

PREDISPOSING FACTORS AND VULNERABILITIES OF FEMALES' INVOLVEMENTS IN ARMED ROBBERY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Females are serving terms in custody for their involvements in armed robbery but there are limited published articles in this regard in Nigeria. However, factors that make females vulnerable and pull them into armed robbery have been assumed to be same with the males which may not be correct. This study therefore, examined the peculiar push and pull factors that predispose females into armed robbery in Nigeria. It is hinged on Differential Association theory by Sutherland (1947). The key participants purposefully selected were sixty-one female armed robbery convicts in custody at the three major correctional centers in three southwestern states in Nigeria; Lagos, Ogun and Oyo in 2022. Interviews were conducted to elicit information from the participants and data gathered were thematically analyzed bringing out themes derived from the interviews. The study revealed that majority of the females involved in armed robbery were pushed into it based on their emotional attachments to male armed robbers, assistance rendered to the males in their hustling and deals while many were pulled into it because of the financial gains attached to it. The study therefore recommends amongst others that females need to consider their family background, family name, future, not immediate gratification, and the effects of their actions on their significant others before rendering any assistance or actions that violate the laws to anyone including females.

Keywords

armed robbery; correctional centers; female; push; pull

Introduction

Studies have suggested that when females participate in violent crimes like robbery, homicide, terrorism, kidnapping, human and drug trafficking amongst others, they do so in partnership with males and their roles are marginal; they are segregated and compensated with tokens not anything compared to the loots of the crime (Alker, 2022; Brookman et al., 2007; Maher, 1997; Miller, 1998; Schwartz & Steffensmeier, 2016; Ugwuoke et al., 2021). Also, when females commit violent crimes such as assault or aggravated assault, they mostly use it to settle disputes and renegotiate their reputation on the streets and neighborhoods (Alker, 2022; Schwartz & Steffensmeier, 2016). Violent crimes characterized by masculine features of hardness, toughness, violence and intimidation, which are not considered female features, are striking characteristics that distinguish females' enactment of armed robbery across the globe.

However, the socio-economic factors responsible for these involvements have not been clearly stated in academic literature in Nigeria. Examination of the push and pull factors of

females' involvements in armed robbery therefore becomes necessary so as to discourage others from getting involved. It will also enable interventionists to properly plan and execute policies aimed at curbing females seeking careers in armed robbery as well as provide problem solving solutions in Nigeria. Hence, this study examined the factors that predispose females into armed robbery, as well as factors that make them vulnerable to participating in armed robbery operations in Nigeria. Specifically, it examined the socio-demographic/economic characteristics of female armed robbers, their family background, spousal profiles of the married ones and attraction into armed robbery.

Females' Involvements in Armed Robbery

One reason for females' involvements in armed robbery is the need to maintain street life subculture that they have imbibed over time (Miller, 1998). Since they have been used to being street wise, rough and indecent life styles, partying and drinking alcohol, learnt the tricks of cheating, stealing and taking drugs, they want to do everything possible to retain the kind of life they have enjoyed over time. Hence, such instant status enhancing traits are strongly associated with females' involvement in armed robbery. Some of these females find it difficult spending money on these choice items. The ease of getting them in robbery excites/thrills them and influences their continuous involvement in armed robbery (Miller, 1998). One of Miller's (1998) respondents said she got all she wanted in one quick step in her quote: *"I like robbery. I like robbery 'cause I don't have to buy nothing. You have a herringbone, I'm gonna take your herringbone and then I have me a herringbone. I don't have to worry about going to the store, getting me some money. If you got some little earrings on I'm gonna get 'em"*.

This ease of robbing also strongly influences their choice of targets. Miller (1998) found that older citizens and people who publicly show off their wealth in their mode of dressing, wearing expensive jewelries, flashy cars, spending mint currencies, showing off bulky wallets and expensive bags are 'easy' or 'deserving' targets of robbery because they are assumed to have a lot of money.

Some females also enjoy being called tom boys (possessing male characteristics such as toughness, talking, walking and dressing like males, etc.). They want to do the things males do. As such, they also want to commit the type of crimes that are regarded as male's. Masculinity complex, as suggested by Lombroso & Freud (1912), comes into play here. They are actually not interested in the financial gains, but enjoyed the satisfaction of being hard and thrilled by their actions during robbery operations (Brookman et al., 2007). Miller (1998) also revealed that some females in robbery actually enjoyed the psychological thrill and emotional excitements/satisfaction of over-powering other females or males and dispossessing them of their possessions during robbery (mixture of economic and emotional rewards). Some of them quoted as thus: *"when my first robbery started, my second, the third one, it got more fun... if I keep on doing it I think that I will really get addicted to it". "I don't know if it's the money, the power or just the feeling that I know that I can just go up and just take somebody's stuff. It's just a whole bunch of mixture type thing"* (Miller, 1998).

There have been limited studies on females' involvements, as well as factors predisposing them to armed robbery in Nigeria. For instance, Chukuezi (2009) noted in her study on change in the patterns of female criminality in Nigeria that the reasons for increase in female criminality, especially armed robbery, were attributed to two factors: economic instability and change in societal values. 96% (335) of her sample attributed their criminal involvements to economic instability in Nigeria. This includes change in government and government policies, inflation, the rise in the prices of goods and services, deprivation and poverty. Out & Elechi (2015) also supported this claim in their study. Adekeye & Adebisi (2016) study at Akure also found that about half of the females in the sample were between 18

and 25 years. Steffensmeier et al. (2017) worked on the age-crime thesis among males and females in the United States of America and Taiwan and found that the age-crime invariance for robbery and theft offenders in both countries peaked early and declined quickly, while other offences were contrary to the invariance thesis.

