

ASSESSMENT OF JUNGLE JUSTICE PRACTICES AND CRIME CONTROL IN ABAK LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The prevalence of criminal activities in Abak Local Government Area has motivated inhabitants to adopt jungle justice as a strategy for crime prevention and control. The study was an assessment of jungle justice practices and crime control in Abak Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It focused on the underlying causes, patterns, efficacy, and police response to incidences of jungle justice. A descriptive survey design and a mix of In-depth Interviews (IDIs) and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were utilised. The Frustration-Aggression Theory guided the study. Sixty-seven (67) youth leaders, community leaders, eyewitnesses and police officers were purposively selected. Data gathered were coded, transcribed and analysed in themes. Findings demonstrated that the primary causes of jungle justice were lack of trust and confidence in the criminal justice system, delayed justice, cultural beliefs and norms of violence to maintain social order, increasing crime rates and social media. Patterns of jungle justice were similar to other places, including lynching, beatings, stripping, burning and destruction of properties. Jungle justice, despite being a common practice in the study area, is ineffective in deterring potential offenders and never a sustainable crime control technique in any society. It further revealed that the police were sluggish in their response to incidents of jungle justice in the study area. This study concludes that jungle justice is not a sustainable strategy for controlling or preventing crime; instead, it breeds insecurity, fear and lawlessness within the community. The study recommends attitudinal change among residents and that traditional rulers, youth and women's associations, community leaders and religious leaders should sensitise their subjects or members on the illegality and inhumanity of jungle justice.

Keywords: Assessment, jungle justice, practices, crime, crime control

Introduction

Jungle justice, an extrajudicial punishment against crime or norm violators is a global phenomenon. Akinlabi (2017), and Olukayode (2016), submitted that jungle justice is a common issue in Asian, Latin American and African countries. In India, jungle justice manifests in the form of lynching and

killings of crime suspects. These acts are often justified by the perpetrators as being necessary to maintain social order and justice in the face of inadequate law enforcement (Dey, 2015). The prevalence of jungle justice in several societies indicate a breach of social contract between the government and the led (Udousoro, Daniel & Iton, 2024). In Brazil and Mexico, jungle justice is frequently a response to crime violators (Zizumbo-Colunga, 2017). In Nigeria, jungle justice is often a response to the perceived inefficiency of the criminal justice system (the police, the court and the penal institutions) (Essoh & Asangausung, 2025; Esara, Asuquo, Ekanem & Etim, 2023; Islam, 2019). Citizens, frustrated by slow judicial processes, corruption and impunity, resort to extrajudicial punishments (Asakitikpi, 2019; Olaniyan, 2020; Buur, 2014).

Ajayi and Longe (2015), observed that incidents of jungle justice are widespread in Nigeria, reflecting deep-seated mistrust in the criminal justice system. In Akwa Ibom State, where Abak Local Government Area is located, there are several occurrences of jungle justice (Essoh & Asangausung, 2025). Nwofor and Chukwuma (2018), and Aluko (2018) submitted that jungle justice is caused by socio-economic factors, such as poverty, unemployment and lack of education, contributes to the prevalence of mob justice. Olugbenga (2019), Agbola (2019), and Essoh & Asangausung (2025), argued that jungle justice is exacerbated by a weak judicial system characterised by prolonged detention without trial, corruption and limited access to legal resources. Ojedokun (2018), opined that it is driven by a combination of frustration, peer pressure and the desire for immediate justice.

Willie et al. (2023), Fawole and Ogunbode (2019), and Odeh (2019) said it is due to high levels of poverty, ineffective law enforcement and inadequate good governance. Bandura (2016) submitted that jungle justice is common in communities where people view violence as an acceptable means of conflict resolution. Economic factors also play a significant role in the prevalence of jungle justice (Udoh et al., 2020). Cultural beliefs and practices also contribute to the illegal practice of jungle justice (Eze, 2018; Nwolise, 2017). Amnesty International (2020), Udousoro et al. (2024), Adeleke (2017) and Tyler (2017) argued that it is due to lack of public trust in the police. Social media and messaging apps have facilitated the rapid spread of information, including rumors and calls to action, which can mobilise mobs quickly (Willie et al., 2024; Banaji & Bhat, 2021; Macharia, 2020; Nwakpu et al., 2020; Patel, 2020). It may also be attributed to high crime rates and population drift (Daniel et al., 2024; Udo and Udousoro, 2024).

