

Original Research Article

Methods of Children's Punishment in the Nso Socio-Cultural Community: North-West Region, Cameroon

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Abstract: *Objective:* The main objective of this article is to *Investigate the methods used to punish children who engage in unacceptable behaviors and practices in the Nso community.* *Method:* The methodology for this research was informed by the interpretative or constructivist paradigm. The qualitative methodology for this study was ethnography given that the aim was to describe the cultural factors that underpin the beliefs and practices related to the methods of punishing children in the Banso community. Data collection methods were ethnographic techniques that included observation, in-depth interviews, focus groups discussions, informal conversation, life histories and visual images. Direct and participant observations were used in the collection of data on punishment methods for children. Direct observations were also used to focus on child raising practices and education initiatives for children. Attention was focused on punishment practice traditional methods, the behaviour of children and parents in various contexts. *Results:* This article presents the sociocultural nomination of crimes in Nso community and the different customary punishments methods. Finally, the consequences of society's perceptions and impressions on traditional methods of punishment play a major role. From the preceding analysis, it is noticed that the Nso ethnic community is doing everything at its level to preserve their traditional methods of punishing children likewise western prescriptions that do well to kick against corporal punishment. This fact results in an almost endless variety of acts and characteristics qualifying as deviant depending on conditions and circumstances. Debates over prostitution, gambling, nudism, cheating and medical quackery, arise from conflicts between norms about such acts. Just as some people consider some acts as deviant, others also become so classified. Social types perceived by some as deviants include reckless drivers, pacifists, racists, "hippie" radicals, the very rich, and the very poor, old people, drinkers, nondrinkers, and motorcycle gang members. *Conclusion:* In our present century, punishment methods amongst human beings and children at large have become a call for concern. The Africans and Cameroonians in particular have their own ways of punishing children which is obviously not as seen by the westerners. With this, there is an increase of children in crime waves especially due to lack of care and abandoned responsibilities. That is why ethnic communities like Nso develop sanctions and measures to punish their children who engage in unacceptable behaviours at home and in school. These had as mandate to socially include and consider all defaulters as having equal status with other members of the community. It should be noted that all traditional African societies and Cameroon in particular had introduced their own methods of punishing criminals like; beating, ostracizing, banishment and executions.

Keywords: Punishment, Traditional and western methods, children, ethnic community, Nso.

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INTRODUCTION

This article focuses "Different methods of children's punishment in the Nso socio-cultural ethnic community. North-West Region Cameroon". In theory, punishment should suppress inappropriate behaviours totally, but this is rarely the result. Parents must remember that punishment, particularly corporal

punishment, is distinct from discipline. Disciplining children is almost always preferable to simply punishing children as children are still learning. No one enjoys having to tell children that they are acting inappropriately but on occasion it does need to be done. Disciplining children, however, is an integral part of teaching children about our cultural norms. Discipline is distinct from punishment in that all discipline strives to

show children what is considered appropriate. Through discipline, children learn personal responsibility, societal norms and how to function healthfully and happily in their society [1]. Punishment is practiced in many societies around the world in varied forms and context. As a tool used in child development and socialization process, many adults use it to discipline children and adults in different settings such as schools, homes and many other social institutions. This article focuses on the punishment of children, and will like to limit discussion around this vulnerable population of the society, particularly in Nso community of the North–West Region, Cameroon.

Despite the considerable epistemological and empirical contribution made by various disciplines within the social sciences to our understanding of punishment and its methods, these studies have largely been limited to Western theoretical perspectives which do not give consideration to African methods of punishment which goes far beyond prison detention. Most of the studies that focus on the punishment of children do not incorporate traditional methods. Consequently, they do not offer complete information on African methods of punishment. Given the remarkable absence of an anthropological perspective in the study of punishment methods for children in the African context, the various indigenous methods of punishment remain and their relationship with western approaches remain unclear. Consequently, there are high prospects for wrong or misinterpretation of indigenous punishment methods due to the lack of an in-depth understanding of their cultural foundations. Additionally, due to this knowledge gap, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of various punishment methods for guidance on which to consider in different contexts and their consequences. The consequences of limitation in knowledge and methods of punishment for children is an indication of the need for an anthropological perspective.

When children deviate from culturally acceptable behaviours, they have to be punished. From a cultural interpretive point of view, punishment behaviours and practices are grounded on cultural beliefs underlying the construction of social norms and values and the corresponding sanctions that accompany the deviations from those norms. With the use of theoretical triangulation, we hope to offer convincing explanations for the socio cultural factors that govern the use of the various punishment methods. In other words, we intend to offer explanations to why parents punish their children the way they do and what impact this will have on the behaviour of children in the Nso community.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative methodology for this study is ethnography given that the aim is to describe the cultural factors that underline in the beliefs and practices related to the methods of punishing children in the Nso community. This has to do with the manner in which both primary and secondary data was collected; The participants for this study came from diverse background and socio-cultural status; parents of both sexes and varied ages, children between the ages of seven and twenty, religious and traditional authorities, teachers, social workers, human right activists, policy makers, prison attendants and security agents (police gendarmes etc.). About 15 informants were selected within the study area to give relevant information needed for this work. Only inhabitants in Nso community were involved in the study.

The following techniques were adopted: direct observation, in-depth interview, focus group discussion, photography and documentary research in the aim to get in-depth information on traditional and western punishment methods used on children in the Nso community. According to the philosophical assumptions of the interpretative paradigm, reality is not readily available but is constructed by humans in their social and cultural environment [2]. That is why the methodology for this research is informed by interpretative or constructive paradigm. Qualitative data collection techniques were used to get information's from the field, they are: direct observation, life history, in-depth interview, formal interview, FGD (Focus Group Discussion). Direct observations were used to focus on child raising practices and education initiatives for children. During the time spent in the field, the author lived with the members of the community for a given period of time and observed the daily routine and life styles of the people in their natural environment. Attention was focused on punishment practice on traditional methods, the behaviour of children and parents in various contexts.

This technique was also used in order to complement with other research methods which were regarded as being specific as well as for specific purposes. This technique permitted to observed better most behavioral aspects be it cultural or individualistic; the act of beating a child in a bit to correct and leaving the other without beating for example; families are organized, how they punish their children when they committed crimes, how parents looked at the western system of punishing children, why some crimes led to banishment and others to reparation, just to name these few. This because of the fact that most people usually don't tell all what is in their minds not because they do not want to but because they do not perceive them. Sometimes, informants expressed detailed information

¹Beth Morrisey MLIS - Updated: 1 March 2019.