The study carried out in Nigeria by Aborisade & Oni (2020) revealed that females in armed robbery attributed their involvements to several factors such as area of residence, inadequate significant others/family ties resulting from large and disorganized families, low parental supervision, negative parenting, inability to meet economic and educational needs, financial and material needs, low parental educational background, abusive environment and the need to satisfy curiosity. They claimed that their inability to pay school fees pushed them into criminal gangs that started with 'yahoo yahoo' (Internet Freud) and providing sexual satisfaction to rich men who wanted to satisfy their sexual urges with campus prostitutes. They had to upgrade to armed robbery when they were introduced by an older aunt since they were not satisfied with what they were getting from the men. Some others ventured into armed robbery with the desire to take revenge and to gain recognition among their peers. In the same vein, environment contributes to females' involvement in crimes. Some families also depend on their young female adults to contribute to the upkeep of the homes ('dutiful daughters', Jefferies et al., 2019) even when they are not gainfully employed; these burdens drive many into armed robbery in their teenage years (Umar, 2010).

Aborisade & Oni (2020) also identified unemployment and poverty as factors that led some other females into armed robbery. Material deprivation and prolonged inability to meet basic needs pushed them into joining armed robbery gangs as they were easily lured into armed robbery through their boyfriends who gave them handouts from time to time. The type of jobs that some of the females were involved also exposed them to armed robbers and easy enrolment into the gangs. For instance, some of them were bar attendants who were used to overcharging customers, sex workers, hard drug sellers and locally brewed alcoholic drink hawkers. The study also showed that the major factor that accounted for females' involvements in armed robbery was peer influence (26 respondents). This was later followed up by continuous association and closeness with criminal gangs through which they upgraded from stealing to armed robbery. Another factor is mingling with criminal friends. One of them told the story of how she forcefully joined an armed robbery gang after they operated at the shop where she worked and lived (Aborisade & Oni, 2020). The ever increasing inflation rate in Nigeria is another major factor that predisposed females to armed robbery (Adelowokan et al., 2019; Arinze, 2012, Siyan et al., 2016). This further increased the level of suffering, lack, deprivation, hardship, unemployment and poverty such that many small and medium scale businesses are closing down and most of the masses cannot provide the basic necessities of life, hence many females turn to crime, especially armed robbery.

Theoretical Framework

Sutherland's Differential Association (1947) theory majorly addresses the issue of females' initiation and continuous enlistment in armed robbery based on the continuous association with male armed robbers and crime environment. As posited by differential association theorists, intimate partners' and peer influence, especially with criminally minded, associates influence females into participating in armed robbery (Aborisade & Oni, 2020; Brookman et al., 2007). Closeness to criminal males or females has been found to strongly predispose both sexes to armed robbery because the more they relate before and after initiation the more likely their criminal tendencies and activities will grow. For instance, Aborisade & Oni (2020) discovered that female armed robbers in Nigeria started with stealing and pickpocketing, but in continuous association with criminal peers they graduated into armed

robbery.

The economic situation in Nigeria nowadays has forced females into taking up jobs to support the family in addition to socializing the children. Hence, more females are competing with the male folks in crimes that were originally male dominated, because of the positions they occupy in their work places (Aborisade & Oni, 2020; Ameh, 2013). Some females are even taking up full responsibilities of providing for the family, while the males are jobless and incapacitated. Some males have forced their wives into prostitution and criminality in order to provide for their families. The need for females to work outside the homes has also reduced parental control and socialization of the female children which makes them easy preys to armed robbers. Some female children are not adequately catered for once they attain the age of maturity; they are pushed out to fend for themselves and their younger siblings including their parents. By doing so, they get associated with criminal males who are ready to initiate them into armed robbery. It probably starts with gifts, dating and then co-habiting and rendering one assistance or the other and eventually being full-fledged members of the gang.

At other instances, some female young adults that are left to provide for themselves are easily enticed with little handouts by armed robbers to make their hairs, buy designer clothing or pay their school fees (Aborisade & Oni, 2020; Schwartz & Steffensmeier, 2016; Out & Elechi, 2015; Chukuezi, 2009). Continuous communication and association with criminal males are likely to get them involved in armed robbery with or without their consent. The case of the young girl who went to visit her boyfriend at Ibadan and on the fateful day the police went to raid his house in an attempt to arrest him is a typical example. She was beaten, videoed and arrested (https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=226407971810004&id=1666216526824458&sfnsn=scwspwa&extid=wHRix02VKjR2Z14j&d=w&vh=e). The video was uploaded on the social media while her boyfriend who was the armed robbery suspect did not appear on the video at all. Peer group influence is usually associated with differential association theory and this is one of the factors that sustain females in armed robbery (Esiri, 2016; Zakariyya & Ado, 2020).

