



## TRADITIONAL METHODS IN CRIME PREVENTION AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF IBIONO IBOM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study examined the effect of traditional methods in crime prevention: Continuity and change in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area (IILGA), Akwa Ibom State. Two research questions were raised to guide the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of 787,233 indigenes of IILGA from which two sets of samples consisting of 20 and 380 were selected using snowball sampling technique and systematic sampling technique respectively. Meanwhile, to arrive at a 400 sample size, the Taro Yamane formula was adopted. The primary data were collected using a mixed approach consisting of qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitatively, data collection was done using semi-structured interview guides, whereas a questionnaire entitled “Traditional Methods of Crime Prevention Scale (TMCPs)” was utilized for quantitative data collection. These instruments were validated by experts. Data analysis was done both quantitatively and qualitatively using simple percentage and thematic discussion of the respondents’ views and perceptions about preventing crime. The findings revealed that a modified form of traditional methods such as Mbiam, and Ukang were capable with uncontrollable speed to deter potential anti-social behaviour and keep society morally sound and justified. Also, the extent to which these traditional methods (ukang and mbiam) still influence behaviours and prevent crimes are high. This was similar to the results to the extent to which they still retain their originality. It is recommended among others that the traditional institutions should bring up a blueprint/template containing the modified methods of preventing crime as complementary or alternative strategies to the conventional criminal justice system (CCJS).*

**KEYWORDS:** Traditional Methods, Crime, Crime Prevention, Moral Development.



## INTRODUCTION

Issues of development and crime are working in parallel contravention. Where crime persists, development ultimately declines. In other words, a unit increase in crime rate undermines or drastically retards the progressiveness of the development in the society (Jonathan, Olusola, Bernadin, & Inoussa, 2021). Crime without doubt leads to retardation in both social, economic, spiritual, innovative and infrastructural development of the people.

Many scholars defined crime as violations of common but agreed public orderliness established by the people (Mehran *et al.*, 2019; Vijayarani *et al.*, 2020). Crime could be explained as contravention of public rules and orderliness to the extent of violating the victim's rights and constituting fear in the society. It could be categorized into: crimes against persons such as assault, homicide and rape; crimes against property such as destruction/damage/vandalism of property, arson and robbery; and crimes against society such as drug/narcotic violations, drug violation among others. The implications of the victim's right violation and the corresponding fear may result in disorderliness and insecurity, constitute impediment to the socio-economic activities of man, disrupt social cohesion of any society (Woźniakowska, 2013), fuel corruption, and destabilize the growth of the society (The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2020). Premised on these negative implications of crime, it becomes essential for every society to adopt feasible prevention strategies with the potency to eliminate or curtail its prevalence.

Crime prevention as strategies that manage crime occurrence and curtail incessant spread of crime have been variously inferred as the best approach to maintain public order. When effective and efficient, it allows the society to experience a quality sense of protection and security with the main aim of the betterment of the quality of life (Nwolise, 2004). Many authors explained crime prevention in diverse ways with emphasis on crime retardation (Adeboye, 2013; Okunola and Ikauomola, 2012). Some stressed on the position of not just retarding crime occurrence but also enhancing the consciousness of every individual with criminal tendencies that he/she is being monitored. This could mean that crime prevention is any approach utilized to curtail the occurrence of crime by sustaining the consciousness of an individual with criminal tendencies and creating remarkable awareness that he/she could possibly be caught.

Although diverse innovative technologies have been in place in the twenty-first century society to utilize in crime seeming prevention, the rate of crime still increases geometrically, an indication that perhaps crime prevention technologies possibly do not control individual sense of rationalization not to be involved in crime. More worrisome is the fact that most of these new technologies are not available in the African societies with emphasis on the rural communities—a situation that many believe to have promoted the crime rate in Nigeria (Statista, 2023; Akpan, Njoku & Jeremiah, 2018; Onota, 2021), coupled with the abandonment of the traditional methods that were utilized in the past four decades before the introduction of the new technologies.

Historically, crime statistics in Akwa Ibom State generally before the incorporation of technology and conventional policing in the society is far less than what is obtained in twenty-first century society. Many authors believed the low states of crime in the last four decades in the State was due to the proactiveness of traditional methods (Anyacho & Ugal, 2009; Uyang & Ayuk, 2013), especially in the areas of instilling fear (Nana, 2021), stringent policy of administering punishment



without logic (Lot, 2022), shaming the culprit and the family, as well as, death penalty that was irrevocable (Inyang et al., 2020). These traditional methods are approaches utilized for control, discipline, moderation, and measuring behavioural standards peculiar to the people. They revolve around ensuring the installation of rules and regulations governing the conduct of the people and the process of establishing truth using what individuals can see, feel, touch and sense. Whether these traditional methods actually have the potency to prevent crime in the twenty-first century society where conventional policing and innovative technological wares are utilized for the security of the society is a contemplation for investigation especially in rural communities.

