

# ANALYSIS OF CRIMINAL INVOLVEMENT OF CONVICTED WOMEN BETWEEN 2015-2025 IN SELECTED STATES OF NORTH WEST NIGERIA.

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## Abstract

This study analyzes the criminal involvement of convicted women in selected states of North West Nigeria between 2015 and 2025. Against a backdrop of rising female incarceration amid regional insecurity and socio-economic challenges, the research investigated the profile of offenders, the types of crimes committed, and the nature of their criminal collaboration. Guided by Marxist Feminist and Women's Liberation theories, the study employed a mixed-methods design, administering surveys to 108 convicted women across correctional facilities in Kaduna, Kano, and Katsina States, and conducting key informant interviews with 16 judicial and correctional officials. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 23, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Findings reveal that convicted women are predominantly young (55.6% aged 18–35), married (54.6%), with secondary education (37.0%), and are largely economically vulnerable (58.3% earning below ₦30,000 monthly). They are involved in a spectrum of serious crimes, categorized as Violent Crimes (34.2%), notably culpable homicide (29.6%); Organized Crimes (32.5%) such as child stealing (13.0%) and transporting arms/ammunition (9.3%); Financial Crimes (15.0%); and Drug-Related Crimes (13.3%). Crime types show state specificities: violent crimes, especially homicide, dominate in Kano; organized crimes like child stealing are concentrated in Kaduna; and drug-related offenses are most prevalent in Katsina. While 65.7% of survey respondents claimed to have acted alone, qualitative evidence from officials indicates that women's criminal activities frequently involve accomplices, primarily friends/co-workers (45.9%) and family members (27.0%), operating within hidden networks. The study concludes that women's criminal involvement in the region is a localized, structured phenomenon, increasingly shifting from petty, individual acts to more organized and serious offenses. It recommends targeted interventions, including adult education and literacy campaigns, counter-recruitment programs in vulnerable communities, and the integration of ethics training into educational curricula to address the root causes and evolving patterns of women's involvement in crime.

**Keywords:** Analysis, Criminal, Convicted, Involvement, & Women.

## Introduction

Human societies have long had norms that dictate right and wrong behaviour. These norms have been formalised into laws in contemporary societies, so laws reflect society's expectations. However, in every society with laws, individuals or groups violate

them, giving rise to the concept of crime, a phenomenon as old as human society itself. Criminality has historically been associated with men, but recent patterns indicate an increase in the participation of women in criminal activities (United States Department of Justice, 2018). As women become more involved in all aspects of life, many of which were previously closed to them, they have also started making their presence known in the criminal world (Adler, 1975). In this study, women's participation in criminal activities refers to their involvement in intentional acts or omissions that are known to violate State laws, thereby rendering them subject to State punishment.

Globally, women are increasingly involved in crimes such as shoplifting, fraud, drug-related offenses, and prostitution (United States Sentencing Commission, 2019; Shen & Winlow, 2019; Islam and Khatun, 2022). Moreover, the female prison population worldwide has risen by over 60% since 2000, according to the Institute for Crime and Justice Policy Research (ICPR, 2022). Similarly, the International Criminal Police Organization (2019) reported that women's involvement in crime is on the rise across all regions, with statistics showing that, for example, 1,154 women per 100,000 are engaged in criminal activities in the USA, 516 in Germany, and 316 in Thailand. While this is a global phenomenon, the nature and patterns of women's involvement in criminal activities vary across race and social class.

Credible statistics back up the growing involvement of women in crime: According to the Ministry of Justice (2022) in the United Kingdom, an estimated 101,912 women were arrested in England and Wales in 2022/23, an increase from the 94,969 arrests recorded the year before. In the US, the Federal Bureau of Investigation recorded an increase in female participation in crime from 2015 to 2019, with arrests going up from 1.8 million, 26.9% of total arrests, to 1.9 million, a 5.56% rise over three years. Well-known examples include Genevieve Jones, a paediatric nurse in Texas who was convicted of murdering babies, and Elizabeth Holmes, who defrauded investors of over \$900 million in 2017.

In Russia, female participation in criminal activities has also increased, especially among youths. The imprisonment of women went up from 7,700 in 2001 to 11,200 in 2004, while the percentage of females imprisoned following sentencing grew from 28.3% in 2005 to 35.5% in 2010, as shown by the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia (2020). A similar trend is observable in Mexico, where women's involvement in crime has been on the rise, and the female conviction rate grew from 15 to 21 per 100,000 inhabitants from 2017 to 2022 (INEGI, 2024). One of the most notable cases is Rosalinda González Valencia, alias "La Jefa," one of the top bosses of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, who was arrested in 2018 for organised crimes and money laundering.

In Asia, studies have also found an increase in the participation of women in criminal activities (Walmsley, 2019; Lee, 2019; Saxena, 2020; Shen, 2020). Specifically, in India, the statistics demonstrate this trend graphically as women arrested for cognisable offences increased from 64,369, representing 4.13% of the total number of arrests in 2017, to 91,508, representing 6.15% in 2018 (National Crime Records Bureau of India, 2019). Similarly, in China, the population of female prisoners rose from 1000 in 2013 to 1,752 by 2022, representing a 75% increase (World Prison Brief, 2023). This pattern is not confined to Asia as reports in sub-Saharan Africa has equally demonstrated a high rate of female offending: For instance, Kenya recorded a 25% increase in convicted female offenders from 2017 to 2018 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019), and Ghana had a 27.4% increase in female offences from 2000 to 2016 (Ghana Police Service, 2017).

