

Cross Border Criminalities and Insecurity Crisis in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis of International Borders in Cross River State¹

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Abstract:

The study, titled Cross Border Criminalities and Insecurity Crisis in Nigeria: Empirical Analysis of International Border in Cross River State, was conducted with the primary goal of determining the extent to which cross-border criminality in Cross River State influences state insecurity. Specifically, the study attempted to investigate the impact of illegal immigrants, illegal arms trafficking, and illicit drug smuggling on national security. Extant literatures were consulted and reviewed in accordance with the study's aims. The social disorganization theory and ungoverned space theory were used to critically examine the existence and impact of cross-border criminality on the trend of insecurity in Nigeria. The study used a cross-sectional research design, and the target area was Bakassi and Ikom Local Government Area. The choosing of these places was primarily due to the fact that they both share borders with Cameroon. The study's population consisted of people who lived in these target areas. Taro Yamen's statistical technique was utilized to determine a sample size of 400. The questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool. Simple percentages and population t-tests were used for analysis. According to the analysis conducted, there is a substantial association between the surge of illegal immigrants, illegal arms trafficking, and illicit drug smuggling, as well as the insecurity situation in Cross River State. As a result, the report suggests that various security operators in border regions use modern security measures, as well as boost community policing in various border communities.

Keywords:

Cross border; criminalities; insecurity; illegal immigrants; arms trafficking; illicit drugs.

¹ DOI: 10.12700/jceas.2025.5.4.410

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Introduction

Background of the study

Cross border criminalities have been a security threat to both developed and developing for quite a long period of time. It drastic effects has made it imperative for the fortification of national borders across the globe. While affluent countries have made tremendous steps to reduce the entry of illegal immigration and the accompanying repercussions of drug and arms trafficking, the majority of West African borders are permeable. The porous nature of West African borders, combined with marginalisation of community members within border regions, overcentralization of state powers, and the state's inability to fully control the various border routes through its various security agencies, has resulted in what is known as "ungoverned space" or "alternatively governed" areas in most border communities (Ismail, 2013; Agade, 2014; Clunan & Trinkunas, 2010). Most criminal groups have taken advantage of these ungoverned zones, which stretch across Nigeria, to insidiously carry out a variety of illicit activities. Aside the porous state of border regions in West Africa, the pattern and extent of cross border criminalities have increased as a result of the expanding nature of globalization in West Africa. The associated benefits of inter-state relationship beyond the usual diplomatic ties have encouraged the opening of borders among most countries with advanced technology, socio-economic development and basic amenities which provides a more conducive and safer environment for dwelling. These led to the huge influx of foreigners ranging from legal to illegal immigrants. The proliferation of illegal immigrants further escalated cross border criminalities as most of these immigrants in collaboration with security operatives and native indigenes used different illegal border routes to engage in transnational criminalities that is capable of subverting socio-economic development and peaceful diplomatic ties.

In West Africa, Nigeria is among the countries with porous borders considering it high numbers of illegal border routes. Since it occupies a territory covering 923, 768 square kilometers and shares land borders of 770 kilometers with Benin to the west, 90 kilometers with Chad to the northeast, 1,500 kilometers with Niger to the north and 1,700 kilometers with Cameroon to the east (Ayissi & Sall, 2005), the country is presently experiencing high inflow of illegal immigrants from neighboring countries. The influx of illegal immigrants is mostly as a result of the fact that, the country has over 1,499 illegal border routes and 84 officially identified entry routes into the country (Bobbitt, 2002) which makes the task of monitoring and securing the inflow of immigrants into the country difficult for most of its security operatives.

The porous nature of Nigeria border has permitted different kinds of trans-border criminalities which has grossly spell doom to the development of the country. Most sophisticated among these trans-border criminalities are illegal influx of immigrants, arms trafficking and illicit drugs smuggling. These menaces have taken deep root into the fabrics of Nigeria social structure thereby threatening the peaceful coexistence of dwellers within border regions as well as the country as a whole despite various efforts put in place by security operatives. For instance, arms trafficking which has been

nurtured for quite a long period of time in the country, constitute a significant threat to national security in view of its influence on ethnic militia, terrorism, youths' restiveness, armed robbery, political thuggery and host of other insecurity crisis in the country. As rightly noted by Oxfam (2016), the availability of illegal arms in the hands of unauthorized citizens has led to the death of millions of West Africans as well as destruction of valuable properties. He further noted that, the widespread of illegal arms have led to the violation of human rights, facilitation of bad governance through political thuggery, hijacking of ballots boxes, subvert constitutional stipulations and infusing fear into law abiding citizens.

Similarly, the exacerbating state of illicit drug smuggling has equally affected both youths and adults in the country. Aside the fact that it influences various forms of criminalities such as cultism, kidnapping, armed robbery, ethnic militia, terrorism, destruction of public and private properties and host of others, available statistics from extant literatures have equally revealed that it is one of the leading causes of mental disorder among youths in Nigeria (Conway, 2018). As further observed by Holden, Dobson, Ware, Hockey & Lee (2020), mental health disorder which is now a major public health concern is mostly associated with illicit substance abuse and inadequate social support for some time now.

The persistence of these trans-border criminalities and its associated effect on the security of the country makes various efforts put in place by the government through its security apparatus questionable. Most despicable is the fact that inhabitants in most border communities who are expected to play a significant role in cooperating with security agencies through monitoring and creating of alert where there are possible trans-border criminalities are now involved in aiding and abetting trafficking and smuggling of different kinds. This has helped fueled all forms of cross border criminalities as security agents with its weak security gadgets and equipment cannot sufficiently curb the sophisticated nature of trans-border criminalities. The fact that these security crisis keeps persisting despite various strategies and measures put in place by present and previous administration clearly calls for possible way forward thereby maintaining national security. Arising from this, the study sought to critically assess the prevailing state of cross border criminalities and its associated influence on insecurity crisis in Cross River State thereby proffering valid recommendations as the way forward.