Traditionally, Ibiono Ibom people are a subset of Ibibio people in Akwa Ibom State with characteristics of a typical African Society. The people are blessed with diverse traditional norms, few of which are utilized for crime prevention. These traditional methods include: the ekpe, ukang, mbiam, and the ekpo-nkawo.

Ideologically, Lott (2022) explained mbiam as a traditionally concocted oath with magical potency utilized as a mechanism and instrument to combat and address social ills such as stealing, killing and any associated lies an individual could present to dodge repercussion and penalty of crime committed in the traditional society. The author exaggerated that since mbiam has spiritual potency, the method can actually detect the innocent and the guilty as well as punish the offender. Several studies pointed to the constituents of mbiam to include: liquid, sacred drum, certain leaves, human blood or the Bible and cross (Offiong, 1991). Others could be some concoction specially prepared by a traditional medicine man or woman into which he/she invokes the name of one or more dangerous deities (Udoh, 2008), blood from an in-law (ukot), from a grand-child (eyeyen), from a grandfather (Ete-bom) or from a grandmother (Ekaeka). Other substances or articles that could be used for the administration of mbiam are a piece of finger or toe nail, a piece of hair or a piece of cloth belonging to any of these classes of persons mentioned; any part of the body (especially the private) could also be used as mbiam (Lott, 2022). In any case, the administration of mbiam which is done at an agreed place accompanied by sacrifice is argued to have effectiveness in preventing crime due to its ability to enforce absolute loyalty through fear, and the extension of the penalty inflicted by mbiam to the culprit extended family (Inyang *et al.*, 2020; Lot, 2022; Ukpong, 2017). Many authors believe that the potency of mbiam also stemmed from the commitment its commands resulting from the solemnization of the people to uphold certain principles, norms and subjective reasoning (Jacquemet *et al.*, 2017; Jacquemet, James, Luchini, & Shogren, 2016). Supporting this premise, cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger cited in Aquino *et al.*, 2005) emphasized that when people act contrary to how they believe they should behave, they experience negative emotions caused by the inconsistency between their standards and their conduct. This, in turn, may motivate the desire to regain the sense of self-consistency away from crime.

Ukang (commonly referred to as ordeal) is another aspect of traditional method which many indigenous African societies believe has the potency to prevent crime (Essien, 2011). It is a system that appeals to the spiritual beings to reveal by miracle the right and wrong ways or truth or false bases of argument. Essien (2011) reports that Ukang administration involves “*invoking the powers of the gods believed to be in charge of justice, truth and morality through prayer and invocation for the gods and spirits to investigate the crime and the suspect before the waiting and anxious*



*community. Afterwards, the Ukang administrator ends the prayer and invocation by pouring the traditional libation and proceeding to the administration of the desired type of Ukang.”* Thereafter, the suspects are asked to recant the invocation according to the instructions of the ukang administrator. The individual that is guilty of the crime is severely punished according to the covenant of invocation administered (Essien, 2009). This in its traditional mechanism plays remarkable roles in instilling fear, shaming the culprit, and may equally lead to death according to the nature of invocations administered (Essien, 2009).

Theoretically, the study based the argument on the social control theory by Hirschi (1969). According to the theory, the people's relationships, commitments, values, norms, and beliefs encourage them not to break the law. In other words, if moral codes are internalized and individuals are tied to have a stake in their wider community, they will voluntarily limit their propensity to commit crime. Arising from this position, one could believe that conformity to the rules of a society is produced by socialization and maintained by the social interaction of the people and the institution—that is, family members, friends, peers, and the community. When this bond is weak or broken, it results in crime. These four principles of social control theory revolve around the idea of ‘social bond.’ One could argue that the attachment in the social bond encourages individuals not to involve themselves against others. When this attachment is formed, every individual will be sensitive to the thoughts, feelings, and desires of others. The attachment is often interpreted freely with bonds with the parents, the attachment to the norms of the family, community, and attachment with peers.

Another aspect of this social bond is the commitment to the organization or group of persons in the community. This explains the rational aspect of social bonding followed by the involvement which is the activity of a person in the conventional system. If someone gets involved in a smaller community, he/she develops a tendency to commit irregularities. The logic of sense is when people participate in many activities so that they would spend time and energy in respect of such events; it decreases the chances for them to commit acts against the law in the future. The final tenet of social control theory as promoted by Hirschi is the belief. The author explains belief as the moral aspect contained in social bonding and undoubtedly different from these three issues above. Belief is the faith of a person on moral values. Trusting someone against existing norms gives rise to adherence to the standard.