Parallel developments are observable in Nigeria, where the involvement of women in criminal activities has evolved from rare exceptions to a rising national trend supported by both statistical and qualitative evidence; according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the percentage of female inmates in Nigeria's correctional facilities increased from 4.48% in 2021 to 4.82% in 2022 (NBS, 2023). Although still a minority, women made up approximately 2.4% of the total prison population in early 2024, as reported by the World Prison Brief (2024). Regional data further support this national trajectory; for instance, in Akure, Southwest Nigeria, women's criminal involvement rose from 10% in 2006 to 54% in 2013 (Adekeye & Adebisi, 2014). Similarly, in the Southeast, participation increased from 9% in 2010 to 18% in 2018 (Okafor & Uzor, 2019). In Northern Nigeria, growing female involvement in crimes such as drug trafficking, kidnapping, and even suicide bombings has been recorded (Agbo, 2019). These trends are occasionally highlighted by high-profile cases that reflect the changing face of criminality among Nigerian women. One such case was the arrest of former Petroleum Minister Diezani Alison-Madueke over allegations of large-scale money laundering and corruption (Ogunmade, 2015). Similarly, the 2024 Maiduguri suicide bombing, reportedly carried out by a woman, drew international attention to the disturbing recruitment of women by extremist groups (BBC News, 2024). This study analyzes the criminal involvement of convicted women between 2015 and 2025 in selected states of North West Nigeria, with particular attention to the types of offences for which women were convicted during the period under review. By systematically analysing official conviction records, the study maps patterns of female offending across offence categories without extending into causal explanations. In doing so, it contributes to the limited body of empirical research on women's criminality in Nigeria by providing a focused, region-specific account of offence patterns among convicted women. The study further offers a contemporary evidence base that can support criminal justice planning, classification, and policy discussions relating to female offenders in Nigeria.

## Statement of the research problem

The increasing involvement of women in criminal activities presents a growing challenge in Nigeria. Although women constitute only a small proportion, approximately 2.4% of the national prison population (World Prison Brief, 2025), their numbers are rising at a fast rate (Dataphyte, 2024). This problem is particularly pronounced in the North-West region of Nigeria, where regional data reveal a disproportionately high level of female criminal engagement: Between May 30th and July 5th 2025, correctional facilities in Kaduna, Kano, and Katsina States collectively held 321 female inmates, of whom 120 (37.4%) were already convicted (Nigerian Correctional Service, 2025).

Despite the growing interest in women's involvement in crime, understanding the specific types of criminal activities they engage in remains a challenge. Historically, women were predominantly associated with petty offenses such as shoplifting and prostitution (Steffensmeier & Schwartz, 2004; Heidensohn, 2010). However, recent studies reveal a shift, with increasing female participation in more serious and previously male dominated crimes such as cybercrime, financial fraud, kidnapping, and terrorism (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2021; Okereke & Dambazau, 2022; UNODC, 2020): For instance, in October 2021, Punch newspaper reported the arrest of a 30 years old woman accused of supplying arms and ammunition to bandits operating across Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kaduna, Katsina, and Niger States, with 991 rounds of live AK-47 ammunition found in her possession (Adepegba, 2021). Similarly, in March 2022, the ENACT Africa Initiative documented the arrest of a 38-year-old woman caught transporting eight locally made AK revolver guns and 400 rounds of live ammunition from Plateau State to bandit camps in Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara (Ojewale & Sadiq, 2022). More recently, on March 22, 2023, a woman in Kaduna was arrested for sexually abusing her daughters, as reported by Punch newspaper (Isenyo, 2023). Likewise, Vanguard newspaper reported on June 11, 2024, that a 200-level student from the Federal University Dutse (FUD) gave birth to a baby girl and subsequently discarded the infant from a hostel window, resulting in the child's immediate death (Bello, 2024). In response to this problem, the study addresses several key questions relating to the criminal involvement of convicted women in the study area. It examines the socio-demographic and institutional profile of convicted women across correctional facilities in Kaduna, Kano, and Katsina States, as well as the specific types of crimes for which they were convicted. The study also explores the extent to which women's personal accounts of their criminal activities correspond with official prison records and considers whether female offending in the study area is predominantly individual or involves collaboration with others.

## Theoretical framework

This study applies Marxist-Feminist theory and Women's Liberation theory to interpret the types of offenses committed by women in North West Nigeria between 2015 and 2025. Marxist-Feminist theory posits that women's criminal involvement is shaped by their structural positioning within socio-economic hierarchies. In the context of North West Nigeria, limited access to formal employment, economic dependency, and social marginalization can drive women to survival-oriented offenses such as petty theft, fraud, and informal illegal trade. By applying this theoretical lens, the study interprets these offenses not merely as individual choices but as outcomes of broader structural and economic pressures.

Women's Liberation theory, in contrast, emphasizes the expansion of women's roles beyond traditional domestic spheres, allowing women to participate in activities previously dominated by men. In the Nigerian context, this explains the growing incidence of women engaging in white-collar offenses, drug trafficking, cybercrime, and violent crimes. This theory provides a framework to understand how shifts in social, educational, and economic opportunities may influence women's capacity to commit a broader range of offenses, highlighting the interaction between gender emancipation and criminal behavior. By combining these two perspectives, the study moves beyond descriptive categorization of crime types. The theoretical framework guides the analysis by:

Categorizing offenses into survival-oriented versus male-dominated/empowered crime types, and interpreting patterns of offending within the socio-economic and cultural realities of North West Nigeria. In this way, Marxist-Feminist and Women's Liberation theories provide both a lens for classification and a mechanism for understanding the socio-cultural and economic dynamics underlying female criminal involvement in the region

## **Methods**

The study employed a mixed-methods research design and was conducted in four correctional facilities in North-West Nigeria: Kaduna, Zaria, Kurmawa (Kano), and Katsina, selected because they housed convicted female inmates and granted research access. This approach was necessary because the research problem involves both quantitative aspects, such as socio-demographic profiles and types of crimes committed, and qualitative dimensions, including contextual understanding of inmates' personal accounts and institutional perspectives. The study drew on both primary and secondary data: surveys of all 120 convicted female inmates present during the study period and Key Informant Interviews with 16 purposively selected officials (record officers, prosecutors, and judges) who had direct experience with women's criminal cases. Primary data recorded socio-demographic characteristics and types of crimes committed, while secondary data were extracted from inmate records. Data collection occurred

between May and July, with questionnaires administered directly by the researcher in three facilities and through trained warders in Kaduna due to restricted access. A pilot test checked reliability, and revisions were made accordingly. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative interviews underwent content analysis to complement survey findings through triangulation. Ethical approval was obtained, informed consent was secured, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

