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Armed robbery: A threat to peace and national development in Bo City

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Abstract

This research investigates armed robbery as a significant threat to peace and national development in Bo, focusing on its causes, effects, and possible solutions. Using a field survey approach, the study identifies poverty, unemployment, drug addiction, and peer influence as the main contributors to armed robbery in the region. It also examines the profound impact of armed robbery on community trust, personal security, and economic stability. The research reveals that armed robbery leads to increased fear, restricted movement, and a decline in business activities, further exacerbating social and economic instability. Based on the findings, the study proposes several recommendations aimed at curtailing armed robbery. These include the creation of more employment opportunities, especially for youth, as a preventive measure. Additionally, strengthening law enforcement, improving police-community relations, and enhancing youth education programs are essential strategies for addressing the issue. The study concludes that a comprehensive approach, combining economic empowerment, improved law enforcement, and community-based initiatives, is necessary to reduce armed robbery and promote long-term peace and development in Bo. This research contributes valuable insights into the dynamics of armed robbery in Bo, offering practical recommendations for policymakers and community leaders to enhance security and support sustainable development.

Introduction

Sierra Leone has been engaged in a complex process of national rebuilding since the conclusion of its brutal civil war in 2002. The devastating eleven-year conflict, which began in 1991 with the stated aim of overthrowing President Joseph Momoh's corrupt regime, flooded the country with weapons supplied by various regional actors including Liberia, Guinea, and Libya. Despite subsequent disarmament initiatives, significant quantities of these arms remain in circulation, maintained by elements actively working against national stability and reconciliation. The conflict's legacy includes profound social and physical scars. Rebel groups like the AFRC and RUF committed widespread atrocities, while government-aligned CDF forces also engaged in serious human rights violations. The human cost was catastrophic, with tens of thousands of civilian deaths and approximately one-quarter of the population displaced. Beyond the immediate violence, the war destroyed critical infrastructure and eroded social trust, creating enduring challenges for post-conflict recovery.

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The post-war period has demonstrated that physical reconstruction alone cannot establish genuine peace. As suggested by peace studies scholars like Galtung, Sierra Leone currently experiences what might be termed "negative peace" - the absence of overt conflict without the presence of justice or true security. The country continues to grapple with systemic issues including entrenched inequality, institutional discrimination, ongoing security threats, and cultural attitudes resistant to positive transformation. Within this fragile context, armed robbery has emerged as a disturbing new manifestation of societal breakdown. Following Umar's (2015) conceptualization, these crimes involve the armed, forcible deprivation of property without legal recourse. Their prevalence raises troubling questions about persistent weapons proliferation, potential collusion between criminals and security forces, and the effectiveness of post-war disarmament programs. Particularly alarming are reports of robbers operating in police and military uniforms, suggesting complex networks of complicity.

Genuine national development requires far more than visible infrastructure projects like roads and buildings. True progress demands fundamental transformation across multiple dimensions: the evolution of social attitudes toward non-violence and rule of law, establishment of equitable economic systems that provide meaningful opportunities, creation of reliable security institutions, and development of governance structures capable of delivering justice. The persistent threat of armed robbery actively undermines all these objectives by discouraging investment, eroding social cohesion, perpetuating cycles of violence, and forcing the diversion of scarce resources from development initiatives to security measures. Moving beyond the current state of negative peace requires addressing the root causes of violence at multiple levels. Comprehensive strategies must tackle structural inequality that fuels resentment, implement effective weapons control measures to stem proliferation, confront institutional corruption that enables criminal networks, and create viable alternatives for marginalized youth vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups. Only through such multifaceted approaches can Sierra Leone transition to the positive peace necessary for sustainable development - a peace characterized not just by the absence of violence, but by the presence of justice, opportunity, and genuine security for all citizens. This transformation remains essential to prevent the recurrence of conflict in new forms and to finally realize the promise of post-war recovery.

Country Context: History & Background

Sierra Leone, a relatively small country on Africa's west coast, covers 28,000 square miles (71,470 square kilometers). With a 1994 population estimate of 4.2 million (53% female, 47% male), the country is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and southwest, Guinea to the northwest, north, and northeast, and Liberia to the east and southeast. The name "Sierra Leone" originates from Portuguese explorer Pedro da Cintra's 1462 visit, when he named the mountainous peninsula "Serra Lyoa" (Lion Mountain) due to its lion-like appearance. While this name initially referred only to the peninsula and adjacent islands, it eventually came to designate the entire country by 1896.

