

# Dented but not daunted



**Study of the criminal perceptions and challenges of integration of Nigerians in the Netherlands**

**Ifeyinwa Ogbonna, 2016**

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## **Study of the criminal perceptions and challenges of integration of Nigerians in the Netherlands**

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# **Dedication**

To God Almighty, whose mighty hands single handedly brought me this far against all odds.

# Acknowledgement

My first days in MDR (Masters in Development and Rural innovation) classes were nightmares, coming from a technical background, and being exposed to the world of social science for the first time. Everything was strange: having to read loads of articles, understanding the terminologies, and applying the knowledge to real life situations. But for the encouragement of most of my teachers, I would not know how I could have made it. Therefore, I am glad to be able to use this opportunity to say thank you.

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My warm regards also goes to my dear husband, Alexander. Your knowledge of Dutch system gave me a lot of back up. You eventually became my research partner; leading and helping me to access the authorities, and bridging the gap of Dutch language barrier whenever it was required, especially during the field work days. Not forgetting my dear classmates as well; thanking you all

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In the end, I am glad that I made the choice of MDR. It has indeed been a great learning experience!

# Summary

The criminal perception of Nigerians has been a problem to Nigerians both at home and abroad. This perception has further been deteriorated in Europe and specifically in the Netherlands, consequent upon criminal events involving Nigerian citizens in the Netherlands. However, the details of these perceptions have not been investigated empirically; neither from the perspectives of the Dutch and that of Nigerians, nor in the area of the challenge it is probably posing on the integration of Nigerians in the Netherlands. This thesis therefore studies the criminal perceptions of Nigerians in the Netherlands, and its potential impacts on the integration of Nigerian citizens in the Netherlands.

The concept of frame / framing was chosen to explore these perceptions: that of Dutch society, represented by the frames of her media; and that of Nigerians represented by 16 intermediate elite Nigerian respondents. Similarly, the concept of integration was adopted to explain the possible effects of these frames on Nigerians, while the concept of construction of realities was adopted to explore personal experiences of Nigerians which helped to deepen our understanding of the impacts of these criminal perceptions on the integration of Nigerians in Dutch society. The overall approach was that of qualitative case study, comprising of a media evaluation that explored 3 on line media outlet (Dutch News.nl, Expatica.nl and NRC.nl), and narrative interview of Nigerians living primarily in Amsterdam and The Hague.

It was discovered that Dutch media basically portrays Nigerian group in the light of persistent perpetrators of organized crimes such as human smuggling / trafficking, Internet (419) scam, drug trafficking, prostitutions, sham marriages, money laundering and possession of fake documents. The proliferation of these crimes in Dutch society was attributed to the Netherlands being a safe haven for Nigerian criminals as a result of the softness of Dutch police as well as the direct flight from Nigeria through Schiphol which offers these criminals easy access to the Netherlands, and a

gateway to other parts of Europe. These criminal activities are moreover termed problematic to the Dutch government.

Nigerians on the other hand frames it as an unfair generalization that all Nigerians are at sight adjudged criminals. Consequently, they always have to consciously or unconsciously prove themselves otherwise. Furthermore, the respondents lamented that Nigerians are so mistrusted to the point that innocent mistakes are taken as willful acts of crime. They described themselves as hardworking and good people, pointing out that the perpetrators of these crimes are in the minority, as majority of Nigerians in Dutch society are indeed law abiding.

Finally, the study showed that the criminal perceptions of Nigerians in the Netherlands have effects on certain areas of their integration. In terms of structural integration for instance, which was further divided into economic related integration and other rights, it was discovered that Nigerians are experiencing challenges in the aspect of their economic related integration such as in securing employment, especially with private employers, securing business opportunities and accessing financial deals. In terms of 'other rights', which is primarily the responsibility of the government (state controlled employment, health, housing, welfare benefits), it was revealed that Nigerians are in principle not out rightly discriminated against. However, the blacklisting of Nigerian documents in Dutch society raises a question as to the authenticity of this statement. With reference to social integration, it was found that societal acceptance is still an issue, as Nigerians are more often than not met with skepticism in public places. On the other hand, culturally, it was shown that Nigerians are not experiencing any known form of barrier to their faith and cultural practice.

Finally, it was concluded that the criminal perceptions of Nigerians, which is being fuelled in Dutch society by her media, has impacts in the economical, social and psychological integration of Nigerians in Dutch society. Notwithstanding, some Nigerians are still able to break some of these barriers. Hence the title: "Dented, but not daunted"

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

“We cannot put it directly that our image as a country is battered but rather, it is common knowledge that Nigeria experiences public perception issues over time within global circles, on account, perhaps, of the activities of an insignificant number of compatriots and we in the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations are disturbed over this trend” (Ohaeri, 2014).

The perception of Nigerians in the international community has been a problem to both Nigerians at home and abroad. As pointed out by Ajayi, (2005), this image crisis has a historical foundation (p. 50). Like all other countries in the world, Nigeria is a sovereign nation with both good and bad people. Besides being associated with corruption and globally perceived as an unsafe country, her citizens are known to be resilient, hardworking, creative, enterprising and always kind to foreigners, even to the detriment of their fellow citizens. Yet, the reputation of Nigerians in the international community remains deplorable, as the echo of the exploits of the few bad eggs seem to reverberate more to the ears of the outside world, than the gentle whispers of the good majority. Unfortunately, the consequences of an image crisis can be immense. For instance, it can deny a nation and of course her citizens the desired respect from other nations (Ajayi, 2005, p.50). Thus, globally, there seems to be a mindset that consciously or unconsciously evokes the image of a fraudster at the sight of a Nigerian. And as a result, Nigerian citizens are met with skepticism at airports and in public places.

Efforts had been made on the part of previous Nigerian governments to address this issue. For instance, after the assumption of office in 1999, the then president of Nigeria, General Olusegun Obasanjo, embarked on an image building intervention to improve the image of Nigeria abroad. His shuttle diplomacy involved visiting governments of major countries across the globe and addressing major world organizations such as the commonwealth, the United Nations (UN), the group of 8 (G8) summit, the group of 77 (G77) summit, the European Union(EU), African union (AU), the Economic community of West African states(ECOWAS) and the likes whenever the opportunity arises. Internally, he inaugurated Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in year 2000 and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) in 2003. Both commissions are mandated to fight against corruption through enlightenment, investigation and prosecution of bribery and corrupt practices, and to address financial corruption and money laundering offences respectively.

In another effort, the then minister of information, Late Prof. (Mrs) Dora Akunyili felt that “the negative perception of Nigeria by the international community needed to be addressed” (Akunyili, 2013). She initiated the “Rebranding Nigeria Campaign” in 2009. The launching of the campaign gave birth to the slogan “Nigeria - Good People, Great Nation”. The aim was to encourage patriotism among Nigerians as it was believed that the poor conduct of few Nigerians at home and abroad contributes to its negative image.

These efforts yielded gains in terms of the rising profile of Nigeria in leadership positions in international organizations such as The ECOWAS, the G-77, the AU (Ajayi, 2005, P. 6) and most recently in 2014, in the Organization

of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), where a Nigerian emerged the first female president. Nevertheless, the case is different for individual Nigerians. Nigerian citizens are still being subjected to humiliation and skepticism at embassies, airports and in their host communities, where the fraudsters brand has continued to trail them. The same is also the case of Nigerians in Europe and of course in the Netherlands, where the situation is seemingly aggravated.