Jungle justice is revealed in myriads of patterns and understanding these patterns is essential for formulating effective interventions to curb this form of extrajudicial violence. One common pattern is the spontaneous nature of mob actions, where a crowd quickly gathers and takes swift action against a suspected rule violator without any formal judicial processes (Ajayi, 2018). It often results from heightened emotions such as past experience of victimisation, fear of future victimisation, anger or frustration within the community. The method of execution in jungle justice also follows specific patterns including physical violence such as beatings, stoning and lynching (Ndubuisi, 2020; Obarisiagbon, 2018). These acts are often carried out in public spaces, believing that it serves as a deterrent to potential offenders. The public nature of these punishments is intended to send a strong message to other community members about the consequences of criminal or deviant behaviour (Harnischfeger, 2019; Asangausung et al., 2025). Essoh and Asangausung (2025) observed that patterns of jungle justice include lynching, beating, burning and other immediate methods to end the life of the suspect without subjecting him or her to fair hearing as required by law.

Several studies, including Essoh and Asangausung (2025), Balogun et al. (2023), Shodunke et al. (2023), Balogun, Ifah and Osisiogwu (2023), Chukwudi, Ezebuilo, Owa and Ofuonye (2025), Kolawole-Amao (2020), and Uroko and Ukeachusim (2025), examined the prevalence of jungle justice in Nigeria. These studies did not utilise qualitative methods of data collection and analysis in

assessing jungle justice as a crime control strategy in Abak Local Government Area. To close this gap in literature, the study focused on the primary causes, patterns, efficacy and police response to incidences of jungle justice in Abak Local Government Area. The study was guided by these research questions: What are the primary causes of jungle justice in Abak Local Government Area?; What are the patterns adopted in the execution of jungle justice?; How effective is jungle justice in addressing crime and promoting community safety?; What is the extent of police response towards incidences of jungle justice?

Literature Review

Concept of Jungle Justice

The history of jungle justice is traceable to ancient civilisations where communal justice strategies, including lynching, stoning and other public execution methods were adopted before the establishment of formal legal systems (Olaniyan, 2020). Kpae and Adishi (2017), defined it as an act of punishing a suspected offender without a fair hearing or the right to a defence. As a means to maintain social order and deter crime in traditional societies, Okereke (2018) noticed that pre-colonial societies in Africa had adopted jungle justice. It has become a recurring decimal in contemporary societies. Essoh and Asangausung (2025), defined it as a form of extrajudicial punishment employed by community members against suspected law or norm violators, which deprives them the rights to life and a fair hearing. This phenomenon has been particularly noted in our society where misinformation spread via social media has led to lynching and mob attacks (Banaji & Bhat, 2021; Willie et al., 2024).

Concept of Crime and Crime Control

Crime refers to any act or omission committed by any individual that is in violation of the extant laws of the state, which is punishable by the same law (Brown, 2025). In other words, all behaviours, actions, and inactions for which the political community provides sanctioned punishment on a formal note, are criminal. It follows that jungle justice itself is a criminal offence. A crime suspect cannot be addressed as a criminal until his or her actions are proven beyond reasonable doubt in a competent court of jurisdiction. Crime is an aspect of deviant behaviour because it violates social norms which attracts punishments.

Crime control measure could be formal or informal. The informal crime control measures are unofficial strategies and social structures that influence behaviour and maintain social order. This type of crime control measures may violate human rights or laws. Examples include neighbourhood patrols, night guards, community mediation or social ostracism, stripping and jungle justice. On the other hand, formal crime control measures are official strategies and institutions created by the government to prevent, investigate, arrest and punish crime offenders. Formal measures operate within the law. Examples include police patrols, court trials and imprisonment.

Causes of Jungle Justice

In a study conducted by Essoh and Asangausung (2025), on jungle justice in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, regarding the causes, patterns, legal frameworks, and law enforcement responses, a descriptive survey design was employed and 384 respondents were selected using purposive and randomly sampling techniques. Data were gathered using structured questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The results of the study showed that the causes of jungle justice include frequent occurrences of crime, community acceptance of revenge and lack of trust in the criminal justice system. Balogun et al. (2023), examined the patterns and causes of mob justice in Nigeria and utilised secondary data sources such as textbooks, published articles, and newspaper reports. The results indicated that mob justice is applied to both

minor and serious crimes, such as thefts, pickpocketing, bag snatching, rape, robbery, kidnapping, and murder among others. The root causes of mob justice were identified as distrust in legal and state security authorities, weakness of police and legal institutions, socioeconomic factors (such as poverty, unemployment, discrimination or inequality), frustration and anger, and institutional failure.