## Results

**Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic profile of convicted women across correctional facilities in the study area**

| Variable                 | Option                      | Kaduna<br>(N=44) | %     | Kano<br>(N=46) | %     | Katsina<br>(N=18) | %     | Total<br>(N=108) | %     |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|-------|----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| <b>Age Range</b>         | 18–35 years                 | 25               | 56.8  | 22             | 47.8  | 13                | 72.2  | 60               | 55.6  |
|                          | 36–54 years                 | 17               | 38.6  | 22             | 47.8  | 5                 | 27.8  | 44               | 40.7  |
|                          | 55 years >                  | 2                | 4.5   | 2              | 4.3   | 0                 | 0.0   | 4                | 3.7   |
| <b>Total</b>             |                             | 44               | 99.9  | 46             | 99.9  | 18                | 100.0 | 108              | 100.0 |
| <b>Highest Education</b> | None /Primary               | 25               | 56.8  | 10             | 21.7  | 3                 | 16.7  | 38               | 35.2  |
|                          | Secondary School            | 13               | 29.5  | 14             | 30.4  | 13                | 72.2  | 40               | 37.0  |
|                          | Tertiary/Postgraduate       | 6                | 13.6  | 22             | 47.8  | 2                 | 11.1  | 30               | 27.8  |
| <b>Total</b>             |                             | 44               | 99.9  | 46             | 99.9  | 18                | 100.0 | 108              | 100.0 |
| <b>Religion</b>          | Islam                       | 30               | 68.2  | 38             | 82.6  | 14                | 77.8  | 82               | 75.9  |
|                          | Christianity                | 12               | 27.3  | 8              | 17.4  | 4                 | 22.2  | 24               | 22.2  |
|                          | Traditional Religion        | 2                | 4.5   | 0              | 0.0   | 0                 | 0.0   | 2                | 1.9   |
| <b>Total</b>             |                             | 44               | 100.0 | 46             | 100.0 | 18                | 100.0 | 108              | 100.0 |
| <b>Marital Status</b>    | Single                      | 13               | 29.5  | 12             | 26.1  | 5                 | 27.8  | 30               | 27.8  |
|                          | Married                     | 24               | 54.5  | 25             | 54.3  | 10                | 55.6  | 59               | 54.6  |
|                          | Divorced/Widowed /Separated | 7                | 15.9  | 9              | 19.6  | 3                 | 16.7  | 19               | 17.6  |

|                                |                                |    |       |    |       |    |       |     |       |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|-----|-------|
| <b>Total</b>                   |                                | 44 | 99.9  | 46 | 100.0 | 18 | 100.1 | 108 | 100.0 |
| <b>Have Children?</b>          | Yes                            | 30 | 68.2  | 36 | 78.3  | 14 | 77.8  | 80  | 74.1  |
|                                | No                             | 14 | 31.8  | 10 | 21.7  | 4  | 22.2  | 28  | 25.9  |
| <b>Total</b>                   |                                | 44 | 100.0 | 46 | 100.0 | 18 | 100.0 | 108 | 100.0 |
| <b>Employment Status</b>       | Wage Employed (Full/Part-time) | 12 | 27.3  | 15 | 32.6  | 5  | 27.8  | 32  | 29.6  |
|                                | Self-Employed                  | 12 | 27.3  | 14 | 30.4  | 7  | 38.9  | 33  | 30.6  |
|                                | Unemployed                     | 20 | 45.5  | 17 | 37.0  | 6  | 33.3  | 43  | 39.8  |
| <b>Total</b>                   |                                | 44 | 100.1 | 46 | 100.0 | 18 | 100.0 | 108 | 100.0 |
| <b>Monthly Income</b>          | Low (<₦30,000)                 | 26 | 59.1  | 25 | 54.3  | 12 | 66.7  | 63  | 58.3  |
|                                | Middle (₦30,000–₦100,000)      | 13 | 29.5  | 14 | 30.4  | 4  | 22.2  | 31  | 28.7  |
|                                | High (>₦100,000)               | 5  | 11.4  | 7  | 15.2  | 2  | 11.1  | 14  | 13.0  |
| <b>Total</b>                   |                                | 44 | 100.0 | 46 | 99.9  | 18 | 100.0 | 108 | 100.0 |
| <b>Husband's Income Source</b> | Self-employment                | 15 | 34.1  | 12 | 26.1  | 7  | 38.9  | 34  | 31.5  |
|                                | Wage employment                | 8  | 18.2  | 7  | 15.2  | 2  | 11.1  | 17  | 15.7  |
|                                | Both/Other                     | 1  | 2.3   | 6  | 13.0  | 1  | 5.6   | 8   | 7.4   |
| <b>Total</b>                   |                                | 24 | 54.5  | 25 | 54.3  | 10 | 55.6  | 59  | 100   |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025.

Table 4.1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of convicted women across Kaduna, Kano, and Katsina. Most respondents were aged 18–35 years (55.6%), highest in Katsina and lowest in Kano, while only 3.7% were above 55 years, found in Kaduna and Kano. Secondary school leavers formed the largest educational group (37.0%), mostly in Katsina and least in Kaduna, whereas those with none or only primary education were fewer (35.2%). The majority were Muslims (75.9%), concentrated in Kano and least in Kaduna. Married women constituted the highest proportion (54.6%), most in Katsina and least in Kano, while divorced, widowed, or separated women formed 17.6%, mainly in Kano. Most had children (74.1%), highest in Kano and lowest in Kaduna. The unemployed were the largest occupational group (39.8%), particularly in

Kaduna. Low income earners (<₦30,000) dominated (58.3%), highest in Katsina and lowest in Kano, while high-income earners (>₦100,000) were fewest (13.0%), mostly in Kano. Among the married, husbands were mainly self-employed (31.5%), highest in Katsina and least in Kano. The convicted women in the study are predominantly young adults with moderate levels of education, mainly secondary school leavers. They are largely Muslims and mostly married, with many having children, indicating that they are part of family settings rather than socially isolated. A significant proportion are unemployed, and those who work generally earn low incomes, reflecting economic vulnerability.

