

**Berom Traditional Justice System and Effective Crime Prevention in Plateau State, Nigeria****Deme Samson Bitrus, Alhaji Usman Yusuf, & Yahaya Sabo Sarkinnoma**

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Despite the enduring role of indigenous justice mechanisms in fostering community cohesion and resolving disputes, empirical evidence on their impact on crime prevention and overall crime reduction remains scarce. This study examines the Berom Traditional Justice System (BTJS) in Plateau State, Nigeria, and its effectiveness in crime prevention. Anchored on the social control theory, the study adopted survey design and a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 382 Berom residents in Gyel and Riyom Districts who constituted the study population. The study employed Pearson's Product–Moment Correlation statistical technique to test the stated hypothesis on Berom Traditional Justice system and its effectiveness in crime prevention. The study findings, revealed that Berom traditional justice system is very effective in crime prevention and reduction among the Berom communities. The study also found out that the major challenge confronting the Berom traditional criminal justice system were primarily related to leadership integrity and the perceived risks associated with oath-taking practices. The study recommends, that the traditional justice system should be integrated with the formal justice system through appropriate legislation. The study also recommends, synergy between the traditional rulers who are the custodians of the customary laws and the agents of the criminal justice system. The study further recommends that government should establish an organisation that will be responsible for checking the excesses by the traditional leaders.

**Keywords:** Berom, Traditional Justice System, Effective Crime Prevention, Criminal, Justice System.

**INTRODUCTION**

Crime remains a persistent challenge in contemporary Nigerian society, straining formal justice systems and eroding community trust (Nnam, 2025). Crime prevention in Nigeria remains a herculean task, especially in rural and semi-urban areas where formal law enforcement is overstretched and often distrusted by local communities as asserted by (Iwayemi, 2013). In Berom communities, the situation is worsened by recurring ethno-religious conflicts, land disputes, and communal violence that the conventional criminal justice system has not adequately addressed. As a result, many communities continue to depend on indigenous mechanisms of crime prevention for maintaining order and resolving disputes. In Plateau State, the Berom ethnic group is one of Nigeria's major indigenous communities that has sustained a traditional justice system rooted in customary laws, restorative practices, and communal reconciliation for generations. This system,

expressed through mechanisms such as elders' mediation, oath-taking, fines, and communal sanctions, offers an alternative to purely Western-oriented criminal justice models and may enhance crime control through cultural relevance and social cohesion.

Although indigenous mechanisms of dispute settlement and restorative justice have attracted growing scholarly attention in Nigeria, most existing works are qualitative and descriptive, with limited quantitative evidence on effectiveness in controlling crime (Falusi *et al.*, 2023). In particular, there is a dearth of empirical studies that systematically assess how the Berom Traditional Justice System (BTJS) influences crime prevention. This paper addresses this gap by adopting a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between Berom Traditional Justice System practices and effective crime prevention among Berom communities in Plateau State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Crime prevention in Nigeria remains a persistent challenge, especially in rural and semi-urban areas where formal law enforcement is overstretched and often distrusted by local communities (Iwayemi, 2013). In Berom communities, the situation is worsened by recurring ethno-religious conflicts, land disputes, and communal violence that the conventional criminal justice system has not adequately addressed. As a result, many communities continue to depend on indigenous mechanisms of crime prevention for maintaining order and resolving disputes.

Despite this, there is limited empirical evidence on the perceived effectiveness, and challenges of the Berom traditional justice system in contemporary crime prevention. Much of the existing literature on traditional justice in Nigeria is either historical or generalised across ethnic groups, with little focus on the Berom context. In addition, policy and academic discourse often assume that traditional justice systems are obsolete or incompatible with the modern legal framework (Akinola, 2015; Odo, 2015; Chukuma, 2020; Ikejiaku, 2021). This assumption ignores the practical reality in Berom communities, where the police frequently refer minor cases to traditional leaders, while traditional authorities hand over suspects in serious crimes to formal law enforcement. This indicates an informal but functional interaction between both systems. At the same time, the Berom traditional justice system is under pressure. Internally, issues of bias and declining integrity among some leaders have weakened public trust. Externally, urbanisation,