Shodunke et al. (2023), explored mob justice issues and their intersection with human rights in Lagos, Nigeria. Using simple random and convenience sampling methods, 1152 participants were recruited and the data were gathered via a structured questionnaire and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The findings indicated that institutional problems and unethical practices in the criminal justice system exacerbate public distrust. In conjunction with socio-economic disparities, the distrust triggers individuals to adopt an unconventional approach (mob justice) against crime suspects for public security's sake. Such an approach violates suspects' rights to life, a fair hearing, justice, and protection from degrading treatments as stipulated in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution and international human rights treaties the country is a signatory to. Salihu and Gholami (2018) examined the public perception of the apparatus of justice in term of corruption, lack of equity, fairness and justice for all as a response to recourse to mob justice in Lagos State, Nigeria. Using simple random and purposive sampling techniques, 904 respondents participated in the study. Questionnaire and interview were used for data collection. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists was used to analyse quantitative data and thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. The study found that Lagos State experienced repeated incidences of jungle justice due to public dissatisfaction and loss of confidence in the Nigeria Police Force and the judiciary's partial justice.

Patterns of Jungle Justice

Balogun et al. (2023), examined the patterns and causes of mob justice in Nigeria and utilised secondary data sources. The results showed that the patterns of mob justice in Nigeria include hand beating, necklacing, lynching, burning, stripping, clubbing, and stoning of suspected criminals. Uroko and Ukeachusim (2025), examined the issue of lynching/jungle justice in Nigeria through the lens of I Kings 21:1-19. This study used literary analysis to engage the text and the context. Findings indicated that patterns of jungle justice in Nigeria include verbal harassment, physical assault, beating and lynching with the use of stones, rods, bricks, ropes and fire.

Efficacy of Jungle Justice as Crime Control Strategy

Chukwudi et al. (2025), examined the effect of jungle justice on the rule of law and its implications for achieving societal stability and SDG-16. The descriptive survey design involving secondary data sourced via textbooks, magazines, journals, official reports, newspapers, and internet materials were employed. The study found that jungle justice has neglected the rule of law, creating tension and instability in society and limiting the effort towards achieving SDG-16. This implies that this strategy of controlling crime is ineffective. Akan (2023), examined jungle justice as crime control mechanism among Nigerian youth: a pointer to the rising primitivism, fanaticism and anarchy. The work employed qualitative (key informant interview and focus group discussion) method to generate data. The data was analysed using manual content analysis and ethnographic summaries. It was found that jungle justice is a clear violation of human right. It is barbaric, inhuman, terrifying and has encouraged the culture of impunity among Nigerians. Since this method of crime control is unacceptable in all ramifications, it implies that jungle justice is not an effective crime control measure in Nigeria.

Kolawole-Amao (2020), examined the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, particularly the NPF in tackling jungle justice in Nigeria. The study relied on primary and secondary sources of data and content analysis was used to analyse the data. The results showed that the police response to incidences of jungle justice in Nigeria is always slow. Uroko and Ukeachusim (2025), examined the issue of lynching/jungle justice in Nigeria through the lens of I Kings 21:1-19. This study used literary

analysis to engage the text and the context. Findings, among others, revealed that in situations where jungle justice is being carried out, the police do not always give swift response to calls made to them, giving room for perpetrators to go scot-free in most cases.

Theoretical Framework

The Frustration-Aggression Theory

This study was guided by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Hobart Mowrer, Robert Sears's Frustration-Aggression Theory, developed in 1939. These theorists posit that frustration leads to aggression and violence (Kruglanski et al., 2023). When individuals are thwarted in their goals, they experience frustration, which can manifest as aggressive behaviour, including physical, passive and verbal aggression.

Applying Frustration-Aggression Theory to jungle justice as a crime control strategy in Abak Local Government Area, criminal activities are in a higher dimension, the components of the criminal justice system are individually perceived as ineffective, corrupt, or inaccessible, leading to public frustration. When members of the public perceive that most crime suspects go unpunished for the crimes they committed, jungle justice becomes a choice. This collective frustration with an unreliable legal system drives community members to violate the extant laws or norms through enforcement of jungle justice.

Frustration from continued incidences of crime and culture of impunity from offenders and mistrust on formal police formations pushes members of the public to become aggressive towards offenders, often resulting in brutal and extrajudicial killings. This aligns with ideas of Udoh & Udousoro (2014) and Udoh et al. (2020), who submitted that the persistence of socioeconomic woes and ineffective governance created a cycle of frustration, fueling the proliferation of jungle justice. Furthermore, the theory suggests that aggression is the consequence of frustration and crime suspected individuals are often caught up in mob violence.

This theory is criticised for overlooking individual differences, social contexts and cognitive processes that mediate the relationship between frustration and aggression. Despite criticisms, the justification for adopting this theory lies in the fact that the frustration-aggression theory has explained convincingly that jungle justice is driven by frustration occasioned by mistrust in the formal justice system and increase in crime rates.