### ***1.1 Problem statement***

A lot of Nigerians live in the United Kingdom, followed by Italy (the entry point for most illegal migrants), the rest are scattered in various parts of Europe, including the Netherlands. However, the experiences across countries have been different. For instance, at the moment, documents from Nigeria are blacklisted by Dutch authorities, and as at 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2013, the Netherlands embassy in Nigeria stopped legalizing documents intended for use in the Netherlands. Therefore, documents from Nigeria intended for use in the Netherlands are considered invalid until extensively verified by Dutch authorities (Ministerie van Justitie, 1999).

Similarly, emphasis of previous researches on Nigerians in Europe and of course the Netherlands has been on the criminal events involving Nigerians. The 419 scam received most attention (Schoenmakers, van Wijk, & de Vries, 2009; Oboh & Schoenmakers, 2010; Isacenkova, Thonnard, Costin, Balzarotti, & Francillon, 2013). In fact, in their extensively investigated research, Oboh & Schoenmaker (2010) highlighted that Amsterdam was branded the “*worldwide heart of AFF (Advanced Fee Fraud) scam*” in year 2000, with incidences of scam from the United States and other parts of Europe traced to Amsterdam, and more often than not, Nigerians were involved. Van Dijk,

(2011), exhaustively dealt with human trafficking and forced prostitution. He described how under aged female asylum seekers of Nigerian origin disappeared from asylum homes and homes of their foster parents, with this incident later being connected to the emergence of young under aged prostitutes in Netherlands' big cities such as Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam. Still more, human trafficking and smuggling was thoroughly explored by Carling (2006). These repeated indictments of Nigerians on criminal issues in the Netherlands seem now to be used as a yardstick for assessing all Nigerians in the Netherlands, thereby implying that Nigerians as a group are all criminals (Schoenmakers et al., 2009). These emphases unarguably aggravate the negative perceptions of Nigerians in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, there has never been any empirical investigation into the details of these various perceptions, nor the implication it has for the integration of Nigerians in their host society. This research therefore focuses on a systematic understanding of the details of these perceptions, and its implication on the integration of Nigerians in the Netherlands; starting from an understanding of the contexts.

## ***1.2 The contexts***

The following contexts formed the background of the thesis:

### ***1.2.1 The Nigerian context***

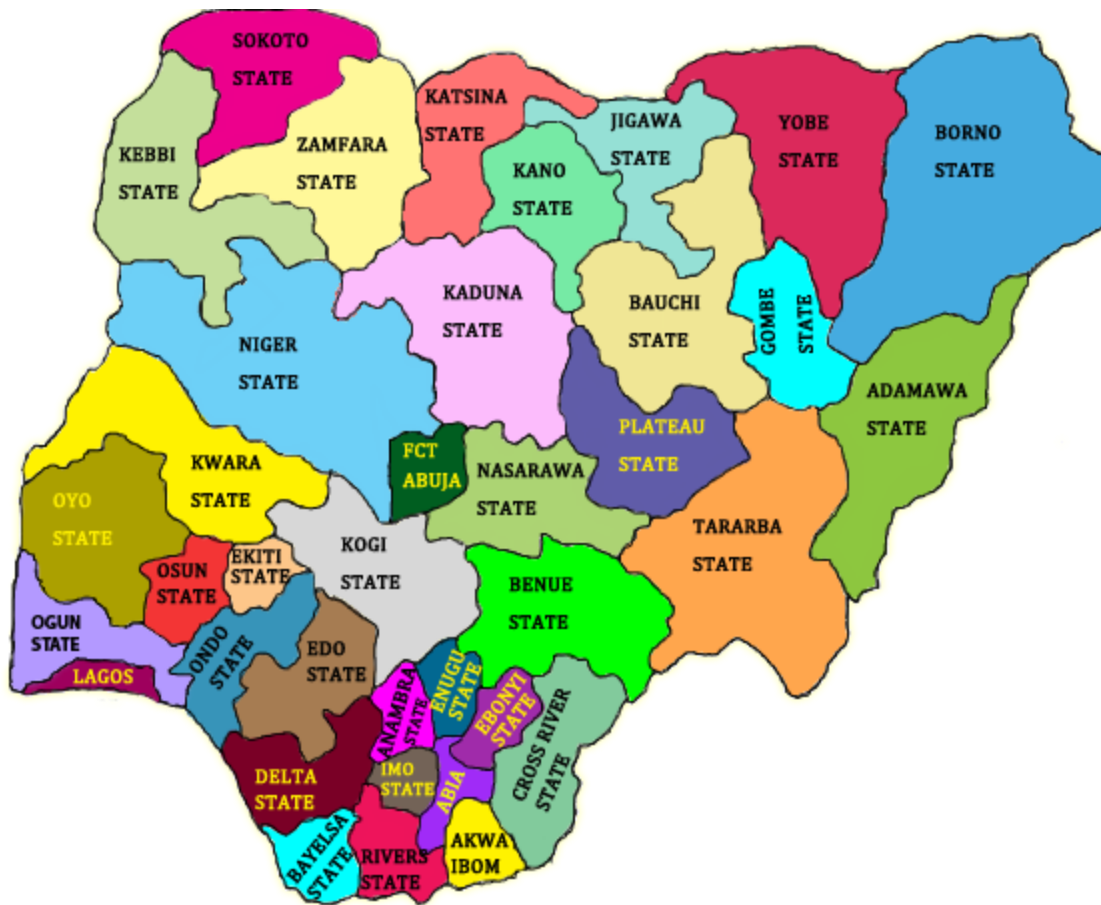
The Federal republic of Nigeria is one of the countries in West Africa. Currently, its population is estimated to be about 170 million people, making it the most populous black nation. It is constituted by 36 geographic and administrative boundaries known as states, in addition to the capital, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, which is also a state, making it 37 states of the



federation (The map is shown next page). Nigeria has about 250 ethnic groups, with the Igbos, Hausas and Yorubas constituting the majority. The diversity in Nigeria is unparalleled in terms of religious, cultural, history and political administration. Based on these divides, Nigeria is characterized by different alignments, factions and interest groups which play a role in the politics and governance of the country. Accordingly, her system of patron-client culture<sup>1</sup> (Carling, 2010, p. 17) leaves most parts of the country marginalized and the people frustrated due to a high degree of social inequality, unparalleled poverty gap between the rich and the poor, and with no known existing social welfare system.

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<sup>1</sup> A system, whereby aligned groups and individuals invests in placing their own people in power for the sole purpose of personal gains rather than for the purpose of developing the country



*Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the 36 states and FCT*

The first generation of Nigerian migrants to the Netherlands were either for employment or job training, bearing in mind the Nigerian - Royal Dutch Shell petroleum relationship that dates back to the 50's. Meanwhile, coming for studies and family reunion with spouse in the Netherlands is still an on-going process, and has contributed significantly to the number of Nigerians in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the current major in flow of Nigerians to the Netherlands is through asylum process. Among West Africans, Nigeria is topping the list; with a total of 925 requests, followed by Congo (680) and 610 from Ivory Coast (Central Bureau of Statistic [CBS], 2014). In recent times, the number has been fluctuating, with a total of 170 in 2009, 190 in 2010, 150 in 2011, 145 in 2012, 165 in 2013 and 80 as at August 2014 (CBS, 2014).

Among documented migrants from Africa, Ghanaian population is the highest, with a population of 22,556; followed by Ethiopians (12,596) and Nigerians (CBS, 2014). Presently, a total of 11,766 thousand Nigerians live legally in the Netherlands. Out of this total, 6,214 persons belong to the first generation migrant while 5,555 are in the category of second generation migrant (children born in the Netherlands by Nigerian parents). Of this second generation migrant, 3,195 of them had one parent born abroad while 1,957 children belong to parents who were both born abroad (CBS, 2014, August). Nonetheless, a lot of Nigerians in the Netherlands are undocumented. Meanwhile, the highest concentrations of Nigerians in the Netherlands are found in Amsterdam and The Hague (CBS, 2014). A sizeable number have Dutch passport and even work for Dutch and international organizations in the Netherlands. Others are engaged in private enterprises and Nongovernmental organizations, breaking even against odds.

