Predicting the Determinants of Homicides Rates Across the ECOWAS Region, 1960-2020

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to predict the determinants of homicide crime across the ECOWAS region. The study used a correctional research design, with a sample size of 15 across the period ranging from 1960 to 2020. The study used a criterion variable of homicide rates, and the predictor variables to include development indicator-life expectancy at birth, economic inequality, youth unemployment, and sex-ratio. The study used SPSS to process and analyze the dataset which came from the following agencies: WHO, World Bank, UNDP, etc. The study used Ordinary Least Squared analysis to predict the determinants of high homicides rates across the ECOWAS region. The study finds the following: a weak inverse relationship between the life expectancy at birth and homicide (r = –0.317**) which is significant at 5% significance, moderately strong positive relationship between economic inequality and homicide (r = 0.657**) and a moderately strong inverse relationship between economic inequality and development (r = –0.548**). Also, the study finds a weak negative association between homicide and sex-ratio (-0.287*). While unemployment exhibited a strong positive significant associated with homicide (r=0.795). Above all the study finds that about 76.5% variations in the homicide crime could be attributed to the following variables, such as life expectancy at birth or the level of development, economic inequality, youth unemployment, and sex ratio.
Keywords: Homicide, Crime, ECOWAS, Unemployment, Inequality, Development, Life Expectancy, Gini-Index
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INTRODUCTION

The ECOWAS region is considered one of the least developed regions in the world but with relatively high rate of homicide crime within the African continent. The homicide rate on the African continent is higher than the global average, and far higher than the rates found in Europe or Asia, according to a report released Monday by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) (see Figure 1 for more details). Meanwhile, the official and other statistics show that the crime rate in Africa is high. Of nearly half-a-million homicides committed globally in 2012, only 5% occurred in Europe; 31% occurred in Africa; just next to the Americas' 36% (UNODC, 2013). Numbeo (2015) ranked six African countries as among the twenty nations with the highest crime rates in the world. These include South Sudan, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Libya. When homicide rates per 100,000 population were calculated, Africa again came second to the Americas. For example, statistics from the victimization surveys in Africa (UNODC, 2010) revealed that in Rwanda, during the period 2003- 2008, out of the number of crime cases reported, 68.9% were crimes at the household level while 31.1% were personal/individual cases.

Also, in other African countries, such as Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt, Tanzania and Uganda, robbery, corruption, consumer fraud, sexual assault, kidnapping, and property crimes involving car hijacking, theft of livestock, and burglary were prevalent, although to varying degrees (UNODC, 2014). As indicated by UNODC, out of 437,000 (almost half a million) deaths caused by intentional homicide globally in 2012, more than a third (36%) happened in the Americas, 31% occurred in Africa, 28% in Asia, and just 5% in Europe (UNODC, 2014). Figure 1 shows that Africa is the second leading in homicide rate among the regions of the world.

Figure 3.1: The 2012 homicide rates by region (per 100,000 inhabitants)
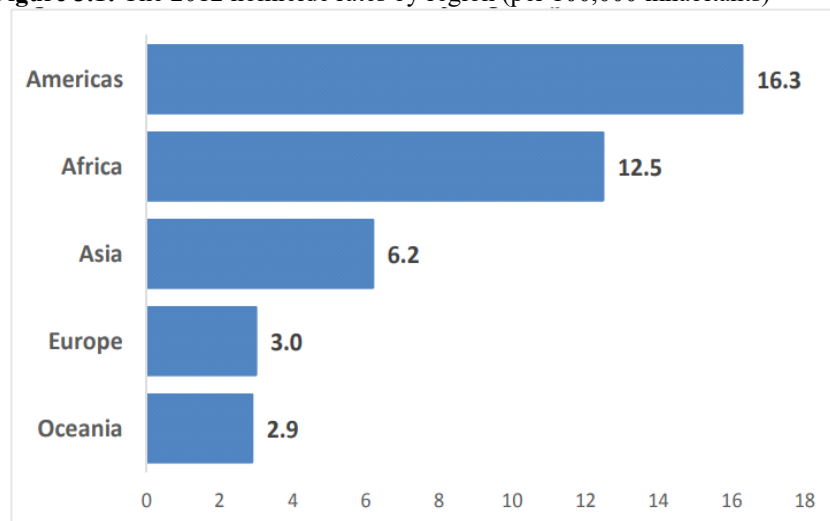
Source: United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC, 2014)

