



EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PREDICTIVE POLICING IN NIGERIA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT PRACTICES IN LAGOS STATE

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ABSTRACT: *This qualitative study evaluates the effectiveness of predictive policing technologies by examining the implementation within law enforcement operations in Lagos State. The research aims to explore how predictive systems influence crime prevention, and decision-making processes in policing. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with NDLEA officers, the study reveals the perceived benefits and challenges of integrating predictive policing tools into traditional methods. Through thematic analysis of interviews and review of secondary sources, the research identifies key themes such as the tension between technology and human judgement, and the potential for over-reliance on system predictions. The findings indicate that while predictive policing can improve efficiency in crime hotspot identification, its efficacy is undermined by concerns over privacy, and fairness. The study concludes that for predictive policing to be effective, it must come with strong regulatory frameworks and ethical guidelines to ensure support from technologies. This research contributes to the growing discourse on the intersection of technology and law enforcement, offering insights into how predictive policing can evolve to better serve the people.*

KEYWORDS: Predictive policing, Law enforcement, qualitative research, Crime prevention, Algorithms, Bias, Justice.



INTRODUCTION

The rise of predictive policing represents a significant technological advancement in the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), allowing drug officers to anticipate criminal activities using data-driven approaches. Predictive policing refers to the application of systems and data analysis to forecast where crimes are likely to occur and who may be involved in future criminal behaviours (Perry, McInnis, Price, Smith & Hollywood, 2013). This method is built upon the idea that historical crime data, when processed through predictive models, can guide law enforcement strategies, thereby enhancing efficiency and resource allocation. While it promises improved accuracy in policing, predictive policing has also raised substantial concerns over bias, ethics, and the potential to exacerbate systemic inequalities within the criminal justice system (Brayne, 2020; Ferguson, 2017).

The development of predictive policing tools is rooted in the increasing use of "big data" within the public sector, particularly law enforcement. Big data analytics allows vast quantities of crime reports, social media data, and even environmental factors to be processed to identify trends and patterns (Williams, 2019). This technology promises a shift from reactive policing, which responds to crimes after they occur, to proactive policing, which seeks to prevent crimes before they happen (Joh, 2016). Predictive policing tools such as PredPol, which maps crime hotspots, have been adopted by numerous law enforcement globally, reflecting widespread belief in the potential of data to guide policing decisions (Meijer & Wessels, 2019).

Despite these advancements, the integration of predictive policing into law enforcement has sparked debate. One of the primary concerns is the potential for bias in the procedures used to predict criminal behaviours. Data sets used in predictive policing are often based on historical crime data, which may reflect long-standing social inequalities, particularly along racial and socio-economic lines (Richardson, Schultz & Crawford, 2019). This introduces the risk that predictive policing tools might disproportionately target marginalised communities, perpetuating cycles of over-policing in areas already subject to heightened surveillance (Lum & Isaac, 2016). Several studies have shown that crime prediction algorithms, while mathematically precise, are influenced by the biases inherent in the data, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy where more policing in certain neighbourhoods results in more recorded crime (Ensign, Friedler, Neville, Scheidegger & Venkatasubramanian, 2018).

Moreover, the ethical dimensions of predictive policing cannot be overlooked. The reliance on data-driven decision-making introduces questions about transparency and accountability. Predictive models are often proprietary and lack transparency, meaning that even law enforcement officers may not fully understand how predictions are generated (Ferguson, 2017). This opacity poses a challenge to unrestricted oversight, making it difficult to evaluate whether predictive policing algorithms respect individuals' rights and freedoms. Furthermore, the use of such technologies risks undermining public trust in law enforcement, especially if some individuals mostly affected by these systems are unaware of how their data is being utilised (Brayne, 2020).