formal education, and the dominance of statutory law have reduced the influence of spiritual sanctions, particularly among the youth (Ikejiaku, 2021; Eze, 2017). Yet there is no empirical data on how these factors affect the system's effectiveness or on the current nature of its relationship with the formal legal framework. This gap has important implications. Without empirical evidence, crime prevention policies continue to exclude traditional institutions, leading to duplication of efforts and weak community participation. Therefore, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the Berom traditional justice system and its role in effective crime prevention in Jos South and Riyom Local Government Areas of Plateau State.

### **Objectives of the study**

The general objective of this study is to examine the role of the Berom traditional justice system in effective crime prevention in Plateau State, Nigeria. However, the study was designed specifically to:

- i. Assess the perceived effectiveness of the Berom traditional justice system in crime prevention within Berom communities.
- ii. Assess the challenges faced in implementing the Berom traditional justice system.

### **Hypothesis**

The test of hypothesis sought to examine whether there is a significant association between the Berom Traditional justice system and effective crime prevention within Berom communities. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** The Berom traditional justice system is not significantly associated with effective crime prevention within Berom communities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptual Framework**

Conceptual framework is a presentation of the relationship between the independent (IV) and dependent (DV) variable (Sarantakos, 2005). The conceptual framework in this research work represents the relationship between Berom Traditional justice system as independent variable while effective crime prevention as the dependent variable.

According to Kegoro (2012) Traditional Criminal Justice System refer to all those people-based and local approaches that communities innovate and utilize in resolving localized disputes, to

attain safety and access to justice by all or a situation where traditional, local actors and procedures are applied in bringing fairness, justice in the society or resolving disagreements between two people, groups and communities. What is fundamental in this definition is the assurance of fairness and justice.

The traditional justice system is the primary means of resolving disputes and to some degree of restoring law and order in Nigerian communities. It forms the cornerstone of accessing justice for the majority of the population, who find themselves alienated by the formal system and their access to it constrained by costs, delays, and complexity (National Policy on Justice, 2017).

In this study, traditional justice system is conceived of as a means of dispute resolution that is peculiar to a particular ethnic group. Eg. Berom traditional criminal justice system, Ngas traditional criminal justice system, Tarok traditional criminal justice system, Mushere traditional justice system, Igbo traditional justice system, Yoruba traditional criminal justice system, and Indian traditional criminal justice system. These traditional criminal justice systems are bind on the members of a particular ethnic group as well as its enforcement.

### **Crime**

According to Newburn (2017) crime is a legal category defined by the state, typically involving behaviour that is sanctioned formally by criminal law and punishable by the state. To Chambliss (1989) crime is whatever the powerful say it is. Crime is defined by those who have the power to make the law, and it reflects the values and interests of the ruling class. Whereas Sutherland and Cressey (1978) conceptualised crime as a behaviour which is prohibited by the state as an injury to the state and against which the state may react by punishment.

Inferring from the definitions of crime above, this study conceptualised crime as any form of behaviour that contravenes the criminal law of the State and is punishable by the state through its agents but the effect is on the victim.

### **Crime Prevention**

Crime prevention has to do with the attempt made by the government and society and to reduce and deter crimes and criminals. It encompasses the effort to reduce crime, enforce laws and maintaining of social order in the society (Usman, 2019). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2021), states that crime prevention encompasses "strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring, and their potential harmful effects on individuals

and society." This definition reflects a comprehensive approach that includes addressing the underlying causes of crime.

Mareglen (2020) defines crime prevention as "the task of modern society to prevent crime at an early stage or before its creation." He emphasises the need for coordinated efforts among state institutions, private organisations, and citizens to create a safe community environment.

Inferring from the definitions of crime prevention above, one can conceptualize crime prevention as any effort made either by formal or informal organs of the society to deter crime and criminality. In this study, the effort made by the informal organ which is the Traditional justice system is the focal point.