Methods

Research Design

The descriptive survey design was employed for the study. This research method proves efficient in gathering information to evaluate the opinions, feelings and attitudes of individuals in Abak Local Government Area on issues bordering on jungle justice and crime control in Abak Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

The Study Area

Abak is one of the 31 local government areas in Akwa Ibom State, with its headquarters at Abak town. It is bounded in the North by Ikono LGA, South by Oruk Anam LGA, West by Ukanafun and Etim Ekpo Local Government Areas, and North West by Essien Udim LGA. It is popularly inhabited by Annang people and it has a projected population of 177,500 (NPC, 2022). The terrain of Abak Local Government Area is suitable for agriculture and play host to Obio Akpa Campus of the Akwa Ibom State University. The Divisional Headquarters of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is located opposite

the Local Government Council Secretariat. Abak is a semi-urban centre, where both simple and serious offences are recorded on a daily basis.

Population and Sampling Procedure

Youths, community leaders, eyewitnesses and officers of the Nigeria Police in Abak Division formed the target population. The projected population of Abak LGA, according to the National Population Commission (2022) is 177,500. The study used 67 youth leaders, community leaders, eyewitnesses and Police Officers who have a fair knowledge on jungle justice in their locality. Six (6) study locations including, Oku Abak, Ediene Abak, Abak Ikot Anwan, Abak Obio, Ikot Etuk Udo Villages and Abak Division of the Nigeria Police Force were purposively selected for the study. The justification for selecting these six (6) locations was because of the repeated incidences of jungle justice recorded in these locations.

Table 1: Distribution of participants according to their locations, target population and methods of data collection

Study location	Population	IDI	FGD (6-10 participants per group)	Total
Oku Abak	Youth Leader	1	2	3
	Community Leader	1	3	4
	Eyewitness	1	5	6
	Total	3	10	13
Ediene Abak	Youth Leader	1	2	3
	Community Leader	1	2	3
	Eyewitness	1	4	5
	Total	3	8	11
Abak Ikot Anwan	Youth Leader	1	2	3
	Community Leader	1	2	3
	Eyewitness	1	6	7
	Total	3	10	13
Abak Obio	Youth Leader	1	1	2
	Community Leader	1	2	3
	Eyewitness	1	4	5
	Total	3	7	10
Ikot Etuk Udo	Youth Leader	1	2	3
	Community Leader	1	3	4
	Eyewitness	1	4	5
	Total	3	9	12
NPF Abak Divisional Headquarters	Divisional Crime Officer (DCO) and other Police Officers	1	6	7
	Divisional Police Officer (DPO)	1	0	1
Grand Total		17	50	67

Source: Field data (2025)

Table 1 shows the distribution of participants based on study locations, target population and methods of data collection. The table indicates that data were collected using two qualitative methods viz: In-depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted in six (6) selected locations in

Abak Local Government Area. The participants were selected youths, community leaders, eyewitnesses and police officers within the study locations. It further shows that each study location contributed participants for both IDIs and FGDs. These participants had fair knowledge about the issue of jungle justice in their localities. There were 13 participants drawn from Oku Abak Village (3 IDI and 10 FGD), 11 participants from Ediene Abak Village (3 IDI and 8 FGD), 13 participants from Abak Ikot Anwan Village (3 IDI and 10 FGD), 10 participants from Abak Obio Village (3 IDI and 7 FGD) and 12 participants from Ikot Etuk Udo (3 IDI and 9 FGD) Village. More so, 8 Police officers comprising the DPO, DCO and personnel from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Nigeria Police Force, Abak Divisional Headquarters (2 IDI and 6FGD) participated in the study. The study involved a total of 67 participants, with 17 in-depth interviews and 6 sessions of focus group discussion comprising 50 discussants. The distribution provided a balanced individual narratives and collective community perspectives on the subject matter.

Instrumentation and Data Analysis

Interview schedule was utilised in the collection of qualitative data. The research instrument was designed based on the study objectives and research questions. In qualitative research, techniques of collecting information and the procedures of gathering the data are fundamental to answering emerging research questions, according to Creswell and Poth (2018). In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were carried out in a noise-free environment and the responses of the participants were tape recorded after their consents were sought. Data gathered were coded, transcribed and analysed in themes.

Results

Research Question I: What are the primary causes of jungle justice in Abak Local Government Area?