Statement of the Problem

The menace of cross border criminalities is one of the exacerbating crises affecting national security in most third world countries considering its sophisticated nature. Its aggravating and appalling state is made obvious in most West Africa countries where most of its borders are unguarded and porous in nature. The marginalization of most border communities is which has further subjected them to abject poverty and destitution is one of the core factors responsible for the degenerating state of cross border criminalities as most dwellers in border routes community view trans-border criminalities as a means to sustainable livelihood.

While Cross border criminalities have been witnessed in most West Africa countries, Nigeria tends to be one of the countries with the most porous border in recent time. Most of its border routes are now used as a channel for easy trafficking of illegal arms, smuggling of illicit drugs, unfettered influx of illegal immigrants, human trafficking, nuclear technology, organs trafficking, trafficking in toxic waste and host of others. The existence of these forms of cross border criminalities in various border regions, states and communities clearly account for the high level of insecurity in most of these communities. This fact is clearly seen Northwest and Northeast region of Nigeria where almost all border states are now flashpoint of terrorism ranging from rural banditry to herdsmen crisis.

Cross River State is among the border states engulfed with cross border criminalities. It borders areas such as Bakassi and Ikom Local Government Area are known for its porous border routes characterized by different forms of border criminalities and its associated consequences on national security. Recently, more security personnel have been deployed to various border routes with necessary gadgets to help boost their effectiveness towards tackling border related crimes. This approach by both the state and federal government have not provided any significant progress in view of the exacerbating state of cross border criminalities in both Bakassi and Ikom Local Government Area. Despite the magnitude of this menace affecting the security of the state and the country, no study has been conducted within Cross River State ascertaining the cause and extent to which this prevailing crisis of cross border criminalities affects the security of life and properties within border communities in particular and Nigeria in general. It is on the bases of the prevailing exacerbation of cross border criminalities and lack of empirical data using Cross River State as the case study, that this study was conducted with the sole aim of ascertaining the nature of cross border criminalities and its associated effect on the crisis of insecurity in the country.

The Study's Objectives

The study's overarching goal is to investigate the impact of cross-border criminal activities on the insecurity crisis in Cross River State. However, the study aimed to,

- i. Investigate the impact of unchecked illegal immigration on the situation of insecurity in Cross River State.
- ii. Evaluate the impact of illegal arms trafficking on the state of insecurity in Cross River.
- iii. Examine the impact of drug smuggling on insecurity in Cross River State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed at the conclusion of the study.

- i. How does the surge of illegal immigrants affect the security problem in Cross River State?

- ii. How does illegal arms trafficking affect the security problem in Cross River State?
- iii. How does illicit drug smuggling impact the insecurity problem in Cross River State?

Research Hypotheses

The study tested the following hypotheses to contribute to the existing body of knowledge:

- i. There is no significant relationship between uncontrolled influx of illegal immigrants and insecurity crisis in Cross River State.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between illegal arms trafficking and insecurity crisis in Cross River State.
- iii. There is no significant relationship between illicit drug smuggling and insecurity crisis.

Significance of the Study

This study was of immense significance to dwellers in the study area as well as those in other border regions of the country, law enforcement agencies, policy makers as well as researchers. Specifically, the study aided in assessing the present state of Cross River State international border in particular and Nigeria as a whole and its associated influence on the prevailing insecurity crisis in most border regions. Findings of this nature enabled dwellers within border regions to understand how porous border condition in terms of unfettered influx of illegal immigrants, illegal arms trafficking and illicit drug smuggling can lead to insecurity in the area. This will enable them strategies best approach through community policing in collaboration with security agencies within border regions to fortify various border routes. Also, findings of this nature will enable various security operatives to understand the state of various border areas in the country and the best approach to put in place to curb prevailing criminalities in border routes within and outside the study area.

Similarly, findings from this study will enable policy makers understand the prevailing state of Nigeria border in general and that of Cross River State in particular and its resultant effect on insecurity. This will provide policy makers the platform of arriving at a more comprehensive and feasible security policies within various border routes in the country thereby mitigating the insecurity crisis within border regions. Finally, the findings from the study will not only serve as a contribution to the already existing body of knowledge on cross border criminalities and insecurity crisis in Nigeria, but will also stimulate other researchers towards researching on other related areas by providing adequate data for further comparative and theoretical formulation.

Literature Review

Extant literatures were consulted and reviewed in line with the problem under review as well as the sub-variables guiding the study. Its essence is to enrich the study with scholarly postulations as well as findings which will further help in establishing the existing gap in the literature and the bases of this study. These literatures were reviewed under the following sub-headings;

Conceptual Issues on Cross Border Criminalities and the Crisis of Insecurity

Cross border criminalities is a global phenomenon as it cut across various countries in the world. While it has been significantly curbed in most advanced countries, most underdeveloped countries are enveloped in persistent occurrence. In whatever form it takes, cross border criminalities which can also be seen as trans-border criminalities or transnational criminalities are those illegal act that constitute a threat to the safety of life and properties and most occurs across national borders involving a coordinated network of criminal gangs. It often affects different countries as it mainly transcends national boundaries. Common examples of these crimes are, illegal immigrants, arms trafficking, illicit drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundry, terrorism and host of others. Because of its motivation which are most financial gains, political and ideological reasons, cross border criminalities have presented a unique challenge to security operatives ranging from law enforcement officers to intelligent agencies thereby requiring international coordination and cooperation between security agencies and governments.

In whatever form it takes, cross border criminalities interfere with the national security of any country where it is allowed to flourish. National security in this case mainly implies the protection of a country's stability through safety of lives and properties thereby promoting the well-being of the general masses from possible threats that has drastic effect on the quality of life of the people as well as the government of the day. Cross border criminalities significantly threaten the national security through depleting the country's sovereignty, stability and development strategies. These crimes undermine the control of a nation over its territory especially through its insidious activities such as illegal immigrants, arms and drug trafficking, money laundry and host of others. For instance, the illegals influx of immigrants, arms and drugs challenge state authority and governance thereby creating a lawless environment. This accounts for the reason why terrorists' groups exploit porous border routes to evade arrest, recruit new members across countries, provide arms and ammunition through arms trafficking, invade both rural and urban areas thereby posting a significant threat to the national security.