Method and Data

This study was carried out in three purposefully selected Correctional Centers and three south-western states in Nigeria. The rationale behind their selection was that the three states were mostly on the mass media for their frequent attacks by armed robbers including females. The three Correctional Centers were the major Centers housing female armed robbery inmates in the south-western states. The participants were also purposefully selected from among the females in custody for armed robbery offences. Only those that have been tried and convicted of armed robbery were selected for this study. Therefore, the total participants that were interviewed from each state were 39 from the Female Custodial Centre, Kirikiri Lagos state, 10 from the Correctional Centre Ibara, Ogun state and 12 from the Correctional Centre Agodi, Oyo state. In all, a total of 61 participants were interviewed for this study.

The study had human subjects as elements of investigation and as such adhered strictly to the international ethical standards for research so as to protect the rights and integrity of the study population. Letters of introduction were obtained from the Department of Sociology to the authorities concerned and responses were received through phone calls or letters before interviews were conducted. Participants, therefore, were assured of confidentiality of their responses. Participants were made to give informed verbally voluntary consent, and they were told the benefits of their participation as well as gifted with financial benefits, lunch and soft drinks after the interviews. The languages of interviews were English, Yoruba, Hausa and Pidgin English.

Results

Table 1. Socio-Demographic-Economic Characteristics of Participants to the Study

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Age	21 – 30	22	36.1
	31 – 40	31	50.8
	41 – 50	6	9.8
	61 – 70	2	3.3
Total		61	100
Education	None	2	3.3
	Primary	26	42.6
	Secondary	23	37.7
	Tertiary	10	16.4
Total		61	100
Marital status	Single	32	52.5
	Married	21	34.4
	Single mother never married	2	3.3
	Divorced/Separated	6	9.8
Total		61	100
Religion	Christianity	44	72.1
	Islam	12	19.7
	Others	5	8.2
Total		61	100
Average monthly income (in naira)	20,000 and below	17	27.9
	21,000 to 40,000	10	16.4
	41,000 to 60,000	2	3.3
	61,000 to 80,000	4	6.5
	81,000 to 100,000	8	13.1
	101,000 to 120,000	8	13.1
	121,000 to 140,000	2	3.3
	141,000 to 160,000	4	6.5
	181,000 to 200,000	2	3.3
	300,000 and above	4	6.5
Total		61	100
Type of accommodation	A single room	27	44.3
	A room and parlor	16	26.2
	Two rooms apartment	2	3.3
	Two bedroom flat	10	16.4
	Duplex	4	6.5
	6 bedrooms flat	2	3.3
Total		61	100
Employment prior arrest	Student	5	8.2
	Unemployed	2	3.3
	Banker	4	6.5
	Businesswoman	8	13.1
	House help	2	3.3
	Makeup artist	2	3.3
	Nurse	2	3.3
	Petty trader	28	45.9
	Procurement specialist	2	3.3
	Sales Rep	4	6.5

	Traditional doctor	2	3.3
Total		61	100

Source: Field Work, 2022

Looking at the socio-demographic-economic characteristics of the participants on **Table 1**, most of the inmates (50.8%) were aged between 31 and 40, while 3.3% were between 61 and 70 years old. This indicates the presence of youths, adults and elders participating in armed robbery. Most of the inmates (42.6%) had primary school certificate, while some of them (37.7) had secondary school certificate. This also shows the presence of both literate and illiterate females committing armed robbery. Most of them (52.5%) were single young females, while some were married. This points to the fact that single females are mostly predisposed to armed robbery offences, probably because they have no familial responsibilities as in children and husbands to cater for. Most of them were Christians, while only few were Muslims. There is an indication that many of them were not practicing Christians or Muslims.

The majority (27.9%) earned below 20,000-naira monthly income, indicating that prior to their arrests they all earned a monthly income though not enough to meet their basic needs and needed to upgrade their financial status through armed robbery.

The majority of them (44.3%) lived in a single room apartment; this indicates that these female armed robbers lived in poor accommodation which could be taken as part of the push factors to their participation in armed robbery. It also revealed that most of the participants (45.9%) were petty traders such as food vendors, selling local/foreign gin and other hot drinks, selling used clothes before they were arrested. This indicates that the female armed robbers were not idle before their arrest; though they were not employed by the government they were working and earning incomes. At least they were making money even though it was not enough to meet their needs. It also shows the level of poverty among female armed robbers.

Table 2. Family Background of Study Participants

Family Size	Less than 5	4	6.5
	6 to 10	40	65.6
	More than 11	17	27.9
Total		61	100
Position in the family	First born	30	49.2
	Middle born	23	37.7
	Last born	8	13.1
Total		61	100
Family Communication Level	Frequently	40	65.6
	Once in a while	5	8.2
	Rarely	16	26.2
Total		61	100
Level of Family Affection	Cordial	28	45.9
	Not cordial	33	54.1
Total		61	100
Family Conflict Level	Frequently	32	52.5
	Once in a while	15	24.6
	Never	14	22.9
Total		61	100
	Drunkenness	8	13.1
	Gambling	8	13.1

Parental Negative Behaviours	Womanizing	17	27.9
	Fetishism	2	3.3
	Violent	8	13.1
	None	19	29.5
Total		61	100

Source: Field Work, 2022

Looking at **Table 2**, the family size of the participants shows that quite a large number of them (65.6%) came from families that had 6 to 10 children. This indicates that family size strongly influence females' participation in armed robbery. Almost half of them (49.2%) were first born of their parents, which indicates that the level of responsibility placed on these females by position of birth in the family significantly affects their involvements in armed robbery.