Before European contact, Sierra Leone was inhabited by various ethnic groups living in small, relatively isolated communities. Coastal areas were home to the Baga, Bullom, Krim, and Vai peoples, while the Temne and Loko occupied the northwest and the Limba settled further north. The Kissi and Kono inhabited the eastern regions. These groups maintained limited interaction until external influences began reshaping the region. The Portuguese were the first

Europeans to establish trade relations with Sierra Leone in the mid-15th century, initially exchanging goods like kitchen utensils for ivory and gold. However, this legitimate commerce soon gave way to the Atlantic slave trade, as European powers (including the English, French, Dutch, and Danish) sought laborers for New World plantations. Bunce Island on the Sierra Leone River became a major slave trading center, with many enslaved Sierra Leoneans being transported to South Carolina due to their rice cultivation skills. Their descendants, known as the Gullah people, have preserved significant aspects of Sierra Leonean culture, including language elements mutually intelligible with Sierra Leone's Krio.

Following abolitionist efforts led by figures like William Wilberforce, Freetown was established in 1787 as a settlement for freed slaves. The British colony developed rapidly, adopting British systems of governance, currency, and education. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) played a pivotal role in establishing Western education, founding institutions like Fourah Bay College (1827) and the Grammar School (1845). By 1841, various missionary groups and the colonial government operated multiple primary schools serving 8,000 pupils. The education system remained fundamentally British in structure and content, with English as the medium of instruction. After gaining independence in 1961, Sierra Leone maintained the British educational framework with minimal modifications. While standards remained high initially, the system increasingly failed to meet national needs. In 1994, the military government introduced educational reforms through Decree No. 4, establishing the National Commission for Basic Education to implement the more responsive 6-3-3-4 system.

Statement of the Problem

Armed robbery constitutes a grave crime against humanity, legally defined as larceny through force or threat of force. This violent offense particularly brutalizes victims who attempt resistance, violating fundamental human rights enshrined in Articles 3, 5, and 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These violations include the deprivation of life, liberty, and personal security; subjection to cruel and inhuman treatment; and arbitrary interference with privacy and personal dignity (United Nations, 1948). As Arinze (2011) notes through Umar's (2015) citation, victims suffer devastating social and economic consequences that extend far beyond the immediate criminal act. Particularly appalling are the sexual violence aspects of armed robberies, where perpetrators systematically rape women and girls, often forcing family members to witness these atrocities. The psychological damage inflicted creates lifelong trauma for both direct victims and witnesses. Many survivors face the impossible dilemma of whether to disclose to children conceived through rape the circumstances of their conception. This epidemic of gender-based violence has created countless silent sufferers within affected communities, with women particularly vulnerable to ongoing psychological distress (Nwokedi, 2011 as cited by Umar, 2015).

The apparent ineffectiveness of state responses raises serious concerns. Numerous reports suggest collusion between law enforcement and criminals, evidenced by the rapid release of apprehended robbers and delayed police responses to active crimes. A disturbing pattern emerges where police presence conspicuously coincides with robbers completing their operations, fueling public suspicion of institutional complicity. The case documented by Jonathan Hindolo Kurabu in Bo City exemplifies this failure - armed robberies occurring within proximity to police stations with no timely intervention (Cocorioko.net, 2022). Recent

seizures of military-grade weapons like AK-47 rifles (Sierra Loaded, 2025) demonstrate both the severity of the threat and the urgent need for more effective law enforcement strategies.

Ahmed's analysis identifies banditry as a growing societal menace involving systematic violence for robbery, rape, or murder (Nigeria Watch, 2011). The crime wave stems largely from systemic unemployment and economic desperation, particularly among youth who face limited opportunities despite educational attainment. A dangerous culture of instant gratification combines with political corruption to create an environment where criminality appears as the only viable survival strategy. As Otu (2012) and Onoge (2003) note through Umar's (2015) work, the systematic siphoning of national resources by political elites creates conditions where ordinary citizens, especially youth, view criminal activity as their only means of economic survival. This dynamic mirrors Sierra Leone's pre-war conditions documented in the TRC Report, where wealth extraction by elites fueled widespread discontent. The education-employment disconnect has created a generation of disaffected graduates who turn to criminality after investing in education that yields no economic returns. This phenomenon reflects deeper structural failures where national resources are systematically diverted rather than invested in job creation and youth development. The resulting alienation creates fertile ground for criminal recruitment, as desperate youth seek alternative paths to economic survival in an environment that offers few legitimate opportunities

Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon two foundational theoretical perspectives: Karl Marx's Conflict Theory and Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution. These frameworks provide complementary lenses for understanding the socioeconomic dynamics driving armed robbery in Sierra Leone.