From a legal perspective, predictive policing raises several key considerations. The application of algorithmic models to human behaviours intersects with constitutional issues, particularly concerning the Fourth Amendment, which guards against unreasonable searches and seizures in the United States (Joh, 2016). Predictive policing may encourage law enforcement to engage in preemptive actions, such as increased surveillance or stop-and-frisk measures, based on



probabilistic predictions rather than actual evidence of wrongdoing (Couch, 2017). This challenges traditional understandings of probable cause, leading scholars to question the legality of actions taken based on predictive models (Citron & Pasquale, 2014). While predictive policing is often justified on the grounds of enhancing public safety, there are valid concerns that it could undermine fundamental civil liberties if not carefully regulated (Barocas, Hardt & Narayanan, 2019).

Another critical area of debate is the effectiveness of predictive policing in reducing crime. Proponents argue that predictive policing can help law enforcement agencies optimise resource allocation, identifying areas where crime is likely to occur and deploying officers more effectively (Meijer & Wessels, 2019). By focusing on crime hotspots, predictive policing could reduce response times and increase crime prevention efforts. However, the empirical evidence supporting these claims is mixed. While some studies suggest that predictive policing has led to reductions in property crime and other offences (Mohler et al., 2015), others argue that these results are overstated, and that predictive policing's success is difficult to measure due to confounding factors such as changes in law enforcement practices or socio-economic conditions (Brayne, 2020). Moreover, the predictive accuracy of these systems remains questionable. Crime, by nature, is complex and influenced by numerous factors, including economic, social, and psychological variables (Perry et al., 2013). Predictive policing models, however, are typically limited to the data they are trained on, which may not capture the full spectrum of influences that lead to criminal behaviours. Consequently, there is concern that predictive policing may oversimplify the causes of crime, leading to interventions that are ineffective or, worse, harmful (Ensign et al., 2018). For instance, while predictive policing may forecast where a crime might occur, it does not provide insight into why it happens or how systemic factors such as poverty, education, or housing might be addressed to reduce crime in the long term (Barocas et al., 2019).

Furthermore, predictive policing has been critiqued for its potential to shift the focus of law enforcement from community engagement to data-driven tactics. Traditional policing models emphasise the importance of building relationships with communities to prevent crime through mutual trust and cooperation (Williams, 2019). Predictive policing, by contrast, may promote a more technocratic approach, where law enforcement relies heavily on data at the expense of human judgement and local knowledge (Ferguson, 2017). Critics argue that this could weaken the social bonds that are essential for effective crime prevention, particularly in marginalised communities that are already distrustful of police (Richardson et al., 2019).

Despite these criticisms, predictive policing continues to gain traction among law enforcement agencies, reflecting broader societal trends toward the use of technology and data in governance (Meijer & Wessels, 2019). As cities grow and resources become more constrained, the promise of optimising police work through data analytics is appealing. However, it is imperative that predictive policing tools are implemented with caution. This includes ensuring that predictive models are transparent, accountable, and subject to rigorous evaluation to prevent unintended consequences (Lum & Isaac, 2016). Policymakers must also consider the broader social and ethical implications of relying on predictive algorithms in law enforcement, particularly in relation to fairness, justice, and human rights (Brayne, 2020). Using data-driven processes, it aims to predict potential criminal activities, enabling law enforcement agencies to take pre-emptive measures. The potential benefits of predictive policing include efficient resource allocation, reduced crime rates, and optimised responses to criminal activity. However, despite its widespread adoption, the effectiveness of predictive policing in practical,



real-world applications remains under-examined, especially from a qualitative perspective that considers the lived experiences of police officers and community members. While predictive policing represents a significant innovation in law enforcement operations, its effectiveness and ethical effects remain subjects of ongoing debate. As the use of predictive policing expands, it is essential that these technologies are critically evaluated to ensure they serve the public good without exacerbating existing inequalities. By doing so, law enforcement agencies can harness the power of data while remaining accountable to the people they serve.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