### **Empirical Review**

#### **The effectiveness of the traditional justice system and effective crime prevention in Nigeria**

In a study by Okafor & Udo (2023) on the effectiveness of restorative practices in rehabilitation of offenders in Nigeria, the study examines the impact of these practices on offender reintegration, recidivism reduction, and victim healing. Restorative justice is a framework that emphasises repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior through inclusive processes involving offenders, victims, and community members. This has gained attention as an alternative to conventional punitive approaches. This study specifically assesses the outcomes of restorative justice programs and their potential to facilitate more successful rehabilitation in Nigeria. The primary goal of the study was to evaluate how restorative justice practices contribute to the rehabilitation of offenders in Nigeria. The study found that these practices facilitate better reintegration into society, reduce recidivism, and promote healing for victims.

In a study by Ibrahim & Yusuf (2023) on community engagement in restorative justice, a case study from Lagos State, the research examined the role of community participation in the success of restorative justice initiatives. The findings indicated that active involvement of community members leads to higher satisfaction among victims and offenders, fostering reconciliation and reducing recidivism.

Also, in a study by Adebayo & Okoro (2022) on restorative justice practices in Nigeria, bridging traditional and modern approaches, the study explores the integration of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms with modern restorative justice practices in Nigeria were explored and several key findings were highlighted. The authors emphasise that traditional methods, deeply

rooted in Nigerian cultural values, focus on reconciliation and community harmony. When combined with modern restorative justice, these methods can enhance crime prevention by fostering offender rehabilitation and victim restoration. In a study by Mohammed, Liman & Zamani (2023) on the impact of community policing in crime prevention in Nigeria. The study examined the role of police community relations in crime prevention in federal capital territory, 2009-2020 was examined. The study found out that many crime victims prefer restitution over imprisonment for offenders, believing it better addresses their needs.

In a study by Onwe and Eze (2019) on crime control in traditional African societies, a review of crime control in Nigeria, the study posited that ordeals is one of the important and recognized method of social control in traditional African societies. Onwe and Eze maintained that trial by ordeals is a traditional method of proving the innocence or guilt of serious offences beyond any reasonable doubt. The study pointed out that trial by ordeals involves oath taking, invocation of juju, the use of boiling palm oil, and the administration of traditional medicinal concoction in different forms which were usually taken either by drinking or rubbing on the body. A by Mwadkwon (2010) titled silencing the spirit of the shrine shows that the Berom legal system relied heavily on indigenous practices, such as ordeals and rituals, to maintain social order. He asserts that these measures, deeply rooted in the community's values, were generally respected and understood within Berom society.

Most Nigerian criminologists have explored the role of ordeals, especially within traditional justice mechanisms, used by various ethnic groups across the country as part of social control and conflict resolution (Adeyemi, 2020; Ibrahim, 2019). These studies emphasise the ways ordeals reinforce community cohesion and address disputes within traditional frameworks, often operating alongside formal justice systems (Okafor, 2021). For instance, scholars have discussed how ethnic groups such as the Tiv, Berom, and Yoruba incorporate ordeals as a method to determine guilt or innocence in cases where evidence may be challenging to establish through formal means (Emeka & Olaniyan, 2022). These practices often include oaths, ritual confessions, or trials by ordeal, rooted in long-standing customs believed to reflect ancestral wisdom or supernatural justice (Nwankwo, 2023).

Another study by Itohan & Solomon (2013) on Resurgence of the Traditional Justice System in Postcolonial Benin (Nigeria) Society, this study shows that most Benin people still uphold their

cultural values and prefer to resolve disputes using the traditional justice mechanism. Although, the study further recommended synergy between the traditional justice system and the formal justice system. They further argue that although most Benin people prefer the traditional dispute resolution mechanism but does not mean that it is perfect. Hence, the need for synergy so that the aspects that are weak can be complemented by the formal justice system.

Overall, empirical studies indicate that many Nigerians increasingly patronize traditional justice systems due to their effectiveness, cultural relevance, and the shortcomings of the formal judicial system. The combination of these factors suggests that traditional mechanisms will continue to play a vital role in resolving disputes within the Nigerian society.