Arising from these principles, it could be said that any method of crime prevention that does not take into consideration these four concepts most likely may not produce tangible and effective results vis-à-vis promote moral development. In other words, as social bonds increase in strength, the individual tendencies in getting involved in crime tend to reduce. Deducing from the explanation of social control theory, it is believed that traditional methods in Ibiono Ibom Local Government (IILGA) Area have the tenacity to command attachment, involvement, commitment and promote belief of the negative consequence of crime committed. Therefore, it was imperative to examine the trueness of the potency of traditional methods in crime prevention using a mixed research design approach. Specifically, the study was geared to:

- i. Examine the extent to which mbiam is still influencing the prevention of crimes vis-à-vis retaining its originality in IILGA.



- ii. Examine the extent to which Ukang is still preventing crimes vis-à-vis retaining its originality in IILGA.

### Research Questions

The research questions raised for the study were:

- i. What is the extent to which mbiam is still influencing prevention of crimes vis-à-vis retaining its originality in IILGA?
- ii. What is the extent to which Ukang is still preventing crimes vis-à-vis retaining its originality in IILGA?

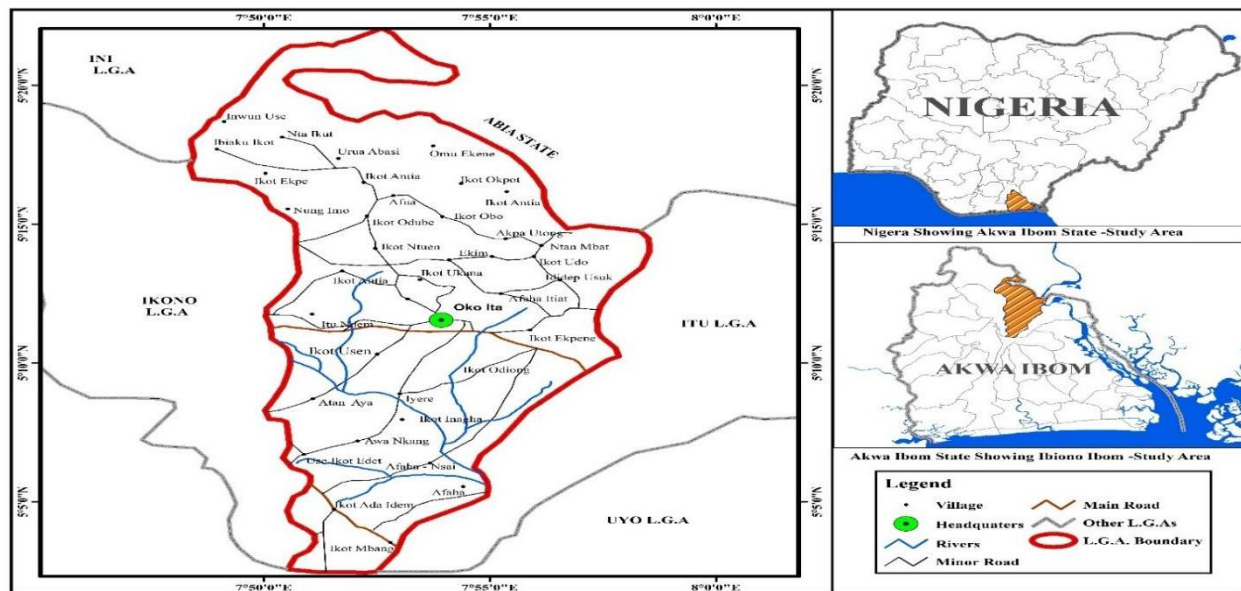
### RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area (IILGA) situated in Akwa Ibom State. The IILGA is among the 31 Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State and lies between longitude  $8^{\circ} 25^{\text{E}}$  and  $4^{\circ} 32^{\text{N}}$  and latitude  $5^{\circ} 33^{\text{N}}$   $7^{\circ} 25^{\text{E}}$  of Greenwich Meridian. Being the largest local government area in Akwa Ibom State with atypical characteristics of her people influenced by Ibibio, annang, and igbo culture due to its boundaries with these ethnic nationalities, it is believed that what is obtained here can actually attest to the potency of these traditional methods in crime prevention.