     The Global Study on Homicide 2019 report puts the African homicide rate across all countries including the ECOWAS region at 13 victims per 100,000 people, with the global rate at 6.1 victims. While the overall global numbers have risen to 464,000 deaths in 2017 – the most recent year for the data – the risk of becoming a homicide victim has attributed to population increase with less employment at the same time, UNDOC said (AT Editor, 2019). Meanwhile, the ECOWAS region has been struggling with weak institutions, coupled with high level of corruptions among several of the ECOWAS member countries. Although it is theorized by Cullen and Wilcox (2012) that weak institution leads to high levels of crime in a given society but little is known empirically when it comes to the relationship between institutions that ensures equitable distribution of resources, creating jobs for youth, ensuring gender equality, etc. and homicide crime in the ECOWAS region. Therefore, this study will examine the relationships between homicide rates and the following predictors-life expectancy at birth, sex-ratio, youth unemployment, and economic inequality, etc. to inform public policy and criminal justice policy in the ECOWAS region.

LITERATURE REVIEW
History of Homicide Crime in ECOWAS
According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2005), the high crime rate in some of the West African countries has made the region to regard crime as an issue of growing concern. In order to highlight the problem, an overview of the development of the phenomenon in five countries of the region—Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone—is provided, tracing both its extent as well as the range of illicit activities that are engaged in. These are diverse and include: drug trafficking, advanced fee and Internet fraud, human trafficking, diamond smuggling, forgery, cigarette smuggling, illegal manufacture of firearms, trafficking in firearms, armed robbery and the theft and smuggling of oil. A number of challenges present themselves in providing an accurate picture of transnational organized crime in West Africa, including the difficulty of gathering reliable information on essentially hidden practices.

     According to the literature, an organized crime in West Africa in its contemporary form is generally perceived to have emerged in the 1970s, contemporaneous with the oil price rises of that decade, the delinking of the dollar from gold, high inflation, and the rapid spread of debt in the developing world (Alemika, 2004, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime-UNODC, 2005). Nevertheless, it was further observed from the literature that it would be wrong to be too insistent about this chronology, as the Nigerian country consultant identifies the roots of the new patterns of crime as existing slightly earlier (Alemika, 2004). Various antecedents could no doubt be traced back for decades earlier, such as in the ancient traditions of long-distance commerce that are characteristic of the region, or indeed in the activities of European criminal gangs who pioneered inter-continental crime from bases in West Africa in colonial times (UNODC, 2005). In Côte d'Ivoire, even before independence in 1960, there were Corsican gangs specializing in cigarette-smuggling as well as the recruitment of women for prostitution in France, and other forms of crime (UNODC, 2005).

     It was not only the general economic climate of the 1970s that caused some people to turn to crime as a means of livelihood on a scale previously unseen, but also some of the institutional arrangements that were introduced to stimulate trade. A Sierra Leonean police official, for example, connects the rise of organized crime in his country to the creation of ECOWAS in 1975, which facilitated movement between member States. While there had always been movements of people from place to place, the circumstances of the late 1970s stimulated

some very large population movements, in the case of Sierra Leone an influx of Fulas (Peul) from Guinea and Marakas from Gambia, both of them being groups with a strong commercial tradition. After the end of the oil boom in Nigeria, in the early 1980s, Nigerians were also impelled to spread throughout the region and further afield in search of economic opportunity, and to seek out a livelihood, if necessary by any means. "It is now firmly held that organized crime was first introduced in Sierra Leone by Nigerians", the same Sierra Leonean police source noted (Alemika, 2004, p.9; Lengor, 2004). Whereas before the early 1980s booming Nigeria had been a magnet for immigrants from other parts of the region, most notably Ghanaians, the downturn in the oil economy caused many such migrants to move on in search of new opportunities (Sissoko, 2004). In 1983, Nigeria officially expelled millions of Ghanaian migrants in a bid to rid itself of officially unwanted guests (Alemika, 2004, Evans, 2003, Vines, 2004). Most returned to Ghana, but a fair proportion of these promptly migrated once again to wherever they believed they might find work. This too was a major stimulus to the development of networks of people with experience of international migration, some of whom were induced to undertake criminal activities (Alemika, 2004, Evans, 2003, Vines, 2004).

