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**Exploring Festac Town, Lagos Residents' Observations
on Crime and the Influx of Unskilled Migrants from
Northern Nigeria and other Illegal Migrants from Sahel
Region**

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Abstract

In recent times, Lagos State, Nigeria, has been faced with a myriad of security challenges which is manifest in the increase of crime in Festac Town, a Lagos State middle-class suburb. These crimes are exacerbated by the influx of unskilled Nigerians from far northern part of Nigeria and illegal migrants from other African countries, particularly from the Sahel areas known as the G5 Sahel countries —Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad due to the many challenges faced by them which include chronic insecurity, lack of economic prospects, poor access to education, inadequate job opportunities and inadequate essential services such as water and electricity. Such incursions are believed to have significant security implications for Nigeria in general, and Festac Town in Lagos State in particular since most of these migrants more often unskilled and undocumented drift into the state, and then into Festac Town because of its economic opportunities. The activities of these unskilled and undocumented migrants have coloured how residents perceive them in the state. The objective of this study therefore was to explore the observations of residents of Festac Town, Lagos. Using a qualitative approach, a structured interview was done with participants in Festac Town. Mobilising the rational choice theory, the study explored and analysed the citizens' perceptions of illegal and unskilled migrants in the Festac area of Lagos State. The findings indicated, among others, that security concerns such as increase in crime, mostly violent crime, and political narratives like a "Fulani agenda" to take over Nigeria are significant observations that were found to shape citizens' views of undocumented and unskilled migrants from far northern Nigeria in their locality. The implications of the findings raise the need for an effective and unbiased policing approach; effective management of Fulani migrants from the North to the South of Nigeria, and other illegal migrants and their activities which will include handing illegal ones over to the Immigration Service; the rehabilitation of the skilled ones from Nigeria, and repatriation of the unskilled ones to their respective states of origin in collaboration with their home governments for resettlement and skill acquisition programmes.

Keywords: *Citizens, Festac Town, Lagos State, Illegal migrants.*

Introduction

Crime, according to Oguntunde, Ojo, Okagbue and Oguntunde (2018), is an act, action or omission which constitutes an offence punishable under the law. *The South African Law Handbook*, in 2017, describes crime as an offence that merits community condemnation and punishment, usually by way of fine or imprisonment. This phenomenon is different

from a civil wrong (a tort), which is an action against an individual that requires compensation or restitution. Therefore, citizens' confidence in the police is a fundamental requirement for effective policing in modern societies (Bello & Johannes, 2020).

The University of Minnesota Libraries in an article titled "Social Problems", in 2016, stated that there are many types of crimes, and that criminologists have commonly group them into several major categories – violent crime; property crime; white-collar crime; organised crime; and consensual or victimless crime, and within each of these categories, many more specific crimes exist. For example, violent crime includes: homicide; aggravated and simple assault; rape and sexual assault; and robbery, while property crime includes burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft and arson. Also, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), in 2016, said that high flying crimes in Nigeria include rape, kidnapping, murder, burglary, fraud, terrorism, robbery, cyber-crime, bribery, corruption and money laundry, and the states in Nigeria with these leading crime rates are Abuja, Delta, Kano, Plateau, Ondo, Oyo, Bauchi, Adamawa, Gombe and Lagos.

In an article published by Doris Dokua Sasu in 2022 for Statista about crime in Nigeria, she opines that political instability, citizen alienation, terrorism and violence define the Nigerian crime scene. She further states that Nigeria has recently been included among the countries with the least peace in the world. According to the Global Peace Index published by Szmigiera in 2022 for Statista, the country is the 17th less peaceful state in the world, and Lagos, the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria, is the most affected state by the high number of crimes. This is because Lagos, as a city-state, is the largest in Nigeria and in the whole of Africa in terms of population in an administrative space¹, and the population might be one of the triggers for increase in crime (Chang, Choi, Lee, & Jin, 2018; Nolan, 2004; Braithwaite, 1975).