### ***1.2.2 The context of Perception as it is regarded in this thesis***

Perception is our awareness of things around us, which is dependent upon the impressions these things make upon our senses, and the meanings or recognitions we attach to them (Allport, 1955, p. 14). Pennington (2000) on the other hand suggests that social perception be used interchangeably with social cognition, whereas social cognition is the manner in which we interpret, analyze and remember information about the world around us (p. 1). He further referred to it as cognitive conditions in our minds that help us to form impressions about the world around us (p. 62).

Similarly, perceived image of a nation is regarded as the mental picture of a nation in the mind of other nationalities (Li & Chitty, 2009, p. 1). Compared to a product brand, a good brand is easily marketed while bad brands are

rebuffed by consumers. A positive national image of a migrant's home country can create a welcoming atmosphere for an immigrant in the host community, while a negative national image would potentially lead to crises in the integration experience of the immigrant. It can also influence the attitude of a person or nation towards another country, its people and products (Kinsey & Chung, 2013, p. 2). Similarly, how a country is perceived and projected can result in a mutual or strained relationship between two countries (Li & Chitty, 2009). Meanwhile, these perceptions are usually constructed from personal experiences, events, stereotyping, the media and its coverage of issues pertaining to the nation in question (Dinnie, as cited in Matiza & Oni, 2014, p. 663).

With particular emphasis to the media, it is not new that the media has influence in the way our perceptions are formed. In fact, the influence of media on perception has been applied to several areas of research; for instance, in the area of politics (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), risk perception (Wahlberg & Sjoberg, 2000) and minority group (immigrant) studies (Tsfati, 2007) to mention but a few. McCombs & Shaw (1972) further wrote that most of what people know comes to them second or third hand from the media (p. 176). To add to that, the receivers of these media information are not passive, but are rather consciously interpreting and connecting the information they acquire to their prior existing knowledge (Barnidge & Rojas, 2014, p. 1), thereby altering or re enforcing their perceptions.

Furthermore, Van Dijk (1989) discovered that people always referred to the media when defending or conveying their ethnic opinion; showing that discussions on minorities (immigrant Nigerians for instance) mostly arise from the media rather than from every day talks (p. 201), that is, the media

has the ability to influence the audience. Unfortunately, studies have shown that media representation of immigrant minority groups has always been negative; mostly in the light of crime (Van Dijk, 1991; Mahtani, 2001; Maneri & Ter Wal, 2005). After all, the general strategy of the media has been: “emphasis our good things and their bad things; deemphasize our bad things and their good things” (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 5). In other words, the media is biased.

However, be it right or wrong, accurate or misleading, perception has strong influence on the acceptance of immigrants in the social circle, and determines to a reasonable extent, the level of success attainable by immigrants in their host community. It is therefore within this context of immigrant perception that the integration of Nigerians in the Netherlands is explored.

### ***1.2.3 The context of integration and the Netherlands***

The context into which an immigrant comes in, such as social network, the opportunities and confrontations with supportive or hostile host community members play an important role in the overall experience of the immigrant (Deaux, 2006, p. 2). An immigrant is someone who has citizenship in one country but enters another country with a specific intention to set up a residence or live there. The country of origin where a migrant is coming from is the *home* country; while the destination country is referred to as the *host*. Gaining an immigrant status in a foreign country can be through family reunion, employment, gaining refugee status (demanded while the applicant is still outside the destination country) or asylum status (applied for from within the destination country). Irrespective of the reason and mode of entry into a country, it is desirable that immigrants are mainstreamed into their new society.

Immigrants seeking to be part of a host society can do so in four different ways. Berry (1997, p. 9) holds that they may choose to abandon their cultural identity and imbibe the culture of the new society (assimilation), or choose to retain their own culture while refusing to interact with the host society (separation). Immigrant can also be said to be (marginalised) when probably it is not possible for them to maintain their own culture, and at the same time, based on exclusion, discrimination or belief system, are unwilling to associate with the host society. The fourth category, *integration*, represents a situation whereby immigrant may wish to maintain their own culture, as well as strive to be part of the network of their host society. This fourth category is the focus of this study, and it represents a “sociological context, which refers to stable, cooperative relations within a clearly defined social system” (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 2).

Castles, Korac, Vasta & Vertovec (2002) defined integration as a process; one by which an immigrant is accepted in the social circle, and mainstreamed into an existing social system (Snel, Engbersen & Leerkes, 2006, p. 267). The Netherlands on one hand is recognised internationally as a multicultural society (Duyvendak & Scholten, 2011, p. 331), although, this multicultural model is now being contested, based on her current restrictive systems. For instance, the March 2006 *Wet Inburgering Buitenland* and December 2006 *Wet Inburgering* which requires intending and newcomers in Dutch society to take civic integration exams in their home countries or in the Netherlands respectively (Vink, 2007, pp. 346 -347), were intended to restrict immigration. Nevertheless, integration is achieved when the host society is receptive and accommodating, minimizing discrimination and tolerating cultural differences. How these elements are achieved in the events of an

exacerbated negative image of Nigerians in Dutch society is the centre point of this research.

### ***1.3 The objectives***

Based on the above, the following objectives were put forward:

- To gain insight into the perspectives of Dutch society through its media concerning the criminal perceptions of Nigerians in the Netherlands.
- To gain insight into the perspectives of Nigerians living in the Netherlands on the criminal perception of her citizens in the Netherlands.
- To learn how these criminal perceptions of Nigerians in the Netherlands is impacting on their integration in the Netherlands.

### ***1.4 The research questions***

Following the above objectives, the following general and sub research questions are formulated:

***How is the criminal perception of Nigerians framed in Dutch society; and how do these frames play a role in the integration experiences of Nigerians in the Netherlands?***

#### ***1.4.1 Sub research questions***

The following sub research questions are also defined:

- How does the Dutch news media frame the criminal perception of Nigerians in the Netherlands?
- How do Nigerians living in the Netherlands frame the criminal perception of Nigerians in the Netherlands?

- How does the criminal perception of Nigerians in the Netherlands impact their integration experience in the Netherlands?

### ***1.5 My relation to the topic***

Arriving at this topic was a coincidence, yet it turned out to be something that I knew I passionately wanted to do. Even my classmates were not surprised that I came up with this topic. Meanwhile, my position in this research is as an insider, being a Nigerian and having gone through some of the experiences described in this work. For instance, before I came to the Netherlands, when my photo passport was demanded by the university in the course of processing my scholarship, it turned out that over and over, my submission was rejected. When I complained to my contact in the Netherlands, the answer I got was “this people are careful with Nigerians”. Again, few weeks after I came to the Netherlands, I met and became friends with one of my classmates, an Indian. It was months later that she informed me how her family dissuaded from engaging in our friendship, “Nigerians cannot be trusted” they told her. It never occurred to me that I am being watched closely. Nevertheless, our friendship thrived until this day, having not found any reason to the contrary. Similarly, in June 2014, the entire class embarked on an excursion to Malta on a research, and the subject of the research was illegal migration; unfortunately, Nigerians are always involved. Thus, over and over, at meetings and interview places, Nigerians were constantly being referred to, and whenever this happens, the entire students turn to stare at me.

