



## The Socio-Economic Factors Responsible for Smuggling in Babura and Maigatari Border Towns, Jigawa State, Nigeria

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### Abstract:

This study examines the socio-economic factors responsible for smuggling in Babura and Maigatari Border towns, Jigawa State, Nigeria. The major aim of this research is to explore the social and economic factors responsible for smuggling in border towns. The study adopted survey research design and a total of 380 respondents were selected for the study. However, the study utilized cluster, purposive, and availability sampling techniques. Findings reveal that poverty and unemployment are the major factors responsible for smuggling in Babura and Maigatari border towns. In view of the findings, it is recommended that government should address poverty and unemployment by creating more job opportunities and improving economic conditions in border communities to reduce the incentive for smuggling; enhance border control measures with advanced surveillance technology such as drones and automated systems to monitor and secure porous borders effectively; implement stricter anti-corruption measures within customs and law enforcement agencies to prevent smugglers from bypassing enforcement efforts and finally, fostering stronger relationships between border communities and law enforcement by improving communication, trust, and reporting mechanisms for suspicious activities.

**Keywords:** Factors Responsible, Smuggling, Socio-economic.

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### Introduction

Smuggling is a worldwide activity that cuts across all the nations of the world. It usually occurs between rich countries and the poor countries. Bredow (as cited in Olanrewaju, 2015) added that countries such as Mexico serves as central hub for drugs smuggling, Iraq linked to arms and oil smuggling in middle east, while in African countries like Libya, South Africa, and Nigeria are key players in human trafficking, diamond smuggling as well as drugs smuggling which develop major centers of international smuggling, while other countries like Niger republic, Kenya, morocco, Honduras serve as intermediate centers often play a critical role in enabling the movement of smuggling of contraband from origin to final destination in developed countries.

According to Deflem (2021), smuggling is the mother of all trans-border crimes, it is served as a range of other illicit activities across borders. For instance, illegal fire arms and ammunition are smuggled across borders to fuel conflict, war and terrorism especially in Sahel region in Africa. Smuggling of goods in Nigeria has turned in to an economic and social issue. As a result of land border closure, there has been an increase in unofficial imports and exports of consumable goods in an organized form in areas likes Owode, Jibia, Maigatari, Ikom Badagry, respectively. These occur through illegal formations and unallowable quays by the bands, and number of business men or women who in recent years have caused severe damages to the economic system of Nigeria (Gimba, 2018).

The Nigerian government has recognized the paramount importance of addressing these challenges and has sought to develop strategies to enhance border control and management. The study focuses on two border towns in Jigawa State, Nigeria. Babura and Maigatari towns represent microcosms of the broader challenges associated with border management in Nigeria and, indeed, Africa. They serve as crucial junctures where economic interests and security concerns insect, where the presence of predisposing factors that facilitate smuggling in border towns is more likely, and where the consequences extend far beyond their immediate boundaries (Abdulkadir & Yusuf, 2020).

The complexities surrounding smuggling are symbolizing broader issues that affect international borders in Africa. These challenges revolve around the delicate task of balancing national security with the facilitation of regional trade, migration, and cooperation. The border towns often serve as pressure points where the effectiveness of smuggling enforcement is tested, and the repercussions of these are felt throughout the border towns. Scholar's works and policy makers have substantially contributed to our comprehension of border security and management. Abolarin & Oluwafemi (2019) explored the economic impact of smuggling in Nigeria, emphasizing the urgent need to address the illegal movement of goods.

Presence of informal cross-border trade routes due to the porous nature of inland border contributes the problem of smuggling as one of the geographical factor. These routes, which predate colonial demarcations, are deeply rooted in the socio-economic activities of border communities. Informal routes are often preferred by traders because of their historical significance and the minimal interference from law enforcement agents. In addition to above, corruption among law enforcement agencies are significant factors facilitating smuggling. Nigerian customs officers, border patrol agents, and other security personnel are often accused of complicity in smuggling operations, without understanding the predisposing factors, it will be difficult to establish a plausible control measures. The phenomenon of smuggling is directly related to many socio-economic influences especially among the youth. Hence, corruption serves as a distraction to the effectiveness of existing policies in two border towns. There are many significant factors that need to be clearly understood within the societal and individual domains.