Based on research question one, which aimed to determine the causes of jungle justice in Abak Local Government Area, the answers obtained from participants in IDIs and FGDs showed that the main factors contributing to jungle justice in Abak Local Government Area were weak law enforcement, corruption, a lack of trust in the criminal justice system (the police, courts, and correctional institutions), delayed justice, historical and cultural factors, and an increase in local crime. Selected excerpts of the IDIs and FGDs were as follows:

“Criminal activities are increasing in our communities and personnel of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) have failed to protect lives and property, corruption and delayed justice, all giving rise to jungle justice, an illegal strategy to control crime and offenders” (FGD/Male/Youth).

This response implies that jungle justice is caused by corruption, delayed justice, rising cases of crime and the failure of the NPF to adequately protect residents have led community members, particularly angry youth to adopt jungle justice as an alternative method of controlling crime. In this response, jungle justice is viewed as a response to weak law enforcement, suggesting that people chose to take laws into their hands out of frustration and loss of trust in the formal justice systems.

Another participant said:

“Let me say that historical and cultural factors are reasons for jungle justice in many communities like ours. In Abak Obio community, there is a strong emphasis on maintaining social order and protecting community values. Therefore, jungle justice is sometimes seen as a way to protect communal values and maintain law and order. For me, it is a wrong approach of crime control and I am not in support of it because it is barbaric in nature” (IDI/Male/Community Leader).

This statement suggests that historical and cultural factors in Abak Obio community influence the persistence of jungle justice. Residents of this community consider jungle justice as a means to safeguard communal values and uphold social order when the components of the criminal justice system fail. The community leader condemned the practice, describing it as barbaric, implying that it may be stem from cultural beliefs, which is an unacceptable and uncivilised way of enforcing justice in the community.

Research Question II: What are the patterns adopted in execution of jungle justice?

In an attempt to answer research question two, which sought to determine the patterns of jungle justice used in Abak Local Government Area, responses revealed that perpetrators of jungle justice used harmful weapons such as machetes, stones, cutlasses, sticks, and metal to inflict harm on suspects. Participants also stated that the perpetrators beat their suspects severely and frequently set them on fire with vehicle tyres and petrol. The comments also stated that the offenders do not respect human rights and had stripped several of them naked. In practically all occurrences of jungle justice, eyewitnesses were always posting footage of jungle justice acts on social media, encouraging others to perpetuate violence. In most cases, police personnel came after the victims had received jungle justice. The responses received from the IDIs and FGDs revealed this:

A community leader said:

“In 2023, two suspected armed thieves deprived a motorcycle rider of his commercial motorcycle. An alarm was raised and the suspects were apprehended near the High Court Junction at Abak. The suspects were killed after the stolen motorbike was found and dangerous items like machetes, cutlasses, sticks, metal, used car tires and petrol were used on them. We do not make fun of them in this community; instead, we murder them ourselves and nothing will happen. The Police are aware that in this community we don't spare thieves” (IDI).

The response implies that when there are criminal suspicions, Abak villagers react by raising the alarm, and lynching and outright killing the suspects. It seems that people in this town are extremely enraged by crime, and that extrajudicial executions have taken the place of official legal systems in Abak, which has turned into a place of impunity.

Another participant, an eyewitness, revealed thus:

“I have witnessed in my village where community night guards apprehended a female serial cassava thief in her return from stealing operation. The suspect was seriously beaten with sticks and stripped naked, and paraded to different places within the community. The suspected cassava thief later died in the afternoon of the same day due to severe injuries sustained from the mob” (IDI).

According to the response, certain Abak villages have institutionalised jungle justice. It demonstrates the existence of a violent communal culture in which members of the community substitute formal justice for jungle justice. Repeated stealing of cassava is punishable by death in this culture. The fact that community night guards are involved demonstrates how deeply ingrained violence is in local security practice. The suspect's public stripping, beating, and parading demonstrate how collective rage takes the place of legal processes. The suspect's death demonstrates the deadly result of the mob action's lack of due process.

Still, another participant stated that: “Whenever a criminal suspect is apprehended in our community, the community members must subject such a person to severe beating and set him or her on fire. Let me tell you, we do not harbour thieves and we cannot allow them to continue causing havoc in our community...” (FGD).

The response implies there is still a persistent culture of violence in the community, where jungle justice is practiced as a legitimate measure of maintaining law and order. It shows that the community has a strong communal anger and jungle justice is normalised as deterrent strategy by beating and burning suspected criminals within their possession. This shows how frustration with crime leads to collective violence that undermines state institutions that punish crime offenders.

Another participant stated that:

“Most of the time, individuals take pictures and videos of jungle justice and circulate them on Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, TikTok and other social media platforms, which only helps to intensify violence and incite others to take laws into their hands. You can verify what I just mentioned, and you will be shocked to see how many of these photos and videos are on social media” (FGD).