²Creswell, 2007

on their faces and when the researcher observes, he or she will grasp useful and important information even without the notice of the informant. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants about the different traditional methods of child punishment. The number of in-depth interviews conducted depended on the satisfactory responses obtained from participants. Most of the interviews took place at the palace, family homes, schools, gatherings and public security offices, prisons, amongst others in the mornings and in the evenings. They were interviewed for a period of twenty-five (25) minutes.

Being a fact that this article dealt on punishment methods used on children, some adults of all categories were not left out. This topic enabled to interview children, adults in general like princes and princesses, notables, teachers, parents, prison workers and a few social welfare workers too. It should be recalled that the general age group ranged from 7 to 80 who belonged to different quarters and different religious denominations.

A total of two Focus group discussions (FGD) were organized with policy makers and traditional rulers that have resided in Nso for about 10 years and priority was given to indigenes. They were twelve (12) in numbers. This in order to confront and verify the information's which were gotten from individual interviews or in-depth interviews.

The Formal Interview permitted us to get the opinions of all the informants who could not have spoken about traditional norms of children's punishment. Informal conversations took place anywhere in public places like bars, meeting houses, family homes, markets and churches. Life history was used in this article to collect information on the past experiences of parents and children regarding the behaviour of children and punishment methods used in the past and their consequences. The images and photographs were collected to complement interviews and data on the different methods of punishment on children. The data were registered and transcription followed immediately which was of great help because it enabled obtain different points of views on the study.

RESULTS

This article presents the sociocultural nomination of crimes in Nso community and the different customary punishments methods. We can start by remarking that the fact that there were a diversity of informants' occupations lead us a diversity of opinions and ways of seeing the types of punishments and how they are applied in the community. We also noted that children cannot be punished the same as the adults, so the age and the sex of the informant also counted. We start by treating traditional methods of punishments and we divided them under four solutions according to the nature of the crimes committed. Some crimes were

tantamount to retribution, others banishment, public disgrace and isolation.

Sociocultural Nominations of Crimes in Nso

The concept of crime and punishment has been explored from different perspectives and one of such approach is economics. Becker [³] investigated the cost of crime with a model that looks at the cost of offenses, arrests and convictions, public expenditures on police and courts, the cost of imprisonment and private expenditures on protection and apprehension. Using mathematical methods of calculations, the author concludes that crime and punishment have an economic cost with respect to the various stages of the process. This work is relevant for this article as it gives the economic dimension of crime and punishment. One can define crime as an act committed in violation of law where the consequences of conviction by a court is punishment especially where the punishment is a serious one such as imprisonment. In Nso punishment depends on the crime committed as: disobedience, stealing, murder, host and taboo violation, bad company, sexual affairs with the Fon's wife, abortion, killing, rape, suicide, deformation of character, wickedness, incest and non-respect of "country Sundays", days reserved for no farm work.

Studying the table below, the many crimes in Nso are specific and stratified. Those traditional appellations as represented have great cultural impacts for the Nso community. In fact, any community has its own of differences from others, and some are generally based on the cultural spoken language and traditions. It is also noticed from the denominations that there are generally very short in indigenous written language, but their significations have great power in terms of punishment.

The table below gives information about the different nominations which the members of the Nso community give to different sorts of crimes with which they are confronted.

³Becker, 1974

Table 1: Traditional denominations of some punishment methods in Nso language

Indegenous Terms of some Punishment Methods	Explanation
<i>A tiir wien fo vin tati</i> “Prohibit you from junction”	This means to prohibit somebody from appearing in public after committing incest, abortion and sometimes rape.
<i>A yoh diy kpù rin</i> “no mourning of this dead”	There means one should not mourn a person that committed suicide.
<i>Nwinong fer wo fo nsai nso</i> “Nwerong drives you from nsoland“	The nwinong secret society has exiled a culprit for committing murder or having a sexual affair with the Fons wife.
<i>Yen sho 'o mow</i>	A special public disgrace that a culprit is made to undergo after committing crime especially stealing
<i>Akerie mo yin tangri</i> “must carry on a sacrifice”	The term means to perform traditional rites for crimes committed
<i>Lahh ki faki</i> “pay fine”	An obligation to pay fines which depend on the nature of the crime
<i>Fasi sum</i> “take a farm”	Confiscate a farm and put on fire for a crime committed
<i>Ntun njoè Fo Konè</i> “dig a whole at corner for fighting”	It means to pay fines for fighting with people who take fighting as a delight and causing disorder during public gatherings. They are punished to pay fines for disturbing public peace.
<i>Yo mvem wir</i> “no respect for elders/ somebody”	The term refers to the clearing and cleaning of the compound. This as a sign of punishment for committing crimes like disobedience, disrespect, and other.
<i>Wiry tyre yi wun un</i> “put tyres on his body”	Mob justice where people put tyres (car tyres) on the body of a thief and burn
<i>frerr è wo fon sai nso</i> “drive you from Nsoland“	Ex-communicate a criminal
<i>Djenv shong yi Nyuri</i> “beat – then kill a thief”	Kill a thief by beating
<i>Djev wo wona kiken ki</i> “Beat you with the peace plant”	This refers to beating someone with a peace plant when he commits a sin or crime

Even though some of the crimes and their punishment methods no more exist nowadays, we managed to gather the best from Nso informants. People don't make effort in the language to express crimes in the communities, like to say something about banishing a culprit maybe after committing murder they simply say, *frerr è wo fon sai nso*.

• **Traditional Methods or Situations and their Punishments**

Here, it is a matter of bringing to light according to information raised on the ground, the different sanctions envisaged by tradition, according to offence. The methods have their roots in the world view of Europeans and are based on a retributive philosophy that is hierarchical, adversarial, punitive, and guided by codified laws and written rules, procedures, and guidelines. The vertical power structure is upward, with decision making limited to a few. The retributive philosophy holds that because the victim has suffered, the criminal should suffer as well. It is proclaimed on the notion that criminals are wicked people who are responsible for their actions and deserve to be punished. Punishment is used to appease the victim, to satisfy society's desire for revenge, and to reconcile the offender to the community by paying a debt to society. It does not offer a reduction in future crime or reparation to victims.

The law is applied through an adversarial system that places two differing parties in the courtroom to determine a defendant's guilt or innocence, or to declare the winner or loser in a civil case. It focuses on one aspect of a problem, the act involved, which is discussed through adversarial fact finding. The court provides the forum for testing the evidence presented from the differing perspectives and objectives of the parties. Interaction between parties is minimized and remains hostile throughout. In criminal cases, punitive sanctions limit accountability of the offender to the state, instead of those that he or she has harmed or to the community.