As previously stated, predictive policing is rooted in environmental criminology. Early studies by Perry et al. (2013) and Mohler et al. (2015) focused on the quantitative outcomes of predictive policing programs, reporting reductions in certain types of crime and improved resource allocation. These studies typically emphasised statistical and algorithmic accuracy. Recent qualitative studies, however, have begun to explore how predictive policing tools are implemented in the field and how officers and communities perceive their effectiveness (Lum & Isaac, 2016; Brayne, 2020). This literature review synthesises key perspectives, presenting a balanced examination of the current discourse surrounding predictive policing. Perry et al. (2013) report that cities implementing predictive analytics observed notable reductions in property crime rates and enhanced response times. Research highlights that reliance on historical data can yield misleading conclusions, as crime patterns are influenced by dynamic social factors (Harcourt, 2020). He further emphasises that many predictive models fail to account for societal changes that affect criminal behaviours, thereby undermining their reliability. Ratcliffe (2019) notes that errors in data input can lead to inaccurate predictions, diverting police resources from areas that genuinely require attention. These limitations raise concerns about the effectiveness and sustainability of predictive policing as a long-term crime prevention strategy.

Despite a growing body of research on predictive policing, there are several critical gaps in the literature: As most existing studies prioritise quantitative metrics (e.g., crime reduction statistics, algorithmic accuracy) over qualitative assessments of the social and organisational impact of predictive policing. While quantitative studies provide important data, they often neglect the nuances of how predictive policing is perceived by law enforcement officers and community members.

Research by Ferguson (2017) and Joh (2019) touches upon the need for human oversight, but a more in-depth qualitative analysis is needed to fully understand the practical limitations and human impact of predictive policing. Many studies report short-term reductions in crime or improved resource allocation (Mohler et al., 2015), but few address the long-term sustainability of these results. Qualitative research, particularly interviews with law enforcement officers, suggests that initial crime reductions may occur, or reverse as criminals adapt to police behaviours based on predictive models (Joh, 2019). Although predictive policing models provide data-driven suggestions, law enforcement officers must decide how to act on these predictions. However, the role of officer discretion in shaping the outcomes of predictive policing remains under-researched. Studies like Lum and Isaac (2016) have noted that officers often mistrust predictive tools or modify their behaviours based on personal experience rather



than algorithmic output. This gap suggests a need for more focused research on how predictive policing interfaces with traditional policing skills and knowledge.

Recognizing these gaps, the need for qualitative studies that explore the lived experiences of law enforcement officers, and the broader ethical implication of predictive policing is clear. Therefore, the objective of study focuses on understanding how officers interpret and implement predictive policing models, and whether they view these tools as effective supplements to their traditional policing methods. By doing so, scholars and policymakers can better understand how predictive policing can be deployed ethically and effectively, with an eye toward minimising unintended consequences such as bias and community alienation.

Theoretical Framework

Predictive policing is the application of data analytics to predict where and when crimes are likely to occur, and has emerged as a prominent method for modern law enforcement. However, the theoretical framework surrounding predictive policing is deeply contested, drawing support from proponents who emphasise its efficiency and critics who raise concerns about ethics, biases, and legality. The study looks at Rational Choice theory and Routine Activity Theory as the underpinning theories.

Rational Choice Theory: Predictive policing is partly based on rational choice theory, which assumes that criminals make calculated decisions to commit crimes based on the perceived costs and benefits. By identifying patterns in crime data, predictive policing systems attempt to predict where and when crime is likely to occur, under the assumption that criminals behave in rational ways that can be anticipated (Clarke & Cornish, 1985). This theory posits that if law enforcement can increase the perceived costs of committing a crime by increasing police presence in high-risk areas, potential offenders may choose to avoid criminal behaviours (Brayne, 2020). Predictive policing aligns with the idea that rational decisions can be influenced by altering the environmental factors that potential offenders consider before committing a crime.