Eventually, when I was constrained to carry out my thesis in the Netherlands, my first option was to avoid language barriers. Thus, I opted for migrant studies, specifically concerning Nigerians, so as to stick with people of my own speech community. But it was not clear what I was going to do with Nigerians.



Fortunately, going through previous researches concerning Nigerians in Europe, I discovered a knowledge gap that captured my interest and promises to supply answers to most of my 'whys'.

Because of my quest, I became too ambitious without my knowing it; I wanted to know everything, to get the perspectives of everybody concerned – the Dutch society, her media and Nigerians as well. Eventually, the scope of my topic became too large, having 3 units of observations that required different methodologies, concepts and styles of analysis. I had different versions of interview questions too, each one adapted to the varied groups. My inner motive was to get Nigerians to understand the different perspectives surrounding this problematic issue, hoping that the knowledge generated could somehow be useful someday.

## ***1.6 Structure of the thesis***

Chapter 1 gave an overview of the negative image of Nigerians and how it has been a burden to Nigerians. The problem statement is then defined, followed by a description of the situational context of Nigeria, in addition to the two other contexts that is central to this study - perception and integration. The research objectives were then defined, followed by questions, sub questions and my relation to the thesis.

Chapter 2 elaborates on the theoretical concepts applied to this thesis, and ends with a sketch of the interrelationship among the concepts.

Chapter 3 gives a description of the research plan. This includes the research design, sampling, data collection and analytical method.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the first research question, the media evaluation report.

Chapter 5 presents a framing analysis of the viewpoints of Nigerians concerning her perceived criminal image in the Netherlands.

Chapter 6 documents some striking experiences of Nigerians, and then using the concept of integration, analyses the impact of the frames in 4 and 5 on the integration of Nigerians in the Netherlands.

Chapter 7 brings the reader to the end of the report with a conclusion, discussion and recommendation for further research.

The term 'negative perception', 'criminal perception', 'negative image' or 'criminal image' are used interchangeably throughout the thesis, depending

on which term is most suitable, enhances clarity and or avoids unnecessary repetitions at some points or the other.

## 2 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUNDS

The focus of this thesis is to understand how the criminal perception of Nigerians is influencing the integration of her people in the Netherlands. However, perceptions in itself are thoughts or mental images, and can only be understood when they are communicated. As such, the concept of *framing* (in this case, verbal representation of thoughts) is adopted to help us study these perceptions. The framing section will cover two parts, starting with a general introduction of the concept of frames / framing and how it relates to the topic under study. This is followed by a brief explanation of frames with particular emphasis on the media. The media framing, as employed in this thesis was intended to provide a reflection of the perception of Dutch society concerning Nigerians in the Netherlands.

Next, our perceptions are influenced by our realities; and vice versa. Therefore, the concept of *construction of realities* is adopted to explore the experiences of Nigerians in the Netherlands. Although the media also construct realities, media construction of realities will not be given attention hence the focus (unit of analysis) of this thesis is on Nigerians and their experiences of integration. The concept of construction of realities is therefore used to shed light on these experiences. Finally, the concept of *integration* is used to explore how the criminal perception of Nigerians is influencing their interactions in the Netherlands.

### ***2.1 The concept of Framing and frames***

To frame is to construct reality (Goffman, 1974). It is a way of making sense, interpreting and giving meaning to what is happening around us (Aarts, Van Lieshout, & van Woerkum, 2011, p. 235), hence a process of representing our

interpretation of the world through sorting and categorizing of our experiences (Gray, 2003, p.12). The media, political groups, social movements and groups, organizations and individual actors give meaning to social phenomenon through framing.

Dewulf et al. (2009) distinguishes between two theoretical approaches to framing: *cognitive* (frames) and *interactional* (framing). Cognitive frames represent knowledge schemas; that is, they are structures of expectations that we hold in our mind about people, places, events and objects. For example, it can be viewed as the structures of expectations that the Dutch society hold in their minds about Nigerians and vice versa. In other words, they are a cognitive representation that build on and refers to previous experiences, expectations and objectives concerning an issue at stake (criminal perceptions), the actors involved (Nigerians) and the processes that take place (Aarts & Van Woerkum, 2006, p. 232). On the other hand, framing is “the activity and process of creating and representing frames” (Gray, 2003, p. 11). It is negotiated and produced during interaction through meta-communication, and captures how a situation should be understood (Dewulf et al. 2009, p. 160). Framings are outcomes of frames, and are necessary in representing our opinions or thoughts in words, thereby voicing out our perceptions about a situation or an experience (Weick in Gray, 2003, p. 12); in this case, the perceptions of crimes involving Nigerians in the Netherlands.

Different kinds of frames are recognized, but *issue* frames, *identity* frames and *characterization* frames (Gray 2003; Lewicki et al. 2003; Dewulf et al. 2009; Aarts et al. 2011) are most relevant for this study.

*Issue frames* refer to the interpretations we assign to agenda items, events, and problems (Dewulf et al. 2009, p. 165). They define problems (Gray 2003,

p. 15; Entman 2009, p. 52). By problem definition, frames are used to ascertain that a problem exists, to determine what it is all about, and to explain the different ways that people make sense of it (Aarts et al. 2011, p. 236). In other words, they reveal the different elements of the issue at stake as it is perceived by those concerned. These elements also include probable causes and solution (Aarts et al. 2011); as well described as diagnosis and prognosis (Gray 2003, p. 12; 2004, p. 167; Bonfadelli, Dahinden & Leonarz, 2007).

*Identity* frames are constructed to refer to one's own individual or collective identity in relation to a problem (Lewicki et al. 2003; Gray 2003; Dewulf et al. 2009, Aarts et al. 2011), for instance, the perceived identity of Nigerians as a group or as individuals with respect to the criminal perception of her citizens. Challenge to peoples' identities produces vigorous defense (Rothman in Dewulf, 2009, p. 169), such defense could be in form of champions or as victims (Dewulf et al. 2009, p. 169).

*Characterization frames*, also referred to as frame of *moral evaluation* (Entman 1993, p. 52), are usually directed at the causal agent. They are statements of a person or group with reference to "the other" person or groups (Aarts et al. 2011, p. 236). It is about taking stance, making attributions as to who is responsible for a problem. They could either be positive, negative or neutral portrayal of the attitude of "the other" (Dewulf et al. 2009, p. 168), in form of acknowledging or blaming of the third person (Gray 2003, p. 12).

### **2.1.1 Media framing**

According to Entman (1993):

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (p. 52).

These communicating texts could be in form of news papers, magazines and on-line publications through which the media reaches out to its readers. Media framing is thus the process of constructing meanings concerning issues of social relevance by the media.

Following Bonfadelli, Dahinden & Leonarz (2007), media framing can be defined as:

A structure within the media text that organizes central ideas of an issue and which has the function of constructing meaning, incorporating news events into its interpretative package. These media frames are the result of the news production process, including organizational and personal (journalistic) factors. (p. 103).

Thus while framing generally makes salient certain aspect of perceived reality; promoting its definition, cause, evaluation and or treatment (Entman, 1993, p.52), news reporters bring in their own objectivity to convey a dominant frame and activate the consciousness of certain issues in human minds (p. 56).

Two types of media framing are identified by communication researchers: equivalency framing and emphasis framing. *Equivalency framing* is “the use of different, but logically equivalent words or phrases to describe the same

phenomenon while *emphasis framing* involves highlighting a particular subset of potentially relevant considerations”, (Druckman, as cited in Iyengar 2005, p.5).

Media Frames can also be *thematic* or *episodic* (Iyengar, 2005, p. 6; 1991, p. 14). Thematic frames give a more general background report of an issue while episodic frame takes the form of a case study and is centered on the reporting of events.