Cross border crimes also effect both political, economic and social activities of a country. Politically, through the influx of illegal immigrants and arms trafficking, the various government institutions and their programmes towards enhancing the country are been altered. The fact that illegal arms are now in circulation clearly spell doom to the electoral process of the country. Often times, illegal immigrants are used to topple

sitting government through civil war. This trend significantly weakens the political structure of the country. Economically on the other hand, it leads to huge financial losses through tax evasion, money laundry which affects the revenue of a country thereby depleting sustainable economic development plans. Also, smuggling of goods affects legitimate trade such as local businesses leading to instability and loss of job. While socially, human trafficking which often lead to forced labor or sexual exploitation directly violate human rights. Similarly, illicit drug trafficking leads to its abuse and addiction which in turn leads public health crisis such as mental health disorder which significantly affects the social activities of a country.

Unfettered Influx of Illegal Immigrants and the Crisis of Insecurity in Contemporary Society

The illegal immigration situation in most West African countries, including Nigeria, has advanced to a new level, with far-reaching consequences for the host country. Any independent nation is primarily concerned with three things: national security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Every independent nation has well-defined borders, an independent government that oversees the affairs of the state, and the legal competence to conduct international contacts outside of its geographical authority. Thus, one of the essential characteristics of a sovereign nation is the presence of borders, and the inability to defend its borders from an unrestricted flood of illegal immigrants indicates a failure to protect national security (Segun & Ufuoma, 2018).

Globally, measures and strategies put in place by government through its institutions on cross-border immigration are to regulate the numbers of immigrants entering the country. These policies and measures are strictly meant to ensure that immigrants entering the country are not a threat to themselves as well as the country. As rightly observed by Mahmoud and Augustine (2022), policies and strategies on international borders are basically designed to checkmate the influx of illegal immigrants considering their drastic effect on the national security of a country. Thus, the fundamental responsibility of an existing government is to protect its territorial integrity and national security through ensuring the security and safety of life and properties within its territory.

The unfettered influx of illegal immigrants through Nigeria borders from neighboring countries and the exacerbating state of national insecurity are among the pressing social problems affecting the country. Vast efforts as well as resources have been put in place by previous and present administration to ensure Nigeria border withstand cross border threats across its border regions. Paradoxically, the state of its border regions are quite pitiable and devastating considering its multiple illegal border routes. Also, the porous state of its international borders has rendered it susceptible to influx of illegal migration who are also perpetrators of other trans-border criminalities such as illegal arms trafficking and illicit drug smuggling. According to Aliyu (2021), the porosity of Nigeria's borders has resulted in an influx of illegal immigrants, which has exacerbated the country's insecurity crisis because the majority of them are also actively involved in other

forms of criminality in the country. Similarly, Udeh and Nwokorobia (2021) stated that the excessive influx of illegal immigrants from neighbouring countries without proper documentation or records has had a significant impact on Nigeria's security crisis, as some of them have been apprehended for various forms of crimes such as armed robbery, drug trafficking, banditry, herders and farmers clashes, human trafficking, illegal arms trafficking, terrorism, and a host of others. For example, the Northwest and Northeast regions of Nigeria contain several illicit border crossings that connect Nigeria to various neighbouring nations, further exposing the country to illegal immigrants. Since these illegal border routes lack well equipped security operatives to mitigate the influx of illegal immigrants, these regions are prone to illegal immigrants who also engage in different forms of criminalities and violent behavior such as herder's crisis, armed banditry and all sort of terrorism within border communities (Tabi & Ndum, 2020).

In most African countries, illegal immigrants engage in various trans-border criminalities. Most common among them are illegal arms trafficking and illicit drug trafficking (Nkhoma, 2020). These crimes have now taken a more sophisticated dimension as most dwellers within border communities also aid in propagating both illegal arms trafficking and illicit drug smuggling. Other organized crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, car hijacking, political thuggery are also committed by illegal immigrants whose essence of leaving own country is to secure a comfortable life. Also, illegal immigrants increase pressure on social amenities such as medical care, education, land and host of others. There also put pressure on the limited job opportunities which further fuel the prevailing state of unemployment. In Nigeria, political leaders and government officials, including law enforcement officers, have accused migrants from other West African countries of violating different security regulations (Adetula, 2015).

Arms Trafficking and the Crisis of Insecurity in Nigeria

The proliferation of illegal arms trafficking in Africa is one of the core factors responsible for the increase in terrorism and national insecurity. Over 50 percent of arms illegally trafficking into the continent are used for internal crisis, armed robbery, communal clashes, terrorism, ethnic militia and host of others. The proliferation of small arms outside recognized security institutions had significantly fueled the incessant violence and insecurity in most developing countries (Samuel, 2022). In most third world countries like Nigeria, the associated effect of illegal arms trafficking through its porous borders are been witness on daily bases across the length and breadth of the country given the myriad insecurity crisis in both urban to rural areas. Most prevailing is the northern part of Nigeria where the ungovernable spaces in mostly border areas have been captured by bandits and insurgents who on daily bases engage in criminal activities leading to the loss of life and properties of helpless civilian (Okoli, 2019).

The availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) through illegal arms trafficking has resulted in the deterioration of a national security problem in the majority of governments throughout the world. Aside from the exacerbation of terrorism, which

has killed over 37,000 people, displaced more than 2.5 million in the Lake Chad region, and rendered nearly 244,000 refugees since May 2011, as noted by Global Conflict Tracker (2020), the proliferation of illegal arms in both rural and urban areas has further led to the incessant perpetration of crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, cultism, political thuggery, rape, murder, and a slew of others in Nigeria. It has also led to increasing state of communal clashes in most rural part of South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The occurrence of these security crisis has further led to socio-economic insecurity such as acute food shortages resulting from the destruction of farms and economic trees, killing and displacement of farmers, destruction of infrastructural facilities such as health care centers, schools, electrification projects and host of other basic amenities which further subjects affected areas to underdevelopment and destruction of small scale businesses as well as industries thereby exacerbating the unemployment condition of the people (Uwakwe, Chijioke and Susan, 2020).