- **Criminal Behaviour**

Criminologists often break down criminal activity into three categories: common law crimes (conventional or street crimes), white-collar crimes, and adolescent violations (delinquency). Common-law crimes include offenses that virtually everyone would regard as criminal, such as murder, rape, robbery, burglary, and assault. Lawyers often refer to these violations as Worst, meaning they are bad in themselves. Societies judged these acts as illicit behavior before any had developed written, state-enacted laws; in those times, formal standards for behavior came only from common law, a term that

refers to legal traditions in the form of judges' decisions.

To the Nso indigene, a crime is defined as "*any act you carry that is against societal norms, that is the laws and rules that govern the community, as long as you do not respect these rules, it means you are committing a crime and you have to account for*" [4]. At some time or another, common law has set standards for a variety of behavior, including recreational activities on the Sabbath, the practice of witchcraft, cigarette smoking, selling of alcoholic beverages, and women's wearing of one-piece bathing suits, among many others. Legal prohibitions of certain other types of behavior come from no such principles in common law. Lawyers refer to these crimes as mala prohibited or bad, simply because the law prohibits them. Most of these acts became offenses as reactions to technological and social changes in society. Many are associated with the automobile, building codes, activities to manufacture and sell impure food and drug products, and sales of fraudulent securities. Sociological analysis must separate conventional crimes from white-collar crimes, perhaps more accurately termed occupational crimes. These crimes were noticed in Kumbo-Nso even though their punishment methods were administered differently. A teacher interviewed in Kumbo town clearly stated these punishments amongst others. He said: "**Late coming to school, disobediencies, stealing, murder, abortion, incest, having an affaire with the fon's wife...**". It should be rolled that some of these crimes warranted children from the entire village.

In Nso community, there are divine criminal laws as well as human criminal ones too. A participant argues that "only the violation of the divine law, which violation is held as "nso" could be regarded as a criminal offence, to use western legal term". Then, there is no profit saying that in criminal law in Nso, the words "offence" and "crime" are synonymous. Using the term "criminal offence" would amount to one being unnecessarily tautologies. Although in Nso parlance, crimes are not, as in common law, classified into felonies, or simple offences. Yet some crimes are more serious than others, and which seriousness depends on the legal framework that created the crime. Perhaps, it is because of the divine origin and thus more heinous nature of some misacts that the participant regards them as "criminal offences" in exclusion of others.

But according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 36, a crime is "*an activity that involves breaking of law*", "*an illegal act or activity that can be punished by law*", or "*an act that is immoral or a big mistake*". Certainly, all these shades of meaning coincidentally underscore the Nso understanding of crime. In Nso beliefs, a crime is really an act that breaks

the law (divine or human) and is punishable by law. And because there is no clear distinction between crime and morals, a criminal act is invariably an immoral act. Therefore, it would be a reduction to restrict the list of "criminal offences" to violations against the divine laws (abominations, taboos amongst others). But on another hand, we seem to agree with Green that there are two main classes of offences, those that are 'nso' and those that are not. Green refers to the former as taboos and to the latter as natural offences. Therefore, Okafor needs to put his position straight on the issue of what constitutes crime in Nso justice system. Although under the common law tradition, it is the law that stipulates which act is a crime as distinguished from civil wrongs, and does not bother to give an essential definition of crime, yet in Nso, enclaved moral violations of divine and human laws are regarded as crimes.

For instance, the act of a cock crowing at an awkward time in the night or a hen crowing like a cock, the act of a woman giving birth to twins, the act of a baby delivered "feet-first" rather than "head-first", the act of an infant counting the upper teeth first, etc. These are acts clearly regarded as immoral or criminal without any consideration of the impossibility of criminal liability on the part of the "culprits". Many of the code items however, are clearly human acts such as murder, incest, suicide, poisoning someone with the intention to take his or her life, theft of domestic fowls especially hen or her hatching pot where she can easily be taken along with her eggs.

• **Retribution**

Retribution which can be seen as the purpose for punishment is actively to injure criminal offenders, ideally in proportion with their injuries to society and to expiate them from guilt. Retribution can also be seen as divine. The traditional Nso society believe that retribution is supernatural punishment of a person, a group of people or any one by a deity in response to some action be it negative or positive. Generally, they believe that the severity of the punishment is proportionate to the crime. Traditional punishment in Nso community is carried out in the households and community. Retribution certainly includes elements of deterrence, incapacitation and rehabilitation but it also ensures that the guilty will be punished, the innocent protected and societal balance restored after being disrupted by crime. So therefore, retribution can be seen as the only appropriate moral justification for punishment. It should be noted that these methods are not only limited to children but to the community members as a whole. This because most punishment methods are intersectional and the legal Nso responsibility age is unsettled.

- **Rudeness and its Sanctions**

Norms are expected behavior in specific situations. Generally, people are taught as small children to follow certain norms of respect. Often called

⁴Interview realised with informant 11 in Kumbo on 19/03/2016.

manners or etiquette, such expectations are guidelines to show respect for other people in social situations. Children are often taught to respect parents and other elders, teenagers ought to show respect for adults and teachers, and adults ought to show respect for children and each other. And, this is what happens most of the time for most people. Sometimes, however, this doesn't happen. Consider the following events, all in the month of September 2009: U.S. Representative Joe Wilson of South Carolina shouted out "You lie!" during President Obama's address to a joint session of Congress after the president said that the health bill being debated would not cover the insurance needs of illegal immigrants. Tennis professional Serena Williams loses a match at the U.S. Open and berates a line judge using profanity suggesting that the tennis player might shove a tennis ball down the judge's throat.

Our case in point is in Nso, our study area. Children are believed to respect their parents and elders as a whole in the society. One informant, a retired teacher on interview told us that: "... I have never seen a child that as ever -grown from childhood to maturity without be punished to be disciplined, which is not bad but good for the child's up bringing as a responsible and obedient, if a child does not respect his parents or elders, he has to be disciplined, so as to implant him with good moral values..." [5]. When a child becomes rude and disobedience, he is supposed to be punished, sanctioned and corrected so that he will know that an elderly person or parent deserves respect.