## ***2.2 Construction of realities***

The realities of our world constitutes of facts, which can be presented or represented (Bohm, 1996). Presented facts are in form of first order realities, while represented facts are termed second order realities respectively (Watzlawick, as cited in Ford 1999, p. 481). First order realities are accessible, measurable and empirically verifiable. They are attributes or qualities of a thing, situation or events which can be physically demonstrated or publicly recognized. Alternatively, second order realities are the meanings, interpretations, value and attributes that we attach to these first order realities (p. 482). Thus, our lived experiences can be viewed as first order realities while our interpretation of them can be seen as second other realities.

Generally, realities are constructed in the course of social interactions (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010, p. 174). For instance, we know because someone says it is or because we are able to interpret that it is, given what we already know. In other words, they are mediums through which production of meanings possibly take place.



Realities can be from casual conversations. According to Eggins and Slade (1997), casual conversations, although seemingly aimless, play a role in the construction of realities, which can be experienced in our day to day encounters in the course of social interaction with other members of the society. Again, media discourses plays significant role in the construction of realities (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992). Takeshita (1997, p. 15) wrote that the media mediate between the objective realities (what is out there) and our subjective realities (what to believe about what is out there), especially as it concerns social issues around us.

Construction of realities is an ongoing process; as people live stories, and in telling those stories, they reaffirm, modify and even create new ones (Koch 1998, p. 1183). In addition, Bruner (1991) supports that as humans, we organize these experiences (otherwise realities) as narratives (p. 4).

In this study, the narrative of Nigerians which helps us to make sense of their experience of integration in the Netherlands is explored using this concept.

### ***2.3 Integration***

Integration is a two-way process (Bakker, Dagevos & Engbersen, 2013, p. 432), an ongoing experience and not an end situation, of becoming accepted in the society on one hand (Penninx, 2005, p. 141) and the immigrants' willingness to adopt the norms of the new society on the other hand (Ager & Strang 2008; Castles et al. 2002). It takes place at every level and in every sector of the host society, and involves a broad range of social actors, including public officials, political decision makers, private employers, trade union officials, fellow workers, service providers and even neighbours (Castles et al. 2002, p. 113)

Besides being an area of migration research, integration is also a concept; to which terms such as placement, acculturation interaction and identification can be applied (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 3). However, Heckmann and Schnapper (as cited in Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 3) opined that the terms be conceptualized instead as structural, cultural, interactional (social) and identification integration respectively.

Furthermore, integration can be classified in terms of objective (verifiable economic component) and subjective component (feelings about ones situation) Montgomery (as cited in Castels et al., 2002, p. 133), whereas Kuhlman (1991) also identified a psychological aspect of integration (p. 2).

Yet again, the position of Spencer & Cooper (2006) is that integration takes place in the areas of economic, social, cultural and political sphere. However, Dutch literature distinguishes between structural (socio-economic), social and cultural integration (Snel et al., 2006, p. 267; Bakker et al, 2013, p. 433). *Structural (socio-economic) integration* refers to the rights of immigrants to access social and economic services such as employment related opportunities, education, health, citizenship, and all other government provided welfare services (Penninx, 2005, p. 139). However, the Netherlands is described as an advanced welfare state (Snel et al., 2006, p. 2); one of the most immigrant - friendly countries in Europe, with its 1983 minority policy that offers equal opportunities to all her residents (Vink, 2007, p. 340).

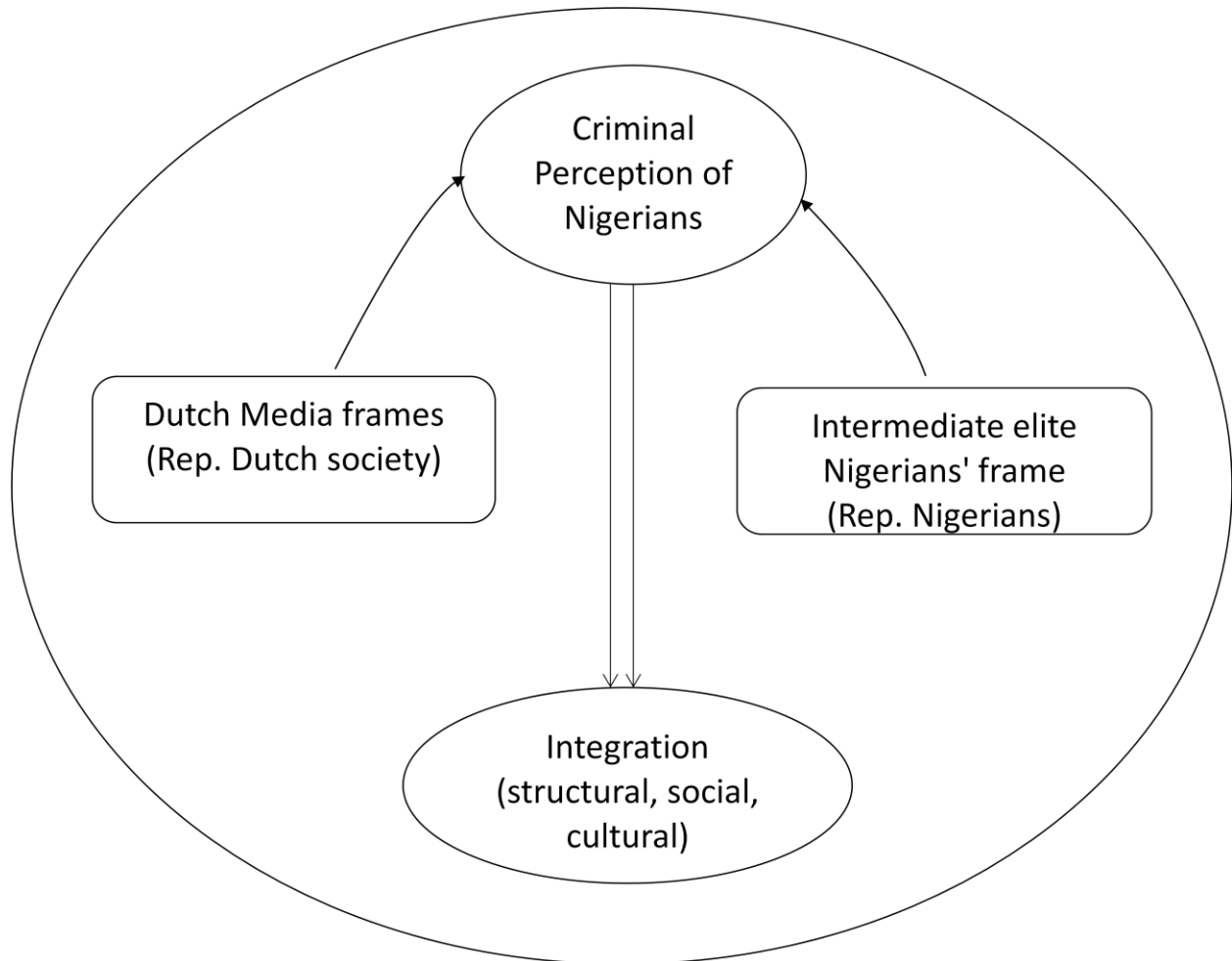
Meanwhile, *social integration* on one hand refers to the formation of social relations with non-migrants and other members of the new society. It entails an interactive process which includes having a sense of belonging, identifying with the members of the host society and building personal relationships

(Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 11). It is more of a personal than a policy issue.