Marxist Conflict Theory Perspective

Marx's conflict theory posits that all societies are fundamentally shaped by class struggle over material resources. In the capitalist system Marx analyzed, the bourgeoisie (owners of production) systematically exploit the proletariat (working class) to maximize capital accumulation (Marx & Engels, 1848). As Garba (2006) observes through Umar's (2015) citation, this system creates a moral framework where individual worth becomes measured solely by material wealth rather than ethical conduct or social contribution.

The Sierra Leonean context vividly illustrates these dynamics. A small political elite (bourgeoisie) controls national resources while the majority population (proletariat) faces:

- Systematic underpayment for labor

- Exclusion from meaningful employment opportunities

- Chronic economic marginalization

This creates what Marx termed "false consciousness" - where the oppressed fail to recognize their collective power. However, as Marx predicted, growing class consciousness among Sierra Leone's proletariat may eventually lead to systemic challenge. The current epidemic of armed robbery represents one manifestation of this emerging class conflict, as marginalized youth employ violent means to redistribute resources.

Darwinian Evolutionary Theory Perspective

Darwin's evolutionary theory, particularly the concepts of "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest," provides additional explanatory power (Darwin, 1859). While originally biological, these principles have socio-economic applications as noted by later thinkers like T.H. Huxley, who recognized intellectual and social dimensions of competition (Wikipedia, 2022).

In Sierra Leone's context, these evolutionary concepts manifest through:

- Extreme competition for scarce resources
- Breakdown of social contracts
- Normalization of violent survival strategies

The proliferation of armed robbery reflects what Darwin termed "natural selection" operating in a social ecosystem - where individuals adapt antisocial behaviors as survival mechanisms in an environment of:

- Chronic unemployment
- Political corruption
- Economic inequality

Synthesis of Theoretical Perspectives

The intersection of these theories reveals a powerful explanatory model:

- Marxist analysis explains the structural conditions creating inequality
- Darwinian theory explains the adaptive behaviors emerging from these conditions
- Together they account for both systemic causes and individual manifestations of armed robbery

This theoretical framework suggests that armed robbery in Sierra Leone represents both:

- A form of primitive class rebellion (Marxist lens)
- An adaptive survival strategy (Darwinian lens)

The persistence of these criminal patterns will likely continue until either:

- Structural inequalities are addressed (Marxist solution)
- Legal systems become more effective selectors against criminal behavior (Darwinian solution)

This dual theoretical approach provides comprehensive tools for analyzing both the root causes and potential solutions to Sierra Leone's armed robbery epidemic.

General Aim and Specific Objectives

The general of this study was to examine Armed Robbery as a major threat to peace and national development in Bo City. The Specific Objectives were to:

- To identify the Causes of Armed Robbery
- To assess the effects of Armed Robbery on Peace And Security
- To proffer in recommendations for the curtailment of armed robbery operations in the study area.

Method

Research methodology describes the methods employed the researcher in conducting a particular research. It describes the step by step procedures that will lead to collection and analysis of data for a given research work.

Research Design

The following designs were followed: data collection method, the instruments for data collection, and method of data analysis. Both primary and secondary data were utilized. Questionnaires formed the main tool for primary data collection, internet materials, information from journals, books and articles were used. Both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were followed.

Sample Size and Selection Procedure

120 respondents were chosen using purposive sampling technique. This population consisted of 10 police officers, 10 legal practitioners, 30 victims of armed robbery operation, 35 youths from ghettos, 20 armed robbers convicted and placed behinds bars, 15 media workers (Journalists). A purposive randomized selection of respondents was employed. It was purposive because the respondents had meaningful contributions to offer for the study; and randomized in the sense that all respondents within the population had equal chances of being represented.