In addition, it was observed from the literature that in the French-speaking countries, Côte d'Ivoire offered a similar allure to Nigeria's in the Anglophone world. Organized crime is regarded as having started in Côte d'Ivoire too in the 1970s, when the country attracted large numbers of immigrants in search of work. A problem of armed robbery emerged, as bands composed of immigrants were formed, later joined by Ivorians (Sissoko, 2004). According to UNODC (2005), some politically controversial attempts to regulate immigration in the 1990s have become inextricably connected to the violence that has now emerged in the country, creating a mix of crime, politics, violence and debates on identity and migration.

Moreover, wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone have facilitated the import of firearms by armed groups, including armed robbers, to Côte d'Ivoire (Evans, 2003). A roughly similar development appears to have occurred in Senegal, where armed robbery, marijuana-trading and weapons-trafficking have been connected to the emergence of a low-intensity armed conflict in the Casamance region since the early 1980s. In Nigeria itself, at least one expert considers that elements of organized crime may be identified before 1975 in the form of organized groups involved in falsifying imports in order to transfer funds outside the country, normally in contravention of currency regulations. This process involved over-invoicing, or importing sub-standard goods for delivery to government departments, in return for kickbacks paid to government officials. This practice was alluded to by the executors of the country's first coup in 1966 (Alemika, 2004). The same expert agrees with many other sources, however, that in general, the 1980s was the decade that first witnessed the flourishing of organized crime in Nigeria. This he attributes to the general corruption of the civilian government of 1979-1983; the introduction of a structural adjustment program in 1986, resulting in greater poverty and unemployment and a consequent increase in emigration; the rapid and ill-prepared liberalization of the financial sector, including the establishment of poorly regulated finance houses and banks, providing new opportunities for money-laundering and fraud; homicide crime, and illegal foreign exchange transactions (Alemika, 2004). The first cases of heroin trafficking were recorded in Nigeria in the early 1980s (Alemika, 2004).

In Ghana, crime appears also to have emerged in the 1980s, connected to the problems and the opportunities offered by international migration (UNODC, 2005). Ghanaians were among the first West Africans in modern times to migrate widely, particularly with the onset of major economic problems in the 1970s, benefiting from the country's generally high standard of education, the large number of people speaking good English, enabling them to compete in international labor markets, and a tradition of migration by young men especially in search of economic and social advancement. When very large numbers of Ghanaians were forcibly expelled from Nigeria in 1982, and as other foreign job markets became more difficult, some appear to have been attracted to illicit forms of enrichment (UNODC, 2005).

Table 3.1: Average Homicide Rate Between 1960 and 2020 for ECOWAS Member Countries

Countries	Benin	Burkina Faso	Cape Verde	The Gambia	Ghana	Guinea	Guinea-Bissau	Ivory Coast	Liberia	Mali	Niger	Nigeria	Senegal	Sierra Leone	Togo
Homicide Rate	1.123	1.250	6.804	7.8	2.091	17.3	1.149	11.6	3.264	10.9	4.428	34.524	0.268	1.729	9

Source: World Bank and Knoema Data Appliance- World Atlas Data

Table 3.1 reveals that the following ECOWAS member countries have average homicide rate far above the average global homicide rate (6.1 victims per 100,000 people): Cape Verde (6.804 victims per 100,000 people); The Gambia (7.8 victims per 100,000 people); Guinea (17.3 victims per 100,000 people); Ivory Coast (11.6 victims per 100,000 people); Mali (10.9 victims per 100,000 people); Nigeria (34.524 victims per 100,000 people); and Togo (9 victims per 100,000 people).

3.3. The Historical Development of ECOWAS

ECOWAS is the result of several prior attempts to form economic groups among Anglo-French nations in West Africa. Consideration of the previous three major attempts to form economic groups provides the background

necessary for understanding the creation and objectives of ECOWAS. Before discussing the historical background of ECOWAS, however, it is useful to consider the other major economic integration endeavors which took place among French speaking nations in West Africa.