The proliferation of illegal arms trafficking is critical to ensuring that a greater percentage of civilians own small arms and light weapons. Armed civilians without a licence pose a threat to national security since they jeopardise the safety of the country's general population. Although illegal arms trafficking is a global crisis, data from The Guardian (2018), cited by Umaru (2021), show that over 640 million small arms and light weapons are in circulation worldwide, with 100 million found in Africa alone and approximately 30 million in Sub-Saharan Africa. The research also suggests that more than 8 million were in circulation in West Africa. Most terrible is the fact that the majority of these weapons, approximately 59%, are in the hands of citizens, while 41% are possessed by government armed forces.

The relationship between civilian arms proliferation and the country's insecurity crisis has been the subject of heated academic debate. While some researchers claim that the proliferation of weaponry among civilians is a direct cause of national instability, others believe that tiny arms are only a precipitating factor. Despite their differing perspectives, there is general agreement that small arms in civilian hands pose a threat to any nation's ability to maintain peace and stability (Osimen & Akintunde, 2015).

In whatever forms it takes, the proliferation of arms through its illegal trafficking aids in exacerbating armed conflicts. It endangers law abiding citizens as well as undermines the respect for both national and international humanitarian laws. It threatens the legitimacy of an existing government to the benefit of its perpetrators (Kofi, 2010). To further buttress the heinous role of arms proliferation among civilians, Gofwan, Ishaya and Ado (2019) noted that, arms trafficking which results in the escalation of small arms and light weapons is among the core security challenges facing third world countries like Nigeria. The trafficking of arms fuel political instability, communal clashes, terrorism, ethnic militia and host of other insecurity crisis that defiles various developmental strategies and programmes.

Illicit Drug Smuggling and the Crisis of Insecurity in Nigeria

Illicit drug smuggling is among the prevailing cross border criminalities that has affected most third world countries such as Nigeria. The NDLEA Report, as mentioned in Nwannennaya (2021), emphasised that illicit drug smuggling and selling remains a thriving business in Nigeria, despite its harmful impact on the general population. As a result, there is a need for vigorous and coordinated efforts to combat this scourge, given its aggravating situation. The fact that illegal drug smuggling is increasingly common in most parts of the country underscores the porous character of Nigeria's borders. The high level of profit involves in trading on illicit drugs made it one of the lucrative trans-border criminalities carried out by organized criminal groups in Nigeria. These organized criminal groups are known to have networks cut across different continent with top political office holders linked to their illicit drug smuggling. Nigeria is not an exception to this trend as some of its top political office holders have been linked to illicit drug trade.

The severity of illicit drug trafficking in Nigeria has further culminated in the exacerbation of other social problems that threatens the safety of the masses in the country. In a study conducted by Amad (2021) it was revealed that in 2020, NDLEA arrested over 21,434 illicit drug dealers. The total quantity of drug seized stood at 654,765 kilograms. As occurred in the previous years, cannabis led the list of substances seized with a total of 401,373 kg. Psychotropic substances followed at 233,920 kilograms, then methamphetamine (340.8kg), cocaine (290.2kg), heroin (24.53kg), amphetamine (19.297kg.) and ephedrine (0.28kg). The fact that these drugs were in circulation clearly poses a serious threat to both the general well-being of the population and the country's national security.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Centre for Research and Information on Substance Abuse (CRISA), discovered that 14.3 million Nigerians abuse all types of drugs and report "lifetime use" of alcohol and marijuana (UNODC, 2020). Similarly, Amad (2021) observed that there is a consistent increase trend in drug selling, with the rate of illicit drug use in Nigeria in 2023 being more than double the global average of 5.3%. Approximately (60 million out of 200 million) people suffer from mental illnesses, with illegal substance use accounting for 30% of these cases. Nigerian youngsters are the main consumers of illicit substances. According to Aliyu (2021), young people in both secondary and higher institutions are a prime target for illicit drug sellers. Aside the fact that there are often the major consumers, they are also recruited into the illicit drug trafficking within and outside the country. The existence of this menace has significantly contributed to the collapsing state of Nigeria educational system in view of the poor standard of students' academic performance. For instance, it is now common practice in most tertiary institutions and even secondary schools for students to sell illicit drugs within the school environment. This has further led to the forming of cartels as well as cult groups specifically meant to protect it members and the chain of illicit drug business.

Aside the school environment, most rural communities and urban areas in Nigeria are saturated with illicit drug trading. This has further accounted for its high level of consumption with different forms of illicit drugs been introduced on daily bases. Most devastating is it associated consequences on mostly the youths that forms the labor force of the country. In most parts of Nigeria, consumption of illicit drugs is what one can term a conventional practice considering the extent to which it been consumed. For instance, most rural communities in Northern and Southern part of Nigeria sell illicit drugs such as marijuana, ice, tramadol, cocaine, morphines and host of others. The excessive consumption of illicit drugs accounts for the increasing state of mental disorder among youths in the country. Aside it associated consequences on the health of it consumption, illicit drug consumption also triggers violent behaviors which further threaten the safety of lives and properties in the country. This accounts for the reason why most apprehended criminals are mostly under the influence of illicit drugs when crimes are been committed.

Despite it drastic effect on the general public, available literatures clearly reveals that very little efforts has been made by the government towards tackling the problem of illicit drug trafficking.

For example, Nwannennaya (2021) conducted research on Illicit Drug Trafficking in Nigeria: An Obstacle to National Development and Security. The study's primary goal was to investigate the challenges and threats posed by illicit drug smuggling to the general public, socioeconomic development, and national security; it examined the Nigerian government's concerted efforts to curb the menace, with the goal of making potential recommendations on how to combat the growing state of illicit drug trafficking. The study states that weak information gathering, insecurity, bribery and corruption, poverty, civilisation, and permeable borders are the primary problems restricting the government's abilities to address the threat of illicit drug trafficking. To solve the problem, the study recommends sound orientation/education, strong law and good governance, adequate intelligence gathering, and the critical role of law enforcement agencies in maintaining a drug-free society and state.