On the ethnicity perspective, IILGA is a typical Ibibio ethnic group with various clans (Ibiaku, Use, Mbiabong, Idoro, Afaha, Ikpanya, Ntan, and Utit Obio). Meanwhile, the people of IILGA are highly religious, established on the foundation of traditional religion before the introduction of Christian Religion by the European missionaries. This traditional religion was based on the worship of diverse deities such as Abasi Isong, Abasi Oyong, Epat ukpa, and Atabriyang, which were responsible for specific tasks and which performed unique functions. Among the commonest of the deities are the Abasi-Isong and Abasi-Onyong (Inyang *et al.*, 2020). These deities are believed to be in charge of other smaller gods such as Idiong, Nkukit, Ukang and Use Mkpó (Inyang *et al.*, 2020). The IILGA had other gods that were in charge of planting and harvesting season, controlling birth, crimes and conflicts resolutions. In terms of traditional politics, Ibiono Ibom as a community of people has a viable central authority which according to globalization has been regrouped into traditional political hierarchy: Okuku (traditional head in charge of every traditional investigation and consultation), the paramount ruler (ceremonial traditional head in charge of the administration of the traditional doctrines), followed by the clan heads, group heads, village heads, and family heads.

The criminal justice system in Ibiono Ibom traditional setting depends on whether the crime is committed against an individual in his/her immediate family (that is whether the offender and the offended is in the same family), or against the village/community, or community against community. Inyang *et al.* (2020) opined that when the crime is against an individual of the same family, the case is handled by the family head. However, if the resolution cannot be reached and the punishment is not satisfactorily administered, the case can be reported to the village head,

wherein all the family heads will be assembled/invited for effective discussion and administration of necessary and agreed punishment. But in the case of crime against the community/village, the village council takes charge. This village council consists of a village head, council members and the family heads. In a situation where the crime is committed between a community and another community, the resolution is handled by the clan head and or the paramount ruler.



**Figure 1: Map of Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area**

The population of the study consisted of 787,233 people in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area (Projected Population 2024 from the National Census, 2006) from which a sample of 400 indigenes was derived to participate in the study using Yamane formula:

$$S = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

where S = Sample size, N = Total population of the study, e = Error margin (0.05), that is,

$$\frac{787,233}{1 + 787,233 (0.05)^2} = 400$$

The respondents were sampled using multi-stage random sampling consisting of clustering, proportionate, and simple random sampling techniques. This involved reducing the IILGA into units for equal representation and participation in the study. At first, Ibiono Ibom LGA was grouped into eight clusters based on the existing clans (Ibiaku, Use, Mbiabong, Idoro, Afaha, Ikpanya, Ntan, and Utit Obio) using clustering sampling technique. The second stage involved dividing the sample size with the eight existing clans which in the sampling of 50 respondents per clan, while the third stage involved utilization of systematic random sampling technique in selecting two sets of respondents named: Set A and Set B. While Set A consisted of a Paramount Ruler and an Elder in the community, Set B consisted of other indigenes and dwellers within the



age of 20 and above in each of the eight sampled clans. Set A respondents provided historical views on the procedures and measures which these considered traditional methods utilized mostly in crime prevention. Meanwhile, Set B respondents provided measurable perceptions on how the traditional methods discourage them from involvement in crime, which is a hallmark for crime prevention, as well as whether it should continue or change.

Data was collected with designed instruments tagged “Semi-Structured Interview Guide (SSIG), and Traditional Methods and Crime Prevention Scale (TMCPS).” The SSIG with 10 items closed end questions provided opportunity for the respondents (interviewees) to give detailed explanations on the procedures, modus operandi, efficacy and potency of the traditional methods sampled in crime prevention as well as its (tradition methods) strengths and weakness (whether it should be continued or changed). Meanwhile, the TMCPS elicited details from respondents on their brief perception on the potency of the considered traditional methods (Mbiam and Ukang). This TMCPS has 10 items structured on two clusters based on the two research questions raised. Each of these items had four rating scale of very high extent (VHE), high extent (HE), low extent (LE), and very low extent (VLE), each built on positive perspective and coded thus: VHE = 4, HE = 3, LE = 2, and VLE = 1 respectively.

Data administration was done with the assistance of research adhoc using instant retrieval approach. Data collected was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, a simple percentage was used to assist the researcher to have a measurable estimation of the peoples’ perception for a more viable conclusion. Meanwhile, in a qualitative approach, thematic discussion of the respondents’ positions/perceptions were presented and theorized on the potency of the considered traditional methods in crime prevention.

## RESULTS

**Research Question One:** What is the extent to which mbiam is still influencing prevention of crimes vis-à-vis retaining its originality in IILGA?

### Thematic Approach

Mbiam tradition in IILGA of Akwa Ibom State has been recognized as a medium for the establishment of truth, settlement of conflicts that could lead to loss of lives and destruction of properties, as well as serving as a judicial method of coordinating the affairs of the people, especially preventing stealing.