The Central African Customs and Economic Union has as its members the states of Cameroon, Central African Republic, People's Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and Chad, the latter having rejoined in 1976 after temporarily leaving the group (see Figure 3.2 for more details). The UDEAC members have harmonized their tariff rates and incidental charges, i.e., port fees, so that many imports are subject to duties at the same level in each country. However, the number of exceptions to the general tariff rates have been steadily increasing and have diminished the effectiveness of the customs union. The tariff is levied on imports from both member and non-member states, yet most of the import duty is refunded to exporters in Member States. The balance of this duty is retained by UDEAC for its expenses and various projects. The UDEAC has also eliminated import quotas (Sidjanski, 1972).

Figure 3.2: A Political Map of ECOWAS Region Used for the Development of the Region
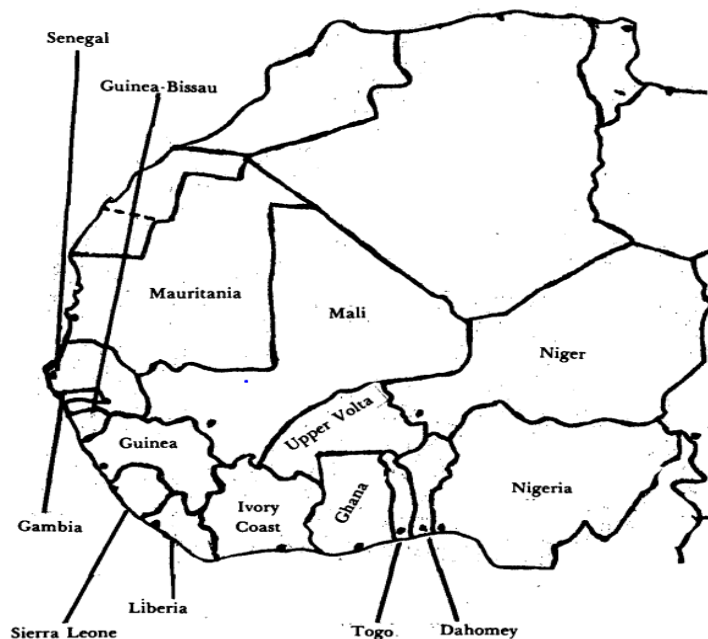
Source: (Zagaris, 1978).

A second economic integration group is the Economic Community of West Africa which replaced a prior, ineffective economic union known as the East African Customs Union (OTamboura, 1972). The CEAO includes the French speaking countries of Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. Benin City is an observer. The objective of the CEAO is to establish a common outer tariff and eliminate intra-community trade barriers (OTamboura, 1972). Since its establishment in January 1974, only limited progress has been achieved (Business International Corporation, 1977).

The initiative to form a regional economic grouping of AngloFrench nations in West Africa was made in 1964 by President Tubman of Liberia. On August 24, 1964, representatives from the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea met in Monrovia, Liberia, to discuss the prospects for the establishment of a free trade community among their respective nations (Ajomo, 1976). As a result of the Monrovia meeting, a committee of ministers and experts was assigned the task of making studies and recommendations for consideration at the next intergovernmental meeting. Agreement was reached among the representatives at the Monrovia meeting that cooperation should go forward in stages (Zagaris, 1978).

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On May 28, 1965, the next intergovernmental meeting was held at Freetown, Sierra Leone, at which time an agreement between Anglo-French nations was signed creating an interim organization based on the study of the

committee of experts. The agreement provided for the establishment of a ministerial commission, a small claims secretariat, and specialized committees to be established by the ministerial commission and composed of experts and technicians designated by the governments of the Member States. In addition, in September 1965, an administrative office of the West African Interim Organization was created in Monrovia (Sullivan, 2021). The second major development in Anglo-French economic cooperation among West African states resulted from a series of sub-regional meetings to develop regional economic cooperation sponsored by the United Nations Economic Commission for West Africa (ECA). In the second sub-regional meeting at Accra, Ghana, on May 4, 1967, a tentative agreement on seven Articles of Association for the Establishment of an Economic Community for West Africa was signed by thirteen English and French speaking West African states (Zagaris, 1978; Sullivan, 2021).