Theoretical Framework

The nature of social reality in terms of crimes and insecurity is so complex that, it triggering factor is subjected to various critical analyses and interpretations depending on which of the theoretical realm one falls. There are ample theories that can be used in interpreting various forms of criminalities. However, two theoretical perspectives in social sciences were used to explain cross border criminalities and insecurity crisis in Cross River State particularly and Nigeria in general. These theories are;

Social Disorganization Theory

In 1942, Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay proposed the social disorganization theory, which holds that crime emerges when the mechanisms that provide social control are ineffectual and weak. The theory further explains that a disorganized society is

predominantly characterized by poverty, residential mobility, poor social stability, weak public institutions and host of others which affects that behavior of the people. Thus, physical and social environment basically influence the people's behavioral choice on what to do and what not to do. This account for the reason why a particular neighborhood with weak social structures is prone to violent activities and crime. The is because once there is social disorganization which is the breakdown of generally acceptable way of life, confusion, disillusionment and disorientation is prone to set in. In summary, social disorganization theorist maintained that, wherever and whenever there is social disorganization resulting from weak social structures, there is bound to be exacerbation of criminal activities and insecurity.

In practice, social disorganization theory is beneficial since it examines the need to develop social structures in order to address the issues of cross-border crime. It is also relevant because it calls on the Nigerian government to critically examine the social structure of Nigerian border lines, as well as improve the means of livelihood in most border communities that are currently characterised by poverty, unemployment, and inadequate infrastructure, in order to avoid exposing them to various cross-border criminalities that are now viewed as lucrative means of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The idea also advocates for supplying suitable security gadgets to security operators in various border regions so that they can combat the sophisticated nature of trans-border criminalities plaguing the country.

Ungoverned Space Theory

Jennifer Keister and Andrew Taylor proposed the ungoverned space notion back in the 1990s. The tenet idea of the theory is anchored on its ability to critically analyze the threatening effects of poorly governed or ill governed areas to most nations as there are mostly used as base for perpetrating different forms of criminalities by subversive groups. The theory argued that, ungoverned space are often security threat to the people and the government at large. This is because they are minimally accountable for the construction of governance structures; however, the purpose for their formation is to fill the void left by deficient governance structures as a result of state capacity issues. The deficit gap, which is not well managed, is exploited by organized groups of criminals who are frequently dissatisfied with the current government or are simply motivated by a need for money to conduct crimes at various levels. The core premise of this theory offers a link between large forest regions (that are ungoverned), illegal border routes, cross-border criminalities, and national insecurity, which serves as the foundation of this study.

The consequences of this theory for the study are that cross-border crime thrives in distant locations where the presence of the government is not documented, resulting in little deterrence and numerous chances for illegal behaviour. The majority of border settlements or families are divided and interspersed with wooded regions. This makes them exposed to cross-border criminal activity. This scenario is exacerbated by the lack

of security personnel as well as adequate community policing systems capable of handling the hinterlands' unique security concerns.

Methodology

The study used a cross-sectional design. This design assesses the prevalence of a certain outcome of interest in a given population. That is, it captures a snapshot of a situation as it exists at a specific instant in time. This approach is ideal for this study since it seeks to determine the prevalence of a phenomena, situation, problem, attitude, or issue using a cross-section of the population. The study was limited to a local government area in Cross River State, which borders Cameroon. The local government areas include Bakassi, Ikom, Etung, Akamkpa, and Obanliku. These Local Government Areas were chosen mostly because they share a border with Cameroon.

The study's population consists of both juveniles and adults who are regarded to be sufficiently educated and experienced in cross-border criminalities and insecurity crises in all of the above-mentioned Local Government Areas in Cross River State, which shares a border with Cameroon. The study's population was based on the predicted population of all of these local government districts in 2025. Taro Yamen's (1967) statistical method was utilized to determine the sample size for the investigation. Using the simplified procedure for estimating sample size at 95% confidence level and $p=5$, a total of 400 samples were obtained and used in the investigation.

The study used purposive sampling to pick border settlements from all Cross River State Local Government Areas. Because the study is focused on cross-border criminality, selecting border villages in the survey becomes critical in determining the true level of cross-border criminality and the insecurity situation in Cross River State. The "Cross Border Criminalities and Insecurity Crisis Questionnaire" (CBCICQ) was utilised as the primary data gathering instrument. The instrument was developed taking into consideration the hypotheses and sub-variables under study. It was made up of fifteen (15) items which were interrogative in line with the study objectives requiring the respondents to indicate by ticking the extent to which the statement appeals to them as correct. The simple percentage and population t-test statistics were used to analyze primary data gotten from the field.

Data Analysis

Data presented was generated through the administration of questionnaire. The analysis and discussion of data relate to 385 respondents out of the 400 representing 96% of the entire sample drawn from the target area covered by this study. The analysis is presented below.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Returned and usable	385	96%
Not usable	8	2%
Not returned	7	2%
Total	400	100%

Figure 1: Return rate of questionnaire Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 4 indicates that the returned rate for the research instrument is 96% (n=385), while the mortality rate is 4% (n=15). The mortality rate is insignificant and as such did not affect the study. Therefore, the analysis and presentation of data for this study was based on 385 copies of research instrument that were returned and found to be usable.

Analysis Of Respondents Responses to the Structure Questionnaire

The summary of the spread sheet showing the frequency and percentage of the respondents based on their responses to the structured questionnaire.