*Cultural integration* on the other hand refers to the adoption of the morals and values of the host society. This last definition implies that immigrants will have to lose their own culture and adopt the dominant culture of the host country. But contrary to this position, Waldrauch and Hofinger (2010) define cultural integration as the process in which the host society accepts and sometimes supports the preservation of cultural characteristics and traditions of the immigrant populations. More explicitly, it is the cultural and religious rights of immigrants whereby they have the right to organize themselves and meet together as cultural, ethnic or religious groups (Penninx (2005) p. 139). Belonging to town meetings and having the freedom to practice ones faith belongs to this category. Still again, the Netherlands is said to be a multicultural society (Vink, 2007; Duyvendak & Scholten, 2011). As a multicultural society, it entails that the different ethnic and cultural groups in Dutch society are acknowledged and accommodated, resulting in a more successful integration of its diverse population (Duyvendak & Scholten, 2011, p. 331). ). Together with social integration, they define the subjective aspect of integration (Montgomery as cited in Castles et al., 2002, p. 133).

Regardless of the different categorization though, the expected outcome of integration is social cohesion between migrants and non-migrants (Spencer and Cooper, 2006, p. 15). And this can be attained when all aspects of integration are taken into consideration, devoid of barriers to full participation based on national origin, race, and ethnicity, social and cultural background; and devoid of restrictive rules and rigid systems (Castles et. al 2002, p. 113).

For the purpose of this thesis, the typology of integration recognized by Dutch literature; structural, social and cultural will be adopted, hence this study is being conducted in the Dutch society. Below is a diagram showing the interrelationship among these concepts:



*Fig 2: Diagrammatic representation of concepts and context (ogbonna, 2016)*

This diagram shows how the context of perception is impacting on integration through the frames of both the Dutch society, and that of Nigerians. The frame of the Dutch public was represented by that of her media. On the other hand, the frames of Nigerians were represented by that of intermediate elite

Nigerian respondents. Together, these frames exert influence on the integration of Nigerians in the Netherlands.

# 3 RESEARCH PLAN

## 3.1 Research Design

The strategy for this research will be that of a qualitative single case study. Verschuren & Doorewaard, (2010) defines a case study as a strategy that tries to gain a profound and full insight into one or several objects or processes that are confined in time and space (p. 178). Case studies are characterized by strategic sampling of research units in a small domain whereby intensive qualitative data are generated in more depth than breadth. This research is a case study of Nigerians in the Netherlands with respect to their criminal image in Dutch society, and how this criminal perception is impacting on their integration. To achieve this, 3 units of observations were selected. They were:

1. The Dutch media.
2. Respondent from Nigerians living in the Netherlands.
3. Respondents from the Dutch society, represented by instituted authorities such as the *Gemeente*, IND, Dutch police, EUROPOL and Timing job agency.

Unfortunately, all efforts to access these instituted authorities was not successful as none of them responded positively to the researcher's requests for an interview. Thus, two units of observation were eventually employed in this study: *Dutch media* and *intermediate elite Nigerian respondents*. However, the methods applicable in collecting data from these 2 units of observations are different and so were described differently in some cases. For instance, the strategies for generating data were qualitative media evaluation for media reports and narrative interview for the Nigerian respondents. Meanwhile Nigerians as a group formed the *unit of analysis*.

### ***3.2 The study area***

The study area was primarily Amsterdam and The Hague due to the fact that Nigerian population in the Netherlands are more concentrated in these two areas. Besides, Amsterdam is the hub where most of the negative events involving Nigerians happened or are happening. Again, a lot of international organizations, private establishments, Dutch ministries, establishments and the Nigerian embassy are all based in The Hague and Amsterdam. This increased the chances of getting respondents who may have first hand information about the topic. But eventually, the research extended to other locations in the Netherlands where Nigerians who had the potential of giving informed opinion about the research topic were found.

### ***3.3 Sampling***

According to Green & Thorogood (2004), purposeful sampling is used to precisely select interviewees that can generate appropriate data that is relevant to a particular study. Strategies for purposeful sampling may be in form of deviant, typical or snowball sampling (p.102). These strategies help to extract “information rich cases for in depth study” (Patton, as cited in Green & Thorogood, P. 102). Thus to achieve the purpose of this study, purposeful sampling was adopted.

#### ***3.3.1 Sampling media outlets***

DutchNews.nl, Expatica.nl and NRC.nl were purposely selected for evaluation. This is because these sources are on - line and have their archives on line too. Therefore, it was easier and faster to retrieve information from the archives of these sources. Secondly, it was easier too to Google – translate retrieved information hence I had to deal with Dutch language barrier as well being that one of the sources (NRC.nl) is published in Dutch language, although the other

2 (DutchNews.nl and Expatica.nl) were in English language. And thirdly, the archives of these on - line media dated back to the period under investigation unlike the other recent on - line media sources. The following media outlets were reviewed:

- ***DutchNews.nl***

DutchNews.nl is reputed for providing quality Dutch news covering politics, sports, crime and economic development for both Dutch and international audience. Over 25,000 people read their news online daily. They provide broad coverage of major Dutch news by translating (Dutch to English) major news events from other leading national news outlets such as NOS news (*Nederlandse Omroep Stichting*, the major Dutch broadcast foundation that provides news and other programmes for 3 Dutch national television and radio services), the Telegraaf newspaper (the leading daily Dutch national morning newspaper estimated to be read by about 1.8 million people daily), Trouw newspaper and others.

- ***Expatica.nl***

Expatica.nl is an online media outlet designed purposely for non Dutch speakers in the Netherlands and environs. It is owned by an international media company that is founded in Amsterdam in year 2000. Besides news, the website provides other services such as job and house search tools and online dating sites. The exact readership of the news site is not known, but Expatica receives over a million visitors across its services monthly.



- ***NRC.nl***

NRC.nl is the online news site owned by NRC media; a Netherlands based publisher of NRC Handelsblad and nrc.next daily newspaper. The site offers the digital edition of the newspaper and its archives. It receives over 30 million page viewers per month.

### ***3.3.2 Sampling of respondents***

Personal contacts and snowball sampling were used to purposely select immigrant Nigerian respondents in the Netherlands. These respondents included intermediate elite Nigerians who have lived legally in the Netherlands for at least 5 years and above, and who work for Dutch and other international organisations or own and manage their own establishments in the Netherlands. These categories of persons are believed to have in their struggle to break even and survive in the Dutch society, had lots of interaction with the Dutch society over the years. This means that they would have wealth of experience and information concerning the research focus. This was also necessary so as to potentially exclude undocumented persons, bearing in mind that in general, they face peculiar challenges, and so their situation cannot be used as a yardstick to measure true experience of integration.

In all, 13 individual respondents and 3 groups were selected, making a total *sample size* of 16 respondents. The first group was the Nigerian National Association (NNA); an umbrella body covering all other Nigerian associations in the Netherlands. The function of NNA.nl is to monitor the activities of smaller groups such as town, tribal or gender based associations in the Netherlands. It is also the responsibility of NNA.nl to liaise with the embassy or the Dutch government on behalf of the smaller groups. Next was

Tabernacle of David Church (TOD) in The Hague; a branch of Redeemed Christian Church of God in the Netherlands. Lastly, the Nigerian embassy was also treated as a group. The groups were expected to relate the experiences of Nigerians as a group, in addition to the experiences of the individuals they represent. These groups were however represented by individuals.

The table below gives an overview of the profile of the respondents interviewed. The names are however fictitious. Data for answering questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 were generated from these respondents.