The role of the police as an institution is critical to law enforcement in any society including Nigeria, and it cannot be over-emphasised. According to Otubu and Coker (2008), to fight crime in the society, the law enforcement agencies are imperative, and their roles in the maintenance of peace and order are a foregone conclusion. Otubu and Coker (2008) argue that every man, by nature, is selfish, and that attitudinal disposition may motivate him to perpetrate crime. In most cases, man needs the presence of the state institution of law enforcement

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1218259/largest-cities-in-africa/> - Accessed August 3, 2022

to act right and just. Therefore, above all other law enforcement agencies in the society, the police provide and assure the internal security of the nation. In examining the Nigerian Police Act, Cap 359, Laws of Federation of Nigeria 1990, according to the provision of section 4 of the Act, states that:

The police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulation with which they are directly changed... . –
Police Act, Cap 359 laws of Federation of Nigeria 1990, provision of section 4

These statistics, as stated by Sasu (2022), for Statista, demonstrate Lagos as a crime destination in Nigeria due to the socio-economic factors which also present more opportunities for both positive and negative human activities including crime. However, there is a need for more police presence in the city-state to study the nature of crime, its prevention, the perpetrators, their motivation, their arrest and prosecution according to the laws of the country, and this includes crimes committed by illegal migrants into Lagos State.

Literature Review

The literature review of this study adopts a historical and narrative approach (Labaree, 2009) to underscore the phenomenon, and how it has evolved into the challenges today. The review also contains data from newspaper reports on the subject matter, maps and diagrams to contextualise the study.

Migrants, Migrations and Migration into Nigeria

In human history, people have always migrated from one place to another for various reasons. Human migration is, therefore, the movement of people from one place to another with the intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily, at a new geographic region or location. The movement is often over long distances and from one country to another. In 2019 alone, there were an estimated 272 million international migrants globally (3.5% of the world's population).

Internal migration is also a phenomenon globally (World Migration Report, 2020)², and the International Organisation for Migration (2019) states that majority of migrants do not move across borders but migrate within the countries, which underscores the point that most people live in the countries in which they were born (World Migration Report, 2020).

However, geography has no comprehensive theory of migration and, according to Hagen-Zanker (2008), migration decision entails weighing the costs versus the benefits of migration which is economic. Cultural and environmental factors also induce migration, although not as frequently as economic factors. However, political instability, terrorism, poverty, as well as religious and ethnic conflicts drive migration in Africa, with more than half of Africans migrating more within the African continent. East Africa, according to Hagen-Zanker (2008), is the most frequent destination and, indeed, the majority of refugees in Africa are in the Horn of Africa and in the East, particularly in Uganda and Sudan. In 2020, Uganda had 1.4 million refugees, in a population of around 40 million people³.

Nigeria is a country in West Africa covering an area of 923,769 square kilometres, with a population of over 211 million. It borders Niger in the north, Chad in the northeast, Cameroon in the east, and Benin Republic in the west. Nigeria is a federal republic comprising 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, where the capital, Abuja, is located. The largest city in Nigeria is Lagos, and it is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world and second largest in Africa. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country with an estimated 250 various ethnic groups. The *World Factbook* operated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) states that the ethnic groups in Nigeria are 30% of Hausa, 15.5% of Yoruba, 15.2% of Igbo, 6% of Fulani, 2.4% of Tiv, 2.4% of Kanuri, 2.1% of Igala, 1.8% of Ibibio, 1.8% of Ijaw, and other ethnic groups make up 24.7% of the ethnic population (CIA World Factbook, 2020)⁴.

Nigeria, being the most populous country in Africa, plays a key role in the evolution of African migrations. While the post-independence period (1960) was dominated by emigration to other West African countries, particularly Ghana, this pattern was reversed after mass expulsions of Nigerians from Ghana in 1969 and the 1973 Oil Crisis when oil-rich Nigeria started to attract labour migrants from all over

² https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf - Accessed June 12, 2022

³ <https://www.statista.com/topics/7865/immigration-in-nigeria/> - Accessed August 26, 2021