The family background of the participants' also revealed that most of the participants (65.6%) communicated frequently with their families before they were arrested, while five (8.2%) communicated with their family once in a while. This indicates that family communication level may not have strong impact on females' participation in armed robbery. A good number of the participants (45.9%) confessed that they had cordial relationship with their family members, while the majority (54.1%) confessed that they did not have cordial relationship with their family members. Hence, cordial relationships with family influence females' participation in armed robbery. The table also revealed that more than half of them (52.5%) frequently experienced conflicts in their families. This also indicates that the level of family conflicts experienced significantly affect females' involvements in armed robbery. Talking about the negative behaviors of their parents, most of them (29.5%) declared that their parents did not have any negative behavior. From the wide spread representation of parental negative behaviors, it indicates a likely positive influence on females' participation in armed robbery even though a few indicated that their parents did not have negative behaviors.

Table 3. Spousal Profiles of Married Study Participants

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Spousal Education	Primary	6	22.2
	Secondary	17	63.0
	Tertiary	4	14.8
Total		27	100
Spousal Employment	Unemployed	2	7.5
	Artisan	6	22.2
	Bus driver /Okada rider	11	44.4
	Businessman	3	11.1
	Lecturer	1	3.7
	Sales Rep	1	3.7
	Self-employed	3	7.4
Total		27	100
Spousal monthly income level (in Naira)	30,000 and below	8	29.6
	31,000 to 60,000	6	22.2
	61,000 to 90,000	7	25.9
	91,000 to 120,000	3	11.1
	121,000 to 150,000	2	7.5
	181,000 to 210,000	1	3.7
Total		27	100

Source: Field Work, 2022

Table 3 shows the profiles of spouses of the married female armed robbers. It revealed that the majority of them (63%) did not have more than secondary school education. This indicates that spousal educational level strongly influenced their participation in armed robbery. Also, most of them (44.4%) were bus drivers and Okada riders. This means that spousal educational level negatively impacts on their type of employment which placed them at the bottom of the ladder, which strongly influenced their participation in armed robbery. That is, spousal low level of employment strongly influences females' participation in armed robbery. As a result of the type of job they were doing, almost half (25.9%) of them earned between 61 thousand naira to 90-thousand-naira monthly income. This indicates that spousal low income level significantly influenced the participants' involvements in armed robbery.

The Socio-Economic Push and Pull Factors Propelling Females into Armed Robbery

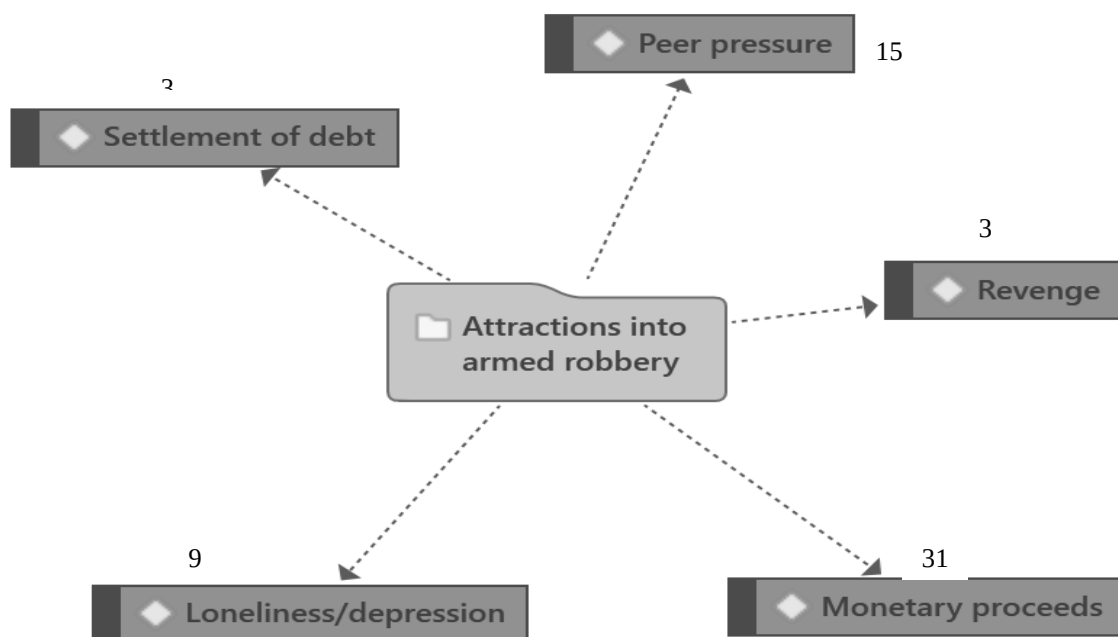
While discussing factors that led female inmates into armed robbery, they discussed what attracted them into the profession. Most of them alluded that they became armed robbers because of the money they hoped to gain from it. Some of them confessed that they had long-throat (covetousness) and wished to enjoy life, wear expensive clothes, shoes and wig like rich people. Access to quick money with little or no stress made some to go into robbery. One inmate also wanted to get money to take care of her young ones, while another was used to high life she had from drug trafficking which later collapsed: *"I was used to high life, the kind of money I got from trafficking drugs is difficult to leave. I wanted to continue living large as usual and I didn't mind which way I got the money. Immediately when drug trafficking collapsed and the opportunity to get involved in armed robbery came I quickly grabbed it"* (IDI_Female_26_Kirikiri Lagos). *"I wanted to wear expensive clothes and wigs so I can look good. I like looking good from small"* (IDI_Female_31_Agodi Ibadan). *"I wanted to have money to buy expensive clothes and take care of my younger ones"* (IDI_Female_32_Kirikiri).

