

Dispositional and Contextual Factors Predicting Smuggling Behaviour among Smugglers in Border Areas in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT Smuggling is one of the major factors undermining the economy of Nigeria. This behaviour is aided partly by the multi-border nature of the country with multiple entry and exit points (legal and illegal). The country shares land borders with Cameroon, Benin Republic, Republic of Togo, Chad and marine border with Equatorial Guinea. In a bid to stem the tide of smuggling, successive governments in Nigeria have put up a number of measures and legislation in addition to empowering the Nigeria Custom Service, yet the phenomenon has continued unabated. This study therefore, investigated some dispositional factors (openness to experience, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, extraversion, locus of control, risk taking propensity and contextual factors (economic factors, family influence and peer influence) predicting smuggling behaviour. Two hundred smugglers were sampled in a cross-sectional survey using the snowball sampling technique in two selected border towns in Ogun State, Nigeria. Participants' age ranged from 20 – 60 years with a mean age of 37.13 and standard deviation of 8.43. Of the sample, 188 were males while 12 were females. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire comprising of 8 sections. Findings showed that all the independent variables jointly predicted smuggling behaviour ($R = .80$; $R^2 = .63$; $p < .05$). Meanwhile, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness, did not independently predict smuggling behaviour while extraversion and neuroticism did. It is thus recommended that government starts public awareness and re-orientation programmes aimed at bringing about attitudinal change beginning from elementary schools in order to shape the emerging personalities positively.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian economy has suffered a lot of battering over the years; which has largely been attributed to a number of factors ranging from unarticulated economic policies, policy inconsistency, corruption, unstable political environment as well as external political and economic influences (Oladeji 2010). One other major problem that is plaguing the country's economy is smuggling or parallel trade as it is called in some quarters. This is robbing the nation of huge amount off revenue that should be derived from import duty and has also resulted in flooding the market with sub-standard, fake and expired products. Research has shown that smuggling is one of the commonest crimes across Nigerian borders and it also runs across the West African sub-region (Akano 1986).

Smuggling as a subversive economic activity is a behavior that has occurred ever since there were laws or moral codes that tax or forbid access to a specific person or object (Wikipedia 2011). It is pertinent to note that central to the phenomenon of smuggling is the economic pull of demand and supply, consideration is in terms of what the consumer demands, how

much the consumer is willing to pay and the ability of the smuggler to supply. Oladeji (2010) defines smuggling as the movement of goods across national borders, without proper documentations, sometimes under dangerous conditions, for the purpose of making money. In a similar effort, Oladeji (2010) defines smuggling as the clandestine importation and/or exportation of goods from one place to another. The goods in this context may be prohibited goods, or the evasion of customs duties on legal goods that are liable to duty. According to Defiem and Kelly (2001) price disparities and differential customs duties between jurisdictions or across different periods in time can determine the likelihood of smuggling.

Globally, smuggling is generating a lot of concern because of both the economic and health implications; it depletes the economy of nations, constitute serious health hazards through sub-standard goods and in some instances death. The damaging effect of smuggling on global economy has necessitated a number of measures put in place by government of nations in addition to inter-border collaborations and the idea of regional economic integration all in a bid to confront and discourage smuggling. However,

these measures seem not to be effective in the control of smuggling and its negative effects on Nigeria. The prevalence and monstrous nature of smuggling is becoming quite overwhelming up to the point that some high ranking officials are becoming fatalistic in their thinking that the phenomenon cannot be controlled. For instance, Ahmed Faraj Saudi, Head of Egyptian Customs Department was reported in Media EYE Middle East (2010) as saying that no country can control smuggling as it is a human behavior.

The aforementioned fatalistic thinking pattern although not verbally expressed by the authorities in Nigeria is implicit in various policy changes and summersaults that regularly characterized the country's import laws. Successive governments in Nigeria are constantly reviewing policy on importation, items on the importation list, age of items like vehicles, machineries, and furniture that can be imported, all of these in response to the activities of smuggling and smugglers. A case in point was the ban on the importation of motor vehicles whose manufacture date was above ten years. The government later discovered that the regulation increased the activities of vehicle smugglers who make use of the numerous manned and unmanned borders in some instances with active collusion with law enforcement agents to bring into the country vehicles older than the prescribed ten years. Consequently, this affected the economy of the country because custom duty was not paid on these smuggled items, the situation led to the review in the policy with the age of vehicles raised from ten to fifteen years in direct response to the activities of smugglers. Another interesting scenario is the rule in the custom service that if anyone is found within the country with a vehicle on which duty was not paid (in other words, smuggled) the individual is merely made to pay the duty and particular percentage as fine.