These sets of people were significantly selected for their contributions to the research topic. The Police are the state securities charged with responsibility to safe guide the lives and property of the civilian population. They were selected for this research because they are the ones dealing directly with the armed robbers and often they have been accused by the population for conniving with the criminals. The legal practitioners who convict or acquit these criminals were also very relevant for the study. They provided the legal interpretations of the law upon which they criminals are convicted or acquitted and discharged. The very victims of armed robbery operation gave their life experiences about how they were attacked and mistreated. Their contributions gave relevant meanings to this research work. Young people from various ghettos added value to the work. Armed robbers convicted and placed behinds bars gave their own side of the story that added significant flavour to the work, civil society and media workers (Journalists) were selected because they are the advocates of the people and they influence government decisions on behalf of the people.

Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data is a firsthand data collected by the researcher himself from the respondents using questionnaires, focus group discussions and observations, and interviews. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and collected on a stated date. Interviews conducted on diverse dates played significant roles for the final compilation of this study. Data collected from the questionnaires formed the bulk percentage of data for this work. Secondary data are those collected from Library, internet,

Journals, articles and newspaper containing relevant information about the research topic. The researcher sought documentary sources to beef up and enrich the interpretations and analysis. Both excel and Statistical packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) were used for data analysis. Tables and graphs were presented and percentages calculated.

Data Analysis

Data from the questionnaires were analysed using table and descriptive statistical analysis to throw light on the research questions. Numbers, percentages, tabular presentations of responses and graphs were used to illustrate the findings of the study. Qualitative data from interviews and documentary sources supplemented the questionnaire data. Observations made were used to enrich interpretation of the data. The discussions, conclusions and recommendations drawn were based on the research findings.

Findings

Primary Causes of Armed Robbery

Table 8 reveals that a significant proportion of respondents; 138 (31.8) identified poverty as the primary cause of armed robbery, suggesting that economic deprivation is a major driving force behind criminal behavior in the community. This finding underscores the urgent need for poverty reduction strategies as part of broader crime prevention efforts. However, it is also important to recognize the relative influence of other contributing factors. Unemployment was identified by 119(27.4%), indicating that lack of job opportunities closely follows poverty as a major trigger of armed robbery. Drug addiction also emerged as a notable factor, cited by 97(22.3%), pointing to the role of substance abuse in facilitating criminal acts. Additionally, peer influence 52(12.0%) and greed 28(6.5%) were acknowledged, albeit to a lesser extent, highlighting the multifaceted nature of the problem. Together, these findings suggest that while poverty is the most dominant cause, a comprehensive approach to addressing armed robbery must also tackle youth unemployment, substance abuse, social influence, and moral decay to effectively reduce the incidence of such crimes in the community.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents' perceptions of the primary causes of armed robbery

Primary Cause	Absolute Frequency (AF)	Relative Frequency (RF) (%)
Poverty	138	31.8
Unemployment	119	27.4
Drug addiction	97	22.3
Peer influence	52	12.0
Greed	28	6.5
Total	**434**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, April 2025

Groups Most Commonly Involved in Armed Robbery

Table 9 shows that the majority of respondents; 126(34.6%) identified unemployed youth as the group most commonly involved in armed robbery, emphasizing the critical role that youth unemployment plays in perpetuating criminal behavior in Bo. This highlights the pressing need for targeted employment and skills development programs for young people as a strategy to reduce crime. At the same time, other groups were also frequently mentioned,

pointing to the broader social dimensions of the problem. Ex-convicts accounted for 101(27.7%), suggesting that reintegration challenges and social stigma may push former inmates back into criminal activities. Drug addicts were identified by 86(23.6%), reinforcing the link between substance abuse and violent crime. Additionally, school dropouts were noted by 51(14.1%), indicating that limited access to or discontinuation of education can also be a pathway into criminal behavior. These findings imply that while unemployed youth are perceived as the primary perpetrators, a comprehensive intervention strategy should also focus on ex-convict reintegration, drug rehabilitation, and educational retention to effectively address the root causes and demographics of armed robbery in the community.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents' perceptions of the groups most commonly involved in armed robbery

Group Involved	Absolute Frequency (AF)	Relative Frequency (RF) (%)
Unemployed youth	126	34.6
Ex-convicts	101	27.7
Drug addicts	86	23.6
School dropouts	51	14.1
Total	**364**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, April 2025