Analysis of Questionnaire Items Relating to Research Question One

Questionnaire items were drafted based on the first research question. This analysis helped in the interpretation of the research findings relating to hypothesis one. The outcome of the administered questionnaire is as shown below;

S/N	Questionnaire items	Scale	Frequency	Percentage	Commutative percentage
1	Porous nature of borders routes in various communities have led to the influx of illegal immigrants from neighboring countries?	Strongly Agree Agree	139 149	36% 39%	36 75

		Disagree	32	8%	83
		Strongly Disagree	65	17%	100
2	There has been significant increase in illegal immigrants resulting from the nature of porous border routes	Strongly Agreed	109	28%	28
		Agree	127	33%	61
		Disagree	89	23%	84
		Strongly Disagree	60	16%	100
3	Most illegal immigrants are assisted into the country through the help of security operatives and are harbored by various community members?	Strongly Agreed	171	44%	44
		Agree	103	27%	71
		Disagree	69	18%	89
		Strongly Disagree	42	11%	100
4	Most illegal immigrants lack the skills and knowledge to be gainfully employed as such are prone to criminal activities?	Strongly Agreed	162	42%	42
		Agree	129	24%	66
		Disagree	40	10%	86
		Strongly Disagree	55	14%	100
5	The increase in illegal immigrants in various communities has led to the increase in criminal activities?	Strongly Agreed	144	38%	38
		Agree	106	28%	66
		Disagree	32	8%	74
		Strongly Disagree	100	26%	100

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Figure 2: Analysis of respondent responses to unfettered influx of illegal immigrants and insecurity crisis in Cross River State Source: field survey, 2025.

The distribution in table 2 shows that majority of the respondents agreed to the fact that porous nature of borders routes in various communities have led to the influx of illegal immigrants from neighboring countries. This is as the result of the fact that 139 representing 36 percent strongly agreed, 149 representing 39 percent agreed, 32 representing 8 percent disagreed and 65 representing 17 percent strongly disagreed.

The table equally shows that majority of the respondents agreed to the fact that there has been significant increase in illegal immigrants resulting from the nature of porous border routes. This is based on the fact that 109 representing 28 percent strongly agreed, 127 representing 33 percent agreed, 89 representing 23 percent disagreed and 60 representing 16 strongly disagreed.

The table also shows that majority of respondents strongly agreed that most illegal immigrants are assisted into the country through the help of security operatives and are harbored by various community members. This is based on the fact that 171 representing 44 percent strongly agreed and 103 representing 27 percent agreed, 69 representing 18 disagreed and 42 representing 11 percent strongly disagreed. The table equally reveals that majority of the respondents sampled for the study strongly agreed to the fact that most illegal immigrants lack the skills and knowledge to be gainfully employed as such are prone to criminal activities. This is based on the fact that 162 representing 42 percent strongly agreed, 129 representing 24 percent agreed, 40 representing 10 percent disagreed and 55 representing 14 percent strongly disagreed.

Finally, the table shows that majority of the respondents sampled for the study strongly agreed to the fact that the increase in illegal immigrants in various communities has led to the increase in criminal activities. This is as a result of the fact 144 representing 38 percent strongly agreed, 106 representing 28 percent agreed, 32 representing 8 percent disagreed while 100 representing 26 percent strongly disagreed.

Analysis of Questionnaire Items Relating to Research Question Two

Questionnaire items were drafted based on the second research question. This analysis helped in the interpretation of the research findings relating to hypothesis two. The outcome of the administered questionnaire is as shown below:

S/N	Questionnaire items	Scale	Frequency	Percentage	Commutative percentage
1	The porous nature of various border routes has led to the proliferation of illegal arms trafficking from neighboring countries?	Strongly Agree	132	35%	35
		Agree	148	38%	73
		Disagree	55	14%	87

		Strongly Disagree	50	13%	100
2	Most community members and security operatives are involved in illegal arms trafficking through most border?	Strongly Agree	127	33%	33
		Agree	137	36%	69
		Disagree	82	21%	90
		Strongly Disagree	39	10%	100
3	Most illegal immigrants are involved in arms trafficking through various border routes?	Strongly Agree	186	48%	48
		Agree	162	43%	91
		Disagree	20	5%	96
		Strongly Disagree	17	4%	100
4	The increasing rate of illegal arms trafficking through various border routes have led to the perpetration of different crimes in border communities?	Strongly Agree	129	34%	34
		Agree	152	39%	73
		Disagree	71	18%	91
		Strongly Disagree	33	9%	100
5	Proliferation of illegal arms trafficking can best be curbed through the fortification of various border routes?	Strongly Agree	141	37%	37
		Agree	109	28%	65
		Disagree	82	21%	86
		Strongly Disagree	53	14%	100

Figure 3: Analysis of respondent responses on illegal arms trafficking and the crisis of insecurity in Cross River State Source: Field survey, 2025.

The distribution in table 3 shows that majority of the respondents sampled for the study strongly agreed to the fact that the porous nature of various border routes have led to the proliferation of illegal arms trafficking from neighboring countries. This is based on the fact that, 132 representing 35 percent strongly agreed, 148 representing 38 percent agreed, 55 presenting 14 percent disagreed while 50 representing 13 percent strongly disagreed.

The table further shows that majority of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that most community members and security operatives are involve in illegal arms trafficking through most border. This is based on the fact that 127 representing 33 percent strongly agreed, 137 representing 36 percent agreed, 82 representing 21 percent disagreed, 39 representing 10 percent strongly disagreed.

Also, the table shows that majority of the respondents sampled for the study strongly agreed to the fact that most illegal immigrants are involve in arms trafficking through various border routes. This is as a result of the fact that 186 representing 48 percent strongly agreed, 162 representing 43 percent agreed, 20 representing 5 percent disagreed, while 17 representing 4 percent strongly disagreed.

The table furtherly shows that majority of the respondents' sample for the study agreed that to the fact that, the increasing rate of illegal arms trafficking through various border routes have led to the perpetration of different crimes in most border communities. This is based on the fact that, 129 representing 34 percent strongly agreed, 152 representing 39 percent agreed, 71 representing 18 percent disagreed and 33 representing 9 percent strongly disagreed.

Finally, the table shows that majority of the respondents' sample for the study strongly agreed to the fact that proliferation of illegal arms trafficking can best be curbed through the fortification of various border routes. This is as a result of the fact that, 141 representing 37 percent strongly agreed, 109 representing 28 percent agreed, 82 representing 21 percent disagreed while 53 representing 14 percent strongly disagreed.