⁴ CIA World Factbook – Accessed August 26, 2021

West and Central Africa. The post-1981 decrease in oil prices, associated economic downturn and political repression transformed Nigeria from a net immigration to a net emigration country. Despite this growth in emigration, almost one million West African migrants and refugees are still believed to live in Nigeria. According to official estimates, at least 800,000 Nigerians are believed to live abroad, but the real figure is likely to be far higher⁵. Nigeria is an important link between coastal West Africa, Central Africa and the beginning of the trans-Saharan routes through Niger to Libya and Morocco. Consequently, it has become an important staging post for migrants and refugees moving north, often to join Maghreb in their attempt to cross to Europe. Nigeria's borders with Benin Republic and Chad are fairly short, 773km and 87km long respectively. In comparison, Nigeria's borders with Niger and Cameroun span 1, 497km and 1, 690km respectively. Countries like Benin, Cameroun, Chad and Niger are all potential providers of migrants due to their proximity to Nigeria, and this affects their demographics and their socio-economic realities⁶. At greatest risk are Cameroun and Niger, which share considerably vast borders with Nigeria.

According to Simona Varrella (2021), a researcher with Statisa, Nigeria records about 60,000 refugees annually, and the majority come from Cameroun. They are mainly hosted in the states of Cross River, Benue and Taraba, the Nigerian states at the borders with Cameroon. As of March 2021, Cross River State had almost 38,000 refugees from Cameroon, and Taraba had over 16,000. Cameroonians fleeing from ongoing violence between security forces and armed separatist groups from the Ambazonia region⁷ run into Nigeria. When it comes to asylum, after Niger Republic, Cameroon is the most frequent country of origin for asylum seekers in Nigeria.

The porous state of Nigerian borders, particularly the ones in northern Nigeria, has led to a high number of nationals from the countries that share borders with her to migrate into the country. However, it is important to note that the migrants that come into Nigeria from the northern borders are mostly Fulani migrants. In most cases, they come with their cattle, while others come in to look for greener

⁵ <https://www.migrationinstitute.org/completed-projects/aphm/case-studies/nigeria> - Accessed August 26, 2021

⁶ <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/border-porosity-and-boko-haram-as-a-regional-threat> - Accessed August 26, 2021

⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/1/violence-in-cameroon-anglophone-crisis-takes-high-civilian-toll> - Accessed June 12, 2022

pastures, and subsequently find their ways to the South because the southern part of Nigeria is more prosperous, especially Lagos State where Festac Town is located (Ducrotoy, Majekodunmi, Shaw, Bagulo, Bertu, Gusi, Ocholi, & Welburn, 2018).

Higazi (2020) of the University of Amsterdam opines in an online article published by the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) that the Fulani are a large and internally diverse population spread across West and Central Africa, with their largest concentration in Nigeria. In very broad terms, they can be divided into two main categories: the (semi)-nomadic and transhumant pastoralists, who raise cattle and sheep and, contrary to popular belief, usually also cultivate crops on a subsistence basis. The others are the settled Fulani, who are not pastoralists, they live in urban areas and villages as traders, farmers, traditional rulers and educated professionals. Social divisions among the Fulani population can be quite strong⁸.

Many Nigerians, especially those from southern Nigeria, cannot tell the difference between the Fulani from Nigeria and the ones from other West or Central African countries because of their diverse population. Therefore, they categorise most of them, if not all, as foreign migrants. Therefore, every itinerant Fulani in Lagos is seen as an undocumented migrant Fulani.

Factors Predicting Observations of Migrants in Festac Town in Lagos State

Pryce (2018) states that, though immigrants and immigration generate a tremendous amount of debate because of the societal changes associated with the influx of newcomers into any society, the older members of the society are more likely to be resentful and xenophobic towards these migrants, while the young ones who see themselves as global or world citizens are more receptive. However, the residents of Festac Town are united in their attitude towards Fulani immigrants, especially because of the crime they accuse them of perpetrating.

This attitude of the residents is further fuelled by the alleged shielding of the Fulani criminal elements by the police in Festac Town. This perception persists because the residents feel that the alleged Fulani criminals are being protected by the highest political class in Nigeria

⁸ <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publicazione/herders-and-farmers-nigeria-coexistence-conflict-and-insurgency-25447> - Accessed August 26, 2021

which, under President Muhammadu Buhari, is dominated by the ethnic Fulani and, by extension, the residents also think other undocumented Fulani people from the Sahel region, especially Niger Republic, enjoy the same protection.