Some of them confessed that they were attracted and influenced by their peers and partners. They were attracted by the people they moved with, who were armed robbers. Loneliness, boredom, frustration and depression also led some to armed robbery. Frustration which ensued from not having a man to marry and desire to marry whoever comes their way led some to armed robbery: *"My love affair with a man who is an armed robber attracted me to armed robbery because I never thought in my life that I will be an armed robber"* (IDI_Female_28_Kirikiri Lagos). *"I wanted to be married to a man because I was lonely though I had money to take care of myself and children and even any man that was ready to marry me"* (IDI_Female_40_Kirikiri Lagos). *"I was getting old and frustrated and I wanted to get married and start my own family"* (IDI_Female_32_Kirikiri Lagos).

Another thing that attracted some to armed robbery was the desire to avenge the hostility of the society towards them directly or indirectly. One of the inmates narrated how the society did not show her mercy when she was caught for stealing and was given cement to drink. Another said she became armed robber in order to avenge the death of her mother killed by the police. *"When I was caught for breaking into somebody's house to steal in 2006 people in the area asked me to remove all my clothes, beat me seriously with wounds all over my body. They said for a female like me to do what I did, then it means I have no pity for myself or anybody so they will not pity me. They gave me three options to choose from; either I drink cement or they shoot me with gun or drive a 12 inches nail down my head. I chose drinking cement. They carried me to a nearby stream, mixed cement with water and gave me to drink and left me there to die. They thought I will die but I don't know how it happened, I survived. When it was dark I gathered the little strength I could and walked to my friend's house. Seeing me she quickly took care of me and I recovered after some days. It was then I made up my mind to carry arms and be brutal, never compassionate during operations. At this stage I was 33 years old. I also*

recruited some boys and girls that we became 20 in number” (IDI_Female_50_Agodi Ibadan). “I wanted to take revenge for my mother that was killed by the police, hardship, poverty, frustration and hopelessness; I had the feeling that it cannot be better for me again so when I got the opportunity of making money I quickly grabbed it” (IDI_Female_28_Ibara Abeokuta).

Two of the inmates recalled that they got into armed robbery because they could not pay their debt and the lender was threatening to report them to the police: “I could not pay the money I borrowed and the person threatened to report me to the police. The fear of being reported to the police gave me sleepless nights that made me think of stealing 3 million from the bank where I work as an operations manager. So I developed the idea of making it an armed robbery incidence. I invited a male friend of mine, told him that there is a 3-million-naira deal that I want us to pull out of the bank where I work. I told him that we will arrange it as an armed robbery incidence; I will go to the bank to withdraw the money with the other signatory who is a female also and then on our way back into the car, he will waylay us and threaten the woman with a gun and collect the money from her and run away. In the evening I will go and meet him at home and we will share the money 70/30%. So I bought a toy gun and gave to him and promised him that there will not be any problem that the woman will submit the money on seeing a gun” (IDI_Female_36_Ibara Abeokuta). “The need for money to pay my debts because I was seriously into debt” (IDI_Female_28_Ibara Abeokuta).



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure 1. Attraction into Armed Robbery

A number of factors influenced the female convicts into armed robbery: economic factors such as financial pressures, low income, poverty and hunger, unemployment, and debt. In ability of some ladies to cope with their financial demand led them to robbery. Some of them said they resorted to robbery due to hunger and lack of financial support to cater for themselves and their children: “I was sacked from my international job where I was being paid in dollars” (IDI_Female_44_Kirikiri Lagos). “My auxiliary nurse work was not paying me well enough to take care of myself and maintain a family” (IDI_Female_32_Kirikiri Lagos). “I started fending for myself before I left primary school by doing manual jobs for people on the street and they will give me stipend which I normally use to feed myself. The boys were already toying with

girls in the neighborhood and crimes and the girls were toeing the line of prostitution. Many of us left school very early and started pursuing things that are expected of adults” (IDI_Female_28_Kirikiri). “Poverty, the stress of caring for my 4 children was on me and then I wanted to enjoy myself” (IDI_Female_31_Kirikiri Lagos).