**Types of crimes committed by convicted women in the study area**

**Table 4.2: Types of crimes committed by convicted women in the study area**

| Crime Type                    | Kaduna (N=44) |        | Kano (N=46) |        | Katsina (N=18) |        | Total (N=108) |        |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--------|-------------|--------|----------------|--------|---------------|--------|
|                               | F             | %      | F           | %      | F              | %      | F             | %      |
| Child stealing                | 14            | 31.8   | 0           | 0.0    | 0              | 0.0    | 14            | 13.0   |
| Culpable Homicide             | 3             | 6.8    | 27          | 58.7   | 2              | 11.1   | 32            | 29.6   |
| Drug Trafficking/Possession   | 2             | 4.5    | 2           | 4.3    | 6              | 33.3   | 10            | 9.3    |
| Transporting Arms/Ammunition  | 6             | 13.6   | 0           | 0.0    | 4              | 22.2   | 10            | 9.3    |
| Criminal Breach of Trust      | 3             | 6.8    | 6           | 13.0   | 0              | 0.0    | 9             | 8.3    |
| Financial Fraud               | 2             | 4.5    | 6           | 13.0   | 0              | 0.0    | 8             | 7.4    |
| Aiding/Abetting Criminal Org. | 4             | 9.1    | 0           | 0.0    | 4              | 22.2   | 8             | 7.4    |
| Trafficking in Persons        | 4             | 9.1    | 0           | 0.0    | 2              | 11.1   | 6             | 5.6    |
| Assault                       | 4             | 9.1    | 0           | 0.0    | 0              | 0.0    | 4             | 3.7    |
| Cybercrime                    | 1             | 2.3    | 2           | 4.3    | 0              | 0.0    | 3             | 2.8    |
| Kidnapping and Murder         | 0             | 0.0    | 2           | 4.3    | 0              | 0.0    | 2             | 1.9    |
| Armed Robbery                 | 0             | 0.0    | 1           | 2.2    | 0              | 0.0    | 1             | 0.9    |
| Total                         | 44            | 100.0% | 46          | 100.0% | 18             | 100.0% | 108           | 100.0% |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025.

In table 4.2, the most common type of crime was culpable homicide 32 (29.6%), found predominantly in Kano and least in Katsina. This was followed, at a distance, by child stealing 14 (13.0%), found only in Kaduna. The least represented crime was armed robbery 1 (0.9%) recorded solely in **Kano**. This means the types of crimes women are convicted for are highly localized. Each region has a distinct primary crime, with homicide centered in Kano, child stealing exclusive to Kaduna, and drug and arms offenses more common in Katsina.

**Table 4.3: Types of crimes committed by convicted women as per Official Facility Records**

| Crime Type                                   | Kaduna (N=48) |       | Kano (N=52) |       | Katsina (N=20) |       | Total (N=120) |       |
|--|---------------|-------|-------------|-------|----------------|-------|---------------|-------|
|  | F             | %     | F           | %     | F              | %     | F             | %     |
| Child stealing                               | 12            | 25.0  | 0           | 0.0   | 0              | 0.0   | 12            | 10.0  |
| Child stealing and trafficking in person     | 5             | 10.4  | 0           | 0.0   | 0              | 0.0   | 5             | 4.2   |
| Culpable Homicide                            | 3             | 6.3   | 28          | 53.8  | 2              | 10.0  | 33            | 27.5  |
| Drug Trafficking/Possession                  | 4             | 8.3   | 5           | 9.6   | 7              | 35.0  | 16            | 13.3  |
| Transporting Arms/Ammunition                 | 5             | 10.5  | 1           | 1.9   | 3              | 15.0  | 9             | 7.5   |
| Criminal Breach of Trust                     | 1             | 2.1   | 5           | 9.6   | 1              | 5.0   | 7             | 5.8   |
| Criminal breach of trust and financial fraud | 3             | 6.3   | 1           | 1.9   | 0              | 0.0   | 4             | 3.3   |
| Financial Fraud                              | 1             | 2.1   | 4           | 7.7   | 2              | 10.0  | 7             | 5.8   |
| Aiding/Abetting Criminal Org.                | 3             | 6.3   | 0           | 0.0   | 2              | 10.0  | 5             | 4.2   |
| Trafficking in Persons                       | 3             | 6.3   | 0           | 0.0   | 1              | 5.0   | 4             | 3.3   |
| Assault                                      | 3             | 6.3   | 0           | 0.0   | 1              | 5.0   | 4             | 3.3   |
| Cybercrime                                   | 1             | 2.1   | 2           | 3.8   | 0              | 0.0   | 3             | 2.5   |
| Kidnapping and Murder                        | 0             | 0.0   | 2           | 3.8   | 0              | 0.0   | 2             | 1.7   |
| Conspiracy and Armed Robbery                 | 0             | 0.0   | 1           | 1.9   | 0              | 0.0   | 1             | 0.8   |
| Forgery                                      | 1             | 2.1   | 0           | .0    | 0              | 0.0   | 1             | 0.8   |
| Total  | 48            | 100.0 | 52          | 100.0 | 20             | 100.0 | 120           | 100.0 |