Economic Factors Contributing to Armed Robbery

Table 12 indicates that the largest share of respondents; 129 (33.4%) identified lack of job opportunities as the leading economic contributor to armed robbery. This finding reinforces the perception that employment scarcity is the most pressing economic driver behind criminal behavior, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable job creation and skills training initiatives, particularly for vulnerable populations. However, other economic factors were also highlighted as significant contributors. Low wages, selected by 107 respondents (27.7%), suggest that even those who are employed may still struggle to meet basic needs, potentially driving them toward illicit activities. Similarly, high cost of living, cited by 89 respondents (23.1%), reflects the economic strain many individuals face in maintaining a decent standard of living. Furthermore, poor economic policies, acknowledged by 61 respondents (15.8%), point to systemic issues in governance and economic planning that may inadvertently foster conditions conducive to armed robbery. Collectively, the responses suggest that while job scarcity is viewed as the most critical economic issue, a holistic strategy addressing wage levels, living costs, and economic governance is essential for effectively tackling the economic roots of armed robbery in Bo City.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents' perceptions of the economic factors contributing to armed robbery

Economic Factor	Absolute Frequency (AF)	Relative Frequency (RF) (%)
Lack of job opportunities	129	33.4
Low wages	107	27.7
High cost of living	89	23.1
Poor economic policies	61	15.8
Total	**386**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, April 2025

Major Consequences of Armed Robbery

Table 16 highlights that the most commonly cited consequence of armed robbery is increased fear, mentioned by 104 respondents (20.4%). This suggests that armed robbery has a profound psychological impact on communities, undermining their sense of safety and stability. The second most noted consequence is economic decline 96(18.9%), indicating that such criminal activities can deter investment, disrupt local economies, and reduce livelihoods. Violent outcomes were also prominently cited. Killing of people who resist robbers (89(17.5%) and raping of women 68 (13.4%) point to the brutal and traumatic nature of these crimes. Additionally, wounding of victims 56 (11.0%) further reflects the physical dangers associated with armed robbery. Other consequences include migration of residents 45 (8.8%), sexual penetration of young girls 30 (5.9%), and business closures 21 (4.1%), which together illustrate a wider pattern of social disruption, demographic shifts, and economic instability. Overall, the data underscores that while fear is the most immediate and widespread effect, the broader consequences of armed robbery—ranging from economic hardship to serious violence and community displacement—are equally alarming and demand comprehensive policy and security responses.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents' perceptions of the major consequences of armed robbery

Consequence	Absolute Frequency (AF)	Relative Frequency (RF) (%)
Increased fear	104	20.4
Economic decline	96	18.9
Killing of people who resist them	89	17.5
Raping of women	68	13.4
Wounding	56	11.0
Migration of residents	45	8.8
Sexually penetrating young girls	30	5.9
Business closures	21	4.1
Total	**509**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, April 2025

Recommendations for Reducing Armed Robbery in Bo City

Table 22 reveals that the most frequently recommended solution to reduce armed robbery is for the government to provide more job opportunities, as suggested by 118 respondents (31.2%). This indicates a strong public belief that addressing unemployment—particularly among youth—is fundamental to curbing criminal activities and promoting long-term peace and stability. At the same time, other responses reflect a multifaceted approach to tackling the issue. Tougher laws and stricter punishment for offenders, cited by 102 respondents (27.0%), suggest that many believe stronger legal deterrents are necessary to discourage potential criminals. Additionally, increased police patrols and surveillance, recommended by 84 respondents (22.2%), point to the need for more robust security presence and proactive policing to deter and respond to armed robbery incidents. Furthermore, government investment in youth empowerment programs, noted by 74 respondents (19.6%), highlights the importance of equipping young people with skills, mentorship, and opportunities to engage in productive livelihoods.

Table 5. Recommendations for Reducing Armed Robbery in Bo City

Suggested Action	Absolute Frequency (AF)	Relative Frequency (RF) (%)
Provide more job opportunities	118	31.2
Tougher laws and punishments	102	27.0
Increased police patrols and surveillance	84	22.2
Youth empowerment programs	74	19.6
Total	**378**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, April 2025