Social factors such as peers' influence, especially intimate partners' influence, was responsible for the involvement of some female in armed robbery. Most of them associated their involvement in robbery to their intimate partner who happened to be robber, who took care of them and flashed his money before them to entice them and then recruit them into his gang. One of them shed light on it by saying that she joined her boyfriend because he promised to marry her and she wanted him to get more money. Lifestyle is another social factor leading female to robbery; they wanted to live in affluence like their peers and partners. Accommodation was another issue that predisposed female to armed robbery. One of them confessed that she was sent out packing from her previous apartment and her boyfriend was the one who paid for another apartment where she lived with him like a couple and his wife. Another was influenced by a cousin who visited them in the village because she wanted to be like her, so she followed her to Lagos, not knowing she was an armed robber. It was also eluded that the environment where they grew up and the kind of friends they moved with also predisposed them to armed robbery: *“Marriage, my boyfriend promised to marry me so I thought if I can encourage him and join him in armed robbery we will make a lot of money and get married” (IDI_Female_32_Kirikiri Lagos). “I am an easy going person I just happened to be an armed robber by association” (IDI_Female_30_Kirikiri). “It was when my land lord increased the rent of my room that my friend called me to come and rent a house at Imota, Ikorodu after which my boyfriend paid for the accommodation and we started living as husband and wife” (IDI_Female_30_Kirikiri Lagos).*

In the same vein, emotional and psychological factors such as bitterness towards individuals and the society, and rejection/isolation can predispose a female into armed robbery. For instance, one of the inmates stated that she became an armed robber because she was sent out of her family house after the demise of her parents just because she was a woman. Another said she was frustrated, so she decided to pour her anger on the society through armed robbery: *“My parents had died and I was driven out of our family house because I am a woman. So I needed to rent an apartment to live in” (IDI_Female32_Kirikiri Lagos). “We were frustrated and we decided to pour back our frustration on the society by robbing other businessmen” (IDI_Female_40_Kirikiri Lagos).*

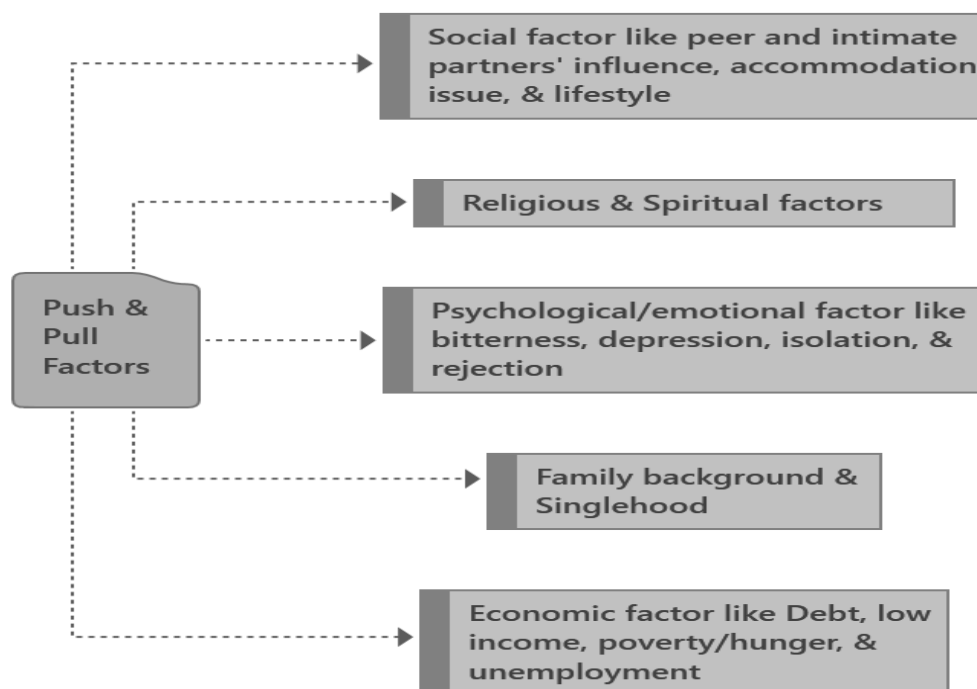
Family background is another factor mentioned by the respondents; the inmates recounted how their dysfunctional backgrounds exposed them to independent life at the early stage of their lives which graduated to what they became. Another recalled that she was maltreated by her aunt who she was living with; she was so though that she broke her arm while beating her; this made her run away from home to Lagos where she was initiated to armed robbery. Some made it known that the hardship in their families made them resort to armed robbery. Lack of parental care/involvement/control was also pointed out by the inmates. This was a situation where parents were not there for them or could not exercise any control over them when they were growing up. *“My kind of background paved way for me to live like an adult instead of the child that I was. At the age of 15 years, when I told my father that I needed a job, he got for me a job at the casino, though my mother didn't like it, but there was nothing she could do. Surprisingly, my father asked me for the salary at the end of the month and he collected it from me and said he will be giving me transport every morning...My father pushed me into armed robbery because of the kind of job he got for me. I also wanted money to start my own business” (IDI_Female_28_Kirikiri). “My parents lack control over me. I was too stubborn and adventurous. I wanted to know everything that was going on around me. As a girl*

I was behaving like a boy” (IDI_Female_33_Agodi Ibadan).

However, one of the inmates recalled that she was over pampered by her mother because she was her only daughter. She bought her expensive things and introduced her to high lifestyle from tender age, which resulted in her involvement in armed robbery to sustain the expensive lifestyle: *“First of all, my mother over pampered me because I was the only girl from when I was young. She bought expensive things for me and kept singing my praise”* (IDI_Female_24_Ibara Abeokuta).

Crimes such as armed robbery was also attributed to lack of religious commitment, because religiosity brings about the fear of God which makes people distance themselves from criminality. Also, inmates attributed their involvement in criminality to spiritual manipulation. They made it known that they were under the influence of a spirit that made them do things contrary to their wish: *“Most times when I make up my mind to stop gambling and stealing, something in me draws me back to committing crime such that I cannot control myself”* (IDI_Female_30_Kirikiri (2)). *“My involvement in armed robbery was a case of spiritual manipulation”* (IDI_Female_44_Kirikiri).