- **Bullying**

Bullying is not a new form of deviance but it has been relatively neglected unfairly until recently by researchers and practitioners alike. A quick search of Amazon.com yields virtually thousands of items when searching for bullying, including some films and television specials, advice from experts for parents and for victims in the workplace, and advice for children who are victimized by bullies. Bullying can occur within virtually any context, such as school, church, home, or workplace. While it is usually defined by example, Olweus's D. (1999) definition describes bullying as intentional, repeated hurtful acts, words, or other behavior, such as name-calling, threatening, and/or shunning committed by one or more children against another and an imbalance in real or perceived power between the bully and victim. In some settings, such behavior might be considered minor hazing, but the consequences can be very much the same. In one high school, senior girls would make a "slut list" of incoming freshmen for the first day of school. "*Seniors blow whistles in some girls' faces and jostle or push them into lockers, leaving them afraid to come to school the next day*" [6]. While this definition seems better

suited to school bullying, it does apply to other forms as well, including workplace bullying [7]. A related phenomenon is mobbing. Mobbing is ganging up on an individual by several offenders to force someone out of the workplace through rumors and humiliation [8].

Some informants especially teachers touched little on bullying. To some, bullying falls under disobedience, bullying the small ones in school and get hold of their school belongings like pens, books amongst others and even at times their food boxes with food inside. Such behaviours however has been since yesteryears. Teachers and parents just need to control and pay more attention. According to informants, children who bully others have to be punished severely because a child that has been bullied at school might leave school for good. Informant 34 of Kumbo said: "*Bullying turns to be one of the major crimes in school and at home that warrants severe punishment. I say so because a-child that is being bullied in school might lose interest in education and will stay away from school activities and that will be the end. Some children even envisage committing suicide just to run away from their persecutors...*" [9].

Bullying has been a problem for some time, but with more attention on the problem we are being more aware of the negative outcomes of bullying. These consequences, experienced by the person being bullied, include psychological and even physical negative effects. Thus, the physical consequences of bullying include severe anxiety, sleep deprivation, loss of concentration, and stress headaches. Clearly, these are serious health risks from bullying. The consequences of bullying for the victim can be so serious that victims contemplate and commit suicide. Walker-Hoover C., an 11-year-old boy, hanged himself in a stairway in his home after continual bullying at school [10]. As bad as workplace bullying is, perhaps bullying in schools is more pervasive. In either setting, of course, the negative consequences are roughly the same. In an early research effort, it was concluded that school bullies have a strong need to dominate others to get their own way, are easily angered, and show little empathy with those they bully [11].

We were informed that a 10 year old child who was being bullied in school was always sad ill the house and he never attended classes because his faulters were in the same class with them. It is only when the parents discovered their child with wounds on the body that they discovered their child was psychologically suffering. The school had to convoke the parents of the

⁵Interview realised with informant 11 in Kumbo on 19/03/2016.

⁶Kelley, 2009: A12

⁷Kohut, 2008

⁸Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliott, 1999

⁹Interview realised with informant 34 at Kumbo on 17/03/2016

¹⁰Johnson, 2009

¹¹Olweus, 1993

bullying elder for the problem to be solved. Still informant 70 of Kumbo affirmed that: "... if the parents of the bullied small boy did not take the case to the school authorities, the child would have continued having psychological traumas and one does not know the end..." [12].

- **Case of Suicide**

If a child commits suicide, the families members are asked to pay an amount of money, goats, fowls and palm wine are paid at the palace. It is the "juju" of the secret society that has to bury the person who died through hanging and even all the other forms of suicide. If he is to be buried, then the jujus still have to do the burial same as any other person too who dies through suicide. On another hand, according to one informant: "*the burial is different from the normal deaths, it is somehow, not recognised, no coffin, no mourning cry die. At times the corpse is buried in the bush and people are not allowed to go and see the grave*" [13]. So, when somebody has committed suicide, the community buries the person without any recognisance, nobody and sometimes the culprit is buried directly at the place he or she died.

- **Non Part Taking in Developmental Projects and Works on the Fon's Farm**

A child or youth, who does not respect or take his responsibilities as concerns the traditional community work, pays fines for not taking part in developmental projects. If he dies without paying, his family has to pay the fines before he is buried. It should also be noted that, there is an amount to be paid for the culprit to be in good terms with the community. It has always been a tradition that each quarter has its own projects before the general one, and if a person who fails is reported to the quarter head, sanctions and heavy fines are levied on him.

It is a tradition in the Nso land of keeping aside a day to work on the Fon's farm. When there is failure to work on the Fon's farm, the culprit is punished by paying fines which are called "*kuifon*" and then contributing 5 litters of palm wine. At times certain items are taken from your compound like your hoes, cutlasses, just to name these few so that you present yourself at the Fan's palace before your charges are presented to you.

- **Offence of a Wrong Oath Swearing**

It is equally regarded as an offence to die a "*bad death*", that is, death resulting from an infectious disease like leprosy, small pox or dying within one year after having sworn to an oath. Being what it may sound, there is no profit saying the list of offences in Nso

traditional ethical code is not exhaustive. Certainly, what institutes offences in traditional Nso society cannot be restricted to such a short list?

Under this dispensation, the suspect would be required to swear before a powerful chief that he is innocent of the accusation. Hence, it is the accused who initiates the move to prove his innocence. This is the reverse of the common law culture where the onus is on the prosecution to weave beyond the guilt of the accused. It is normally believed that if by the end of the year or two after the oath swearing and no harm befalls the accused, then he would have been acquitted by the supernatural tribunal. Otherwise the ancestors would either kill him or inflict some mystical punishment perhaps in form of blindness, small pox, a mass death of lie relations of the accused. At times it goes as far as punishment deferred much later in the accused life, or even be transferred to his children. An alternative to oath swearing would be to make the suspect drink the water used to bath the diseased in order to prove his innocence and the effect would be the same as in swearing. The above procedure is the same for other offences against the gods (abominations) such as incest, which is a taboo is defined as having intercourse with a person one cannot marry by reason of their blood relationship. Often, offenders are banished as they are thought to have polluted the land. Yet another phenomenon associated with violations of the divine laws is "*isa asisa*" (confessions on a dying bed). Practically, the Nso believe that notorious criminals responsible for the untimely death of other villagers either by poisoning, sorcery, magic or witchcraft must confess their awful crimes at dying beds. The criminal usually dies after the confession directed as it were, to nobody in particular.

Generally, the Nso believe that divine vengeance is inevitable and great misfortunes are thought to be God-sent punishments. Therefore, if a lightning strikes a man or his house, sudden death, or cases of one dying with a swollen stomach, just to name these few; such situations are regarded as punishment for some hidden crimes committed by the victim. The procedure would be different if the offence is one that is less grievous.

• **Violating Traditional Laws**

Furthermore, in the case of violation of laws against interpersonal relation, the procedure involves much of human agents. The injured party may first appeal to the head of the family of the offender or a body of village arbitrators. If this fails to reach an amicable settlement of the issue, the injured party may summon the person, an elderly person than the former with close friends of the litigants in attendance. In the events of further failure, other institutions which may be appealed to include the age grade association, the fraternity, various title-taking societies, town union, amongst others. When all these efforts fail, then as a

¹²Interview realised with informant 34 at Kumbo on 17/03/2016.