Smuggling in Babura and Maigatari border towns influence by many varieties of interconnected factors that make the practice both widespread and difficult to combat. These includes economic disparities, porous land borders, corruption, poverty, and unemployment, high import duties and tariffs on goods are among others.

### **Conceptualizing Smuggling**

Although smuggling is a global issue, it is particularly prevalent in Africa, with Nigeria seemingly the most affected country on the continent. World Trade Report (2013) & Columbian (1993) asserted that Smuggling is the illegal transportation of objects, substances, information or people across an international border, in violation of applicable laws or other regulations. Smuggling can have various motivations, such as

the participation in illegal trade, tax evasion, import or export restrictions, or providing contraband to prison inmates. Uduma (2020) describes smuggling as the illicit transportation of goods and services across borders in defiance of established customs and trade regulations. This activity circumvents taxation and breaches policies designed to safeguard domestic industries, uphold public safety, and protect national security.

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (2002) described smuggling as the criminal offense of bringing into or removing from a country those items that are prohibited or upon which customs or excise duties have not been paid. Thus, smuggling is the secret movement of goods across national borders, thereby avoiding customs duties and import or export restrictions. Similarly, smuggling is an illegal method of conducting business. Deflem and Kelly (2001) described it as a clandestine activity involving the importation and/or exportation of goods by wrong or unlawful means with the objectives of evading taxes and any other measures prohibiting or restricting the importation or exportation of such goods. People engage in smuggling for selfish purposes, including extra profit by boycotting the appropriate agency in charge of ascertaining the nature of the goods before they are allowed into the country.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

#### **Socio-economic factors responsible for smuggling in border towns**

There are many social and economic factors responsible for smuggling in border towns. Some of these include but not limited to the following:

##### ***Poverty and Unemployment***

One of the most significant economic drivers of smuggling is poverty. In regions where economic opportunities are scarce, smuggling often becomes a viable means of livelihood. According to Ojo (2018), poverty and lack of employment opportunities push individuals towards smuggling as a way to make ends meet. In many developing countries, particularly in border regions, legitimate job opportunities are limited, making smuggling an attractive alternative.

##### ***High Demand for Illegal Goods***

The high demand for illegal goods, such as drugs, weapons, and counterfeit products, is a significant driver of smuggling. Consumer demand creates lucrative markets for smuggled goods, incentivizing individuals and criminal organizations to engage in smuggling. As noted by Reuter and Majmundar (2015), the profitability of smuggling illegal goods can be immense, making it a highly attractive endeavor despite the risks involved.

##### ***High Tariffs and Trade Barriers***

High tariffs and trade barriers also incentivize smuggling. When governments impose high duties on certain goods, it creates a price disparity between the legal market and the black market. As highlighted by Fishman and Wei (2004), this price differential encourages traders to bypass official channels to maximize profits. For example, in Nigeria, high tariffs on imported goods such as textiles and electronics have led to a significant increase in smuggling activities (Adewuyi, 2017).

##### ***Currency Exchange Rates***

Fluctuating and unfavorable currency exchange rates can also drive smuggling. In countries with unstable currencies, people often resort to smuggling to acquire foreign goods without having to deal with the official exchange rates. This practice is prevalent in countries with strict foreign exchange controls, where the black market offers better rates than official channels (Bahmani-Oskooee & Goswami, 2003).

### ***Subsidies and Price Controls***

Government subsidies and price controls can also contribute to smuggling. When the government sets prices for certain goods below the market rate, it creates an incentive for smuggling. For example, fuel subsidies in Nigeria have led to widespread smuggling of subsidized fuel to neighboring countries where prices are higher (Amundsen, 2010). Smugglers exploit these price differentials to make substantial profits, undermining the intended benefits of the subsidies.

### ***Corruption***

Corruption at various levels of law enforcement has been cited as a major factor contributing to smuggling. Customs officials and border security officers are often found to be complicit, either through direct participation in smuggling or by accepting bribes to overlook illegal activities. This is especially evident in the ease with which high-value goods, such as vehicles and electronics, are smuggled across Nigerian borders with minimal resistance (Ibrahim & Bello, 2020). The Nigerian Customs Service, despite its efforts to curb smuggling, is often hampered by internal corruption, where officials collude with smugglers to allow contraband goods through official channels (Eze, 2015).