According to the response, sharing images and videos of jungle justice activities on social media sites encourages people to think that the practice is legitimate and applicable, which makes the problem worse. These actions undermined due process and a violation of fundamental human rights. It implies that jungle justice can be encouraged through photographs and videos circulated on social media.

Research Question III: How effective is jungle justice in addressing crime and promoting community safety?

In order to ascertain whether jungle justice has been successful in lowering crime rates in the Abak Local Government Area, data from IDIs and FGDs showed that although residents of Abak have used jungle justice as a crime control strategy, it has not been successful in reducing the rates of theft, burglary, robbery, cultism, rape, and other criminal activities that are still prevalent in the study locations. It suggests that the idea that jungle justice can curb criminal activity in the Abak Local Government Area has not worked. It implies that jungle justice is not a viable approach to crime control. It seems to reinforce a cycle of violence, fear, and lawlessness rather than deterring criminals, diminishing governmental authority.

A participant stated:

“Even if jungle justice has made many potential offenders fearful, I have never supported it. However, theft of motorcycles and tricycles, nighttime car battery theft, cassava theft, phone snatching, and robberies of retail cooking gas vendors, supermarket and point-of-sale operators, and fuel pump attendants in filling stations are still prevalent in our community. I believe that instead of using jungle justice, communities should use a more effective approach to crime control” (IDI).

The response shows that jungle justice has not reduced criminal activities despite creating fear among potential offenders. As an illegal method of crime control, jungle justice has failed to provide sustainable security in the study area and that is the reason the participant is yearning for a more effective method of crime control.

Another participant stated:

“Let me make it clear that there is no justification for anyone or group of persons to engage in jungle justice. It is unlawful and unconstitutional. The police at all times are ready to protect the citizens,

although we are not everywhere to discharge our duties. Jungle justice as an illegal method of curbing crime is ineffective in deterring potential offenders. In Abak, where I serve as a Police Officer, criminal activities are in the increase despite this informal method of justice adopted by community members” (FGD).

The answer suggests that jungle justice is an illegal and unsustainable method of crime control. It is accurate to say that the failure or lack of police intervention creates a window of opportunity for illegal mob activities. Jungle justice obstructs appropriate investigation, destroys evidence, and violates due process. Instead of decreasing crimes, killing a suspect before the facts are known feeds the cycle of violence. It also demonstrates that serious crimes are still common in Abak LGA, demonstrating that jungle justice increases mistrust, culture of impunity, instability and lawlessness rather than deterring crime and criminals.

Research Question IV: What is the extent of police response towards incidences of jungle justice?

Data gathered on how the police respond to jungle justice incidents in Abak Local Government Area, the responses gathered from IDIs and FGDs revealed that police response or intervention to reported incidents of jungle justice was slow due to certain administrative or institutional challenges including corruption, poor management of intelligent information, lack of road worthy patrol vehicles and many others.

A participant stated:

“We recently apprehended a suspected criminal and brought him before the Village Head. Since it was a criminal offence, the village chief invited the police right away. The police responded by claiming that their patrol car was out of fuel. Before they could get to the scene, their response was always a covert request for fuel. We decided to bring the suspect to the police station so they could conduct a thorough investigation. The IPO’s demand for money to feed the suspect was really disappointing. The next day, we witnessed the suspect’s release, which shocked us greatly”(FGD).

According to the response, there is a significant decline in public confidence in the police as a result of on-going inefficiencies and unofficial financial demands, forcing community people to take on duties that belong to the police. Due process justice is compromised by systemic corruption and logistical deterioration, which are shown in the frequent justifications for outright requests for fuel and money. The suspect’s unexpected release exacerbates community annoyance and raises the possibility that people will use extrajudicial tactics in the future.

A participant stated:

“I gave a tip-off to the police over a persistent stealing in my neighbourhood. The suspect was caught and was about to be executed by the mob but I prevented them from taking such an action. I called the police immediately when I discovered that he will be killed. A few minutes later, the police showed up and apprehended the guy. After being released in less than eight hours, the suspect started intimidating me and family members because the police had told him where the information that led to his arrest came from. The police are untrustworthy and incapable of managing intelligence information, thus I can never rely on them in any situation. The suspect continued keeping malice against me, until the council of elders intervened” (FGD).

This response implies that the police have lost credibility and operational effectiveness. Residents are put at risk of fear and retaliation when police actions are delayed, personal information is handled improperly, and suspects are released without sufficient investigation and prosecution. By disclosing the identity of the individual who gave a tip-off to the police not only endangered the informant's life but also demonstrated their incapacity to handle intelligence information. This has reduced public trust in law enforcement and deterred future reporting of crimes.