**Source:** Conviction records from correctional facilities, 2025.

In Table 4.3, the most common crime recorded was culpable homicide 33 (27.5%), found mainly in Kano and least in Katsina. This was followed by drug related crimes 16 (13.3%), which were highest in Katsina. Child stealing 12 (10%) appeared only in Kaduna, where it remained a significant crime. The least recorded crimes included forgery and armed robbery, both found in single instances. This means that, as in the previous table, patterns of crime among women were location specific, with homicide concentrated in Kano, child stealing in Kaduna, and drug and arms related crimes more evident in Katsina. The table also presents a wider range of crimes, with additional categories such as conspiracy and armed robbery, child stealing and trafficking in person, forgery, criminal breach of trust and financial fraud. These differences indicate that official records capture compound aspects of women's criminal involvement that are not evident in the self-reported data. On the type of crimes committed by convicted women, record officers Stated thus:

*Women here are mostly convicted for child stealing, trafficking in person, transportation of arms and ammunition, emm there is also oo homicide and drug possession. Child stealing is really the one that we see more than the others. Some are involved indirectly, like helping to hide or move the children, or acting in between like giving logistics for the movement. Yes. (KII\_REC\_KD\_001)*

In addition, the record officer in Zaria noted that:

*For now we have only two convicts. One is for cybercrime and the other for drugs. The woman involved in cybercrime was caught using social media to scam people and impersonate others online, trying to get money from unsuspecting victims. the way she operated was clever, you know, sending messages and setting up fake profiles. The other woman was involved in drugs. she was helping her brother bring substances across town. (KII\_REC\_ZR\_001-01)*

In Kano, violent crimes such as culpable homicide were dominant as the record officer remarked that:

*Culpable homicide..eh..is the most common, about twenty eight of them are for culpable homicide. You will hardly see another type here that reaches that number, Some from violence, fighting and before you know it somebody is dead. Very very common here you see some of them looking innocent but you don't know it is otherwise. (KII\_REC\_KN\_002.*

However in Katsina, the record officer explained that:

*I have more than five female convicts here for drugs either for possession, trafficking, or use. Some are for helping terrorists and bandits, and also trafficking in person but more of drugs (KII\_REC\_KTSN\_003)*

The qualitative data reveal both convergence and divergence in the types of crimes for which women are convicted across the three States. A notable point of convergence is the presence of drug related crimes in several locations. For instance, in Kaduna, a record officer mentioned that some women were involved in “drug possession” alongside other crimes such as child stealing and homicide (KII\_REC\_KD\_001), while in Zaria, another officer reported a woman “helping her brother bring substances across town” (KII\_REC\_ZR\_001-01). Similarly, in Katsina, drug related crimes were the most common, involving “possession, trafficking, or use” (KII\_REC\_KTSN\_003). This demonstrates a shared pattern of women’s involvement in drug related crimes, though expressed differently across locations. In contrast, the data also show variations in the dominant crimes across States. In Kaduna, child stealing was most prevalent, with women participating both directly and indirectly, as seen in those “helping to hide or move the children” (KII\_REC\_KD\_001). In Kano, violent crimes, particularly culpable homicide, were most common, with the record officer noting that “you will hardly see another type here that reaches that number” (KII\_REC\_KN\_002). Katsina, however, stood out for its concentration of drug-related crimes and some involvement in aiding terrorists and trafficking in persons (KII\_REC\_KTSN\_003). Hence, while drug related crimes connect the regions to some extent, regional differences still exist like child stealing in Kaduna, homicide in Kano, and drug crimes/ aiding terrorists and trafficking in persons in Katsina.

Across the correctional facilities, both self-reported and official records revealed similar crime patterns, though the official data captured more convicted women and broader crime categories. In Kaduna, both sources identified child stealing as most common, while official records additionally showed cases combining child stealing with trafficking and financial or trust related crimes. Qualitative accounts reinforced this, indicating that some women assisted indirectly by concealing or transporting children or providing logistics. In Kano, culpable homicide dominated in both datasets, with slight overlaps in drug related and financial crimes. Likewise, in Katsina, drug related offenses were most prevalent across both sources, alongside cases involving arms transportation and aiding criminal groups aligning with officers’ reports that many women were linked to drug possession, trafficking, or supporting armed networks.

**Table 4.4: Categorization of crimes committed by convicted women based on official facility records**

| Crime | Specific Crimes | Kaduna |  | Kano |  | Katsina |  | Total |  |
|-------|-----------------|--------|--|------|--|---------|--|-------|--|
|       |                 |        |  |      |  |         |  |       |  |

| Category            | Included  | (N=48) |      | (N=52) |      | (N=20) |     | (N=120) |     |
|---------------------|---|--------|------|--------|------|--------|-----|---------|-----|
|                     |   | F      | %    | F      | %    | F      | %   | F       | %   |
| Violent Crimes      | Culpable Homicide, Assault, Kidnapping and Murder, Armed Robbery  | 7      | 4.6  | 1      | 9.6  | 3      | 5.0 | 41      | 4.2 |
| Organized Crimes    | Child stealing, Child stealing & trafficking, Transporting Arms/Ammunition, Aiding/Abetting Orgs., Trafficking in Persons | 28     | 8.3  |        | .9   | 9      | 0.0 | 39      | 2.5 |
| Financial Crimes    | Criminal Breach of Trust, Criminal breach of trust & financial fraud, Financial Fraud                                     | 5      | 0.4  | 0      | 9.2  | 2      | 5.0 | 18      | 5.0 |
| Drug Related Crimes | Drug Trafficking/Pos session  | 4      | .3   | 5      | .6   | 6      | 0.0 | 16      | 3.3 |
| Others              | Cybercrime, conspiracy and Forgery  | 4      | .3   | 5      | .6   | 0      | 0   | 9       | 7.5 |
| Total               |   | 48     | 99.9 | 52     | 99.9 | 20     | 100 | 120     | 100 |

Source: Conviction records from correctional facilities, 2025

Table 4.4 presents the distribution of crime categories committed by convicted women in the study area. The majority were involved in **violent crimes** (41, 34.2%), most prevalent in **Kano** and least in **Katsina**. This was followed closely by organized crimes (39, 32.5%), concentrated mainly in Kaduna and least in **Kano**. The least category was others (cybercrime, conspiracy and forgery 7.5%) found in mostly in Kano and least

in Kaduna. This means that the type of criminal involvement of convicted women in the study area is largely serious and often group based.