Preferences for Employment Opportunities to Reduce Armed Robbery

Table 23 reveals that the most frequently suggested intervention to reduce armed robbery is the establishment of skill acquisition centers for youth, supported by 110 respondents (28.1%). This reflects a strong belief that equipping young people with practical, employable skills can provide viable alternatives to criminal activity and foster self-reliance. Other notable responses point to a shared emphasis on income-generating opportunities. Agricultural job schemes, recommended by 99 respondents (25.3%), indicate recognition of the agricultural sector's potential to absorb labor and offer steady livelihoods, especially in rural and peri-urban areas. Additionally, small business grants and start-up loans, cited by 88 respondents (22.4%), suggest that entrepreneurial support is also viewed as a critical tool for economic empowerment and crime prevention. Likewise, vocational training programs, highlighted by 95 respondents (24.2%), emphasize the need for hands-on, trade-based learning that can lead to immediate employment or self-employment. Collectively, these findings underscore a clear preference for practical, sustainable, and income-generating solutions as the most effective means of tackling armed robbery. The data points to the importance of government and development partners investing in youth development, agriculture, and entrepreneurship to address the root economic drivers of crime in the community.
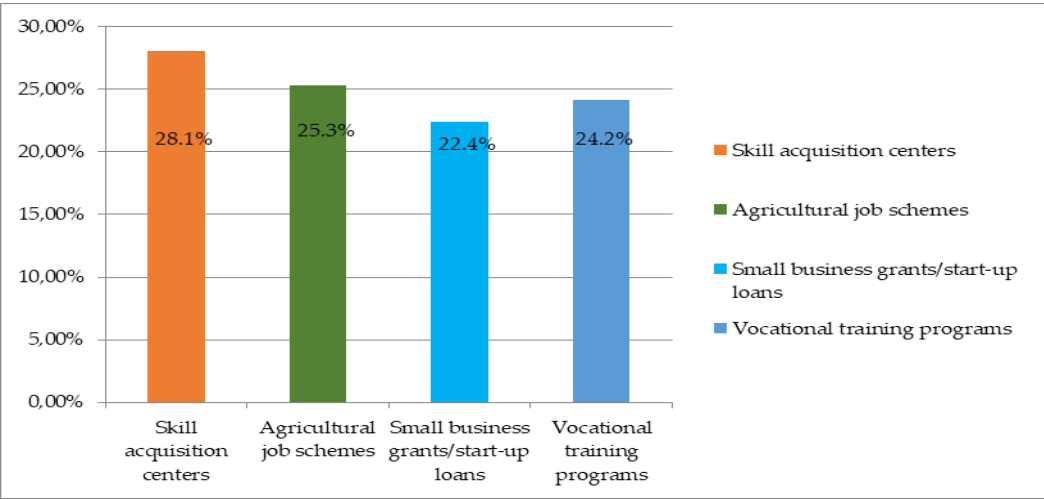
Figure 1. Distribution of respondents' preferences for employment opportunities to reduce armed robbery

Source: Field Survey, April 2025

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal critical insights into the public perceptions of armed robbery in Bo, Sierra Leone, situating them within broader academic and policy debates. A significant proportion of respondents (34.6%) identified unemployed youth as the primary group involved in armed robbery, reinforcing the well-documented link between youth unemployment and criminal behavior in Sub-Saharan Africa (Adegboye et al., 2021; Urdal, 2012). This aligns with the "idle hands" hypothesis, which suggests that economic exclusion drives young people toward illicit activities (Fajnzylber et al., 2002). At the same time, the prominence of ex-convicts (27.7%) and drug addicts (23.6%) as perceived offenders underscores the challenges of reintegration and substance abuse, consistent with studies in Nigeria (Peters, 2020) and broader West African criminological research (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2004). The inclusion of school dropouts (14.1%) further highlights the intersection between educational deprivation and criminal pathways, a trend observed in other low-resource settings where limited access to schooling correlates with higher delinquency rates (UNESCO, 2020).

Economic factors were also central to respondents' explanations for armed robbery, with job scarcity (33.4%) emerging as the leading contributor. This finding resonates with strain theory (Merton, 1938), which posits that economic deprivation compels individuals to adopt illegitimate means of survival. Similar patterns have been observed in Ghana (Owusu & Adu-Mireku, 2021) and South Africa (Burger, 2021), where unemployment and underemployment were strongly associated with property crime. The emphasis on low wages (27.7%) and high living costs (23.1%) further reflects the precarious economic conditions faced by many in Bo, supporting Standing's (2011) concept of the "precariat"—a class vulnerable to exploitation and criminality due to unstable livelihoods. Notably, the attribution of crime to poor economic policies (15.8%) suggests a broader critique of governance failures, a perspective less prominent in studies from more economically stable regions but recurrent in research on fragile states (World Bank, 2020).