Routine activity theory suggests that crime occurs when three elements converge in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Predictive policing uses historical crime data to predict where and when this convergence is likely to happen. By analysing patterns in criminal behaviours, law enforcement can allocate resources more effectively to places where crimes are expected to occur, thereby disrupting the opportunity structure that allows crime to happen. This theory reinforces the use of predictive models by emphasising how altering the spatial or temporal availability of law enforcement can reduce the likelihood of crime. The key theoretical framework for predictive policing stems from rational choice theory and routine activity theory. Proponents claim that predictive policing supports hotspot policing, a strategy that focuses resources on geographic areas with high crime rates. Research suggests that a small number of places account for a disproportionately high percentage of crime (Weisburd, 2015). This approach is rooted in evidence-based policing, which advocates for using empirical data to guide policing practices (Bachner, 2013). Proponents argue that predictive policing aligns with the broader framework of intelligence-led policing (ILP), which emphasises the collection and analysis of data to make informed decisions. In cities like Chicago and Los Angeles, predictive policing software such as PredPol and Palantir has been shown to reduce specific types of crime by providing real-time forecasts of high-risk areas (Shapiro, 2017). These tools rely on analysing historical crime



data, integrating factors like time, location, and type of offence to identify patterns. Advocates also emphasise that predictive policing helps cash-strapped law enforcement do more with less by enabling targeted deployments of officers to high-risk areas rather than random patrols, which can be costly and inefficient (Cambridge, 2020).

On the other side of the debate, critics raise concerns about the ethics, accuracy, and potential for racial discrimination in predictive policing practices. Opponents challenge the optimistic assumptions behind the technology and highlight the risks of reinforcing existing biases in law enforcement. Critics argue that predictive policing can lead to unconstitutional practices, such as unreasonable searches and seizures. In the U.S., the Fourth Amendment has been invoked to challenge certain predictive policing tools that may disproportionately target minority communities. Critics have pointed out that, in cities like Ferguson, Missouri, predictive policing exacerbated distrust between law enforcement and African American communities, particularly following high-profile cases of police violence (Cambridge, 2020). A significant concern among opponents is that predictive policing algorithms are trained on historical crime data, which may already reflect systemic biases. For example, studies have shown that minority communities, particularly African Americans, are more likely to be arrested and policed than others, not necessarily because they commit more crimes but due to biased enforcement practices. By relying on these data, algorithms risk reinforcing these disparities rather than rectifying them (Joh, 2017). Another challenge is the opaque nature of the algorithms used in predictive policing tools like PredPol. Critics have noted that the proprietary nature of these algorithms means that the public and even the police departments using them have limited visibility into how decisions are made. This lack of transparency raises concerns about accountability, as it is difficult to contest decisions made by an opaque system (Shapiro, 2017).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Philosophy: This research is underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology, which emphasises the importance of understanding how individuals in specific social contexts interpret and give meaning to their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given that the study aims to explore the perceptions of law enforcement officials in Lagos regarding predictive policing, an interpretivist approach is appropriate. This philosophical stance is complemented by a phenomenological orientation that seeks to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of the police officers implementing predictive policing strategies (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Research Design: A qualitative research design is adopted for this study to provide in-depth insights into the law enforcement practices related to predictive policing in Lagos State. Specifically, a **case study approach** is chosen, which allows for the detailed examination of a single setting—Lagos State Police Department—within its real-life context (Yin, 2014). The qualitative case study is suitable for understanding the nuances of predictive policing in a complex environment like Lagos, where socio-economic, political, and cultural factors significantly influence law enforcement.