Moreover, in many cases, border officials actively cooperate with smuggling networks, creating a mutually beneficial relationship that undermines government efforts to curtail smuggling activities (Ukoha, 2018). For instance, in 2019, a Nigerian customs officer was arrested for aiding smugglers by providing them with advance notice of patrol routes, illustrating the depth of corruption in border control (Nigerian Customs Service Report, 2020).

### ***Ineffective Trade Policies***

Ineffective trade policies can unintentionally encourage smuggling. Policies that create artificial scarcities or restrict access to certain goods can lead to the emergence of black markets. For instance, protectionist trade policies aimed at protecting local industries by imposing import restrictions can backfire, leading to increased smuggling of the restricted goods (Krueger, 1974). Policymakers must carefully consider the potential unintended consequences of trade regulations to avoid fostering smuggling.

### ***International Trade Agreements***

International trade agreements can have unintended consequences that drive smuggling. Trade agreements that liberalize markets and reduce tariffs can lead to increased smuggling if not accompanied by robust enforcement mechanisms. As noted by Bhagwati (2004), trade liberalization must be carefully managed to prevent the exploitation of regulatory gaps by smugglers. Effective monitoring and enforcement of trade agreements are crucial to preventing smuggling.

### ***Illiteracy***

Illiteracy, particularly in border regions, is a significant contributor to smuggling. Individuals without formal education often lack knowledge of the laws and regulations surrounding trade, making them more likely to engage in illegal activities without understanding the legal or economic consequences (Olayiwola, 2021). Smugglers exploit illiterate individuals, using them as couriers or operatives within smuggling networks, often without their full comprehension of the risks or legal implications (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2019).

### ***Rural-Urban Bias***

Economic development in Nigeria tends to favour urban areas, leaving rural communities, especially those in border regions, underdeveloped and economically marginalized. This bias leads to higher levels of poverty in rural areas, pushing people

toward smuggling as a way to make a living (Olufemi, 2020). The lack of infrastructure, education, and economic opportunities in rural border areas forces many residents into the informal economy, which includes smuggling. They often see it as the only viable means of survival (Fagbohun & Olajide, 2018). Example, research shows that border communities like Seme and Idiroko in the southwestern region of Nigeria suffer from high poverty rates due to neglect in infrastructure development, pushing residents into illegal cross-border trade (Adepoju, 2020).

### ***Lack of Social Welfare Package in Border Towns***

Border communities are often left out of national economic growth and development efforts, lack of social welfare programs for border communities in Nigeria contributes to the prevalence of smuggling. Many of these communities suffer from extreme poverty and lack basic amenities such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Without government intervention and support, smuggling becomes a way for residents to sustain themselves (Edeh & Akande, 2021).

### ***Porous Border***

Nigeria shares over 4,000 Kilometres of land borders with neighboring countries, including Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. These borders are largely unmonitored, with over 1,400 illegal routes identified by the Nigerian Customs Service (Adetayo, 2019). This creates ample opportunities for smugglers to move goods undetected. The presence of informal border markets and poor coordination between border security agencies exacerbates this issue. According to Adewuyi (2018), the smuggling of goods, particularly fuel and food items, through these porous borders are not only an economic problem but a national security concern. Smugglers often operate in remote and difficult-to-reach areas, which makes enforcement challenging. According to Andreas (2000), the physical geography of border areas, such as mountainous terrain or dense forests, can provide cover for smuggling activities, without adequate resources and technology to patrol these borders, the fight against smuggling remains an uphill task.

### ***Methodology***

A sample of three hundred and eighty (380) respondents was used for the study. After which, the purposive sampling technique was applied to select 10 traditional and religious leaders, 20 representatives from transport unions, 20 representatives from community-based organizations, 20 from traders union association. Furthermore, the availability and stratified sampling technique was utilized to select 20 respondents from the Nigeria Customs Service personnel, 10 from the Nigeria Police Force, 10 from the Nigeria Immigration Service, 10 from NDLEA personnel, and 200 from residents of general public in Babura and Maigatari LGAs because these two border towns are distinct strata, each characterized by its unique context and dynamic concerning of smuggling activities. Also, the study used snowball sampling technique to identify and select 20 suspects and convicted smugglers in both Babura and Maigatari towns.