¹³Interview realised with informant 18 at Kumbo on 17/03/2016.

final resort, submission is made to the supernatural tribunal in form of oath swearing. Punishments that can be meted in the cases of violation of human positive laws touching the wellbeing of the society including ostracizing, banishment, fines, forfeiture of valuable property, just to name these few.

In a nutshell, as concerns the Nso culture, punishment which ranges from verbal warning, fines, forfeitures, ostracism, banishment or even death, depending on the seriousness of the offence is multifarious in purpose. Sometimes, it may be for the purpose of giving a fair retribution to the offender or for the reason of reforming him into becoming a better member of the society. Other reasons may include deterrence on the part of the offender or other future offenders, reparation as a result of committing the offence and to re-establish the harmony destabilized by the offence, or for the aim of incapacitating or removing the offender from the social group. Again, the Nso judicial apparatuses involve the roles of human and divine personages. Methods of trial by ordeal, and oath swearing are often employed in the findings of guilt.

• **Banishment**

Banishment can be defined as the act of expelling or relegating someone to a country or place by authoritative decree, condemn to exile. In simple terms, the punishment of being sent away from a place especially that place where one holds a lot of esteem. In the Nso land, impacts of some punishments methods that were used could be seen through excommunicating or banishing you entirely.

- **Murder**

Murder is regarded as a very grievous offence not only against the society but also a violation of divine law. Life is believed to have come from God. Therefore, any shedding of another person's blood under any circumstance is an abomination. In Nso, murder is considered as being one of the most dangerous criminal acts that usually warrant no excuses but severe sanctions because human life is involved. It is believed not only in Nso, Cameroon, Africa and the World at large that no one has the right to take away another's life. That is why the punishment for murder is always rude. Our information informed us that in the case of murder: "... severe beatings are inflicted on the culprit who can also lead to his death. If he does not die immediately, he is deported from the Nso land by the 'Nwerong secret society' that however was in the past because murder cases are becoming rare nowadays, if it does occur, the case is handled by the forces of law and order..." [14].

Nearly all criminal homicide represents some form of aggravated assault in which the victim dies.

Most criminal homicides and assaults grow out of personal disputes and altercations, some resulting from immediate conflicts and some from long-standing ones. A few of these offenses occur during the commission of other crimes, such as robbery or drug trafficking.

Accordingly, to the people the killer has to be exiled. He is summoned to the palace and in order to start judging him or her, he has to come along with a fowl and palm wine. Formerly the culprit was killed instantly but for some time now, the 'nwerong' that is the village secret society escorts the criminal out of the land, that is, at the borders. In other circumstances, the culprit could also be obliged to pay fines for committing the crime. (*Sung kishev*); performed traditional rites (*Akerie mo yin tangri*); (banned) from public meetings, no association with any person and at times jungled justice was carried upon him, leading to death even though, nowadays with the westerners, the killer should face the court. It is said by the Nso tradition that the killer should be exiled from Nso land. That is the Nwirong juju will escort the criminal out of the land. There is another punishment of the murder called "eye for eye" in which the culprit has to be killed in return. Formerly the culprit was killed instantly following Moses' law fondom.

Some like in the Igboland, even in times of war, those who participated especially who killed in the war are expected to undergo the ceremony of ritual cleansing (*ikwa alca ochu*). Thus, if a child kills another person, the murderer is expected to hang himself for, according to Okafor, "there is no provision for the public or private execution of a murderer in Igboland." Okafor further describes the nature of penalty against a murderer: The villagers may nonetheless exert serious psychological and social pressure on the murderer but cannot go beyond that. If the murderer has fled, his family must also flee, and their property confiscated. Whenever the murderer is caught, he will be made to hang himself to enable the daughters of the land perform their cleansing rites, *izachapu ntu ochu* (sweeping away the ashes of murder...). Failure to perform these rites will lead to far reaching consequences which are dreaded by the villagers. Certainly the case would be different if the murderer is from another village. The scenario is adequately created in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Punishment is both compensatory and expiatory in nature. These take care of both the human and divine disharmony created by the offence of murder. In the case of murder, it is sufficient for the murderer to hang himself.

It is observed that in the two sets of homicide cases above, expiatory sacrifices to pacify the gods are involved. This is because homicide of any kind is, first and foremost, an offence against the gods. Ordinarily, it is not usual for the Igbo to put a murderer on trial or to punish him for he believes that any ease involving a human life is essentially outside human jurisdiction.

¹⁴Interview realised with informant 11 in Kumbo on 19/03/2016.

That is why the murderer in Nso is expected or pressurized to hang himself. They would be different if there is material evidence to prove the respect of crime in the cases of death by spiritual poisoning or other occultic means.

- **Punishment by the “Nwerong” for Witchcraft**

Witchcraft practices are rarely seen by the eyes of normal people. It is believed in Nso that a child who practice witchcraft most have inherited it from the parents or from ancestors. So the traditional priest and guardians of the tradition of the Nso land are there to see when a child has done something wrong on that way. Any child who carries out acts either in public or secretly shall be asked to first of all confess in public and then charged to pay fines and refund all the things he/she destroyed through wickedness or jealousy. That is the reason why informant said: *“Any child caught practicing witchcraft is excommunicated by the Nwirong and Ngiri secret societies. These jujus can easily detect without fault any person involved in the witchcraft practices”* [15]. In this community, once a child is accused of practicing witchcraft, he or she is immediately banished from the land by the ‘nwerong’, that is, one of the many secret societies. Today, proofs have to be brought out to show that the child is a witch. At times when ample proofs are not shown, the matter can be taken forward to the State Council.

Just like the Mofous as in many parts of Cameroon, witchcraft, murder and incest were rewarded with the death sentence though it is not still the case today because murder be it meditated or accidental is considered a serious crime.

- **Sexual Affairs with Fon’s Wife**

From information gathered from the field, any child or adolescent caught having any sexual affairs with the Fon’s wife or wives, was more than enough to be exiled completely from the Nso land. Formerly any person who did so was expelled from the entire Nso land by a juju or secret society called “nwirong”; it should be noted here that, before this he was given some snake beatings that could even lead to his dead. The Fon’s wife who committed the act with the man is not beaten but banished. They generally gave the culprit a tall Bamboo and were escorted by the Nwirong secret society (juju) out of the river Bire (Bui). This means women are immediately punished when they do it in their marital home. But to have a sexual intercourse with a fon’s wife is a scandal. Our informant says: *“Have a sexual situation with the fon s wife the culprit is given snake beatings and maybe killed if not killed, the nwirong society will take a long bamboo and escort the culprit out of nso land; after crossing the River Bui they will give the culprit the long bamboo meaning he*

¹⁵Interview realized with informant 12 on 10-03-2016at ntoh-Nso.

should never set his legs on the nso land either alive or dead The Fon s wife on her part is not beaten but banished as well” [16]. In other words the punishment is capital and extreme for the culprit who in this case is considered a man.