Another participant stated:

“I witnessed a young man who was accused of stealing an iPhone and was about to be lynched. After promptly responding to a distress call, the police brought the suspect to their station. The same squad of police officers returned to the neighbourhood a few hours later and arrested a few individuals who the suspect said had violated his fundamental rights. The suspect denied stealing any iPhone or involving in stealing and accused the complainant of sending off a false alarm against him. The suspect was released the following day in spite of the evidence ” (FGD).

The police were able to save the crime suspect who was going to be lynched by the mob, demonstrating their quick response to a jungle justice scenario. However, their later actions of arresting a few persons due to the suspect's consistent counter claims and quick release of the primary suspect raises concerns about the efficacy of the Nigerian Police Force in handling reported instances of crime and that the police can be easily manipulated by either the complainant or the accused persons.

Another participant said: “Most times, police officers do not give a swift response to protect victims at the scene of jungle justice. They frequently delayed in responding to distress calls and this is frustrating and dangerous. I could recall that I was once a victim of jungle justice. It was God that saved me” (IDI).

The aforementioned statement implies that the police are always sluggish in responding to calls pertaining to jungle justice situations, where timely actions are required. It is implied that victims of jungle justice are constantly in danger of being put to death without due process. Mob perpetrators disregard official institutions of justice because they believe that the police are unreliable and that the social contract between the people and the government has been violated.

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that lack of public trust in the formal justice system, delays in judicial processes, cultural beliefs and norms, insufficient police presence, increasing crime rates and social media were significant factors that drive jungle justice in Abak Local Government Area. When communities perceive that the formal justice system is corrupt, slow or ineffective, there is likelihood that community members may resort to jungle justice as an alternative to formal justice. Cultural norms in some of these communities normalise jungle justice, especially for crimes like, robbery, theft, witchcraft accusations or other violent offences. In some communities, jungle justice is seen as a way to maintain social order and punish offenders, a means to protect the community from perceive threats or harm. These communities have informal justice systems that prioritise restitution and punishment, which can led to jungle justice. Cultural beliefs in supernatural consequences or witchcraft cause community members to indulge in jungle justice as it is commonly observed among the elderly and children who are being killed or forced out from their homes to live permanently on the streets. Some groups believe instant punishment deters crime and restores balance. The results are in tandem with the submissions of Essoh and Asangausung (2025), Balogun et al. (2023), Shodunke et al. (2023), and

Salihu and Gholami (2018). This also aligns with tenet of the frustration-aggression theory of Dollard et al. (1939), cited in Kruglanski et al. (2023).

The results also showed that jungle justice is commonly applied to suspected thieves, armed robbers and individuals accused of witchcraft or violent crimes in Abak Local Government Area. Jungle justice often involves physical assaults, stripping, burning of suspects with tyre and fuel or destruction of property of the suspected offender. It is not a recognised crime control mechanism but it often happened in the form of angry actions by groups of persons who are impatient to see the government take decisions on crime suspects. It occurs as an immediate judgment to those suspected to have committed a crime and are caught in the act by the community people. The perpetrators may or may not have any premeditated decision to harm the suspected offender. But once an alarm is raised against a suspected offender, passers-by especially those who have been either primary or secondary victims especially of property crime will take a revenge on the alleged suspect. They often beat the suspects mercilessly with different harmful objects ensuring that the victims are seriously injured or killed in order to serve as deterrence to potential offenders.

The results demonstrated that jungle justice is not a legitimate crime control approach. It does not in any way deter crime and criminals in Abak Local Government Area but instead fosters a cycle of violence that undermines the legitimacy of the criminal justice system (the police, the court and the penal institutions). Despite the fact that jungle justice is commonly utilised in the study area, crime rates have not reduced as expected. Therefore, jungle justice encourages societal disorder and normalises extrajudicial violence, unresolved grievances and fear of reporting crimes to the government authorities. It can deepen societal rangers and mistrust, particularly if victims are wrongly identified or innocent parties are harmed. The results resonate with Chukwudi et al. (2025), and Akan (2023), who suggested that jungle justice has neglected the rule of law, creating tension and instability in society. It was found that jungle justice is a clear violation of fundamental human rights. It is cruel, inhuman, horrifying and has reinforced the culture of impunity among individuals and groups. The conclusion is further substantiated by the frustration-aggression theory presented by Dollard et al. (1939), cited in Kruglanski et al. (2023). This is because residents redirect their frustrations toward suspected offenders through mob action as an outlet for their accumulated anger. This community's discontent causes violence, which destabilises social order.