Study Area: In this research project, the study area is Lagos State, Nigeria, a unique and multifaceted region that offers a rich context for examining law enforcement practices, particularly in relation to predictive policing. Lagos, as the most populous city in Africa, is characterised by rapid urbanisation, which presents both opportunities and challenges in terms



of crime management and security (United Nations, 2019). The state's economic vitality, driven by a diverse informal sector and significant investment in technology, further complicates the dynamics of law enforcement (Adelekan & Aiyedun, 2020). As a megacity, Lagos grapples with pressing issues such as high crime rates, including organised crime, drug trafficking, and money laundering, necessitating effective policing strategies (Owojori & Alabi, 2021). The diverse socio-cultural landscape, marked by various ethnic groups and socio-economic strata, influences community relations with law enforcement agencies, impacting the efficacy of policing strategies (Adebayo, 2022). Furthermore, the urban environment presents logistical challenges, such as traffic congestion and inadequate infrastructure, which can hinder law enforcement operations (Ogunyemi et al., 2020). This study will employ qualitative research methods, including interviews and focus groups, to gather in-depth insights from law enforcement personnel and community members, thereby enriching the understanding of how predictive policing is implemented and perceived in this complex urban setting. The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on crime prevention and community safety in rapidly urbanising contexts, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (Chukwuma, 2021).

Sampling and Sample Techniques: This study employs purposive sampling to select participants who are directly involved in predictive policing efforts in Lagos State. Purposive sampling ensures that only individuals with relevant knowledge and experience of the subject matter are included in the study (Patton, 2002). The sample will consist of law enforcement officers across various ranks within the Lagos State Police Command, with at least three years of experience in implementing predictive policing strategies. The sample size will be determined using the principle of data saturation, which occurs when no new themes or insights emerge from the data (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Interviews with 25 Police officers provided reasonable data for a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of predictive policing in the region.

Data Collection Methods: Data were collected using semi-structured interviews to allow for flexibility in exploring the participants' views on predictive policing. This method enables the researcher to probe deeper into key areas while maintaining consistency across interviews (Kvale, 2007). A set of open-ended questions will be developed based on existing literature on predictive policing, law enforcement, and crime prevention practices in Nigeria. In addition to interviews, document analysis of internal police reports, crime statistics, and predictive policing models used in Lagos will be conducted. This will help triangulate the data obtained from interviews and provide a broader understanding of the effectiveness of predictive policing strategies.

Data Analysis: The data from the interviews will be analysed using thematic analysis, a method suitable for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis will involve familiarisation with the data, coding, theme development, and refining themes to ensure they capture the essence of the participants' responses. NVivo software will be used to facilitate the coding and organisation of the data, allowing for a systematic approach to identifying themes related to the challenges, benefits, and effectiveness of predictive policing.

Ethical Considerations: The study will adhere to all relevant ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before the interviews, and they will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. The confidentiality of participants



will be maintained by anonymizing their responses and ensuring that no identifiable information is linked to the data (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). Ethical clearance will be sought from any relevant local authorities involved in law enforcement in Lagos. The researcher ensures that the study complies with the Data Protection Regulation to safeguard the personal information of participants.

RESULTS

Perception of Predictive Policing's Effectiveness: A key theme that emerged from the interviews was the mixed perception of predictive policing's effectiveness among law enforcement officers in Lagos. Majority of the participants noted that while predictive policing tools had led to a modest reduction in some forms of crime, such as street robberies and burglaries, the overall impact on complex crimes, including organised crime, was limited explained:

"Predictive policing has helped us anticipate where smaller crimes might happen. For example, in some neighbourhoods, we can deploy more officers if we predict a rise in thefts. But for bigger, more organised crimes, it's not as effective."

This sentiment is supported by Ferguson (2017) who found that predictive policing tends to be more successful in addressing low-level crimes, such as property-related offences, than in tackling more sophisticated criminal operations. In the context of Lagos, the effectiveness of predictive policing seems to be constrained by the complexity and scale of certain crimes, such as cybercrime and drug trafficking, which require more nuanced investigative approaches beyond what predictive algorithms can provide (Olatunji & Akinlabi, 2017).