### **The challenges faced in implementing the Traditional Justice System in Nigeria**

The implementation of traditional justice in Nigeria faces several significant obstacles that hinder its effectiveness and acceptance. These challenges stem from a combination of legal, cultural, and institutional factors. According to the National Policy on Justice (2017), the challenges faced in implementing the Traditional Justice System are:

- i. **Bias and Discriminatory Practices.** The traditional and community justice system is prone to discriminatory practices due to the customary deference to social hierarchy, and the tendency to infringe on the rights of women and children and to stifle the dissenting voice of minorities. It also sometimes fails to give equal rights of fair hearing to disputing parties, is prone to bias, and fails to achieve the level of impartiality required for equitable administration of justice.
- ii. **Repugnant Customs.** There are a number of cultural norms and practices that are enforced through the traditional justice system which are repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience. Examples are customs that disinherit women, promote exploitation of children and encourage jungle justice. They fall short of complying with the constitutionally and internationally accepted human rights standards.
- iii. **Enforcement Difficulties.** Difficulties are frequently encountered in seeking to enforce the settlements mediated by traditional and community leaders. Due to lack of legislative recognition for the mediatory roles of the traditional rulers, and the absence of a formal enforcement mechanism, users of the system have no choice but to rely on the authority of custom and social pressure for enforcing awards given in their favour.

iv. Ambiguous scope of mandate. The limits of the area of application of traditional justice are not clearly spelt out or communicated to the users and practitioners. There is, consequently, a measure of tension between the formal justice system and traditional justice, with traditional rulers being often accused of crossing the line by dealing with cases they are not legally permitted to settle, such as crimes of violence like rape and murder, drug trafficking, and kidnapping. There is also currently no institutionalized system of formal education and training for practitioners of traditional and community justice.

However, the National Policy on Justice did not recognize the diversity in the traditional justice system which is being practiced by different ethnic nationalities within the country and the lack of hegemony among the practitioners or the traditional rulers as a major challenge. This difference makes it very difficult for members of one ethnic group to accept an implementation of a traditional justice mechanism on him/her that he/she does not belong to. Also, the lack of hegemony makes it difficult in checkmating excesses by the traditional rulers in the administration of justice.

In a study by Oladapo (2017) on Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, this empirical research seeks to explore legal pluralism in modern African democracy. The study specifically answers the research question: is the traditional justice system applicable to Nigerians and Ivorians in contemporary dispensation? The study finds out that a significant population at the grassroots rely on the traditional justice system, when compared with their counterparts in the cities. The rural population argues that the formal justice system is quite expensive and that the legal procedures are difficult to understand, coupled with the fact that court houses are mostly located in the cities. On the other hand, the gender-biased and male-dominated outlook of the traditional justice mechanism and its proneness to external influences, as well as the impact of modern religions, have continued to propel a considerable population (especially in urban areas) to patronize the formal justice system.

Oladapo (2017) further argues that the adoption of western institutions of government by African states has forced traditional institutions to occupy the back seat. Hence, there is a mixed social environment wherein both formal and traditional justice systems are weak, and the states being weak themselves are significantly responsible for the weakness of traditional institutions. Consequently, flaws in both justice systems have compelled people to take the law into their own hands and to resort to jungle justice.

The result of the introduction of foreign legal practice is that most of the values of the Benin traditional systems and the entire traditional justice systems in Nigeria received a hard ‘knock on the head,’ having been categorised as barbaric and fetish, and in some cases earned outright abolition. The principle of the English legal system undeniably rendered the traditional system redundant (Itohan & Solomon, 2013). These Western values are still upheld by the Nigeria criminal justice system thereby making it difficult in the implementation of the traditional justice system in the country.