Analysis of Questionnaire Items Relating to Research Question Three

Questionnaire items were drafted based on the third research question. This analysis helped in the interpretation of the research findings relating to hypothesis three. The outcome of the administered questionnaire is as shown below:

S/N	Questionnaire items	Scale	Frequency	Percentage	Commutative percentage
1	Smuggling of illicit drugs through various border from neighboring countries has been an ongoing	Strongly Agree	165	43%	43
		Agree	179	46%	89

	process for quite a long period of time?	Disagree	31	8%	97
		Strongly Disagree	10	3%	100
2	The free flow of illicit drugs through various border routes has made such drugs rampant in most border communities?	Strongly Agreed	159	41%	41
		Agree	145	38%	79
		Disagree	37	10%	89
		Strongly Disagree	44	11%	100
3	Most illegal immigrants are involved in the smuggling of illicit drugs through various border routes?	Strongly Agreed	162	42%	42
		Agree	169	44%	86
		Disagree	30	8%	94
		Strongly Disagree	25	6%	100
4	The availability of illicit drugs resulting from it smuggling from neighboring countries has led to the increase of youths' involvement in drug abuse?	Strongly Agreed	139	36%	36
		Agree	148	38%	74
		Disagree	59	15%	89
		Strongly Disagree	39	11%	100
		Strongly Agreed	181	48%	48
		Agree	169	44%	92
		Disagree	17	4%	96
		Strongly	18	4%	100

		Disagree			

Figure 4: Analysis of respondent responses to the link between illicit drug smuggling and the crisis of insecurity in Cross River State Source: Field survey, 2025.

The distribution in table 14 shows that majority of the respondents sampled for the study strongly agreed to the fact that, smuggling of illicit drugs through various border from neighboring countries has been an ongoing process for quite a long period of time. This is based on the fact that 165 representing 43 percent strongly agreed, 179 representing 46 percent agreed, 31 representing 8 percent of the respondents disagreed, 10 representing 3 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed.

The table also revealed that majority of the respondents' samples for the study strongly agreed to the fact that the free flow of illicit drugs through various border routes has made such drugs rampant in most border communities. This is based on the fact that 159 representing 41 percent of the sampled respondents strongly agreed, 145 representing 38 percent of the sampled respondents agreed, 37 representing 10 percent of the sampled respondents disagreed, while 44 representing 11 percent of the sampled respondents strongly disagreed.

Also, the table shows that majority of the respondents agreed to the fact that most illegal immigrants are involve in the smuggling of illicit drugs through various border routes. This is based on the fact that 162 representing 42 percent strongly agreed, 169 representing 44 percent of the sampled respondents agreed, 30 representing 8 percent of the sampled respondents disagreed, while 25 representing 6 percent strongly disagreed.

Furthermore, the table shows that majority of the respondents sampled agreed to the fact that the availability of illicit drugs resulting from it smuggling from neighboring countries has led to the increase of youths' involvement in drug abuse. This is based on the fact that, 139 representing 36 percent of the sampled respondents strongly agreed, 148 representing 38 percent of the sampled respondents agreed, 59 representing 15 percent disagreed and 39 representing 11 percent of the respondents sampled strongly disagreed.

Finally, the table shows that majority of the sampled respondents strongly agreed to the fact the high rate of illicit drugs smuggling from neighboring countries has been a security threat to most local communities for quite a long period of time. This is based on the fact that 181 representing 48 percent of the sampled respondents strongly agreed, 169 representing 44 percent of the sampled respondent agreed, 17 representing 4 percent of the sampled respondents disagreed, while 59 representing 15 percent of the sampled respondents disagreed.

Test of Hypotheses

The five hypotheses formulated for this study which are stated in the null form were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant relationship between unfettered influx of illegal immigrants and insecurity crisis in Cross River State.

Variables	Sample mean	S. D	Reference Mean	T-value
Unfettered influx of illegal immigrants		7.12	45.00	33.29
Crisis of insecurity	40.09	5.78	45.00	10.27

Significant at 0.05 level, degree of freedom=383 Critical r-value=1.98

Figure 5: A Population t-test Analysis of hypothesis one (385).

The result of table of 5 shows that the calculated t-value of 33.29 for unfettered influx of illegal immigrants and 10.27 for crisis of insecurity are each greater than the critical t-value of 1.98. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. In other words, there is significant relationship between unfettered influx of illegal immigrants and insecurity crisis in Cross River State.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant relationship between illegal arms trafficking and insecurity crisis in Cross River State

Variable	Sample mean	S. D	Reference mean	T-value

Illegal arms trafficking	49.78	6.57	45.00	31.78
Crisis of insecurity	40.09	5.78	45.00	10.27

Significant at 0.05 level, df=383, critical t-value=1.98

Figure 6: A Population T-Test Analysis of Hypothesis Two (N=385)

The result of table 16 shows that the calculated t-value of 31.78 illegal arms trafficking and 10.27 crisis of insecurity are each greater than the critical t-value of 1.98. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between illegal arms trafficking and insecurity crisis in Cross River State

Hypothesis three

There is no significant relationship between illicit drug smuggling and the crisis of insecurity in Cross River State.

Variable		Sample mean	S. D	Reference Mean	T-value
Illicit drugs smuggling		58.12	8.11	45.00	36.81
Crisis of insecurity		40.09	5.78	45.00	10.27

Significant at 0.05 level, df=383, Critical t-value=1.98

Figure 7: A Population T-Test Analysis of Hypothesis Three (N=385).

The result of table 17 shows that the calculated t-value of 36.81 of illicit drug smuggling and 10.27 of crisis of insecurity are each greater than the critical t-value of 1.98. Hence the null hypothesis was rejected. In other words, there is significant relationship between illicit drug smuggling and the crisis of insecurity in Cross River State.

Discussion of Findings

From the analysis carried relating to hypothesis one, the study revealed that the unfettered influx of illegal immigrants poses a significant threat to the safety of life and properties of most border communities in Cross River State. Most disturbing is the extent to which the influx of illegal immigrants is now taking place in various border routes. This is made possible as a result of the porous nature of various border routes. Security operatives charged with the responsibility of ensuring documentation of immigrants are now accomplices of illegal immigration. This grossly accounts for the porous state of Nigeria border. The fact that most illegal immigrants are allowed into the country without proper documentation only expose the country to various forms of criminalities.