An article titled “Unidentified foreigners flood Festac Town as residents live in fear” by an online news medium, published on January 30, 2020⁹, states that residents are apprehensive of the activities of these migrants. The online news medium claimed, in its report, that there was palpable tension in Festac Town, Lagos State in Nigeria over a large influx of unidentified men disguised as “Okada” riders (commercial motorcyclists), petty traders and truck pushers. At least, this is what they appear to be during the day but, at night, their mission is beyond the comprehension of residents. The online report also claimed:

... These foreigners come to Lagos in droves and settle wherever with no identification, no address, and no documentation. Nobody knows their real names; where they come from, or how to monitor them. They parade around as cart pushers and steal drainage covers and man-hole covers, leaving gaping holes in the road. – *Financial Watch*, January 30, 2022.¹⁰

A mainstream newspaper medium, *Guardian Newspaper*, on December 18, 2021,¹¹ published a headline titled “Violent clash as Lagos clamps down on daring Okada riders”. The report says:

...more than ever before, commercial motorcycle operators popularly known as Okada riders in Lagos State now constitute a menace to the residents and the government. Recently, they have become so daring and emboldened to act in manners detrimental to safe living in the society. They operate with unregistered motorcycles and seem to be running a parallel government as they flagrantly disobey orders restricting them from plying certain routes. Besides, assaulting other innocent road users at slightest provocation and attacking police personnel on duty have become the order of the day.

⁹ <https://www.financialwatchngr.com/2020/01/30/unidentified-foreigners-flood-festac-town-as-residents-live-in-fear/> - Accessed June 12, 2022

¹⁰ <https://www.financialwatchngr.com/2020/01/30/unidentified-foreigners-flood-festac-town-as-residents-live-in-fear/> Accessed August 3, 2022

¹¹ https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/violent-clash-as-lagos-clamps-down-on-daring-okada-riders/?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&Echobox=1639799653&utm_source=Facebook – Accessed June 12, 2022

The two media houses gave an account of the inability of the police to manage and control the excesses of these motorcycle riders who are seen to be people from the northern extraction of Nigeria. Nonetheless, most of them are foreigners who cannot even converse in the English language. The media houses detailed how these men usually re-group after they had been arrested by the police to attack the officers of the Nigeria Police Force, and many residents believe that the ones arrested are usually freed without being prosecuted for any crime. Consequently, the residents of Festac Town see the Police as protecting them either on political grounds or due to corruption.

The Present Reality

The influx of Nigerians, especially the Fulani people, from the North and other Fulani people from the Sahel region into Lagos and indeed Festac Town – a built up middle-class area – has not only increased the apprehension of the residents, but also increased crime and social tension between the migrants community and the residents, with the residents blaming the Police for shielding the migrants when they (migrants) commit crime. However, there was no previous study in Festac Town to support or negate the suspicion of the residents by providing data and even recommendations critical for government, especially at the municipality, and the police to rely on.

This study, therefore, fills the research gap on citizens' perception and experiences of migrants, especially in a local setting like Festac Town in Lagos State, with a view to generating the data that will be useful in developing security policies and strategies to the municipality and Lagos State Police Command which is the supervising police command for the Festac Town Police Division. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there is currently no known study on the subject matter in Lagos State, Nigeria. Hence, this study represents the first to empirically assess the public perception of the influx of migrants, particularly those from the North, and their Fulani cousins from outside Nigeria, into Festac Town, Lagos State.

The ethical approval for this study was given by the Executive Chairman of Amuwo Odofin Local Government Area with Reference Number AOLG/CHM/GC/REQ/15A dated March 10, 2020. The questionnaire was distributed by late Mr. Prosper (Masterp) who passed on during the course of the research due to ill health.

Theoretical Framework

The rational choice theory (RCT) was adopted by the researcher to interrogate the data gleaned from the survey and structured interviews with the participants. RCT was promoted by Gary Becker (1968), and it argues that criminal behaviour is not different from non-criminal behaviour because the people intentionally choose to undertake crime (i.e. they are not compelled or forced to do crime). They choose to commit crime because they think it will be more rewarding and less costly for them than non-criminal behaviour. RCT takes the position that offenders are not compelled to commit crime because of some extraordinary motivation; offenders do not have different personalities than non-offenders; neither were they socialised into a criminal belief or cultural system whose norms require crime (Cornish & Clarke, 2002; Kubrin, 2009).