Smuggling in Nigeria as in other places is not without risks and some form of hazards to the smugglers. For instance, men of the Nigeria Custom Service many times engage smugglers in armed combat which lead to death, arrest, prosecution and in some instances conviction. These are in addition to risk of accidents from other causes as the smugglers look for ways of bringing their products into the country. In spite of these risks, smuggling as a line of preferred business continues to thrive by the day

both at the petty and commercial levels. What then are the motivating and predisposing factors which make individuals to take the risk of smuggling at the risk of their lives in addition to other hazardous consequences?

Defiem and Kelly (2001) identified two types of smuggling, and a look at the Nigerian context shows that the two types are in operation. This identification is premised on the level of social organization and they are petty smuggling and commercial smuggling. Petty smuggling involves individuals who legally or illegally cross the borders to purchase goods at cheaper prices to be sold or for personal consumption, whichever the case is, they often buy contraband goods and/or fail to pay duty on non-contraband goods. Commercial smuggling on the other hand involves transportation of large quantities of goods which may be contrabands or non-contraband goods without payment of custom duty to the appropriate authority. These two types of smugglers are found (conspicuously) at almost all legal and illegal land borders in Nigeria and the presence of law enforcement agents at these places is a pointer to the fact that corruption is a factor militating against the effort to fight smuggling.

Lichtenwald (2004) proposed a three phase developmental smuggling model (DSM). According to him, phase I smugglers usually smuggle contraband to meet their own needs although they might smuggle enough to cover their expenses by selling some of the contrabands.

Phase II on the other hand involves groups of individuals who know each other and have a shared value system which they achieve through smuggling.

Phase III however refers to organizations formed for the sole purpose of smuggling though they may engage in a particular legitimate business as a front for the actual smuggling activities. The emphasis in this particular study is on the phase I smugglers, this is because they are the most visible, they are found daily at the borders, dynamic in their operations, more frequently apprehended, and they meet the law enforcement "smuggler profiles."

Perhaps, one reason why attempt at controlling smuggling activities in Nigeria has been futile is the multiple natures of her borders; nobody can precisely say how many routes there are. Although the official/legal entry points may

be known, observation has indicated that there are countless other entry points (land and marine) that are officially unknown, unmanned or very poorly manned. Another possible factor is the fact that the country has several neighbours amongst which are Benin Republic, Togo, Chad, and Cameroon. All these countries have common cultural heritages and affinities with Nigerians living along their border areas (for example, the Borgu Kingdom cuts across Borno State in Nigeria and Chad; the Ketu Kingdom in Nigeria and Benin Republic, the Amazonia in Nigeria and Cameroon, the Togoese and the Yoruba of Nigeria). The import of these dynamic heritages is that the people see themselves as kin and kith and as such do not see the reason for there to be any impediment to movement of goods and services. This mindset makes the works of law enforcement agents difficult, in that the people see them as "victimizing" their "cousins", and as a result smuggling activities are actively abetted.

However, the preoccupation of this study is to examine the dispositional and contextual factors predicting smuggling behavior in spite of the serious risk and stigma involved. Of particular interest is the examination of personality of individuals to see if it predicts smuggling behavior. Ryckman (2004) postulates that personality describes the dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations, and behaviours. In other words, the personality of an individual is a propelling factor responsible for various kinds of behavior the individual engages in. Costa and McCrae (1982) proposed that personality has five dimensions. These according to them are: neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness. The view of this five-factor personality dimension is that individuals fall between two extremes of each dimension, in other words, it is not a matter of possessing or not possessing a trait, it is a matter of where an individual is on the continuum with respect to each of the five dimensions.

The same goes for locus of control which describes the degree to which individuals perceive that outcome results from their own behaviours, or from forces that are external to themselves. Admittedly, smuggling involves certain degree of risk and this study is interested in the role that risk taking propensity

plays in the tendency to engage in smuggling. This is to check on the assertion of Hovarth and Zuckerman (1993) that individuals with high needs for stimulations are more likely than low sensation seekers to engage in smuggling and other negative activities in order to experience intense feelings of arousal.

In addition to dispositional factors, psychologists have also over time established that the environment is a very significant factor influencing behavior across situations. The Nigerian environment is noted for its dynamism in the economic sector, political space and diverse cultural leanings across the country. Thus, it is hypothesized that dispositional and contextual factors will significantly independently and jointly predict smuggling behavior among identified smugglers.