The involvement of females in armed robbery is attributed to a number of connected factors which are spelt out in the figure below.



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure 2. Push and Pull Factors Responsible for Females' Involvement in Armed Robbery

The various socio-economic push and pull factors that attracted these females into armed robbery are also listed in **Table 4**.

Table 4 Socio-Economic Push and Pull Factors of Attraction into Armed Robbery by the Study Participants

S/N	Socio-economic Push And Pull Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1	Maintain high life, Wished to enjoy life	41	67.2
2	Maintain a life style of drug and alcohol addiction	38	62.3

3	Desire to get money to care for her younger ones/family	27	44.3
4	Access to quick money	59	97
5	Strong desire to get money to start a business	14	22.9
6	Long-throat/ greed (covetousness)	48	78.7
7	Poverty	48	78.7
8	Love and desire for expensive clothes, wigs, shoes and bags	43	70.5
9	Attracted by peer influence	52	85.2
10	Attracted by intimate partners (love affair)/ desire to get married and to settle down with just any man	48	78.7
11	Loneliness/boredom, hopelessness, frustration and depression	28	45.9
12	Unemployment	7	11.5
13	Singlehood	16	26.2
14	Environmental factor (area of residence growing up and adult)	13	21.3
15	Desire to pay back/revenge for the death of her mother/family	6	9.8
16	Society did not show her mercy when first caught for stealing	3	4.9
17	Hardship and Hunger	38	62.3
18	Lack of parental care and control	38	62.3
19	Stubbornness and adventurous	29	47.5
20	Payment of debt owed	3	4.9
21	Threatened by the initiator	5	8.2
22	Shattered family background	33	54.1
23	Spiritual manipulation	3	4.9
24	Emotionally battered and lack of affection	28	45.9
25	Money for gambling	2	3.3
26	Desire for accommodation (desolation)	17	27.9

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Discussion of Results

This study corroborates Aborisade & Oni (2020), Alker (2022), and Schwartz & Steffensmeier (2016) on the age of female offenders. It also shows that females of 30 years and above engaged in armed robbery in Nigeria. This study supports the findings of Aborisade & Oni (2020) which concludes that female armed robbery offenders were mostly between 18-25 years, the mean age being 22 years. This shows that females in their youthful, middle age and the elderly get involved in armed robbery in Nigeria as revealed in this study. This study also indicates that some female senior citizens could be involved in armed robbery by rendering services in support, encouragement and legal assistance offered to members who have been arrested.

Drawing from this study, it can be rightly said that single females are more predisposed to armed robbery since they have no familial responsibilities. It also indicates that some females find themselves in armed robbery by associating with male armed robbers, especially in intimate relationships, i.e. the social bonding and relationships postulated by Sutherland (1947). The majority also cohabited with male armed robbers offering supportive roles, as well as satisfying their needs of accommodation, which supports Aborisade & Oni (2020) which stated that some females got into armed robbery because of desolation, having no place to stay. Hence, if some of these females identified in this study had comfortable accommodation or were not homeless, perhaps they would not have found themselves in armed robbery and taken up responsibilities of adults early in life.

This study also corroborates the findings of Aborisade (2016), Aborisade & Oni (2020), Okafor & Uzor (2019), Steffensmeier & Schwartz (2008), which suggested that the environment an individual resides or finds herself predisposes her to armed robbery. This was

supported in this study as most of the female armed robbery convicts were greatly influenced by the environment they lived. More so, the influence of educational qualification on females' involvements in armed robbery appeared to vary in two dimensions in this study. Low level of education was a major determinant of females' participation in armed robbery corroborating Aborisade & Oni (2020), Adekeye & Adebisi (2016) and Umar (2015). At the same time, high level of education and position held at the work place was a major determinant of females' involvement in armed robbery contradicting Umar (2015), because some of the female convicts had tertiary education, were gainfully employed and earned high wages before their arrest and conviction for armed robbery. It also supports the assertion that there is a correlation between the level of education among females and the types of crimes perpetrated by females (Abdul-Rasheed et al., 2016).

However, this study suggested that females from well-to-do families can unintentionally participate in armed robbery either by force or association. It revealed that some females' parental accommodation was duplex, 6, 5 or 4 bedrooms flat, and some of their parents earned up to 600,000 naira monthly (mother and father combined). Yet, they got entangled in armed robbery unknowingly, intentionally and by association. Intentionally in the sense that they have been used to expensive and luxurious life style provided by their parents and at the death of their parents they had to look for other means to sustain their life style. It could also be blamed on depression, stress and anxiety, which could have crept in as a result of the loss of a partner, parent or higher significant others arising from inability to meet basic needs or maintain the standard of living that they have been used to.

Some females were initiated into armed robbery gangs because their lives were threatened by male armed robbers, knowing their secrets, while a few intentionally got into it because they wanted to upgrade their criminal adventure/career. That is, they entered into armed robbery through their own self will (Aborisade & Oni, 2020; Otu, 2010).