Some of the patrol officers, emphasised the improvement in response times, stating that *"Predictive tools allow us to respond faster to areas where there is likely to be trouble. It's not perfect, but we've seen a reduction in response time in some high-crime areas."*

This aligns with a research by Perry which suggests that predictive policing can help allocate resources more efficiently, thus reducing response times and increasing police visibility in areas identified as high-risk (Perry et al., 2013). In Lagos, where resources are often stretched thin, this is a notable benefit of the technology, although its application remains limited to specific types of crime.

Challenges in Implementing Predictive Policing: Another theme that surfaced during interviews was the significant operational challenges faced by officers when implementing predictive policing in Lagos. Majority of the officer involved in planning and strategy, highlighted data quality as a major issue: *"The predictive tools depend heavily on the data we input. But the data is often incomplete or outdated, which affects the accuracy of predictions."*

This observation is consistent with literature that underscores the importance of data integrity for the success of predictive policing models (Ferguson, 2017). In Lagos, where data collection infrastructures are still developing, unreliable crime data can severely hamper the functionality of predictive models. For instance, many crimes go unreported, or reports are not



systematically documented, leading to gaps in the data required. Furthermore, some participants of mid-level officer, discussed the lack of training as a significant barrier:

"We need more training. The officers using the predictive tools don't fully understand how they work, and this reduces the effectiveness of the technology."

Secondary sources reinforce this point, indicating that the successful implementation of predictive policing requires not only sophisticated technology but also well-trained personnel who can interpret and act on the predictions (Perry et al., 2013). In Nigeria, and specifically in Lagos State, the absence of comprehensive training programs for police officers in data analytics and predictive technologies creates a significant hurdle for maximising the benefits of such systems (Olatunji & Akinlabi, 2017).

Ethical and Social Concerns: Ethical concerns regarding predictive policing were also raised by participants. Majority of police officer, voiced concerns about the potential for bias in the system:

"The system sometimes seems to target the same areas repeatedly, which can create tensions between the police and the communities. It feels like we are always monitoring the same people, and they don't trust us."

This reflects broader concerns discussed in academic literature, particularly the risk of reinforcing biases within predictive policing models. Ferguson (2017) argues that predictive algorithms can perpetuate existing biases if they rely on historical data that reflect over-policing of marginalised communities. In Lagos, where certain districts are disproportionately affected by poverty and crime, the use of predictive policing could exacerbate existing tensions between law enforcement and these communities (Agboola & Oyewole, 2019).

Some key participants, including old police officers acknowledged this issue, expressing concerns about the over-reliance on technology:

"We sometimes put too much trust in technology and ignore the human element. Policing should be about relationships with the community, not just predictions."

This perspective aligns with findings from Perry et al. (2013), who argue that predictive policing should be used as a complementary tool, rather than a substitute for traditional, community-oriented policing. In Lagos, where strong community relationships are essential for effective law enforcement, an over-reliance on predictive technology without addressing the underlying social and economic factors contributing to crime could undermine trust between the police and the public (Olatunji & Akinlabi, 2017).

Impact on Crime Prevention and Reduction: The overall impact of predictive policing on crime reduction in Lagos remains moderate according to participants. While some officers reported short-term reductions in crime, they were sceptical about the long-term effectiveness of the strategy without significant improvements in the infrastructure supporting it. Few of high-ranking officer, stated: *"Predictive policing has its benefits, but without better technology and better data, it's only a partial solution. We need more investment in crime prevention at the grassroots level."*

This comment resonates with academic critiques of predictive policing, which argue that without addressing root causes of crime—such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality—the long-term success of data-driven policing strategies will be limited (Ferguson,



2017; Agboola & Oyewole, 2019). In the Lagos context, while predictive policing may improve operational efficiency in the short term, it is unlikely to result in sustained crime reduction unless broader socio-economic challenges are addressed.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to evaluate the effectiveness of predictive policing in Lagos State, Nigeria, through a qualitative examination of law enforcement practices. The findings reveal that while predictive policing offers some promising benefits, such as improved resource allocation and faster response times to low-level crimes, its overall effectiveness is limited by several operational, ethical, and infrastructural challenges.