More challenging is the attitude of the English legal system towards spiritualism. Modeled after the British court system, their adjudicatory parameters are confined to issues and evidence adduced before it. Whereas in the Benin traditional system, administration of justice goes beyond the presentation of physical evidence, it involves the supernatural forces playing active role in ensuring effective justice delivery, especially in cases beyond evidence. The Benin people believe that the all-seeing God can discover criminals that mortal eyes cannot discern. Adegbola (1983) cited in Kumi (2020) rightly observes that ‘everywhere, African morality is hinged on severe sanctions, but the most fundamental sanction is the fact that God’s all-seeing eyes sees the total area of human behavior and personal relationship; for God is spoken of as having eyes all over like a sieve.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework relevant to understanding the effectiveness of Berom Traditional Justice system in crime prevention among Berom communities in Plateau State Nigeria is the social control theory. This theory provides a detailed account as well as a guide in understanding the criminological explanation of the workings of the Berom traditional justice system as a mechanism for effective crime prevention among Berom nation in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Social Control Theory was propounded by Travis Hirschi (1969), the theory seeks to explain why individuals conform to societal norms rather than engage in deviant behaviour. Unlike other criminological theories that focuses on the motivations for crime, social control theory argues that crime occurs when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken (Hirschi, 1969). The theory posits that strong social ties and institutions, such as family, education, and community prevent individuals from engaging in criminal activity (Okafor & Eze, 2024).

The basic assumptions of social control theory are; attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief (Hirschi, 1969). These basic assumptions contribute to an individual's bond to society:

**Attachment:** Attachment refers to an individual's emotional and psychological ties to others, such as parents, teachers, and peers. These strong attachments create a sense of responsibility and discourage deviant behavior (Hirschi, 1969). Studies show that children with strong parental attachment are less likely to engage in delinquent activities (Hoeve *et al.*, 2012).

**Commitment:** commitment refers to the degree to which an individual has invested time, energy, and effort in conventional activities (e.g., education, career). Those with higher commitments have more to lose by engaging in crime, making them less likely to do so (Hirschi, 1969). Empirical research supports this, indicating that individuals who are committed to school and work exhibit lower delinquency rates (Agnew, 2005).

**Involvement:** Involvement refers to engagements in structured and socially approved activities (e.g., sports, clubs, jobs) reduces the opportunity for delinquency. The idea is that "idle hands are the devil's workshop" while busy individuals are less likely to commit crimes (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

**Belief:** Belief refers to an individual's acceptance of societal norms, laws, and moral values. Those who strongly believe in the legitimacy of the legal system are less likely to break laws (Hirschi, 1969).

#### **Weaknesses of the social control theory**

**Oversimplification:** Critics argue that the theory does not explain why some individuals with strong social bonds still engage in crime (Akers, 1991).

**Neglect of Structural Factors:** It does not fully consider external factors such as poverty, discrimination, or peer influence (Cullen, Wright, & Blevins, 2006).

**Limited Explanation of White-Collar Crime:** The theory focuses on street crime but does not adequately explain corporate or white-collar offenses (Benson & Simpson, 2014).

#### **Strength of social control theory**

Social Control Theory remains a significant criminological framework that emphasises the importance of social bonds in preventing crime and deviance behaviour. While it has its

limitations, its focus on family, education, and social institutions continues to influence crime prevention strategies.

By implication, the attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief that the Berom people are socialised into goes a long way in preventing them from criminalized tendencies within their communities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a survey research design. This design is adopted because the population in question the Berom of North- Central Nigeria is a large population. The survey method enables the researcher to study a very large population much more easily than other types of designs. It also enables one to adopt sampling methods that are representative of the population but yet manageable by the researcher (Black and Champion, 1976). The population of the study is Berom people in Gyel and Riyom District that are from 18 years above while the targeted population is the entire Berom in Plateau State. Quota sampling was used in the selection of the two local government areas which include Jos South and Riyom as well as Gyel and Riyom Districts where the Berom people, being the population under study are domiciled. The probability random sampling method was used in the selection of respondents in this study. Sampling size was determined from the 2023 election voters' card registration where a sample of 382 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan table for sample size determination. The registered voters in Gyel District with the exception of Bukuru ward was 37,794 and Riyom District was 39,854 giving a total of the study population as 77,648. 382 questionnaires were distributed with the help of two research assistants. The researcher and the research assistants waited for the respondents to fill and returned the questionnaires. One month was used to complete the data collection. The data collected was presented, analysed using bi-variant analysis and interpreted accordingly. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Respondents' Perceptions of the Contribution of the Berom Traditional Means of Settling Disputes to Discouraging Criminality in Berom Communities**