### ***Result and Discussion***

From the total three hundred and eighty (380) questionnaires administered to the respondents, only 365 (95. %) were retrieved. The analysis is therefore based on the 365 questionnaire returned.

**Table 1 Factors Responsible for Smuggling in Maigatari and Babura Border Towns**

<b>Factors Responsible for Smuggling</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Poverty/Unemployment	145	39.7
Corruption among Border Personnel	120	32.8
Illiteracy/Rural-Urban Bias	47	12.8

Porous Border	25	6.8
Lack of Social Welfare Packages	28	7.6
Total	365	100

From the above table, poverty and unemployment which represent the opinion of 39.7 % are perceived as the major factors responsible for smuggling. This highlights economic distress as a key motivator, suggesting that individuals may resort to smuggling as a means of livelihood in the absence of adequate economic opportunities. Corruption among border personnel (32.8%) also plays a crucial role, indicating that systemic issues within border management contribute to the problem with high percentage. Illiteracy and rural-urban bias with lower percentage (12.8%) further exacerbate the situation by creating barriers to education and opportunities, while a porous border 6.8 % but to a lesser extent and lack of social welfare packages 7.6% are seen as contributing factors with lower responses.

**Table 2: Border Communities Proximity**

Distance	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 10km	153	43
10-20km	110	30.1
20-30km	66	18.0
30-40km	42	11.5
Total	365	100

The majority of respondents live within 10 kilometers of the international border 43%, suggesting that proximity to the border are common in the surveyed towns. This close distance likely facilitates smuggling activities due to ease of access. A substantial portion 30.1% lives 10-20 kilometres away, still within a region where border activities could influence local dynamics. The decreasing percentages for distances beyond 20 kilometres imply a diminishing direct impact of border proximity on smuggling as the distance increases.

**Table 3: Respondent's view on how proximity of Border Towns influence Smuggling**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	288	79
No	77	21
Total	365	100

A significant majority (79 %) of respondents believe that the proximity of border towns influences smuggling. This strong consensus underscores the role of geographical closeness in facilitating smuggling activities, reinforcing the idea that easier access to the border can increase opportunities for such activities. Conversely, the minority (21%) who do not see a connection might consider other factors more critical or may not be directly affected by border proximity.

**Table 4: Commonality of Smuggling in Maigatari and Babura Border Towns**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very common	144	39.4
Common	118	32.3
Neutral	63	17.2
Rare	25	6.8
Very rare	17	4.6
Total	365	100

Smuggling is perceived as very common 39.4% or common 32.3% in the towns, indicating that it is a prevalent issue. The high frequencies of 'very common' and 'common'

responses reflect significant engagement in smuggling activities, likely driven by the factors identified earlier. A smaller portion of respondents view smuggling as rare or very rare 11.4% combined, suggesting either limited exposure or a differing perception of the extent of the issue.

### Conclusion

In view of the findings of the study, it is concluded that poverty, unemployment, and corruption as the major factors responsible for smuggling in Maigatari and Babura border towns, reinforcing the argument that economic hardship compels individuals to engage in illicit activities. However, although smuggling may provide temporary financial relief for some individuals, its long-term consequences are detrimental to the economy, as it disrupts formal trade, undermines local businesses, and weakens national revenue collection.

### Recommendation

In view of the conclusions that was drawn from the findings of the study, the paper provides the following recommendations:

1. The government should address poverty and unemployment by creating more job opportunities and improving economic conditions in border communities to reduce the vulnerability to smuggling.
2. Enhance border control measures with advanced surveillance technology such as drones and automated systems to monitor and secure porous borders effectively.
3. Implement stricter anti-corruption measures within customs and law enforcement agencies to prevent smugglers from bypassing enforcement efforts.
4. Foster stronger relationships between border communities and law enforcement by improving communication, trust, and reporting mechanisms for suspicious activities.

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