However, there could be some factors that might influence the behaviour of offenders to commit crime. Some of these factors can be external or environmental influences, especially when the offenders perceive that they may not be apprehended or sanctioned heavily. To the extent that this factors exist, the offenders will rationalise his decision to commit crime.

This theory is relevant to this study because the residents of Festac Town in Lagos State believe that the migrants from northern Nigeria, especially the Fulani, and others from the Sahel region have normalised their choices of crime perpetration because of the perceived protection they get from the Festac Town Police Division by refusing to prosecute them even after arresting them. They feel this protection stems from the political influence at the federal level including the body language of the current president, which has increased the political narrative.

Methodology

The design of the study is a qualitative approach. Therefore, to appreciate the experiences of the residents of Festac Town, the study formulated structured interviews with 12 participants: seven male and five female in the 30-65 age bracket; they have resided in Festac Town for at least 10 years. The structured interview consisted of a series of predetermined questions that all interviewees answered in the same order (Jamshed, 2014).

The data from the structured interviews and surveys were validated through the triangulation framework (Bhandari, 2022; Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, & DiCenso, 2014) since the perceptions and experiences of different participants should enhance the credibility and validity of the data during data analysis.

To appreciate the perceptions of Festac residents, the study designed a conceptual model based on the perception of illegal migrants and migrants from northern Nigeria with components on crime level, political narrative, socio-economic and cultural concern, and security concern. The same model formed the basis of the structured interview with the residents of Festac Town to explore their experiences in order to interrogate if the migrants from far northern Nigeria and the Sahel region are, indeed, influenced by some factors that have reinforced their behaviour which seems a rational choice to them.

Research Site

Data for this study (both questionnaire and structured interviews) were collected between August 2020 and March 2021 in the Festac area of Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. Festac Town is a federal housing estate located along the Lagos-Badagry Expressway in Lagos State, Nigeria. Its name was derived from the acronym 'FESTAC', which stands for Second World African Festival of Arts and Culture, held there in 1977. It was built in a grid network consisting of seven major roads/boulevards or avenues from which minor roads extend. These avenues are identified by their numbers: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th avenues respectively.

The 1st, 2nd, 4th and 7th avenues surround a portion of the town in what seems like an almost rectangular road network connected and accessible through one another. The 3rd and 5th avenues run parallel within the town. The 6th avenue is found in a portion of the town accessible through a bridge from the 1st Avenue. The town consists of cul-de-sacs or closes named in an alphabetical format.

The choice of these sites was based on its cosmopolitan status. Festac Town is accessible from the Lagos-Badagry Expressway through three main gates that open into the 1st, 2nd and 7th avenues and are called the First, Second and Third gates respectively. The town is also accessible through the Festac Link Bridge. Once a sleepy estate, Festac Town has in the past few years attracted varied forms of businesses within the estate and its environs. Today, there is a growing number of

commercial banks and shopping complexes that cater for the residents. There are also several hotels and relaxation spots within the estate which have contributed to the vibrant night life. This development seems to have attracted not only the largely middle-class house owners and tenants into the community, but also unidentified migrants who have, in recent times, moved into the community and most of them have no form of education or skills.

Exploring the Experiences of Residents of Festac Town with the Activities of the Migrants and Undocumented Migrants

The issues raised by the residents of Festac Town are crime-related and concern migrants from the northern part of Nigeria. These migrants are mainly the Hausa-Fulani and their non-Nigerian cousins that illegally migrated into Nigeria either as herdsmen or men seeking other odd jobs. In his study, Iheanacho (2017) posits that the menace of these Fulani migrants, especially the herdsmen, has caused a serious security breach in Nigeria. He argues that, apart from *Boko Haram*, another recurrent security challenge confronting many states in Nigeria is the challenge of the Fulani herdsmen. The herdsmen's attacks on a good number of several Nigerian communities have been on increase (Akevi, 2014). There have been escalations of reported attacks by the Fulani herdsmen who brutally kill natives of the invaded farming communities including women and children in various states across the country (Durojaiye, 2014). These activities have heightened the suspicion of the residents about every northerner, especially the ones that have the stature of the Fulani.