*Table 1: showing respondent's characteristics*

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Respondent's location</b>	<b>Profile</b>
1	Amsterdam	CEO of a nongovernmental organisation whose mission includes the assistance of migrants in the area of integration in the Netherlands, as well as organising charity deeds in the Netherlands and across Africa.
2	Eindhoven	A religious, and also a commissioner with justice and Peace Commission, Netherlands chapter. Has been involved in issues of human rights, migration and human trafficking.
3	Amsterdam	A general medical practitioner and Director of a private clinic.
4	Den Haag	An Engineer with SHELL Holland
5	Den Haag	CEO of the first European licensed African Television, editor and publisher of an African magazine

6	Amsterdam	An MBA graduate of Nyenrode Business school, founder Nigerian Business council, Netherlands.
7	Den Haag	A Prison chaplain with the Dutch ministry of Justice
8	Den Haag	Human Resources Manager with SHELL
9	Den Haag	A Staff of Leiden University (Female)
10	Den Haag	An ICT / SAP consultant with Achmea BV
11	Leiden	An Operation manager in a petroleum Gas plant( Female)
12	Den Haag	KLM staff
13	Den Haag	CEO of a courier company
14	Rotterdam	An umbrella body covering all other registered Nigerian association in the Netherlands
15	Den Haag	Senior Pastor of Redeemed Christian Church of God
16	Den Haag	Nigerian Embassy in The Hague

### ***3.4 Data collection***

The units of observation required 2 different methods: Media evaluation and narrative interview.

#### ***3.4.1 Media evaluation***

Media analysis requires an examination of about 100 to 200 articles, while media evaluation examines about “50 to 60 articles within either a smaller time frame, and or related to a more specific topic” (Douglas & Co., 2004). Thus, media evaluation was adopted as opposed to media analysis due to my limitation to access lots of data, consequent upon the barrier of Dutch language; and secondly because of the time constraint due to the broad nature

of the investigation required on the second unit of observation (Nigerian respondents).

A Periods of 6 years were covered (2006 to 2011). These periods were selected because they were the latest available on – line. Secondly, it was the peak of reporting for the top most issues that contributed to the criminal image of Nigerians in the Netherlands.

Keywords used were: Nigerians and crime, internet scam in the Netherlands, 419 scam, Nigerians and drugs, Nigerian human trafficking were used as search words to generate articles. When there are suggested links for related stories, such links were followed to further track more articles. It was not possible to have equal number of articles from the 3 media outlets hence my chances was already limited by language issue. The target was just to have as much article as it is enough to make up the requirement. Eventually, 52 story items were generated concerning crimes involving Nigerians, out of which 46 were analysed because they specifically related to crime stories reported about Nigerians in the Netherlands. The other 6 articles reflected crime stories reported from events that occurred in Nigeria. Not having enough articles eventually became one of my limitations. All chosen samples had criminal story line or corruption in it. News items were grouped according to related story line, and the percentage of reports per crime noted.

Being that the samples were generated from on line archives, it was not possible to determine physical frames such as news placement, pictures and other elements that depict non verbal communications. Frames were therefore detected from headlines, news contents, news editorials and tone of reporting.

### ***3.4.2 Narrative interview***

Narrative interview is a kind of interview technique that enables the researcher to facilitate the interviewee in telling their own story (Green & Thorogood, 2004, p. 80). Usually a topic list is designed to function as a loose guide to direct the interview process. However the interviewee responses determine the flow of the questions.

I usually start the interview by asking how long the respondent had been in the Netherlands and if through the media or from people around, the respondent was aware of the criminal perception of Nigerians in the Netherlands. Almost all were aware of the situation, and are glad that they have the opportunity to talk about it in a more systematic way.

Listening to their stories was a sure way of understanding how they feel and are affected by the situation.

During the interviews, it was amazing to realize how some of them were awakened by the realization of a sudden consciousness of their individual and collective responsibilities to the problematic situation. All interviews except 1 were recorded, with the permission of the respondents. The interviewing schedule was flexible. Most interviews were conducted in the church after services and at home or train stations during weekends, evenings and sometimes in the nights.

## ***3.5 Analysis***

### ***3.5.1 Media evaluation***

Only samples that dealt exclusively with criminal reports concerning Nigerians were selected. Thus 46 out of the 52 samples generated from the archives of the on - line news outlets were included. The articles were then

grouped according to related crimes, for instance, articles that dealt on human trafficking, money laundering, internet scam, drug peddling and all the rest were grouped separately. There was no pre determined codes as it was not known from the beginning the nature of the frames that would be found. However, after a first quick reading through the samples, tentative codes were generated, in line with general issues detected and the concepts of media framing. They were later refined and used as guidelines for collecting data from the samples:

- Pattern or trend in reporting (episodic or thematic)
- General terms used to describe the issue
- Presence of emphatic framing
- Types of crimes reported
- Elements of attributions or causalities
- Government awareness of the issue

The scripts were coded during a second reading. Finally, frames were identified from the tone of writing and general pattern of reporting headlines and content.

### ***3.4.2 Analysis of respondents interviews***

The codes were predetermined in line with the concepts. For instance, the concept of frames was operationalized as issue frame, identity frames and characterization frames. Issue frames were further coded as general definitions of the problem, causes and remedies, while characterization frame was coded as positive, negative and neutral frames. Similarly, quotes related to welfare, employment, education, business opportunities were coded as structural integration, while issues related to interaction, friendship, marriages were coded as social integration. Cultural integration was coded in terms of belonging to association or religious related matters. The transcripts

were then coded based on these categories. In the analysis, the quotes were marked so that they can easily be traced from the transcript. Grammatical mistakes were amended to enhance readability and understanding.

# 4 MEDIA EVALUATION

This chapter presents an evaluation of the dominant frames used in reporting the criminal perception of Nigerians in the Netherlands by Dutch media. An understanding of these media frames helped to shed light on how Nigerians in the Netherlands are portrayed and presented to the Dutch society, and what messages are conveyed. A period of six years was covered, and three on line media outlets (DutchNews.nl, Expatica.nl and NRC.nl) were explored. The actual sub research question addressed is:

**How does the Dutch news media frame their criminal perception of Nigerians in the Netherlands?**

## ***4.1 Media reports on Nigerians were both Episodic and thematic***

Iyengar (1991) holds that:

Episodic news frame takes the form of a case study or event-oriented report and depicts public issues in terms of concrete instances while thematic frames by contrast places public issues in some more general or abstract context and takes the form of a “takeout” or “backgrounder” report directed at general outcomes or condition (p. 14).

He further noted that in practice, only few news reports are exclusively episodic or thematic. Although in every news story, one of the two frames predominates (p. 14).

From the analysis it was discovered that 86% of the reports were episodic; they were inspired by events. In this case the events are in form of arrests, court cases, investigations or disappearances involving suspected Nigerians.



As such, the reports were concrete instances of what had happened. This is exemplified in headlines such as “Five arrested for internet ‘Nigerian’ fraud”, (Five arrested, 2007); “Nigerian human trafficking trial delayed” (Nigerian human trafficking, 2009). “Fewer young refugees disappear” (fewer young refugees, 2008).

Episodic news reports are also trendy, peak of reporting are noticed around certain periods and fades away at some point. An example is the incident of the suspected Nigerian underwear bomber travelling to Detroit US through Schiphol from Nigeria. In this case, climax in reporting were noticed within 2 weeks of incident (December 25<sup>th</sup> to January 10<sup>th</sup>), but faded after that. The headlines ran as shown in the table below.