**Table 4.5: Respondents’ views on whether the crime was committed alone or with accomplices**

| Response        | Kaduna State (N=44) |       | Kano (N=46) |       | Katsina (N=18) |       | Total (N=108) |       |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------|-------------|-------|----------------|-------|---------------|-------|
|                 | F                   | %     | F           | %     | F              | %     | F             | %     |
| Acted alone     | 29                  | 5.9   | 30          | 65.2  | 12             | 66.7  | 71            | 65.7  |
| Had accomplices | 15                  | 34.1  | 16          | 34.8  | 6              | 33.3  | 37            | 34.3  |
| Total           | 44                  | 100.0 | 46          | 100.0 | 18             | 100.0 | 108           | 100.0 |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025.

In table 4.5, the majority 71 (65.7) of the women acted alone recorded across all facilities with minimal differences in percentages. This implies that for most of the convicted women in the study, individual criminal action was far more common than collaborative or gang related activity. However, the qualitative findings reveal hidden accomplices as a record officer Stated thus:

*some of them are very wise they will not admit that they have other people helping like those in the child stealing I just mentioned we know they mostly have but some of them they will never tell you but we know they have*

*KII\_REC\_KDN\_001*

The record officer in Kano also remarked as follows:

*Ah ah majority have accomplices they are in the habbit of going with their children or sisters to beat up their husbands new wives and in some cases even kill her some will say it was a mistake they only wanted to teach her lesson but the deed is already done KII\_REC\_KN\_002*

In similar vein, a judge in Kaduna observed that:

*From my experience, the women who deal in arms transportation or trafficking in persons rarely operate by themselves. These are crimes that require networks, logistics, and connections. That is why you will always find accomplices or male collaborators in such cases. KII\_JDG\_KDN\_001-001*

Still in Kaduna, a prosecutor added that:

*There are single crimes but they are also some that are not. You see when you talk about crime and women it is more wide than you think even when they claim to act alone in some cases, after investigations you will find out it is a lie*  
 KII\_PRSCT\_KDN\_001-002

A judge in Katsina also Stated that:

*Except random criminal act that involves stealing food or you know, most of the crimes there is someone else coordinating...either there is someone else fuelling it like her friends (su dinga mata zugi) or someone else is gaining from it*  
 KII\_JDG\_KTN\_003-001

The qualitative data shows convergence in views across all respondents that women rarely commit crimes alone. In Kaduna, both the record officer and a prosecutor explained that although some women deny having help, “we know they mostly have” others involved, especially in crimes like child stealing, where some “help to hide or move the children” (KII\_REC\_KDN\_001; KII\_PRSCT\_KDN\_001-002). A judge in the same State added that crimes such as “arms transportation or trafficking in persons rarely operate by themselves,” as they “require networks, logistics, and connections” (KII\_JDG\_KDN\_001-001). Similarly, in Kano, the record officer remarked that “majority have accomplices,” often going “with their children or sisters to beat up their husbands’ new wives and in some cases even kill her” (KII\_REC\_KN\_002). In Katsina, a judge noted that except for random petty crimes like “stealing food,” most crimes involve “someone else coordinating or fuelling it” (KII\_JDG\_KTN\_003-001). In essence, the data converge on the idea that women’s criminal involvement often occurs within social networks or with assistance from others, rather than independently.

In the survey responses, most of the women presented themselves as having acted alone in committing crimes, with few acknowledging the involvement of others. However, the interview data contradicts this picture showing that many of these women often have accomplices. Some key informants noted that crimes such as child theft, arms trafficking, or organized assaults rarely occur in isolation, as they typically require collaborations.

**Table 4.6: Accomplices reported by convicted women who acknowledged they had any**

| Category of Accomplice | Kaduna State (N=15) |  | Kano (N=16) |  | Katsina (N=6) |  | Total (N=37) |  |
|------------------------|---------------------|--|-------------|--|---------------|--|--------------|--|
|                        |                     |  |             |  |               |  |              |  |

|                                | F  | %     | F  | %     | F | %     | F  | %    |
|--------------------------------|----|-------|----|-------|---|-------|----|------|
| Family Members                 | 3  | 20.0  | 5  | 31.3  | 2 | 33.3  | 10 | 27.0 |
| Friends/Co-workers             | 8  | 53.3  | 7  | 43.8  | 2 | 33.3  | 17 | 45.9 |
| Gang or Criminal Group Members | 2  | 13.3  | 2  | 12.5  | 0 | 0.0   | 4  | 10.8 |
| Strangers                      | 2  | 13.3  | 2  | 12.5  | 2 | 33.3  | 6  | 16.2 |
| Total                          | 15 | 100.0 | 16 | 100.0 | 6 | 100.0 | 37 | 99.9 |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025.

According to table 4.6, the most common accomplices reported by convicted women who acknowledged they had any were friends/co-workers 17(45.9%) recorded highest in Kaduna 8(53%) and lowest in Katsina 2(33.3%). In essence, trust and familiarity play an important role in forming criminal partnerships, with most collaborations emerging from everyday relationships. The qualitative findings support this but also reveals wider networks involving family members and others as a judge in Katsina described in the following:

*They are sometimes her friends...you know bad friends you know they may come to tell you how much they are making in transporting illegal stuffs and you know women when it comes to money they follow it blindly and it is never enough the greed keeps coming until they are caught,, there is also sometimes it is these criminals that use women because you will never suspect a woman how she dress and carry herself. We see them as soft and harmless so we don't suspect them so these criminals take advantage...the whole thing is quite pathetic  
KII\_JDG\_KTN\_003-001*

Similarly, judge in Kaduna Stated that:

*In my courtroom, I have seen cases where women worked with friends, family members, especially siblings. The family angle makes it easier to conceal the crime you know that's why some of them will never mention the names of their accomplices because they are very close the relationship is knitted  
KII\_JDG\_KDN\_001-001)*

A prosecutor also remarked that:

*As i was saying when you talk about bigger crimes, you will always discover that there are others involved. Like her family, her friends even her boyfriend in fact there is this issue let me you know.....let me just leave as it is but sometimes they are being taken advantage, behind the scenes there is someone else benefiting, someone else guiding her, sometimes even controlling everything. That is why I say crime among women is wider than people imagine, because the accomplices are often hidden. KII\_PRSCT\_KDN\_001-002*

In the same vein, a prosecutor in Katsina explained:

*in terms of smuggling through the borders gaskiya they mostly depend on male relatives but in trafficking and aiding armed groups, the accomplices are usually strangers or criminal group members. These women don't have the capacity to run such crimes alone, so they depend on those networks. KII\_PRSCT\_KTSN\_003-04)*

The qualitative data reveal both similarities and differences in who serves as accomplices in women's crimes across the three States. A key point of similarity is the frequent involvement of friends and family members. In Katsina, a judge noted that women are often influenced by "bad friends" who entice them with promises of money from "transporting illegal stuffs" (KII\_JDG\_KTN\_003-001), while in Kaduna, a judge observed that women frequently collaborate with "friends, family members, especially siblings," whose close relationships make it "easier to conceal the crime" (KII\_JDG\_KDN\_001-001). Similarly, a prosecutor in Kaduna confirmed that many women act alongside "family, friends, even boyfriends," emphasizing that "behind the scenes there is someone else benefiting" (KII\_PRSCT\_KDN\_001-002). However, there is also some variation across locations Katsina, a prosecutor explained that for smuggling and trafficking, accomplices are often "strangers or criminal group members," depending on the type of crime (KII\_PRSCT\_KTSN\_003-04). Collectively, the findings illustrate both shared and distinct patterns: across all States women's crimes are often carried out with the help of close social ties, particularly friends and family, yet the nature of accomplices varies by context ranging from intimate relations in Kaduna and Kano to strangers and organized groups in Katsina.

Both data sets reveal a consistent pattern in the involvement of accomplices among convicted women. Quantitatively, friends and co-workers emerged as the most common collaborators, particularly in Kaduna, while family members and strangers appeared less frequently. However, the qualitative accounts extend this understanding by uncovering a broader network of support that often remains hidden. Judges and prosecutors emphasized that while friendships frequently facilitate these crimes, family

members, intimate partners, and even organized criminal groups also play significant roles.

Data on the types of crimes are elicited from the respondents (convicted women) and further corroborated with the official records of the correctional service. The data and records reveal that convicted women are involved in four major types of crimes namely; violent crimes, organised crimes, financial crimes, and drug-related crimes. In the order of prevalence, violent crimes are the leading types of crimes committed by the convicted women. The violent crimes include culpable homicide, assault, kidnapping, and armed robbery. Next in the order of prevalence is the organised type of crime, which account for a substantial proportion of the total. The foregoing types constitute the most prevalent crimes among the convicted women. Nevertheless, other types of crimes account for about one-fifth of the overall crimes recorded. In this regard, financial crimes such as criminal breach of trust and fraud, as well as drug-related crimes such as trafficking and possession, account for smaller proportions, respectively. These crimes are unevenly distributed across the facilities. Violent crimes, particularly culpable homicide, are most common in Kano. Organised crimes, such as child stealing, are concentrated in Kaduna while drug-related crimes are a dominant feature in Katsina.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The main aim of the study was to analyze the types of crimes committed by convicted women in the selected facilities across the study area. Data on the types of crimes are elicited from the respondents and further corroborated with the official records of the correctional service. The data and records reveal that convicted women are involved in four major types of crimes namely: violent crimes, organised crimes, financial crimes, and drug-related crimes. In order of prevalence, violent crimes are the leading types of crimes committed by the convicted women. The violent crimes include culpable homicide, assault, kidnapping, and armed robbery. Next in the order of prevalence is the organised type of crime, which account for a substantial proportion of the total. The foregoing types constitute the most prevalent crimes among the convicted women. Nevertheless, other types of crimes account for about one-fifth of the overall crimes recorded. In this regard, financial crimes such as criminal breach of trust and fraud, as well as drug-related crimes such as trafficking and possession, account for smaller proportions, respectively. These crimes are unevenly distributed across the facilities. Violent crimes, particularly culpable homicide, are most common in Kano. The women convicted for these crimes are predominantly young, married mothers with low levels of formal education, and are primarily unemployed or low-income earners. Conversely, a different profile emerges for financial crimes, which are also more prevalent in Kano. Notably, women convicted for financial crimes constitute the most educated cohort, with a significant portion having tertiary education, which aligns with the general finding that

the Kano facility houses a higher proportion of educated inmates. This suggests that financial crimes may require a level of sophistication or access that education facilitates. Organised crimes, such as child stealing, are concentrated in Kaduna. The typical offender here is a married woman across young and middle-aged groups, with very low educational attainment and income. Lastly, drug-related crimes are a dominant feature in Katsina. The women in this category are mostly young adults, have typically attained a secondary school education, and are mostly single. While still facing economic hardship, this group shows a slightly higher representation of self-employed individuals. Violent and financial crimes were more common in Kano facilities, where convicted women mainly committed culpable homicide as the leading form of violent crime. This is consistent with the findings of Adekeye and Adebisi's (2014), where murder and assault were significant in Akure, and in Eluyera's (2018) findings in Lagos, which reported manslaughter and murder. In the same vein, the leading form of financial crime common among convicted women in Kano facilities was criminal breach of trust and financial fraud. The involvement in financial fraud, common in Kano as given in this study, correlates with the economic crimes highlighted across multiple studies, such as fraud and theft in Tripkovic and Plesnicar's (2018) global analysis and property crimes in Eluyera's (2018) research. Similarly, organised crimes were more prevalent among convicted women in Kaduna facilities, where child stealing and trafficking, trafficking in persons, and transportation of arms and ammunition were highly reported. The women involved in these crimes were typically young to middle-aged, married, and had very low levels of formal education, indicating that this pathway into crime is strongly linked to socio-economic disadvantage and potentially to responsibilities within family settings. The characterization of Kaduna by organized crimes like child stealing also reiterate the findings of Sultana (2019) where women and child trafficking were reported as notable crimes in Bangladesh. Lastly, the drug-related crimes characterized by acts such as drug possession and drug trafficking are more prevalent among convicted women in Katsina facilities. This group is predominantly composed of young, single women who have typically completed secondary education, a profile that suggests a different dynamic, possibly involving greater mobility and independence compared to other offender groups. The dominance of drug-related crimes in Katsina is consistent with the high involvement in drug trafficking reported by Islam and Khatun (2022) in Bangladesh.