A male in-depth interviewee (5) inferred that:

*Mbiam is not a deity that any sensible person should toil with because it does not understand your social class, educational qualification or religious affiliation. The deity does not understand who you are related to or who is related to you. It acts according to the pronouncements and the principle of truth or falsehood, right or wrong. The deity punishes the culprit or any violator with severe and prompt infirmities. Da the deity is still influencing people’s character awareness from crime. Well, it is still good to be.*



This underscores the potency of mbiam as a traditional method that does not segregate persons according to social class or operate based on nepotism and favouritism as against the criminal justice system in Nigeria that is reported as among the most corrupt systems in the world (Alemika, *et al.*, 2015). More so, this mbiam traditional judicial system is prompt to act in accordance with the pronouncement which, according to the Inyang, *et al.*, (2020), is a function of the deity's spiritual effectiveness.

This point was supported by a male key informant (3) who said:

*“Utilization of mbiam starts and finishes when all the necessary sacrifices are made to the gods involved and the pronouncements are made for the gods to follow. The article of the mbiam is then placed where the defense is needed. Where a particular farm or property is to be protected by mbiam, the owner of the property must place the article of the mbiam by the property. When this is done, any individual that acts contrary to the pronouncement is severely dealt with either by death or any other trauma as specified and pronounced to the mbiam.” E still de act in shaping behaviours. We can still allow it to work.*

Arising from this position, it becomes obvious that mbiam has simple procedures to be administered. It does not follow lengthy bureaucratic procedures laced with stress similar to the conventional criminal justice system in Nigeria that requires personnel to protect properties. On many occasions, these security personnel are ineffective in the discharge of their statutory responsibility of protecting properties. Similarly, the swiftness of mbiam in striking the offender with debilitating punishment underscores the effectiveness of the tradition in establishing truth, serving as a deterrent to others, and developing people's values of contentment and truthfulness.

### **Case Study 1 on Mbiam and Prevention of Stealing and Lying – Probing from Key Informant**

A transformer donated by the Government to a certain village in Ibiaku Ikot Udom was stolen by unknown criminals. The village head invited the police for the investigation of the matter. After a year of investigation, and mass arrest of some youth in the village, the transformer was not still found. The issue was reported to the clan head by one of the victims of the police arrest. The clan head summoned all the village heads in his domain and warning was passed to the members of communities. The clan head threatened that if the transformer was not returned to the village by those that removed it within a period of a week, anybody that connived indirectly or directly in committing this act would swell and die alongside his or her family members. In exactly a week, three persons died in that village, two in the neighbouring village including the village head's son who was a well-known criminal in the village. However, before the death of the village head's son, he confessed to the crime.

**(Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2024)**

Deducing from Case 1, it is clear that mbiam was more accurate and proactive in delivering fair justice without resorting to molestation of the innocent persons. This promotes trust in this traditional judicial system especially in its effectiveness in the administration of justice, and fairness in disciplining criminals. More so, its transgenerational powers encourage family heads





to closely train their members on the character of truth, contentment and commitment in accordance with the standard and expectation of the people.