| The Berom traditional means of settling disputes have contributed to discouraging criminality in Berom communities | <i>f</i>   | %            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Strongly Agree                                                                                                     | 220        | 57.6         |
| Agree                                                                                                              | 132        | 34.5         |
| Neutral                                                                                                            | 21         | 5.5          |
| Disagree                                                                                                           | 9          | 2.4          |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                                       | <b>382</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Table 1 presents the respondents' perceptions of the contribution of the Berom traditional means of settling disputes to discouraging criminality in Berom communities. The findings indicate that respondents overwhelmingly perceived the traditional justice system as an effective mechanism for crime prevention. Specifically, 57.6% ( $f = 220$ ) of the respondents strongly agreed, while 34.5% ( $f = 132$ ) agreed that the Berom traditional means of settling disputes have contributed to discouraging criminality. In contrast, 5.5% ( $f = 21$ ) were neutral, and only 2.4% ( $f = 9$ ) disagreed with the statement. Overall, a combined 92.1% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed, demonstrating a high level of confidence in the effectiveness of the Berom traditional criminal justice system in deterring criminal behaviour within Berom communities. The finding suggests that the traditional dispute settlement mechanism is widely perceived as playing a significant role in promoting law-abiding behaviour, fostering social order, and enhancing community safety, thereby contributing substantially to crime prevention within Berom communities.

**Table 2: Challenges facing the Berom traditional criminal justice system in contemporary crime prevention**

| S/N |                                       | Frequency  | Percentage % |
|-----|---------------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| 1   | Insincerity of leaders                | 167        | 43.7         |
| 2   | Loss of lives when oaths are involved | 148        | 38.8         |
| 3   | Delays in dispensing of judgements    | 28         | 7.3          |
| 4   | Illiteracy by the leaders             | 20         | 5.2          |
| 5   | Bribery and corruption by the leaders | 19         | 5.0          |
|     | <b>Total</b>                          | <b>382</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Table 2 presents the challenges facing the Berom traditional criminal justice system in contemporary crime prevention. The findings indicate that the most frequently identified challenge is insincerity of leaders, reported by 43.7% of the respondents, suggesting that concerns about leadership integrity significantly affect the credibility and effectiveness of the system. Closely following this is the issue of loss of lives when oaths are involved, identified by 38.8% of participants, highlighting fears surrounding the potential harmful consequences of certain traditional practices.

Other challenges were reported to a lesser extent. Delays in dispensing judgments were identified by 7.3% of respondents, indicating that procedural inefficiencies are perceived as a relatively minor concern. Similarly, illiteracy among leaders (5.2%) and bribery and corruption (5.0%) were reported by smaller proportions of participants, though these factors still represent important structural and ethical concerns within the system.

The findings of Research Question 2 reveal that the major challenges confronting the Berom traditional criminal justice system are primarily related to leadership integrity and the perceived risks associated with oath-taking practices. While administrative delays, illiteracy, and corruption were noted, they were less frequently cited, suggesting that issues of trust, accountability, and the safety implications of traditional enforcement mechanisms are the most pressing concerns affecting its contemporary effectiveness in crime prevention.

### **Inferential Results**

This section presents the inferential results of the study. The formulated hypothesis was tested using appropriate inferential statistical technique to determine the nature and significance of the relationships among the study variables. Specifically, the hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product–Moment Correlation.

### **Hypothesis Test**

The test of hypothesis examined whether there is a significant association between the Berom traditional justice system and effective crime prevention within Berom communities. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product–Moment Correlation, and the results are presented in Table 3.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** The Berom traditional justice system is not significantly associated with effective crime prevention within Berom communities.

