

PREROGATIVE OF MERCY, BANE OF ETHNIC DISUNITY AND CRIMINALITY: USING SOCIO-LEGAL AND CULTURAL INTERPRETATIONS ON THE VICTIMS' OR VICTIMS' FAMILIES IN NIGERIA

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DOI:

ABSTRACT

Modern prerogative of mercy is comparable to the monarchical absolute power to punish offences in the past. Studies have centred on the offenders' plight, however, the grief of the victims/victims' families is overlooked. The paper examines the effects of prerogative of mercy on the rate of ethnic disunity, crime and socio-cultural implications on the victims/victims' families in Nigeria. Questionnaires were administered to 840 respondents, 64 respondents were interviewed and 4-Focus Group Discussions were conducted. Majority of the respondents claimed that victims/victims' families were uncared for, despite the psychological trauma and pain they encounter from the offenders. Most respondents vowed that there would be no unity between them and offenders/offenders' families; they portrayed an eagerness to revenge at the slightest opportunity. The paper argues that despite the political pragmatic exercise of this power, it conflicts with their cultural values, perpetuated culture of criminality and leads to communities' disunity. The paper concludes that victims and families of the victims often live with hatred because of this unfair treatment. The need to confront the menace of crimes and constant communities' attack demands a total exclusion of these laws and a need for social policy which aims to relieve the grief of the victims/victims' families.

Keywords: Prerogative of mercy, Ethnic disunity, Criminality, Socio-legal and Cultural, Victims, Victims' families