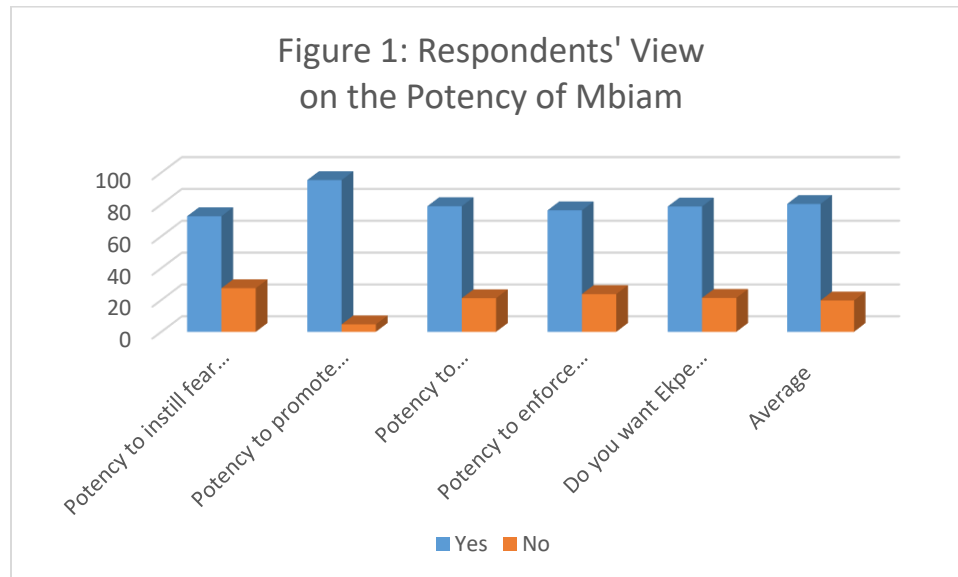
**Quantitative Approach**

**Table 1: Assessment of Mbiam and Prevention of Known Antisocial Behaviour (Stealing and Lying)**

Items Description <i>In your locality, the tradition of Mbiam has the...</i>	Responses		Total
	Yes	No	
Potency to instill fear on criminals	204(53.7%)	176(47.3%)	380
Potency to discourage falsification of fact	296(77.8%)	84(22.2%)	380
Potency to punish the criminals	362(95.3%)	18(4.7%)	380
Potency to discourage involvement in crime	299(78.7%)	81(21.3%)	380
Do you want mbiam adopted and used	276(72.6%)	104(27.4%)	380
<b>Average</b>	<b>287(75.5%)</b>	<b>93 (24.5%)</b>	<b>380</b>

(Source: Field Survey, 2024)

Table 1 indicates that the majority (75.5%) of the respondents were of the opinion that Mbiam has the potency to prevent known antisocial behaviour such as stealing and lying in IILGA.





**Table 2: The Extent to Which Mbiam Is Still Influencing the Behaviour of Stealing of Properties among the People of Ibiono Ibom LGA (N=380)**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
VHE	116	30.3
HE	141	37.1
LE	31	8.2
VLE	92	24.2

(Source: Field Survey, 2024)

Table 2 reveals that the majority of the respondents (37.1%) agreed that the mbiam is still influencing the behaviour of stealing among the people of Ibiono Ibom LGA to a high extent.

**Table 3: The Extent to Which Mbiam Is Still Retaining Originality in Ibiono Ibom LGA**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
VHE	131	34.4
HE	146	38.4
LE	94	24.7
VLE	9	2.4

(Source: Field Survey, 2024)

Table 3 indicates that the majority of the respondents (38.4%) maintained that mbiam is still retaining originality to a high extent.

**Research Question Two:** What is the extent to which Ukang is still preventing crimes vis-à-vis retaining its originality in IILGA?

### Thematic Approach

Ukang is considered among the prominent traditional methods to possess the power of detecting offenders. Because of this, criminals are afraid to take actions that may attract the use of Ukang.

A male in-depth interviewee (15) inferred that:

*Confam ukang no no who you be when he wan act and he kill who no do good. If you kill person and lie and they take you to ukang, he will show you who do the crime. The ukang go also kill you. The tradition good oh! Make we love it and keep it.*

This position was affirmed by another interviewee:

*Depending on the type of Ukang, the deity associated with it has specificity in exonerating the innocent even in cases that upturned the true position of nature, but rather does not spare the culprit with excessive punishment and shame. I still like it; I don't like nonsense.*

In essence, Ukang does not operate based on probability or unnecessary exaggeration of points; rather, it sees with action beyond the comprehension of humans. In other words, Ukang deity is



always exact and highly accurate in the dispensation of justice and prompt administration of punishment without bias, corruption, nepotism or favouritism. The interviewee maintained that it should be sustained.

### **Case Study 2 on Ukang and Prevention of Life Threatening Behaviours – Probing from Key Informant**

A certain land dispute lingered in one of the villages in the Idoro clan. This led to contentions and conflicts among the warring parties (families). The situation created an opportunity for clandestine clashes among the members of one of the families that struggled for the land. To implicate the head of that family, a member from this family secretly killed the head of the other disputing family. The community suspected the head of the family as the one responsible for the death of the disputing family head. The allegation was levelled on him that he threatened to kill him during the last interrogation by the police. The case was reported to the clan head, and Ukang ntokong (ordeal using pepper) was administered on the eyes of every member of the both disputing families. The Ukang exonerated the accused family head and others except the man that actually killed the other family head. The pepper inserted on others' eyes did not cause any pain or discomfort. The killer was dragged to the village square, beaten and finally handed over to the police for prosecution. He later died in Police Custody.

**(Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024)**

In a clear term, Ukang, also known as ordeal, has the propensity to establish truth and fact using the powers of available natural articles which could cause excruciating pains only on the culprit. For instance, it is common knowledge that insertion of pepper in an individual's eye could without exaggeration cause excruciating pain. However, when this pepper is utilized by Ukang deity and pronouncement is made that it should only affect the culprit, the deity automatically exonerates the innocents, but rather causes excruciating pains on the culprit. The excruciating pains associated with the administration of Ukang (ordeal), the death penalty, and other embarrassing fines levelled on the culprit have a controlling influence on individuals. This also is a pointer to every individual that no matter how secret one assumes to be while planning the destruction of lives, Ukang can appropriately sort and unveil the culprit(s) without any lengthy processes. This consciousness that any act or action can be detected or unraveled may impede individuals from involving in any action that may result in the destruction of lives.