**Table 3: Relationship between Berom traditional criminal justice system and effective crime prevention within Berom communities**

|                                           | Effective crime prevention within Berom communities |                  |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------|
|                                           | Pearson's Correlation (r)                           | <i>p</i> - value |
| Berom traditional criminal justice system | .277                                                | <.001            |

A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the Berom traditional criminal justice system and effective crime prevention within Berom communities (Table 3). The results revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between the Berom traditional criminal justice system and effective crime prevention within Berom communities,  $r = .277$ ,  $p < .001$ . The correlation coefficient ( $r = .277$ ) indicates a weak association but it is positive association, suggesting that higher effectiveness or stronger functioning of the Berom traditional criminal justice system is associated with increased levels of effective crime prevention within the communities.

**Decision Rule:** The  $p$ -value of less than .001 indicates that the probability of obtaining this result by chance is less than 0.1%, which is far below the .05 threshold. Since  $p < .05$ , the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that the Berom traditional criminal justice system is significantly positively associated with effective crime prevention within Berom communities.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of Research Objective (i) indicates that the Berom traditional justice system is widely perceived as effective in discouraging criminality, maintaining social harmony, reforming offenders, and promoting victim compensation within Berom communities. This is consistent with Adebayo & Okoro (2022) in which they argued that traditional justice system brings about reconciliation and community harmony among the victims and the offenders in the community. This is also in line with Ibrahim and Yusuf (2023) where they posits that by fostering dialogue, accountability, and reconciliation, active community participation, traditional justice system does not only help victims and offenders but also strengthens the social fabric of communities.

Also, the findings of Research Objective (ii) revealed that the major challenges confronting the Berom traditional justice system are primarily related to leadership integrity and the perceived risks associated with oath-taking practices. While administrative delays, illiteracy, and corruption were noted, they were less frequently cited, suggesting that issues of trust, accountability, and the safety implications of traditional enforcement mechanisms are the most pressing concerns affecting its contemporary effectiveness in crime prevention. These challenges reflect the concerns of the National Policy on Justice (2017) as captured in the reviewed literature on the challenges faced in implementing the Traditional Justice which includes bias and discriminatory practices, repugnant custom, enforcement difficulties, and ambiguous scope. Due to lack of by laws as guiding principle, the traditional rulers can exhibit excesses in discharging their duties.

More challenging is the attitude of the formal legal system towards spiritualism where their adjudicatory parameters are confined to issues and evidence adduced before it. Whereas in the Berom traditional justice system, administration of justice goes beyond the presentation of physical evidence, it involves the supernatural forces playing active role in ensuring effective justice delivery, especially in cases beyond evidence which involved oath taking to prove guilt or innocence.

More so, the findings from the first hypothesis tested where Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the Berom traditional criminal justice system and effective crime prevention within Berom communities. The results revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between the Berom traditional criminal justice system and effective crime prevention within Berom communities,  $r = .277$ ,  $p < .001$ . The correlation coefficient ( $r = .277$ ) indicates a small to moderate positive association, suggesting that higher effectiveness or stronger functioning of the Berom traditional criminal justice system is associated with increased levels of effective crime prevention within the communities. This finding provides answer to the research question which sought to examine the effectiveness of the Berom traditional justice system in crime prevention within Berom communities. This was evidently proved in the decision rule where the p-value of less than .001 indicates that the probability of obtaining this result by chance was less than 0.1%, which is far below the .05 threshold. Since  $p < .05$ , the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that the Berom traditional justice system is significantly positively associated with effective crime prevention within Berom communities.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the inferences drawn from the analysed data and the hypotheses test, the study concludes that Berom traditional justice system is very effective in crime prevention and reduction among the Berom communities where the use of ordeals like oaths taking deters community members from committing crimes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion drawn from this piece of work, the study therefore recommends the following:

- i. The traditional justice system should be integrated with the formal justice system through appropriate legislation. This would go a long way in preventing crimes as the traditional justice plays a complementary role.
- ii. There should be synergy between the traditional rulers who are the custodians of the customary laws and the agents of the criminal justice system.
- iii. The State Government should establish a regulatory organisation that will be responsible for monitoring the excesses of the traditional leaders.

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