In this regard, the suspected people perpetrating crime in Festac Town are rational adults who have choices. They are involved in these criminal activities, not because they were initiated into it by the residents of Festac Town. Nonetheless, they were motivated by their desire to be rewarded through their actions, especially when they feel that they are protected by the political authorities at the centre and the police force incidentally dominated by the Fulani – their ethnic group. This belief has given them the audacity to confront the government either at the local government or state level (*Guardian Newspaper*, 2021).

Hence, the study recognised the themes that emerged from the structured interviews as the context for analysing and discussing the data.

Political Narratives and Observations of Residents on the Influx of Migrants into Festac Town

The residents of Festac Town have a strong perception that the influx of migrants from the far northern Nigeria and the illegal migrants being of Fulani extraction have political undertones. A high score on the perception scale suggests that the residents of the community are uncomfortable with the presence of the migrants because of the current and historical political complexities.

Nmah and Amanambu (2017) argue that the 1804 Jihad war that the Fulani waged against and conquered the Hausa states is still reverberating in the minds of many southerners who are the dominant residents of Festac Town. The campaign of the jihad, according to the authors, was supposed to end when the jihadists dipped the Holy Quran in the Atlantic Ocean in the present-day Lagos State. The effect of the 1804 Usman Dan Fodio's jihad on the intergroup relations in Nigeria has not only been controversial but also suspicious.

In responding to the question on whether he sees the influx of the migrants from the North and their undocumented kinsmen from other countries as a political agenda, a participant – a Festac resident, male accountant – responded thus:

... Of course! It is terrible. The way these people have just invaded Festac, you will know they are being sponsored. Who bought the bike they are riding for them? How did they find their way to Lagos and into Festac? They are all over the place doing security work at the gate and just milling around, and they even sleep outside. They can even attack us when we are sleeping. I believe somebody is telling them to come to Lagos. They have a plan. These people have a plan.

The narrative of this participant is founded and re-echoes the suspicion of the history of how the Fulani came to what is now called Nigeria as documented by Nmah and Amanambu (2017). Similarly, Nwabara (1963) and Agboola (2007) narrate how a major Yoruba town, Ilorin which used to be a military outpost and province of the Oyo Empire, the glory of the Yoruba monarchical system, fell to the Fulani jihadists in the 19th century, and how they established an emirate that has dominated the city as the aristocrats till date. Ilorin is a city in Kwara State. Ilorin and Lagos State – where Festac Town is situated – are indigenous to the Yoruba ethnic group. Nmah and Amanambu (2017) also point to the forceful inclusion of Nigeria as a member of the Organisation of Islamic

Conference (OIC) in 1986, the introduction of the Sharia by 12 northern states between 1999 and 2001, and the registration of Nigeria as a beneficiary of the Islamic Development Bank as policy decisions taken by various governments in Nigeria with the Fulani imprints. The history and suspicion are at the heart of the political narrative of the Festac Town residents who view the influx of migrants from northern Nigeria and their non-Nigerian and undocumented cousins as the continuation of the vision of the Jihad launched by Usman Dan Fodio to conquer the territory to the Atlantic Ocean.

The clannish appointment of President Muhammadu Buhari and the attacks on farmers by the Fulani herdsmen have contributed to fuelling the political narrative and perception by Festac Town residents.

Another factor fuelling this narrative is the declaration by the Bauchi State Governor, Bala Mohammed, in a September 16, 2019 interview on Channels Television¹². The governor, in responding to a question about the controversial RUGA policy of the Muhammadu Buhari-led administration, declared that foreign Fulani herders will benefit from the RUGA Initiative. The implementation of Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlements was a plan by the President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration to put an end to the recurring conflict between nomadic herders and farmers, but met with considerable outrage from Nigerians who saw it as an attempt to seize lands from indigenous Nigerians and hand them over to his ethnic Fulani kinsmen¹³.