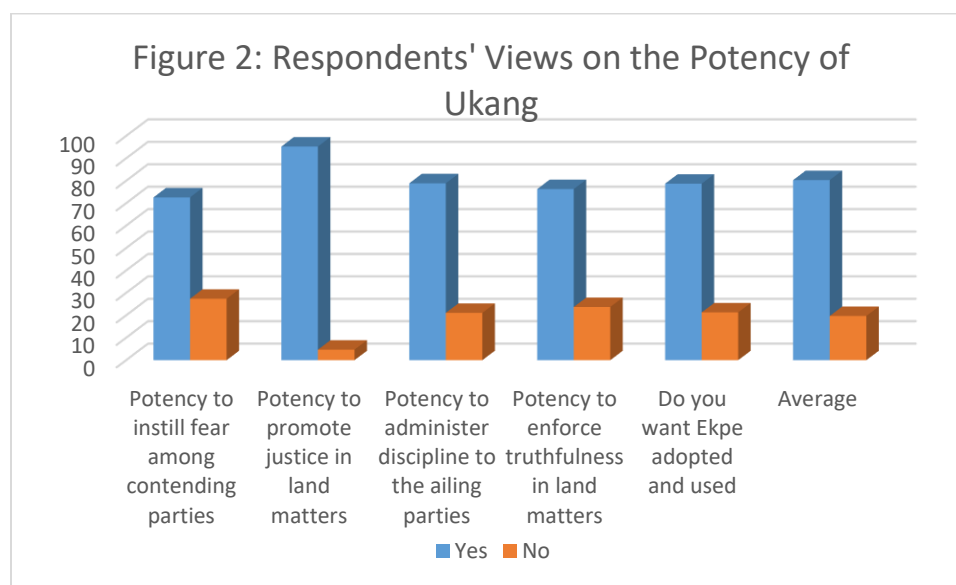
**Quantitative Approach**

**Table 4: Assessment of Ukang and Prevention of Life-threatening Behaviours**

Items Description <i>In your locality, the tradition of Ukang has the...</i>	Responses		Total
	Yes	No	
Potency to reveal true position of any crime	204(53.7%)	176(47.3%)	380
Potency to discourage killings	296(77.8%)	84(22.2%)	380
Potency to punish the culprit	362(95.3%)	18(4.7%)	380
Potency to bring justice to the oppress/victims	299(78.7%)	81(21.3%)	380
Do you want ukang adopted and used	276(72.6%)	104(27.4%)	380
<b>Average</b>	<b>287(75.5%)</b>	<b>93 (24.5%)</b>	<b>380</b>

(Source: Field Survey, 2024)

Table 4 indicates that the majority (75.5%) of the respondents were of the opinion that Ukang has the potency to prevent life-threatening behaviours in IILGA.



**Table 5: The Extent to Which Ukang Is Still Preventing Crimes among the People of IILGA (N=380)**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
VHE	124	32.6
HE	167	43.9
LE	31	8.2
VLE	58	15.3

(Source: Field Survey, 2024)



Table 5 reveals that the majority of the respondents (43.9%) agreed that the Ukang is still preventing crimes among the people of Ibiono Ibom LGA to a high extent

**Table 6: The Extent Ukang Is Still Retaining Originality in IILGA**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
VHE	131	34.4
HE	146	38.4
LE	94	24.7
VLE	9	2.4

(Source: *Field Survey, 2024*)

Table 6 indicates that the majority of the respondents (38.4%) maintained that ukang is still retaining originality to a high extent.

**Table 7: Respondents' consideration of traditional methods over conventional criminal justice system in crime prevention and moral development**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	311	81.8
No	69	18.2

(Source: *Field Survey, 2024*)

Table 7 indicates that the majority of the respondents were of the opinion that traditional methods were more effective and efficient in crime prevention and moral development than the conventional criminal justice system in Nigeria.

**Table 8: Respondents' Consideration of the Negative Implications That Should Call for Abolishment of Traditional Methods of Crime Prevention**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	62	16.3
No	318	83.7

(Source: *Field Survey, 2024*)

Table 8 indicates that the majority of the respondents (83.7%) opined that they do not think the traditional methods of crime prevention has any negative implication that should call for its abolishment.



## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Mbiam and Prevention of Crime

The answer to research question one raised indicates that the majority of the respondents (37.1%) agreed that the mbiam is still influencing the prevention of crimes among the people vis-à-vis maintaining its originality in IILGA to a high extent. This is a suggestion of continuity arising from the basis of the swiftness of mbiam in striking the offender with debilitating punishment underscores the effectiveness of the tradition in establishing truth, serving as a deterrent to others, and developing peoples' values of contentment and truthfulness. The findings supported the inference of Inyang *et al.* (2020) that mbiam has the ability to: enforce absolute loyalty to certain agreements reached, involve the punishment of death, and instill absolute fear. This is equally aligned with the position of Lot (2022) that maintained that Mbiam serves as an important instrument of social control in the traditional Ibibio society. In other words, it could be applied in areas of property fortification, settlement of disputes and determination of innocence and guilt. This is especially because of its potency in serving as a very powerful fetish believed to be capable of discriminating between the innocent and the offender. In summary, mbiam could be used in the following ways: as a tool for settling disputes, discouraging frame ups in matters of infidelity, punishing by causing sickness or killing a person who oppresses, treats another unjustly or offends him with impunity (Lot, 2022).

### Ukang and Prevention of Crime

Research question two answered reveals that the majority of the respondents (43.9%) agreed that the ukang is still preventing crimes among the people vis-à-vis maintaining its originality in IILGA to a high extent. This perhaps may be due to the fact that Ukang deity is always exact and highly accurate in the dispensation of justice and prompt administration of punishment without bias, corruption, nepotism or favouritism. The findings supported the inference of Essien's study that Ukang is an instrument of detection and verification in Ibibio that plays remarkable roles in uncovering, revealing and discovering hidden secrets and exposing criminals such as thieves, murderers, sorcerers, adulterers and other criminals, thereby helping to maintain public order, being concise in delivering judgment according to what is sworn, being effective in restoring trust and fidelity, and establishing the truth or falsehood of what people say especially on disputed issues and doubtful circumstances (Essien, 2009). More so, the author maintains that the gods of Ukang are reliable beings capable of vindicating the just and punishing the wicked, therefore propelling fear in the maintenance of a high level of morality by making people to do what is right, good and moral, and avoid what is evil, wrong and bad.



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## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It could be said that criminals take advantage of knowing that the conventional criminal justice system operates mainly on technicality and logic but does not consider spiritual belief in adjudicating judgment, a characteristic which traditional methods utilize to establish truth and administer appropriate discipline. Therefore, this timeless value of traditional methods should be used as the primary measure of character building among the entire Ibiono Ibom and other crude communities. This is generally in sync with the belief of people regarding the supremacy of their gods in the management of affairs of humans. Unlike other conventional criminal justice strategies, traditional methods (Mbiam and Ukang) are accurate in prediction without condescending to psychological and social bias. Therefore, the traditional methods believe in character development using threat and traumatized punishment. The effectiveness in preventing crime and promoting moral development is embedded in peoples' religious beliefs in the supremacy of their gods and the punishment(s) that could arise as a result of disobedience or violation of their gods.

The study serves as a functional tool that exposes researchers, students and stakeholders in developmental studies on strategies that could optimally lead to crime prevention and moral development. It specifically outlines the potency of peoples' beliefs in a Supreme Being, threat, humiliation, and psychological pain as key measures of social control and behavioural development. In essence, peoples' knowledge on the efficacy of the gods in uncovering the true position of actions and deeds as well as administering severe punishment on the culprit(s) assists in making individuals' consciousness alive towards discouraging their involvement in crime. This in turn promotes values of commitment to societal expectation and enhances the spirit of contentment, the hallmark in reducing chances of peoples' involvement in crime. Hence, it is concluded that traditional methods can effectively lead to crime prevention and moral development.

In the light of the conclusion drawn from the findings of the study, the following were recommended to the governments in different societies with functional traditional methods if the rising level of crime must be prevented for peaceful crime-free societies:

1. The traditional institutions should bring up a blueprint/template containing the modified methods of preventing crime as a complementary or alternative strategy.
2. Governments of nations and states of the nations should provide licenses to the custodians of these traditional methods to legalise their activities in crime detection and prevention for moral development. This will discourage the hide-and-seek attitude of our people in the utilization of the traditional methods.
3. Legislative backing and bye-laws could legitimize the use of traditional methods of crime prevention in Akwa Ibom State.
4. The ministry of local government and chieftaincy affairs can oversee the trend.



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The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study, that no vital features of the study have been omitted, and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

## **Competing Interests:**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

## **Authors' Contributions:**

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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