The uneven distribution of the types of crimes among the convicted women in the study area illustrates the importance of spatial variables. Kano State, known to be a highly commercial town, experiences more violent crimes and financial crimes. While Kaduna, being a linking State and destination to people of several other States, leads organised crimes, especially with respect to human trafficking. The strategic location of the town makes it a transit point for such organised crimes. Katsina, being a border town, also shares in the burden of drug trafficking.

The findings from this study, when viewed alongside prior research, reveal a shift in the landscape of female criminal participation. Earlier studies (e.g., Adekeye & Adebisi, 2014; Eluyera, 2018; Tripkovic & Plesnicar, 2018) characterized women's crimes as largely individual and opportunistic, encompassing acts such as theft, assault, and prostitution. In contrast, the current data shows a movement into more organized, network-driven activities. This new paradigm, which includes aiding criminal organizations, transporting arms and drugs, and participating in trafficking in persons and child stealing, signals a departure from the patterns of the past.

The complex landscape of female criminality in Northwest Nigeria requires a dual theoretical approach, with the situation in Kano presenting a case for analysis. In Kano, the criminal profile reveals a class division among female offenders, best explained by both theories. The core assumption of Women's Liberation Theory, that female criminality diversifies as women gain more social and economic freedom, is validated by a specific segment of women. These are the educated women, who possess tertiary education and are convicted for financial fraud and breach of trust. Their crimes reflect an illicit use of the skills and access granted by their higher social and educational status. However, this theory does not explain the majority of offenders in Kano. The women convicted for culpable homicide, the most common crime in the State, have low levels of formal education and are economically marginalized. This is where a Marxist Feminist analysis becomes essential. For these women, "liberation" is not the issue; systemic oppression is. The prevalence of homicide is directly linked to the real-life pressures faced by women in Kano. Court records and inmate testimonies frequently describe scenarios where a woman, unable to leave an abusive marriage due to having no income or place to go, attacks her husband in a moment of extreme conflict. In other cases, fights between co-wives over scarce household resources such as food, money or school fees for their children escalate from arguments into physical violence, sometimes ending in death. These are not crimes of calculated power but desperate acts by women who see no other way out of situations of domestic imprisonment and economic strain.

In Kaduna and Katsina, the pattern finds a direct explanation in the daily struggle for survival. The data shows that the vast majority of convicted women here never finished secondary school and lived on less than ₦30,000 a month. In Kaduna, a major transit city, this poverty translates into specific roles: a woman might be paid a small amount to temporarily shelter a stolen child, using her own home as a hiding spot. Or, she might be tasked with transporting a bag of weapons across town, a job offered to her because her appearance as an ordinary woman draws less police suspicion than a man. In Katsina, where drug-related crimes dominate, women are enmeshed in an economic order that continues to exploit gendered labor even amid instability. The weakening of formal economic structures has not ended capitalist relations it has transformed them. The informal and illicit economies that flourish in the border regions reproduce the same

dynamics of exploitation: women's labor and social invisibility become cheap resources within a wider network of profit and survival. These women occupy the lowest rung of a restructured capitalist hierarchy: they perform dangerous, gendered labor that sustains illicit accumulation while receiving little of its benefits. Their bodies and mobility are commodified as instruments of the underground economy, reflecting the continued intersection of capitalist exploitation and patriarchal control. In this sense, the "collapse" of the formal economy in Katsina does not represent the end of capitalism but its mutation into forms that depend even more heavily on women's unpaid, invisible, and expendable labor.

### **Conclusion**

The crimes committed by convicted women in the study area are predominantly serious and organized, with patterns that are highly localized and structured. In Kano, women were mostly involved in violent interpersonal crimes; in Kaduna, in organized activities such as child stealing and trafficking; and in Katsina, in drug-related offenses and crimes linked to border insecurity. These patterns indicate that female criminal involvement is not random but shaped by local contexts and structures.

The socio-demographic profile of the women revealed systemic barriers to empowerment, including low educational attainment. To address this, State Ministries of Education should implement adult education and literacy campaigns for women, integrated with digital skills training in accessible community centers. The observed shift toward more organized, network-driven criminal activities highlights the need for targeted interventions; the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and community policing units should develop counter-recruitment programs in vulnerable communities, educating women on risks and providing pathways out of criminal networks. For educated women involved in financial crimes, civic ethics and accountability modules should be integrated into higher education and professional training to ensure that empowerment translates into responsible and constructive engagement in society.

This study contributes to knowledge in several ways. First, it addresses a gap in the literature by documenting women's participation in serious and organized crimes including arms transportation, child stealing, and aiding criminal organizations beyond the traditional focus on petty offenses such as theft, prostitution, and assault. Second, it fills a population gap by focusing on convicted women who have been under-studied in previous research. Third, it addresses a methodological gap by triangulating self-reported accounts of convicted women with official facility records, providing a more robust and reliable dataset. Overall, the study links empirical evidence to practical policy

implications, highlighting strategies to prevent female involvement in crime while supporting responsible empowerment initiatives in North West Nigeria.

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