This means the culprit cannot stay in the same village with the fon he humiliated. Banishing the culprit from the entire Nso land stops other people to try it again for the fon’s wife. The traditional council does it to show the power of the fon in the village. It means no one should bring down his image. In the same order of words an informant revealed: *“Some 40 years ago I personally witnessed two cases of banishment. One for murder and the other was a man who was caught in a love affair with the fon’s wife. Now, we usually hear of stealing cases, abortion, disrespect, land problems and violation of taboos”* [17]. To explain this, the punishment of banishing culprits from the Nso land has made the crime of adultery with the fon’s wife to disappear and people do not even try it again. One of our participants, member of the traditional council referred to this situation as; *“Nwinong fer wo fo nsai nso”*, meaning that the secret society has exiled a culprit for committing murder or having a sexual affair with the Fons wife [18].

Just like the Bassas of the Littoral Region, adultery with the Chief’s wife was a big crime which was tantamount to heavy punishment. It was not an easy act that occurred on frequent basis but it was punished accordingly. When a man was caught red handedly, he was taken to the chief’s palace where 9 ‘mbombocks’ (village leaders with supernatural powers) concerted and after the concentration drove him out of the palace to your father’s compound. It is believed that these ‘mbombocks’ have supernatural powers for protection and sorcery, and that they watched over the entire village at night. The chief’s wife on the other hand was killed since they believed that it was with her consent. The man was fined later on and when he came with the items being asked, he was asked to stay alone for the next two years. Nobody was authorized to pay him a visit and vice versa. In some cases, those who could not bear it left the village completely. If he died while outside of the village, his lifeless body was brought back for burial in the village. The treatment reserved for strangers who committed adultery with a Bassa village man’s wife, stood the risk of being beheaded by the chief.

¹⁶Interview realized with informant 15 on 19-03-2016at “Ntoh-Nso”-Kumbo

¹⁷Interview realized with informant 16 on 20-03-2016at ntoh-Nso.

¹⁸Interview realized with informant 30 on 15-3-2016 at Tabah.

- **Public Disgrace**

Public disgrace can be seen as the loss of respect, honour, or esteem which brings shame; dishonour, reproach; degradation or simply the state of being out of favour, out of trust or confidence. They are associated to scandals, stigma, condemnation, contempt, disrespect and disapproval. According to the Nso people, a child who is termed as a criminal is that one who violates laws and societal norms. These kinds of violations, usually called white-collar or corporate crimes, prominently affects the everyday behaviour of certain children and groups and they bring serious impacts. That is why they believe a good punishment should be inflicted on him so that he will not be able to commit crimes again. And if this has to come through the fact that he has to be disgraced publicly so as correct and have a good citizen in the near future, then no problem. Some of the crimes that were punishable through disgrace were; violation and taboos, deforming one's character and abortion amongst others as are treated below.

Stealing is taking something without permission. The Nso community has her way of punishing such crime. An informant says: *Stealing leads to public disgrace, naked kneels down on shelves of kennels and well tortured and also a levy. The levies are paid either by friends; relatives before the culprit is released from the nopes tied round his/her arms* [¹⁹]. This means the neighborhood is involved in the punishment to give shame to the culprit. Informant confirms by saying that: *"They tie the thief under a big tree at the road junction for the quarter in which the act was committed. Severe beatings follow and at times if the forces of law and order don't come fast, the culprit can be killed only through beatings. After being judged at the traditional council, the culprit is asked to sign an undertaking that he/she will pay all the missing items in the victim's compound or farm within that moment that the incident took place"* [²⁰].

We still continue with the offence of theft. If a man steals from a kinsman and it is proven, the thief will be sternly warned and rebuked if the stolen property is trifle. If the property involved is of high value, the thief is tied up for days without food and if he was caught red-handed, he is carried around the village especially round the market square with the stolen property conspicuously tied around his neck while passers-by jeer, curse and spit on him. Later, the thief would be expected to make restriction. The punishment will be more severe if the stolen property is symbolic such as yams, hen and so on or if certain persons are the culprits such as titled men, elders, etc.

¹⁹Interview realized with informant 11 on 7-03-2016 at Nso.

²⁰Interview realized with informant 11 on 7-03-2016 at Nso.

The culprit who goes about deforming people's characters is banned from public manifestations because he can continue doing so hence will one day betray the whole community. And the, he must pay heavy fines at the palace when reported to the traditional council. Any person who carries out acts either in public or secretly shall be asked to first of all confess in public one day and then charged to pay fines and refund or replace all the things he or she destroyed through his wicked acts or jealousy.

"A *tiiir wounfo vin tati*" in case incest/and violation of taboos : Incest here is referred to having sexual relationship with a sister, a cousin, brother or any member of the same family. After committing incest, the persons involved are prohibited from appearing in public. Cleansing is performed and the culprits are asked to make love in public in the 'Big compound' for the last time in order to have a good separation. Traditionally, anyone who violates traditional laws is bound to suffer from mystical attacks such as ill luck, strange illnesses and other misfortunes. The phenomenon of "Country Sunday", (days -kept aside for no work) is very important in the Nso culture and has to be taken in consideration by all the members of the community, without exception. Violating laws like going to the farm on 'Country Sundays' an injunction order is put in your farm and until this order is taken away, you cannot farm even if you have paid a fine at the palace. It should be noted that, after paying this fine, a purification rite has to be performed before you can farm again. The day that the injunction order has to be removed the culprit has -to provide food and drinks as form of punishments for violating traditional laws. When we have a situation of violation of traditional gathering, the injunction order, they can be seizure of the farmland or portion owned by the culprit at some cases. It is applicable to both men and women who violate the law.

Taboo for example, refers to a situation when you intentionally see a particular "juju" or masquerade which is not supposed to be seen at some particular time or by some particular people or even by the female gender. When this occurs, the person responsible of the act is obliged to pay fines and then some cleansing rituals are performed. After paying these fines he is also obliged to furnish fowls, goats and palm wine for initiation for he is likely to become a member of that juju or secret society. If pregnant young girl for example abuse a juju, it is believed that, they will give birth to babies with malformations of some parts of their bodies.