Security Concerns and Aetiological factors Fuelling Crime Level in Festac Town, Lagos

A high score on the perception index show that the participants view the influx of illegal migrants to Festac, Lagos State as a security threat to the community. They believe that the increase in crime rate in the community is caused by these migrants. Although they agree that crime has increased in Lagos State generally due to economic pressure, they still hold the views that, apart from miscreants from the southern part of Nigeria, the greater percentage of the perpetrators are migrants from northern Nigeria and illegal migrants from the Sahel region.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkRgZmqf91Q&t=252s> – Accessed on August 3, 2022

¹³ <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/ruga-7-things-to-know-about-buharis-controversial-settlements/tcjmr7m> - Accessed on August 3, 2022

In their study of demography and crime, a spatial analysis of geographical patterns and risk factors of crimes in Nigeria, Adeyemi, Mayaki, Zewotir and Ramroop (2020) explored and established that there is a spatial distribution of crime incidences in Nigeria. They also evaluated the association between the geographical variations and the socio-demographic determinants of crimes. The annual report of 2020 produced in conjunction with the Regional Security Office at the United States of America (USA) Consulate General in Lagos sounded an alarm that crime is high in Lagos as well as other states, but Lagos is critical. This is so because Lagos is the largest city-state in Nigeria in terms of population. The report also said that street gangs, popularly called “Area Boys”, are occasionally involved in violent street clashes. The trend monitored by the report shows that crime rates increase in Lagos during a period referred to as “ember months” in Nigeria, and such months are September, October, November and December. During this period, there are many cases of carjacking and breaking. Thieves will break vehicle windows or simply reach in and grab items while a vehicle stops in traffic.

A female participant – resident in Festac Town, female, a librarian in a law firm – who claimed to have had an experience in traffic when travelling to work in her car in the early hours of the morning, recounted:

Two months ago when I was going to work, I got to the Link Bridge, and there was a bit of traffic there. I brought out my phone to call my husband, and this Aboki on bike just snatched my phone and sped off ... I managed to make a turn and went to the police station to report, instead the police were blaming me for making a call in traffic... They did not do anything... I think the police is protecting them because each time they arrest them, they will release them the following day, if not the first day. This seems to have emboldened them as they now even attack the police and their vehicles, and the police won't do anything... These Aboki guys are something else. They are mostly on drugs and do not even know how to ride the bike... They just cause accidents every time and injure people.

Further, Agbibo (2015) asserts that the police, whose duty it is to provide security, have consistently failed and are handicapped because of a combination of factors among which are lack of resources, poor government support and poor conditions of service, resulting in ill-motivated, ill-trained and ill-equipped workforce. Okafor (2017) argues that the Nigeria Police Force is widely perceived by the public as the

most corrupt and violent institution in Nigeria in a way that is not evidently insincere, but stems from the poor performance believed to be influenced by corruption and the fact that they are structurally distant to the people they are supposed to police.

As a matter of fact, Lagos residents, including Festac Town residents, seem to have lost confidence in the police. Bradford (2014) opines that policing has always been implicated in processes of social inclusion and exclusion. Akinlabi (2020) argues that, in his assessment of policing in Nigeria, decentralisation of the police is important and capable of curbing crime in Lagos.

In another study, Akinlabi (2017) points to the consequences of police corruption, police abuse and procedural injustice in Nigeria. He further argues that, if the Nigerian police behave in manners that undermine affective links with the people, in return, the public will be sceptical about the law. If the police also wish to encourage public trust and respect for the law, the current police practices in Nigeria must become citizen-focused. In an empirical and appraisal study on police effectiveness and police trustworthiness in Ghana, Tankebe (2008) states that police researchers have often assumed that perceptions of police effectiveness enhance police legitimacy with very little empirical support for this assumption. However, he concludes that the crucial role of the public police in the quest towards democratic governance is a much more useful approach for governments in sub-Saharan Africa to pay attention to democratic reforms of their police forces. Such reforms are necessary to win public trust in the police, trust that is indispensable to the effectiveness of the police. This brings to the fore the debate of community policing which is apt in Festac Town – an organised community capable of allaying the fears of the residents who are apprehensive about the presence of unidentified migrants in their midst.

Socio-economic and Cultural Concerns of the Residents

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), socio-economic issues are related to the social standing of an individual or group, and it is often measured by a combination of education, income and occupation¹⁴. It determines the class or status of the individual or group in the community. Therefore, socio-economic issues include: the ethics, fairness and results of policies; theories and institutions that may

¹⁴ <https://www.apa.org/topics/socioeconomic-status> - Accessed June 16, 2022

result in a different standard of treatment; and opportunities based on income and background. Poverty is a major socio-economic issue because lack of money for basic necessities is the source of many other socio-economic concerns.