Nevertheless, the limited scope of the Articles of Association caused dissatisfaction among a number of the group's members, and in April 1972 the Heads of State of Nigeria and Togo began promoting the establishment of a more cohesive and integrated community. Nigeria and Togo arranged for meetings with officials of other interested West African countries in order to discuss cooperative arrangements and prepare a draft treaty 'for the West African Economic Community. In 1973, after solidifying proposals for the community, a joint Nigerian-Togolese mission visited West African capitals to lobby for its proposals (Zagaris, 1978).

The next significant meeting took place in Accra, Ghana during the week of February 11 to 15, 1973. At that meeting lawyers and experts from fifteen West African countries studied a draft treaty for economic integration based on a joint proposal by Nigeria and Ghana. The meeting resulted in an agreement to be forwarded to a ministerial conference of West African states. On January 24, 1975, in a meeting of the ministerial council at Monrovia, the draft treaty was approved and then was recommended to the Heads of State and Government at a meeting held in Lagos in 1975. On May 28, 1975, the treaty establishing the West African Economic Community (ECOWAS) was signed by Heads of State of fifteen West African countries (Zagaris, 1978).

METHODO AND MATERIALS

This study employs the correlational regression research design. This study adopts this research design because it allows the researcher to predict the determinants or factors contributing to the high homicide rates for countries in the ECOWAS region. The study span between 1960 and 2020. The study's population takes into accounts the fifteen (15) member countries of ECOWAS region. The fifteen-member countries of ECOWAS region as at the year 2020 have a total population of approximately four hundred million people, according to Africa Development Bank Group-AfDB (2021). This study considers all the fifteen-member countries in ECOWAS in each year for the period studied as its unit of analysis. The sample size of the study was made up of the fifteen-member countries of the ECOWAS region. The homicide data came primarily from the World Health Organization's (WHO) Mortality Database. The study obtains Life expectancy data from the World Bank, sex ratio data from the 2020 CIA World Factbook. All the other control variables were derived from the World Development Indicators for the period of 2020. Gini index data will come from The World Bank and the CIA World Factbook.

Model Specification

$$HMR_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LEB_{it} + \beta_2 SR_{it} + \beta_3 EI_{it} + \beta_4 YER_{it} + \mu_{it} \text{...} (1)$$

Where, HMR= homicide rates, LEB= Life Expectancy at Birth, SR=sex ratio, EI= economic inequality (Gini index), YER= Youth Unemployment Rates. In the equation above i represents the number of countries used (i =1, 2,…..(N)) and t represents the time (1960 to 2020), while $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3,$ and β_4 are coefficients.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variables	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
Homicide Rate	15	34.26	.27	34.52	7.5490	8.94326	79.982
Life Expectancy at Birth	15	22.40	50.90	73.30	59.2600	5.68843	32.358
Economic Inequality-Distribution of Family Income	15	17.00	33.70	50.70	39.6467	5.20369	27.078
Sex Ratio- Males per 100 Females	15	8.76	94.05	102.81	99.5453	2.60863	6.805
Unemployment Rate	15	32.80	.50	33.30	6.7600	7.96473	63.437
Valid N (listwise)	15						

Source: SPSS Data Output

In all 15 countries (N=15) from the ECOWAS region was considered for the analysis of the study. Table 1 illustrates the descriptive statistics or the summary statistics for all study variables. From the dataset, the dependent variable—homicide rates per 100,000 population, has a mean value (before log transformation) of 7.54 and a standard deviation of 8.94. The homicide values range from a low of 0.27 in Senegal to a high of 34.52 in Nigeria. This variable was log transformed for analyses due to positive skew in the distribution. Based on the homicide dataset, eight countries have especially very high homicide rates in the ECOWAS region: Nigeria (34.52), Guinea (17.30), Ivory Coast (11.6), Mali (10.9), Togo (9.00), The Gambia (7.8), Cape Verde (6.80), and Niger (4.43).