METHOD

Research Design

This is a cross-sectional survey design using ex post facto method. There was no active manipulation of the variables in the study; questionnaires were only administered on the participants to tap information on existing tendencies and behaviours. The dispositional factors are openness to experience, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, extraversion, locus of control, and risk taking propensity with contextual factors as economic, family influence and peer influence while smuggling behaviour is the dependent variable.

Participants

Participants in this study comprised of 200 smugglers drawn using the snowball sampling technique from the population of smugglers in two border communities in Nigeria. The age range was between 20 years to 60 years with a mean age of 37.13 and standard deviation of 8.43. Males were 188 (96.3%) while females were 12 (3.7%). On marital status, 48% were married, 30.2% were divorced, 9.8% were separated, while 12% were singles. With regards to levels of education attained, 2.6% had no formal education, 3% had primary school leaving certificate, 20.5% were high school graduates, 10.5% had ordinary diploma or its equivalent, 50.8% had first degree/higher diploma while

12.6% did not indicate their educational qualification.

Sampling Procedure

Based on the nature of the population of interest, the snowball sampling technique was found adequate to recruit people for the study. This involved identifying a smuggling suspect, gaining his/her confidence by explaining the nature of the research and giving assurance of confidentiality with no risk of exposure, the suspect then helped to enlist others who also helped in enlisting more. The participants were given explanations as to the purpose and nature of the research, specifically, they were told that the research is purely for academic purpose and thereby the result will not be used for any other purpose. Confidentiality was assured, verbal consent sought while they were also informed that they were not under obligation to participate and actually reserved the right to disengage at any point they felt like. Those who consented were given the questionnaires with a plea that they be as truthful as possible in their responses and that there was no right or wrong answer. Questionnaire administration and retrieval took 6 weeks with the help of three research assistants.

Instruments

A structured questionnaire, made up of 8 sections was used in data collection. Section A tapped the socio-demographic information of the participants while Section B – H were self-report validated scales measuring the variables of interest. Specifically, Section B is the Big Five Factor Inventory authored by Costa and Macrae (1992). It is a Likert format scale measuring 5 domains of personality (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism), the Reliability Alpha for the 5 subscales are .97, .76, .74, .85, and .78 respectively, while the Alpha Coefficient for the whole scale is .91. Section C is the Rotter (1966) locus of control scale, it is a 24-item Likert scale with 5 points response options with Alpha Coefficient of .89 and split-half reliability of .72. Section D of the questionnaire contained the Weber et al. (2002) risk taking scale, it is a 30-item scale with internal consistency ranging

from .65 - .78 and an overall Alpha Coefficient of .92. The economic factor scale is the Section E of the questionnaire; it was developed by Animashaun (2007) with internal consistency from .68 - .88 and Alpha Coefficient of .90. Section D is the family influence scale also developed by Animashaun (2007), the author reported internal consistency of .65 - .78 and overall coefficient Alpha of .89. Section G measured peer influence and was authored by Animashaun (2007) with test-retest reliability coefficient of .76 and internal consistency of .68 - .79. Perceived smuggling behaviour scale is the Section H of the questionnaire developed by Oladeji (2010), it is a 10-item Likert format scale with a 5 point response option, the author reported Alpha Coefficient of .80 and internal consistency from .67 - .79.

For each of the scales any score above the mean indicates an individual is high on the construct, in other words, the higher the score the higher possession of the construct under consideration.

Statistical Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using multiple regression analysis from the statistical programme for the social sciences (SPSS). Specifically, smuggling behaviour was regressed against the dispositional and contextual factors.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the summary of multiple regression showing the independent and joint prediction of dispositional and contextual variables on smuggling behaviour.

Table 1 shows that the dispositional and contextual factors jointly predicted smuggling behaviour of the participants ($R = .80$; $R^2 = .63$; $p < .05$), they jointly accounted for 63% of the variance. Meanwhile, neuroticism, extraversion, locus of control, risk taking behaviour, economic factor, family influence and peer influence significantly independently predicted smuggling behaviour ($\beta = .17$, $t = 2.85$, $p < .05$, $\beta = .12$; $t = 1.97$; $p < .05$, $\beta = .13$; $t = 2.68$; $p < .05$, $\beta = .26$; $t = 5.45$; $p < .05$, $\beta = .44$; $t = 8.94$; $p < .05$, $\beta = .18$; $t = 3.42$; $p < .05$, $\beta = .23$; $t = 4.40$; $p < .05$) respectively, while, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness did not signifi-

cantly predict smuggling behaviour independently.