The socio-economic push and pull factors that predisposed females into armed robbery in Nigeria were revealed in this study. Poverty, hunger, prolonged deprivation, drug/alcohol addiction and desolation were identified as major factors that predisposed these females into armed robbery in Nigeria. This study further found that individual poverty, hunger, hopelessness and frustration coupled with the family background poverty (prolonged experience of lack and deprivation with no end at sight) greatly influenced females' involvements in armed robbery in Nigeria, which also corroborates Schwartz & Steffensmeier (2016). The responsibilities of caring for self and family of birth, including parents and siblings, pushed a lot of females into armed robbery, and relationships with male criminals as well sustained them over time in it. Greed and desire for quick money, and desire to get money to start a business, satisfy strong desire for gambling addiction, lead high life and enjoyment were also predicting factors to females' involvements in armed robbery in Nigeria identified in the study.

Strongly connected to this is the fact that most of the female armed robbers had troubled family background, experienced violence, conflict and abuse during their growing up years, and just couldn't get the emotional stability needed to lead a responsible life which further pushed them into relationships that led them into armed robbery (Aborisade & Oni, 2020; Okoro et al., 2022; Schwartz & Steffensmeier, 2016). It also supports Okoro et al. (2022) opinion that disruption in family bonds, such as weak family ties and parental attachment influence individuals' onset of criminal engagement, and if not checked it can further lead them into more serious crimes. Thus, a life style of troubled milieu predisposed these female convicts into armed robbery in Nigeria. On the other hand, this study also found that some of the female armed robbers testified that they had cordial relationships with their family members before

they were arrested. This also confirms Okoro et al. (2022) study, which concluded that crime was present in both adequate and inadequate family environments.

Another strong factor is spiritual manipulation as said by some of the female armed robbery convicts. Depression and lack suddenly experienced resulting from loss of job and financial incapability actually pushed these females into mental instability such that they could not think straight anymore. They maintained that they were unable to suppress the desire to rob whenever the urge and opportunity came. This corroborates Schwartz and Steffensmeier (2016) study where they suggested that mental health issues leading to depression and anxiety coupled with some other personal problems such as abuse experienced during childhood usually lead to later life challenges.

Unemployment and economic instability were identified in this study, as well as government corruption, political leaders' fraudulent acts and societal decadence as factors that propelled females into armed robbery. Peer influence and intimate partners influence were revealed as major predicting factors to females' involvements in armed robbery. Marriage proposals and promises from male armed robbers were also identified as major factors that predispose females to armed robbery in Nigeria. This is a factor that had double effects on females' involvements in armed robbery, as it brought females into armed robbery so it made them stand the chance of continuous enlistment/sustenance in the armed robbery gang. Hence, we are corroborating with Aborisade & Oni (2020) and Schwartz & Steffensmeier (2016) suggestion of females maintaining continuous membership of criminal gangs based on the romantic relationship that exists between them and the males in the gangs. This also influenced the role played by the convicted female armed robbers in the armed robbery gangs as most of them were arms keepers/custodians, transporters and support systems.

Prostitution was also identified as a predisposing factor that led females into armed robbery. One of the convicts claimed that she took to prostitution early in life and had a client who always patronized her and they shared so many things in common until they both fell in love with each other to the extent that when he confessed to her that he was an armed robber she could not refuse him but joined him and started keeping his guns and scouting for customers for him to rob. She moved in with him and continued in the trade until her arrest and conviction. Her life took a new turn when she met him; she became more committed to armed robbery and found it difficult to leave until she was eventually arrested. She possessed skills needed for the survival of the gang (Schwartz & Steffensmeier, 2016) and she became more violent and desperate.

Conclusions

The study concluded that female armed robbers in Nigeria are mostly youths, though there are few senior citizens among them. Although singles are in the majority, quite a large number of them are married, and married to armed robbers. Most of them were not idle before their arrests, but earned low incomes and majorly resided in one room apartments. Their family size was also large, with them being the first born saddled with the feeling of responsibility of caring for their younger ones. The study concluded that cordial relationships with family influence females' participation in armed robbery, while family communication level does not have significantly impact. Also family conflict, spousal low level of education, and income significantly influence females' involvements in armed robbery in Nigeria.

This study found nuances in the socio-economic push and pull factors surrounding females' involvements in armed robbery with the males (Otu, 2010; Ugwuoke et al., 2021). This included poverty, unemployment, inflation and peer influence, but most significantly it found that the push and pull factors that predispose females into armed robbery vary distinctively. These push factors are majorly troubled family background, family conflict,

emotional instability such as bitterness, depression, abandonment, isolation and rejection, spiritual manipulation, threat to life, unintentional initiation, wrong associations, need to satisfy drug and alcohol addiction, revenge, settlement of debts, burden of caring for the family, prostitution and taking up responsibilities of an adult early in life. While the pull factors are maintenance of high social life and street life subculture, society encourages crime, emotional attachment to male armed robbers, desolation, loneliness, love affairs, marriage proposals/promissory notes, need to provide support/assistance to a friend or blood relatives, clubbing, money to support gambling habit, money to start a business, desire to get quick wealth, and the kind of jobs taken.

Recommendations

This study recommends that government should improve the standard of living of the masses through creation of employment opportunities for the teeming youths, especially the females. There should also be provision of basic amenities, funding the educational sector, free education, free and improved medical facilities/treatments, accessible roads, pipe borne water, electricity. Finally, there should be more enlightenment programs to prevent females' exploitation by criminal males in the society.

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