The consequences of armed robbery, as reported by respondents, underscore its multifaceted impact on the community. Increased fear (20.4%) was the most cited effect, aligning with studies on the psychological toll of crime in urban Africa (Muggah, 2017). Economic decline (18.9%) was another major concern, consistent with evidence that crime disrupts local markets and deters investment (Meagher, 2018). The high reporting of violent outcomes—such as killings (17.5%) and sexual violence (13.4%)—highlights the brutal nature of armed robbery, mirroring findings from Nigeria (Oluwaniyi, 2020) and Kenya (Ruteere & Pommerolle, 2003). These gendered dimensions of violence suggest a need for security interventions that specifically address risks faced by women and girls. Additional consequences, including migration (8.8%) and business closures (4.1%), further illustrate how armed robbery erodes social stability and economic resilience, reinforcing the urgency of comprehensive responses.

Respondents' recommendations for reducing armed robbery centered predominantly on job creation (31.2%), reflecting a strong belief in economic solutions to crime. This aligns with developmental criminology approaches (Tanner & Meyer, 2015), which prioritize opportunity creation over punitive measures. However, the simultaneous demand for stricter laws (27.0%) and increased policing (22.2%) reveals a dual expectation of both structural reforms and law enforcement—a tension observed in other African contexts (Baker, 2010). The focus on skill

acquisition (28.1%) and agricultural employment (25.3%) as preferred interventions echoes successful crime reduction strategies in Uganda (Blattman et al., 2014), where vocational training and farming programs significantly decreased youth participation in violence. Entrepreneurial support, such as small business grants (22.4%), was also emphasized, supporting evidence that microenterprise initiatives can reduce recidivism (Cho et al., 2021). Collectively, these recommendations advocate for a multi-sectoral approach that combines economic empowerment, security enhancement, and legal reforms.

Comparative Perspectives and Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study both align with and diverge from existing research on armed robbery in comparable contexts. While the emphasis on youth unemployment as a primary driver mirrors trends across Sub-Saharan Africa (Urdal, 2012), the strong attribution of crime to policy failures (15.8%) distinguishes this study from research in more stable economies, where institutional trust may be higher. The gendered reporting of consequences—particularly sexual violence—also highlights a dimension often underemphasized in crime studies from the region, suggesting a need for more gender-sensitive analyses. Theoretically, the data support social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942), as economic deprivation and institutional weakness appear to foster crime. However, the coexistence of demands for both developmental interventions (e.g., job creation) and punitive measures (e.g., stricter laws) complicates purely structural or deterrence-based explanations. This duality suggests that an integrated theoretical framework—one that acknowledges both socio-economic root causes and the immediate need for security—may be most applicable to contexts like Bo City.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations have been put forward to address the problem of armed robbery in Bo City.

- First, there is a need for the government to focus on creating more employment opportunities, particularly for youth, as this is seen as a long-term solution to reducing crime. Job creation, vocational training, and youth empowerment programs were identified as essential in curbing the root causes of armed robbery.

- Furthermore, law enforcement must be strengthened to increase police visibility and improve response times to criminal activities. Building trust between law enforcement agencies and the community is crucial in fostering cooperation and ensuring the effectiveness of security measures.

- Finally, community-based approaches such as youth education, awareness campaigns, and the promotion of community policing are necessary to prevent future generations from engaging in criminal behavior.

- In summary, the study underscores that combating armed robbery in Bo City requires a multifaceted approach that combines economic empowerment, enhanced law enforcement, and proactive community involvement. By addressing the underlying causes of armed robbery and implementing the recommended strategies, it is possible to reduce crime, promote peace, and foster national development.

Conclusion

The study underscores that armed robbery in Bo City is a symptom of deeper socio-economic and governance challenges. Effective responses must therefore be multi-pronged: (1) Economic interventions, including job creation, vocational training, and agricultural support, to address unemployment and underemployment; (2) Social programs, such as ex-convict reintegration and drug rehabilitation, to reduce recidivism; (3) Security and legal reforms, including community policing and judicial accountability, to deter crime while avoiding excessive force; and (4) Macro-level policy changes to improve wages, living conditions, and economic governance. Future research should explore the longitudinal impacts of these interventions, particularly their effects on gender-based violence and youth recidivism. Nevertheless, the findings provide a robust foundation for policymakers seeking to mitigate armed robbery through evidence-based, holistic strategies.

Declarations

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