- **Disobedience, Disrespect and Bad Companies**

In the Nso community, when people children and youths fight, they are taken to the traditional council in the palace where they may pay heavy fines due to the degree of the fight. In the same other of words, an informant asserted that: *"Fighting makes*

people pay fine according to the nature. It ranges from fowls, palm wine and goats” [21]. When a child disobeys his parents or elders, as we noticed advices are given to the children; public disgrace for the adults judged at the traditional council; fines and charges are to be paid by the culprit depending on the nature of the crime; punishments like fetching of firewood, water, sand and sometimes they are reported to the quarter head. The punishment for beating one’s parents or elders is another case that requires retribution. In this case, what is always done is that, there is the call for performing traditional rites because it is looked upon as a very serious offense in the Nso land to lay hands as one’s parents.

Another situation is when a child decides to hang around with bad friends hence joining a bad company or even gangs that smoke. With our forefathers, they will deny the child from walking, play or even talk with the group so as to avoid a full involvement in their attitudes. At times, they deny the child some basic necessities for some time.

When we see a dad foetus deposited beside a culprit, it’s as a result of abortion. Abortion is the ending of pregnancy by removing the foetus or embryo before it can survive outside the uterus. An abortion that occurs spontaneously is also known as miscarriage. An abortion may be caused purposely is called induced abortion, or less frequently called induced miscarriage. The traditional council sees it as killing or premeditated murder. That is why the culprit is judged by the traditional council and punished accordingly. At times, for the sake of keeping the culprit in the communities, there are cleansing rituals that have to be performed.

In the Nso land, abortion is formerly taking as a murder. When a person commits abortion, the traditional council would say the girl in question has killed but today everything is being reformed to pay fines for ritual performances to take place and cleanse the land. What symbolises this punishment here is cleansing and all the object and elements that are used for cleansing. Amongst those elements water, salt, peace tree, animals which are used for sacrifices (goats, fowls...) Etc. “... Abortion is considered a modern phenomenon because in the past there was nothing like abortion as most girls were getting married before being engaged in sexual intercourse. The traditional council can punish culprits by forcing them to perform some cleansing rituals” [22]. The peace tree for punishment symbolizes peace and calm. It is used in the rituals to bring peace in the heart of the culprit, for her family and for the entire community.

²¹Interview realized with informant 26 on 02-03-2016 at Nsoh- Nso.

²²Interview realized with informant 15 on 19-03-2016 at Ntoh-Nso.

• Isolation

Isolation can be seen as the state of being in a place or situation that is separated from others, in other words, the condition of being alone. This may result from being physically separated from others. Our concern here regards isolation as a result from being emotionally removed from a community which can henceforth lead to loneliness. In this section, we sort to looking at another type of punishment at the traditional eyes of the Nso people which is isolation. We are going to look at the different types of crimes that are tantamount to isolation of an offender with the Nso indigenes. This will be analyzed below.

Adultery is extramarital sex that is considered not acceptable on social, religious, moral or legal grounds. Despite the fact that sexual activities constitute adultery, it brings social, religious and legal consequences. The concept exists in many cultures and is similar in islam, Christianity and Judaism. One informant said: “Adultery is punished by beatings and banned from public gathering. If a married woman commits adultery in her husband’s house. The husband and his children will abandon the woman alone in the house” [23]. A single act of sexual intercourse is generally sufficient to constitute adultery and more long-term sexual relationship is sometimes referred to as “an affair”.

- Sex with No Consent (Rape)

Rape is that sexual assault involving intercourse or others forms of sexual penetration perpetrated against a person without his or her consent. The act may be carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority or against a person who is incapable of giving valid consent, such as one who is unconscious, has an intellectual disability or is below the legal age of consent. In the case of the Kumbo community, the rapist is prohibited from appearing in public places. He has to pay all the hospital bills of his victim and is isolated as people are not willing to associate with such a person. Our informant expressed that: “the culprit is first of all asked to pay all the hospital bills and any health complication of the victim as a result of the rape and he is banned from taking part in any public ceremony [24].” In other words, this means the culprit can have extreme punishment like being "banned from appearing in public or being invited in public ceremonies. For this crime the punishment symbol is respect. Doing the punishment by the culprit enable him or her to give respect to human being and lo be conscious.

Furthermore, the Nso community considers rape as a very serious offense. A participant said that:

²³Interview realized with informant 15 on 19-03-2016 at Ntoh-Nso.

²⁴Interview realised with informant 12 on 13-03-2016 at Nso.

“Any man who does this, despite the beating and charges levied on him to pay, the quarter and the entire Nso fondom are closely watching him” [25]. If he is caught in any other crime apart from rape, he will eventually be beaten to death. At times the rapist can be injected with a poisonous chemical since he is being considered a threat to the whole quarter and Fondom. This small or little crimes as he sees it, can bring him hatred from everywhere, and at this point, the quarter head has to decide either to levy fines or forward the case to the forces of law and order. When it comes to raping of a princess of the palace, notables of the community will march him to the road junction, pour wood ash on the culprit and shoot him with some seeds in the form of egg, and the culprit is banished from Nso Fondom.

DISCUSSION

Although, Elizabeth Gershoff [26], a leading researcher says *“around the world, about 30 countries have banned physical punishment on children in all settings including the home. The legal bans typically have been used as public education tools, rather than attempts to criminalize behavior by parents who spank their children.”* Nso parents would still prefer to stick to their traditional ways. We however were able to put our hypotheses into verification. We got from informants that parents are making efforts to use both methods in their children upbringing.

Historically, there is little evidence of penal systems in tribal communities in Nso. This fact remains today, although there are many who express the need for secure confinement facilities to address serious and violent crimes. Many customary sanctions to appease victims and to safeguard against vengeance are still in use. These include public ridicule, public shaming, whippings, temporary and permanent banishment, withdrawal of citizenship rights, financial and labor restitution. Some tribes still temporarily or permanently banish individuals who commit serious or violent crimes. The indigenous process is also used in offenses where there are no victims, such as problems between parents and children, individual misconduct, or alcohol consumption. Family members affected by the offender's behavior or who are concerned with the offender's welfare may participate. Many tribal people view crime, delinquency, and other deviant behaviors as symptoms of bigger family problems. Widening the affected target group to include the offender, parents, siblings, and other extended family members enlists help from those most familiar with the situation to assist in correcting and preventing more serious crimes.