These concerns are palpable among Festac residents. In the survey, the perception index shows that a high score of the scale indicates a higher perception of socio-economic and cultural concerns. This is the assessment of the participants' perception of illegal migrants as constituting a threat to the socio-economic and cultural well-being of the community.

The dilution and impact it will have on the culture of the residents in Festac is a concern to them. This concern is also captured in a study undertaken by Braden and Mayo (1999) asserting that culture tells us not only who we are, and what is what, but also what is to be done. According to them, culture is developed and designed by human, and it is central to community development. Brislin (1993) argues that culture influences behaviour and becomes the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society like the residents of Festac Community.

A participant – resident in Festac Town, male, community leader and educator in the research – revealed:

..... One of our fears is that these people, and I know many of them are not Nigerians. They are just brought by all trucks from the north, they have no skill, no education, and when they arrive Festac, one of their leaders whom they call Seriki will organise either a gateman work for them or a bike, and they just start their lives. Since they started flocking into Festac, crime rate has gone up. They are now affecting how we live. We cannot go out at night and feel safe because of being robbed... We cannot send our daughters on errands for fear of them being raped... They are affecting the way we have been living.... They are different from us, our culture and way of life [are] different... The police must do something as well as the community leaders in Festac Residents Association....

At the back of the minds of residents of Festac Town is also the fear of dilution of the culture in Festac Town. Human culture in any society is not necessarily fixed since its components such as behaviour, symbols and values – always in a state of flux – can gravitate between boundaries (Juwaidah & Banu, 2009). Based on the history of how the Fulani diluted both the demography and the culture of the Hausa states conquered

through jihad in 1804 as posited by Nmah and Amanambu (2017), and how Ilorin, a major Yoruba town formerly a military outpost and province of the Oyo Empire, fell to the Fulani jihad in the 19th century, and how they have established an emirate that has dominated the city as the aristocrats till date (Nwabara, 1963; Agboola, 2007) The residents of Festac are consequently suspicious of the large influx of these migrants.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the interviews, it is obvious that there are varied reasons why the residents of Festac hold the perception on crime in relations to the influx of the Fulani from northern Nigeria and other illegal migrants from the Sahel region to their community.

Therefore, there is a need to apply sanctions as deterrence to offenders as it can prevent criminal acts because of the punishment that can be associated with the acts (Andenaes, 1974; Zimring & Hawkins, 1973). Hence, the migrants or illegal migrants having an intention of committing a crime will refrain from doing so because of fear that he might get arrested, sanctioned with a penalty or deported.

Consequently, the police must demonstrate effectiveness by not leaning on the offender's side irrespective of any political influence, but approach the duty of policing from the perspective of maintaining law and order. The police should liaise with the immigration service to identify the illegal migrants for further processing for removal from the country. The police will need to also work with the Northern/Fulani community leaders and the Festac Town Residents Association (FTRA) to locate where homeless migrants reside in the community with a view to rehabilitating or returning them to their respective states of origin in collaboration with their home governments for resettlement and skill acquisition programmes. Making a livelihood will become tougher as it is expected that the police will effect the ban on commercial motorcycle operators by the Lagos State Government. This new law will make the migrants idle and redundant due to lack of skills and education, and this may be a push factor for more heinous crimes to be committed on the residents of Festac Town.

Also, the political class should desist from influencing or interfering in police duties to favour a group as the perception from the residents are not only fuelling the narrative, but also causing social tension. Rather, they should focus on building a cohesive society through the management of the diversity of the community, so as to reflect the

second stanza of the old Nigerian anthem that reads: "... though tongue and tribe may differ, in brotherhood we stand" and re-stated by Father Matthew Hassan Kukah in an article in *Guardian Newspaper* of March 6, 2017¹⁵.

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¹⁵ <https://guardian.ng/guardian-woman/issues/though-tribe-and-tongue-may-differ-managing-diversity-in-nigeria/> Accessed August 8, 2022

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