The results further revealed that the police response to jungle justice incidents in Abak Local Government Area is particularly slow for certain reasons, including institutional and logistical challenges. The police often find it difficult to intervene in time. Most police stations lack roadworthy patrol vehicles and fuel that can help respond quickly to threats or security breaches, leading to fatalities before arrests can be made. This has led to people being forced to pay money, especially when the police ask for petrol money or a ride. In a violence-prone environment, the police may delay their visit to the crime scene due to fear of retaliation from the mob. This is dangerous because it is the police's job to protect lives and property. When people think that the police will not respond quickly to save someone who is in danger, which is probably for obvious reasons, it gives law violators the courage to carry out their evil plans without any problems. People may be less likely to commit crimes if they see police officers mounting surveillance in a particular location. Gathering evidence and identifying perpetrators of jungle justice is difficult, resulting in few prosecutions. Therefore, the sluggish response to incidences of jungle justice by those tasked with safeguarding lives and property aligns with the findings of Kolawole-Amao (2020), and Uroko and Ukeachusim (2025), who observed that the police response to occurrences of jungle justice in Nigeria is always at a snail's pace, allowing perpetrators to execute their actions without police intervention. The result is corroborated by the frustration-aggression theory suggested by Dollard et al. (1939) cited in Kruglanski et al. (2023).

Conclusion

The study presented an assessment of jungle justice as a crime control strategy adopted by residents of Abak Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The research focused on the primary causes, patterns, efficacy and police response to occurrences of jungle justice. The results revealed that jungle justice is common issue in Abak Local Government Area and that the primary causes of jungle justice include lack of public trust in the formal justice system, delays in judicial processes, cultural beliefs and norms, insufficient police presence and increasing crime rates and conflicting post and reports on social media. The findings also showed that the common patterns of jungle justice include physical assaults, beatings, stripping, burning of suspects with used vehicle tyre and fuel or destruction of property belonging to the suspected offender. Criminal activities are still alarming in Abak Local Government Area, which means that jungle justice cannot maintain the needed social order and cannot deter potential offenders from committing crime. It is an illegal informal justice measure that is at variance with the extant laws governing Nigeria and it constitutes a gross violation of human rights. The findings furthered that police response to jungle justice incidents is very slow due to institutional or logistical challenges. Community members have become reluctant to report crimes, fearing retaliation from suspects or perpetrators and ineffective police response.

The main argument in study is that jungle justice is illegal and ineffective method or strategy of controlling or preventing crime in Abak Local Government Area. The study further argued that jungle justice has become a recurring phenomenon in the study area because of citizen's frustration associated with the delays in judicial processes, corruption, inefficiencies and lack of trust in the formal justice system. This extrajudicial measure undermines human rights and the rule of law, erode public confidence in state institutions and failed to deter crime and criminals. By studying the primary causes, patterns, efficacy and police response, it is concluded that jungle justice is not a sustainable method of controlling crime and instead breeds insecurity, fear and lawlessness within the community.

This study has contributed to knowledge being it provided localised evidence from Abak LGA by demonstrating the socio-cultural and structural factors that sustain jungle justice. Through field-based findings, the study established that jungle justice cannot deter offenders nor reduce crime rates, contradicting the belief that jungle justice can restore or maintain order. It highlighted the police institutional weaknesses and argued that is not only unlawful but a clear violation of the fundamental human rights.

It is suggested that a comparative study should be carried out across multiple local government areas in Akwa Ibom State or neighbouring states to determine whether the primary causes and patterns of jungle justice differ by socio-economic or cultural context. It is also necessary to examine the gender dimensions, whether male and female suspects experience jungle justice differently and how cultural biases shape community responses to crime.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations ensued:

- i. The government should introduce reforms that ensure faster prosecution of criminal cases and improved visibility of police personnel at strategic locations. Public trust can be strengthened through periodic community sensitisation on legal procedures and citizen's rights.
- ii. Targeted behavioural or attitudinal change should be introduced. Traditional rulers, youth and women's associations, community leaders and religious leaders should sensitise their subjects or members on the consequences of jungle justice. Social sanctions should be adopted to discourage participation in jungle justice.
- iii. Since jungle justice fails to deter crime and does not reduce criminality, formal crime prevention and control approaches should be strengthened, by equipping law enforcement

personnel with cotemporary skills on intelligence-led policing, human rights protection, crowd control and community engagement to enable them respond professionally without resorting to brutality or negligence. Effective crime approaches will reduce the perceived needs for extrajudicial responses.

- iv. Community-police partnerships should be strengthened to ensure information sharing, reduce fear of retaliation and encourage early reporting of suspicious criminal activities.

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