As clearly observed by majority of the respondents sampled for the study, most illegal immigrants enter the country through various border routes without any form of skills or education to enable them become productive to the society at large. Striving to ensure their survival without any skills and knowledge merely expose them to all form of criminalities. This greatly account for their involvement in various forms of crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, stealing, drug abuse/addiction, prostitution and host of other forms of criminalities that exacerbating the security crisis in the country.

Analysis of the second hypothesis also revealed that, illegal arms trafficking through various border routes is one of the factors responsible for the growing state of insecurity in Cross River State. The fact that most border routes in the study area are porous in nature has further led to the increase in illegal arms trafficking from neighboring countries. Despite it associated consequences on the peace and security of the country, illegal arms trafficking is now seen as a lucrative business opportunity for both the security operatives charge with the responsibility of ensuring the safety of various border routes as clearly noted by majority of the sampled respondents. Aside the security operatives, dwellers in most border communities and illegal immigrants are also involve in illegal arms trafficking as a means of ensuring sustainable livelihood.

As further observed by majority of the sampled respondents, the influx of illegal arms through it trafficking from neighboring countries has created a situation where most household are now in possession of arms. These has further escalated to different forms of crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, cultism, murder, destruction of private and public properties, political thuggery during election period, intercommunal conflict, boundary crisis and host of other forms of criminalities that has been threatening the peace and security of the people. The presence of illegal arms in most household has made most law-abiding citizens to live in perpetual fear considering the prevailing nature of insecurity in the area.

Finally, analysis of the third hypothesis revealed that arising from the porous nature of most border routes, illicit drug smuggling has been on the increase in Cross River State. Most disturbing is it resultant effect on the safety of life and properties in various border communities. The incident of illicit drug smuggling is not only a social problem

to most community dwellers in most border regions but rather one that is fast increasing as a result of the porous nature of border routes and the fact that most security operatives within most border routes are also accomplices that enable it free flow. As also observed by majority of the sampled respondents, both community members in border communities and illegal immigrants are active perpetrators of illicit drug trafficking. This is in view of its lucrative benefits which tends to ensure their sustainable livelihood.

This trend accounts for the reason why most border communities are now host for adulterated brands of alcohol and illicit drugs such as tramadol, ice, morphine, cocaine, marijuana and host of others. The presence of these drugs has also exposed most youths to drug abuse and addiction. This has further rendered them unproductive to themselves and their social at large.

Also, the presence of these illicit drugs has also led them into perpetration of various forms of crimes under the influence of such drugs. This has also accounted for the increase in mental health challenges among most youths in the region considering their addictive and abusive nature to most of the illicit drugs in circulation. The fact that these illicit drugs are allowed to flow freely within various border communities clearly reflects the nature of insecurity in the area.

Conclusion/Recommendations

From the findings and discussion of the findings, it is quite obvious that the porous nature of most border routes has led to different forms of cross border criminalities which has in turn threaten the security of border communities in particular and Nigeria in general. Most paramount among these cross-border criminalities are unfettered influx of illegal immigrants, illegal arms trafficking and illicit drug smuggling as covered in this study. The fact that these criminalities are exacerbating is mainly as a result of the fact that most security operatives who are constitutionally bestowed with the responsibility of fortifying border routes to ensure proper documentation and screening of what comes in to the country are now accomplices of cross border criminalities. While most neighboring community members are also seen to be involved in these crimes, most illegal immigrants are also perpetrators of these crimes considering its lucrative benefits to their sustainable livelihood.

The issue of illegal immigrants and its exacerbation is one of the main cross border criminalities considering their role in illegal arms trafficking and illicit drug smuggling into the country. Aside the fact that they lack the skills and knowledge to become productive to society as well as themselves, they are now seen as active members of different crimes in various communities. Through their involvement in illegal arms trafficking and illicit drugs smuggling, most communities have been exposed to different forms of crimes and mental disorder. Most youths are now drug addicts and as such less productive to themselves and their society. The increase in illegal arms and illicit drugs has further escalated the insecurity in most border communities and local government areas. Arising from this, the following recommendations were put forward:

- I) The growing state of cross border criminalities is a clear reflection of the countries porous border routes. Thus, it is imperative for the federal government through its various security agencies to ensure the fortification of its border routes. This can best be carried out through the procurement of modern security measures such as CCTV cameras, body worn cameras, security drones, finger print detecting equipment, predictive policing and host of other modern security gadgets. Also, there is need to train security operatives in various border routes on how to use these modern security measures in order to ensure its effective implementation on daily bases. This will help in curbing cross border criminalities because it will serve as a deterrence to both security operatives and community members who are accomplices to cross border criminalities and also help in the quick apprehension of its perpetrators.
- II) There is also need for community policing to be incorporated in the fortification of most border routes. The fact that Nigeria borders have been exposed to different hidden border routes clearly accentuate the need for various border communities to be incorporated in the protection of these border routes through community policing. This is because most times, community members are aware of those illegal routes through which illegal arms are trafficked, illicit drugs are smuggled and also where illegal immigrants freely enter the country without proper documentations. Through community policing, the masses and the security operatives will work together towards fortifying various borders routes in the country.
- III) Public education and awareness programmes should be carried out in various border communities on the need to be law abiding rather than engaging in cross-border criminalities such as illegal trafficking of arms and illicit drugs and also providing opportunity for easy influx of illegal immigrants.
- IV) Also suspected individuals who are directly or indirectly involved in the perpetration of cross border criminalities should be apprehended, tried and prosecuted as stipulated by the constitution once they are found guilty. The existing appalling trend where certain group of individuals are celebrated to be above the law as a result of their political affiliation with the ruling class should be curbed in view of the fact that the constitution remains binding on every citizen. This will serve as a deterrence to intending criminals.

Notes on Contributor

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Conflict of interest

The author hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

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