Table 1: Summary of multiple regression showing the independent and joint prediction of dispositional and contextual variables on smuggling behaviour

Variable	Beta	t	R	R ²	F
Openness to experience	.34	.46			
Agreeableness	.05	.35			
Neuroticism	.26	2.85*			
Conscientiousness	.06	2.07			
Extraversion	.12	1.97*	.80	.63	24.58*
Locus of control	.32	2.68*			
Risk taking behaviour	.35	5.45*			
Economic factor	.69	8.94*			
Family influence	.16	3.42*			
Peer influence	.35	4.40*			

*p<.05

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study indicated that dispositional factors (openness to experience, agreeableness, Neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, locus of control, risk taking behavior) and contextual factors (family influence, peer influence and economic influence) jointly predicted smuggling behavior significantly among suspected smugglers. The factors jointly accounted for 63% of the variance in the prediction of smuggling behavior while the remaining 37% can be attributed to error variance and other variables not considered in the present study. This finding corroborates the assertion of Ryckman (2004) that personality influences cognitions, motivation, and behaviours in various situations. Earlier research has also indicated significant relationship between personality and behavior, specifically, Ciarrochi et al. (2000) found that there exists a strong relationship between personality and antisocial behavior. In a similar research, Zeng and Miller (2002) reported significant correlation between agreeableness extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism and antisocial behavior. Invariably, the joint prediction of smuggling behavior by both dispositional and contextual factors is a confirmation of the traditional view point of psychology that individuals are largely influenced by the interaction of their personality characteristics and the environment as exemplified in the nature-nurture argument. Meanwhile, all the factors except openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness independently pre-

dicted smuggling behavior among suspected smugglers.

Economic factor was found to be the highest predictor of smuggling behavior in this study. This may not be unconnected with the prevalent poverty and economic hardship in Nigeria, the economy of the country is such that a greater percentage of the population lives below poverty line and the middle class has almost gone into extinction. The labour market is saturated with unemployed people and the inability on the part of government to generate and sustain power supply has forced many companies and industries to fold up thereby compounding the unemployment problem. These realities are said to be pushing people into criminal activities including smuggling in spite of risk involved all in a bid to survive. This is a corroboration of Onyejiakwu's (1991) findings that most families in Nigeria are not financially empowered to meet their basic needs and this lack keeps pushing people into criminal activities. Similarly, Sampson and Laub (1990) established a link between poverty and antisocial behavior; they affirmed that poverty makes parents less effective in providing support and monitoring behavior of their children.

Locus of control was also found to predict smuggling behavior in this study; this confirms the finding of Dailey (1980) which reported a relationship between task variability, task difficulty, and locus of control. In another study, Kasperson (1982) found a high positive correlation between negative attitudes and external locus of control. Risk taking propensity was also found to be positively related to smuggling behaviour; this is in consonance with literature on the matter. For instance, Donovan et al. (1991) and Jessor (1993) asserted that adolescent high in risk-taking behavior place less value on conventional societal values and engage more in deviant behavior. This observed deviant behavior in some adolescents has been associated with parental upbringing, Olanrewaju (1999) reported that adolescents more prone to antisocial activities are mostly those from single parents or brought up in homes where marital violence obtained or where one or both parents have history of alcoholism, drug abuse, smoking etc. All these are likely factors that may predispose the emerging personality into antisocial activities like smuggling. In a similar submission, Ortese (1998) was of the opinion that global-

ization which has increased the official responsibilities of parents keep parents more in offices than at home while paying less attention to the moral development of the children, this leads to a break down in control and breeding of social deviants.

It was also found that peer influence significantly predicted smuggling behavior. There appeared to be a consensus among majority of the smugglers sampled that they were introduced into the business either directly by peers who recruited them or indirectly through the envied lifestyles of their peers involved in the business. This found support in the works of Farrington (1989), Williams (1994), and Elliot and Menard (1996), these individuals in their separate studies affirmed that there is a strong correlation between peer influence and delinquent behavior, this has been demonstrated in a study that having delinquent peers is closely associated with been convicted for illegal behavior later in life.

CONCLUSION

Considering the findings in this study, it becomes obvious that containing or curtailing smuggling to enhance both global and local economy goes beyond putting in place rules and legislation enforced by various agents. Rather, attitudinal change through psychological programmes should be embarked upon right from elementary school to tertiary institutions. In this regard, students are taught how to be responsible citizens, sabotaging effect of smuggling on a nations' economy and the danger involved in smuggling activities. All these, in addition to public enlightenment campaign to sensitize the populace to the danger of smuggling. In addition, employment should be created to decongest the labour market while conditions of service should be improved to ease the financial burden of families. These measures will no doubt reduce pressures in the family and make parents more functional in their parenting roles while strengthening mechanisms to monitor children not to fall into bad company.

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