With regards to the discussion of the indicator of development across the ECOWAS region Life Expectancy at Birth was used as an indicator. Table 1 reveals that the Life Expectancy at Birth, has a mean of 22.40 years, ranging from approximately 53.63 years in Nigeria to 74.72 years in Cape Verde. The region recorded a standard deviation value for the Life Expectancy at Birth of 5.688.

With respect to the economic inequality- measure by the Gini Coefficient Index, Table 5.1 reveals that the ECOWAS region recorded an average economic inequality value of 39.65 %, ranging from approximately 33.70% in Guinea to 50.30 % in Guinea-Bissau. The standard deviation of the measure of the distribution of family income as a measure of economic inequality (Gini-Index) is 5.20, indicating considerably low variation in the economic inequality across the ECOWAS region. In relation to sex-ratio variable measure as males per every 100 females, Table 1 reveals that the ECOWAS region recorded an average sex-ratio value of 99.55 %, ranging from approximately 94.05% in Guinea to 102.80 % in Nigeria. The standard deviation of the sex-ratio measured as males per 100 females is 2.61, indicating considerably very low variation in the sex-ratio variable across the ECOWAS region.

Toward this end, Table 1 presents a summary statistic for the unemployment rate across the countries in the ECOWAS region. Table 5.1 reveals that the ECOWAS region recorded an average unemployment rate value of 6.80 %, ranging from approximately 0.50% in Niger to 33.30 % in Nigeria. The standard deviation of the unemployment rates across the 15 countries is 7.96, indicating considerably low variation in the unemployment rate or situation across the ECOWAS region.

Correlation Analysis between Log of Homicide Rates and All the Independent Variables

Table 2: Bivariate Correlation (N=15 countries)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Homicide rate (log)	1				
2. Development (Life Expectancy)	-0.317**	1			
3. Economic Inequality (Gini Index)	0.657**	-0.548**	1		
4. Sex Ratio [Males per 100 Females]	-0.287*	-0.506*	-0.094	1	
5. Unemployment Rate	0.795**	-0.089	-0.266	0.307	1
*Note: * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p< 0.01. Log= logarithm, LB=Life Expectancy.*					

Source: Author's summary of the correlation output from SPSS 20.0

Table 2 presents bivariate correlation analysis for all the study variables. For the case of the development indicator (i.e. life expectancy at birth), Table 2 reveals a weak inverse relationship between the life expectancy at birth and homicide (r = –0.317**) which is significant at 5% significance, indicating that more developed nations tend to have lower levels of fatal violence. This finding is consistent with the following prior researches (see Chamlin and Cochran, 2006; Hughes et al., 2015), which revealed a strong inverse relationship between homicide rates and development indicators.

Table 2 further reveals a moderately strong positive relationship between economic inequality and homicide (r = 0.657**) and a moderately strong inverse relationship between economic inequality and development (r = –0.548**). These findings were also consistent with Hughes et al. (2015) study, which revealed a strong positive association between economic inequality and homicide. The study further revealed a strong negative relationship between economic inequality and development indicators (such as life expectancy at birth, GDP per capita, etc.). Above all, Table 2 reveals also that sex-ratio is not significantly associated with homicide at 5% significance level but at 10% significance level and exhibited a negative weak association (-0.287*). While unemployment exhibited a strong positive significant associated with homicide (r=0.795**). This implies that a country with high with unemployment rate like Nigeria is expected to record high crime rates.

Table 3: OLS Regression Estimates for Predicting Logged Homicides Rates (N=15 countries)

Variables	Estimated Coefficients	
	B	Beta
Development [LB]	-0.425** (0.161)	-0.270
Economic Inequality [Gini Index]	0.313 (0.333)	0.182
Sex Ratio [Males per 100 Females]	-0.589** (0.266)	-0.343
Unemployment rate	0.645** (0.278)	0.448
Constant	16.684*** (5.097)	
F-statistics	8.049**	
R^2	0.765	
Adjusted R^2	0.658	

Note: *Standard errors are in parenthesis. Significance level are measured at * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p< 0.01. Dependent Variable= log Homicide rate & LB=Life Expectancy.*

Source: Author's summary of the ordinary least squared (OLS) regression output from SPSS 20.0