A significant takeaway from the research is the disparity between the theoretical potential of predictive policing and its practical implementation in the Lagos context. Predictive policing in Lagos has had mixed success, largely due to issues such as data quality, lack of officer training, and technological constraints. Participants consistently noted that the data fed into predictive systems were often incomplete or outdated, resulting in inaccurate or less reliable crime forecasts. The absence of structured, reliable crime data in Lagos, a challenge similarly identified in the broader African context by significantly hampers the predictive power of these systems. Moreover, the limited training provided to officers has led to a situation where the available technology is underutilised or misunderstood, reducing the overall impact of predictive policing.

At a theoretical level, predictive policing represents a significant shift in the philosophy of law enforcement. Traditional policing models are often rooted in the concept of deterrence, where the presence of law enforcement officers' acts as a preventive measure against crime. In contrast, predictive policing is more closely aligned with a risk-based model of governance, which focuses on managing and mitigating risks through data-driven interventions (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997). This approach is informed by the broader rise of "Big Data" in public policy, where data analytics are increasingly used to identify and manage risks in areas such as healthcare, finance, and national security (Mayer-Schonberger & Cukier, 2013).

The integration of predictive policing into law enforcement practices also has important implications for civil liberties, particularly with respect to privacy and surveillance. Predictive policing systems often rely on large-scale data collection, which can include sensitive personal information such as social media activity, cell phone records, and even biometric data (Ferguson, 2018). This raises concerns about the potential for invasive surveillance and the erosion of privacy rights, particularly in communities that are already subject to disproportionate surveillance. Additionally, the use of predictive algorithms to make policing decisions can blur the line between public safety and state surveillance, raising questions about the appropriate balance between security and individual freedoms (Zarsky, 2016).

Moreover, the effectiveness of predictive policing remains a topic of ongoing debate. While some studies have suggested that predictive policing can lead to modest reductions in crime, particularly in property crimes like burglary and theft (Mohler et al., 2015), other research has found little evidence to support its efficacy in reducing violent crime



In terms of ethical considerations, this study highlights the potential for bias within predictive policing models, a concern that has been raised in both global and Nigerian contexts. As noted by participants, certain areas in Lagos are disproportionately targeted by predictive algorithms, which exacerbates pre-existing social tensions between law enforcement and marginalised communities. This raises significant questions about the long-term viability of predictive policing in a diverse urban environment like Lagos, where social, economic, and political factors heavily influence crime patterns. The risk of reinforcing biases inherent in historical crime data must be carefully managed to prevent the over-policing of vulnerable communities, as discussed in Ferguson's (2017) work on predictive policing.

The study also demonstrates that while predictive policing can enhance operational efficiency in the short term, its long-term effectiveness in crime reduction remains uncertain. Participants pointed out that the technology's success is highly contingent upon improvements in the underlying infrastructure—most notably the quality of data and the availability of advanced analytical tools. Without significant investment in data management systems, officer training, and community engagement, predictive policing is unlikely to achieve sustained success in addressing the root causes of crime in Lagos. This sentiment is echoed in the literature, which suggests that addressing broader socio-economic issues, such as poverty and unemployment, is essential to long-term crime prevention (Citron & Pasquale 2014).

Finally, predictive policing in Lagos holds potential but faces substantial challenges that limit its effectiveness. To maximise the benefits of this technology, there must be a holistic approach that includes not only technological enhancements but also investments in officer training, community trust-building, and data infrastructure. By addressing these issues, predictive policing could become a more powerful tool for reducing crime in Lagos, contributing to a safer and more secure urban environment. However, without these structural changes, its impact will remain largely superficial, addressing the symptoms of crime without confronting its deeper causes.

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