Traditionally, this process can often be extremely uncomfortable and emotional because it involves participation by everyone affected, but great care is taken to provide a safe environment for matters to be discussed. The distributive nature of this process uses the extended family as a resource for the offender, the victim, and the community to resolve problems. Punishment here is being received as a social cohesion governed by police forces. It punishes the one who is considered guilty to have infringed law, who varies according to groups. Responsibility registers in the logic of conceived law as a system of commandment matched by sanctions. Law and trouble contact the free referee considered to be the reason of crime. The punishment of crime serves for reminding that the Penal Code is not only a paper rag. At the same time, it encourages the potential delinquent to resist temptation so as to divert the potential offender of the act whom he plans to pose. It is the expression of the government in power except for traditionally to know the civil law code, established by the sovereign authority of a society. *“Conflict here refers to the incompatibility between the modern and traditional punitive methods that exist in the communities of Nso. We see that Western methods are based on norms and established social rules as opposed to traditional ones. Traditional values are established on traditional based norms and, they therefore think that a conflict exists between the two methods”* [27].

Finally, the consequences of society's perceptions and impressions on traditional methods of punishment play a major role. From the preceding analysis, it is noticed that the Nso ethnic community is doing everything at its level to preserve their traditional methods of punishing children likewise western prescriptions that do well to kick against corporal punishment. This fact results in an almost endless variety of acts and characteristics qualifying as deviant depending on conditions and circumstances. Debates over prostitution, gambling, nudism, cheating and medical quackery, arise from conflicts between norms about such acts. Just as some people consider some acts as deviant, others also become so classified. Social types perceived by some as deviants include reckless drivers, pacifists, racists, “hippie” radicals, the very rich, and the very poor, old people, drinkers, nondrinkers, and motorcycle gang members. Some liberals, for example, criticize conservatives, considering them deviant, and some conservatives return that criticism.

Clothing norms are even more deviant as is a relative concept. While norms state relative positions, some receive more attention in society than others, and these differences often depend on the power of certain

²⁵Interview realised with informant 22 on 29-02-2016 at Nso.

²⁶Elizabeth Gershoff

²⁷We drew our conclusion from our Focus Group discussion carried out on March 06th, 2016. Participants highlighted that.

groups to enforce their norms over members and other people. Social power, then, strongly affects an understanding of why deviance is relative. For example, strong negative attitudes toward suicide, prostitution, homosexuality, and drunkenness, among other acts, have stemmed mainly from the actions of certain conservative church groups [²⁸].

Some sociologists find meaning in the expression extreme deviance, which has been defined as “behavior, beliefs, or physical traits that are so far outside the norm, so to a wide range of different audiences, that they exist extremely strongly negative sanctions” [²⁹]. If rudeness as being a slight departure from existing norms, these behaviors go farther outside of the norm. Extreme deviance might include tattooing large parts of the body, believing that one has been kidnapped by extraterrestrials, being hugely obese, and having and endorsing adult–child sexual contact [³⁰]. It is not possible; of course, to say with any precision just how much tattooing is “permissible” or how obese someone must be to be considered “extreme.” Rather these are judgments made by the social audience to the behavior or beliefs. Deviance comes in all forms from minor transgressions that are barely noticed to major behavior that has significant consequences. In the Bamelike land in the western part of Cameroon for example, condemning and banishment is a decision reserved only to the chief. This however seems to be one of the most difficult punishment to endure because it sends you completely out of your society. It will be wise to note that banishment in this land now is presented in two forms: the old one and the modern following the status of the guilty person and the crime committed. Looking at the old one, the person banished was sold as a slave, but with the new status, he is driven from the palace and village forever. So there fore, as described by Delarozière [³¹], « *Le banni assiste à sa ‘mort civile’. Les sociétés dont il faisait partie lui sont fermées, ses cotisations ou ses dons lui sont retournés. Il est déchu de ses titres. (...) ce bannissement n’est pas toujours définitif, mais ceux qui en ont été frappés et dont la vie religieuse et sociale s’est trouvée brusquement stoppée, en restent définitivement marqués et le poids de cette sanction pèse sur leurs descendants* ».

Despite the similarities, the methods vary from one culture to another. Crimes that go against cultural norms include stealing, stubbornness, bed wetting, disobedience, rudeness and violation of prohibitions. That is why beatings, starvation, deprivation, detention just to name these few are used by parents because they believe that by using these forms, children’s morality will be positive and compatible. In effect, corporal

punishment affects the psychological state of the child reason for the campaign for its abolition. These criticisms however have left parents in a state of total confusion regarding on how they should discipline their children. Parents are worried not only on how to punish their children but on which methods they need to employ. Some parents believe so strongly in their cultural ways and others believe that hardened criminals should be handed over to the police which now are regarded as the western method. At one moment they question the idea of them abandoning their indigenous methods of punishment in favour of the western prescriptions or just combining both. That brings out the perplexed nature of our study which pushes us to say there cannot be a cause without an effect!

CONCLUSION

In our present century, punishment methods amongst human beings and children at large have become a call for concern. The Africans and Cameroonians in particular have their own ways of punishing children which is obviously not as seen by the westerners. With this, there is an increase of children in crime waves especially due to lack of care and abandoned responsibilities. That is why ethnic communities like Nso develop sanctions and measures to punish their children who engage in unacceptable behaviours at home and in school. These had as mandate to socially include and consider all defaulters as having equal status with other members of the community. At times, the prison as a punishment method turns to be the place where solutions are derived. The prison as a penal institution however was unknown in the traditional Cameroonian society before the 20th century. It should be noted that all traditional African societies and Cameroon in particular had introduced their own methods of punishing criminals like; beating, ostracizing, banishment and executions. The proposed sanction process in this stage included custodial and non-custodial options respectively. But we were interested in the non-custodial option where traditional punishment methods turn to be a success. It should be noted that the systematic application of restrictions on man’s physical mobility as a form of punishment was of the traditional style which to them was credible. So, punishing children plays a critical role as far as raising children is concerned. And this is exercised on children in social settings such as homes, schools, churches, markets just to name these few. Indigenous methods of conflict resolution in Nso include traditional dispute resolution, peacemaking, talking circles, family or community gatherings, and traditional mediation, described only by the language of the tribal community. All this refer to the methods of resolving problems and to the methods of restorative and reparative justice. The structure of relationships in that tribal community is paramount to a legal system exemplified by the clan system. Tribal law determines clan identification, which is often matrilineal. The clan system regulates the behavior of its members and the

²⁸Greenberg, 1988

²⁹Goode, 2008: xi

³⁰Goode and Vail, 2008

³¹Delarozière, 1950 : 50

interlocking relationships in tribal communities often determine the flow of how problems are handled.

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