Table 3 presents the regression results for the predictors of homicide rates across the ECOWAS region. In relation to Table 3, the explanatory or predictor variables include life expectancy at birth, economic inequality, unemployment, and sex ratio, which were consistent with prior researches (see Messner & Rosenfeld, 1997; Hughes et al., 2015; Weld & Roche, 2016). With respect to Table 3, about 76.5% variations in the homicide crime could be attributed to the following variables, such as life expectancy at birth or the level of development, economic inequality, youth unemployment, and sex ratio. Meanwhile, based on the F-statistics (8.409*), it can be concluded that the overall model for prediction is statistically significant and could be used to predict homicide rates in the ECOWAS region. As discovered earlier in Table 3, development has a significant negative relationship with homicide (b = –0.317). Meanwhile, the regression coefficient value for life expectancy at birth (-0.428**) in the regression model is statistically significant at 5% significance level, which also exhibit a negative relationship between life expectancy at birth and homicide rates. This indicates that homicide rates tend to be higher in nations that have younger populations, lower life expectancies, higher infant mortality rates, lower GDPs per capita, and fewer urban residents.

With respect to sex-ratio, the data reveals that the sex ratio variable is statistically significant to the homicide rates at 5% significance with a coefficient of -0.589**. This implies whenever the sex ratio increases by 1% in the ECOWAS region, homicides rates will be expected to fall by 58.90% in the region. This finding is also consistent with prior researches by Messner and Sampson (1991); and Weld and Roche (2016), which revealed that sex ratio also has a significant negative relationship with homicide, suggesting that nations with more men relative to women have lower levels of deadly violence or homicide rates. Meanwhile, youth employment exhibited a significant positive relationship with homicide crime across the ECOWAS region (i.e. with the coefficient value of 0.645**). This implies that a country with high with unemployment rate like Nigeria is expected to record high crime rates. Above all, from Table 3, economic inequality has a significant positive relationship with homicide (b = 0.447**). This finding is also consistent with the bivariate results in Table 2 and the findings from Weld and Roche (2016) discussion for economic inequality and homicide rates, indicating that homicide crime is higher in nations with a greater disparity between wealthy and less affluent segments of the population.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS
It was observed from the dataset and the analysis that crime rate is still on the high-side across the ECOWAS region. It is also observed from the analysis that several factors including life expectancy at, inequality in resource distribution, high youth employment, etc. are crucial predictors of crime in the ECOWAS region. Therefore, in order for the region to minimize crime, and giving the political will of the leaders across the ECOWAS member countries, the study recommends the following policy suggestions and implications:

- Increase developmental projects across the region to ensure growth and development will go a long way to minimize crime in the ECOWAS region. The study finds that the development indicator measure by life expectancy at birth has a negative relationship with homicide crime rate recorded in the region. This shows that homicide rates tend to be higher in nations or countries that have younger populations, lower life expectancies, higher infant mortality rates, lower GDPs per capita, and fewer urban residents within the ECOWAS region. Therefore, as many of the countries within the ECOWAS region tends to improve their education, health, and create more jobs for the youth the region will attain a high degree of

development in order to minimize across the region. Additionally, a country's economic development may also be reflected in average life expectancy, which indicates the achievement of long and healthy lives and is measured by life expectancy at birth. Evidence indicates that sustainable economic growth ultimately improves life expectancy (Khan et al., 2016).

- Ensuring equitable distribution of the region's scarce resources or income among the citizens of the ECOWAS member countries within the region. The study finds that economic inequality or income distribution indicator measure of Gini coefficient index was positively related to crime in the ECOWAS region, this therefore implies high degree of economic inequality or imbalance in income distribution across the ECOWAS region leads to high crime rate in the region. From Table 5.4 in Chapter V, the study revealed that economic inequality has a significant positive relationship with homicide rates for all the three models. This finding is also consistent with the bivariate results in Table 5.3 and the findings from Weld and Roche (2016) discussion for economic inequality and homicide rates, indicating that homicide crime is higher in nations with a greater disparity between wealthy and less affluent segments of the population. Therefore, as a result of public policy implications the leadership for the ECOWAS region must motivate member countries to ensure equitable distribution of scarce resources in order to minimize crime in the region.

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