drug addict as his mother does not show him love. This perhaps suggests that there is a need to pay more attention to children to instil in them virtues of peace, conformity, tolerance and love, which would be instrumental to staying away from crime.

Table 6: Possible Solution(s) to Crime in Northern Nigeria

Possible Solution to Crime in Northern Nigeria	Yes (%)	No (%)
Formal education	213 (66.36)	108 (33.64)
Campaign against crime	194 (60.44)	127 (39.56)
Provision of jobs by the government	233 (72.59)	88 (27.41)
Vocational training	208 (64.80)	113 (35.20)
Youth empowerment	189 (58.88)	132 (41.12)
Proper upbringing	162 (50.47)	159 (49.53)

Tables 6 presents suggestions on the solution(s) to crime in the study area where provision of jobs by the government, formal education, vocational training, campaign against crime, youth empowerment and proper upbringing of children are suggested as solutions to crime in the study area.

However, one very vital pathway to a society devoid of high rate of crime, and which was not highlighted in the response of the respondents, is the need to awaken the consciousness of humans towards the debilitating effects of crime in terms of the fact that the long term effect of crime does not affect only the victim but also the perpetrators because everyone in the society is in a network of relationships. This is brought to the fore in *Season of Crimson Blossoms* through the conversation between Reza and Leila, whom Reza kidnapped. Leila awakens Reza's consciousness towards understanding the folly behind him (Reza) kidnapping her. Leila is a pawn in a political chess as she is not kidnapped for ransom but as a means to distract her uncle who is contesting for the position of senator. She explains to Reza that everyone is actually a victim of crime. This thought is narrated thus: "Can't you see? You and I ... let's say I am your prisoner and you are my jailer and we are on a ship at sea. Let's say the ship capsizes and we are adrift, clinging on to a log or something. Would you then want to handcuff me to secure me?" (*Season of Crimson Blossoms*, p.290). It can be argued based on the picture painted by Leila that even Reza is a victim of his own crime. When Reza tries to shrug the images she painted by stressing that no one escapes him, Leila remarks "*there is the sea to think about. There is the frigging sea to think about*" (*Season of Crimson Blossoms*).

The imagery painted in the imaginative faculty of Reza by Leila actually affects the orientation of Reza. After that conversation with Leila, Reza becomes more sympathetic of the plight of others. First, he advises Sani, one of his errand boys at the San Siro, to go back to school. Second, he dreams of seeing the sea and he regrets unintentionally kills Munkiala, Hajiya Binta's son, when he ordinarily would have felt powerful just like he felt after killing Two Gunns earlier in the story. Here, Reza realises that he belongs to system which is more powerful than him and on the long run, his actions affects not his victims but also on himself. To reveal that Reza is also a victim of his acts, he is given up to the police to be killed by the same Senator Buba Maikudi for whom Reza had killed, for whom Reza caused public disturbances and for whom Reza kidnapped. Thus, there is a need to get everyone to constantly rethink their acts just like Reza does before his eventual death.

On a whole, the depictions about crime and the responses gathered from the data reveal that a large number of the population of Northern Nigeria are aware of the manifestation of crime in the region. In addition, it also

portray several cases of crime and also provides possible means through which they can be curtailed. While the measures depicted above may not readily translate into eradicating crime instantly, a constant promotion of them would no doubt contribute to a reduction in the rate of crime.

Summary of the study's findings

The areas of convergence between the data of the quantitative survey are highlighted below:

- Reza and his gang in the novel had no formal education. Findings from the socio-economic and demographic information of the respondents show that majority from the northern Nigeria do not have higher level of education.
- In the novel, different acts that are against the law and norms of the culture the novel reflects are narrated. The quantitative study shows that respondents understand crime to include act that violates cultural norms and values.
- The novel portrays Northern Nigeria as having high crime rate. Similarly quantitative data shows the prevalence of crime in Northern Nigeria.
- Peer group and drug abuse are also is another point of convergence as it was narrated in the novel that criminal gang members commit crime so as to use the proceeds to buy substance.
- Findings from the quantitative data show that the failure of the family institution in performing its role of proper socialisation of children leads to crime. In the novel, some criminal gang members also had poor upbringing and parental care.

The prominent point of divergence from the depictions in the novel and the data obtained from the survey is that while crimes like theft, rape, kidnapping, and drug abuse which are narrated in the novel are also discovered to be prevalent in northern area in the study, crimes such as prostitution, election violence and burglary are narrated in the novel but not discovered prevalent in the quantitative data from Northern Nigeria. This is in addition to the crime of corruption which is depicted in the novel but not captured in the quantitative data. On a whole, depictions in the novel and the data collected from respondents in terms of the concept of crime are more similar than different.

Conclusion

From the aforementioned, it is evident that the depictions on crime in the novel and the analysis of the crime data from Northern Nigeria highlight the prevalence of crime in Northern Nigeria. Some of such crimes include: theft, rape, kidnapping, drug abuse, election violence, burglary and prostitution. This accentuates the fact that literature is a reflection of the society it emerges from. This study argues that a society devoid of incessant crime is feasible and practicable. All through several historical periods, government and individuals in the Nigerian society have continually spend tons of money including promulgating several laws to combat crime yet the menace has continued to escalate. Such a society of low crime will require a blend of imaginative prowess and actuality of experience to achieve. This entails that positive change can only materialise when

all humans pick from the present and intertwine such experiences with imaginative ruminations to arrive at viable solutions to crime and other abnormalities in the society. Based on current experiences, there is a need for humans in the society to realise that they belong to a system of causatives where the action of one affects others and in the long run, self. When the imaginative consequences of one's actions are thus fully made, the rate of crime will witness a downward trend. As such, there is a need for attainment of higher levels of education, where the thinking and imaginative prowess of individuals are further stirred up. When this happens, the society is better off as individuals would always think about the chain effects of their actions, whether negative or positive, before embarking on them.

Strategies. A paper presented at the National Institute of Justice Crime Prevention working group meeting in Bethesda.

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