*Table 2: Samples showing of trendy reports*

<b>Media</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Caption</b>
DutchNews.nl	December 25, 2009	Explosion on plane from Schiphol to US (new)
“	December 26, 2009	Terrorist suspect passed Schiphol security
“	December 27, 2009	Second incident on Amsterdam-Detroit flight
“	December 28, 2009	Sunday’s ‘terror alert’ was false alarm
Expatica.nl	4th January 2010,	Nigeria on defensive over 'terror breeding ground
DutchNews.nl	January 6, 2010	Detroit plane bomber ‘acted alone’

The analysis also showed that 14% of the articles were thematic; they gave a more in-depth background report about Nigeria / Nigerians in relation to internet scam, Human smuggling / trafficking and corruption. An example is in the story “Amsterdam is the centre of Nigerian spam network”, (Wittenberg, 2008); “Nigerian human traffickers go on trial in the Netherlands”, (Kamerman and Wittenberg, 2009); “Nigeria gives error signal” (Nigeria-geeft-fout-signaal), (Schenkel, 2008). With the exception of the stories on corruption, it was observed that even though these articles gave in depth background reports about the topics, they were prompted by incidences of related crimes in the Netherlands, just as Iyengar observed – that in practice, only few media stories are exclusively thematic or episodic.

Iyengar (2005) maintains (after his experiments in his famous book - “*is anyone responsible*”) that episodic report (predominant at 86% in this case) attributes causal or remedial responsibility to individuals and or groups rather than to historical, social or political forces.

As such, individual Nigerians and Nigerians as a group are held responsible, stigmatized and stereotyped as criminally minded people, without any mention or reference to the social - political and historical context of the Nigerian nation itself, which consequently has favoured the propensities to commit these crimes.

#### ***4.2 Criminal activities framed as recurrent***

The media perceive the crimes committed by Nigerians in the Netherlands as recurrent. Elements of recurrence detected from the analysis were ‘again’, ‘another’ and ‘more’, indicating a follow up of concrete instances of events that happened more than once and over time. For instance, *DutchNews.nl*

reported: “*Another* gang was jailed on similar charges in 2009” (Human trafficking gang in court again, 2011). And: “Nine *more* people have been arrested in connection with a Dutch-British investigation into sham marriages, bringing the total so far this month to 32” (Nine more people arrested in Dutch-British sham marriage, 2012). The statements “*Another gang was jailed on similar charges*” and “*nine more ... bringing the total so far*” connotes that these events had happened before, and is happening again. The captions in the table below show similar samples of these elements of recurrence.

*Table 3: samples showing evidence of recurrence*

<b>Media</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Caption</b>
DutchNews.nl	February 6, 2009	‘More’ victims of people trafficking recorded
DutchNews.nl	July 19, 2011	Human trafficking gang in court ‘again’
“	June 5, 2012	‘More’ false passports found at Schiphol

Using these recurrent terms, it can be inferred that the press wishes to draw the attention of the reader to the habitual occurrence of these crimes.

#### ***4.3 Criminal activities framed as ‘organized crime’***

Not only do frames make salient certain aspects of perceived reality by promoting its definition (Entman, 1993, p.52), they also help us make sense, interpret and give meaning to them (Aarts et al. 2011, p.235). In their reports, the Dutch media suggests that the criminal activities of Nigerians in the Netherlands are ‘organized’.

Meanwhile, according to article 2a of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC, 2015) organized crime constitutes:

A group of three or more persons that was not randomly formed, existing for a period of time; acting in concert with the aim of committing at least one crime punishable by at least four years' incarceration in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit (UNODC, 2015).

Organized crime may be in form of human smuggling, money laundering, financial crime and trafficking in persons, firearms or drugs. It was not mentioned in any of the articles that Nigerians were involved in firearms smuggling. Nevertheless, Dutch press reports showed that Nigerians were involved in the others. As expressed in the article “prison sentences for email conmen”, (2008) by DutchNews.nl:

A court in Haarlem has sentenced three members of a *Nigerian gang* to up to *four years in prison* for *extorting tens of thousands of Euros from victims* who answered emails promising a stake in unclaimed inheritances. The sentences were for *fraud, money-laundering and membership of a criminal organization* ... During investigations police found fake dollar bills, tens of thousands of Euros and the documents and financial details of victims from several countries in an Amsterdam flat (prison sentences for email conmen, 2008).

*Expatica.nl* also wrote:

The gang is accused of human trafficking, people smuggling, participating in a criminal organization, forging travel documents,

counterfeiting and money laundering (Dutch police end child trafficking ring, 2007).

Furthermore, organized crime can be transnational or local. But Dutch media presents the Nigerian group as transnational as indicated in these reports concerning human trafficking:

A travel agency in Nigeria is in charge of getting papers for the girls, the customers are Italian brothels. The Netherlands is the transit country where a top operative takes possession of the girls and sends them on to their next destination. He has about twenty helpers, including several in Belgium and France (Kamerman and Wittenberg, 2009).

And:

Dutch authorities have smashed an international Nigerian child trafficking ring, making 20 arrests in seven countries.

(...) Dutch authorities worked closely with police in Spain, Belgium, France, Ireland, Britain and the United States (“Dutch police ends child trafficking ring”, 2007).

Other frames used by the press to depict organized crimes were ‘Network’, ‘ring’ and ‘gang’ as seen in the captions “Nigerian con trick *gang* arrested”, (2007); “Dutch police end child trafficking *ring*”, (2007); “Dutch police roll up hard drugs *network*”, (2011).

With these reports, the Dutch press illustrates that criminal Nigerians in the Netherlands or perhaps in Europe operates as networks or groups.

#### ***4.4 Nigerian nation framed as “notoriously corrupt”***

Crime and corruption often times go together. Consequently, Dutch press could not refrain from publishing articles on Nigerian corruption. Schenkel (2008) of *NRC.nl* stated in fact that Nigeria is “*contending with great corruption*”. In another statement, Nigeria was referred to as the:

Most resident rich country in Africa, found traditionally on the lower rungs of the ladder of the annual corruption check by Transparency International (Schenkel, 2008).

This seems to connote (in Schenkel’s opinion), that Nigerias’ corruption history has become a usual phenomenon. In short, the use of the word “traditionally” stresses the point that corruption has conventionally become an “embedded normal” in the Nigerian context. Worst still, the writer remarks that the Nigerian government is not real about the propaganda that it is fighting corruption:

It is obvious that Ribadu<sup>2</sup> is practically fired because he did his job well, namely - tackling corruption [...] the Nigerian government refuses to tackle corruption seriously - she takes precisely to its fighters (Schenkel, 2008).

In another article, titled “Power in Nigeria begins with God” (de-macht-in-nigeria-begint-bij-god); Vermeulen (2007) described the nation as a “failed notoriously corrupt Nigerian state”:

Nowhere else is the failure of the *notoriously corrupt Nigerian state* better shown than in this *highway to heaven* (...) The sky above looks at

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<sup>2</sup> Ribadu was an erstwhile chairman for Economic and Financial crime Commission that had the mandate to prosecute corrupt practices

sunset black pollution from diesel engines, puffing and rattling generators that must absorb the *unreliability of national power* (Vermeulen, 2007).

Furthermore, in his caricature statement, “Before I make this about 200 million dollars, I will first stop by the Bishop”, the writer continues to describe how politics is mingled with spiritual power in Nigeria – “The political and spiritual power in Nigeria are inseparable”. The writer opined that prior to assumption of office, Nigerian leaders first seek spiritual blessings in order to embezzle public fund. Linking corruption and spirituality in this way Vermeulen further suggests that not only has corruption eaten deep into the Nigerian system; it has also infiltrated the spiritual domain. This assumption is significant, it means that even the Godly are not exempted from corrupt practices in Nigerian.

#### ***4.5 The criminal perceptions of Nigerians emphasized and further reinforced by Dutch media***

*Emphasis framing* involves highlighting a “particular subset of potentially relevant considerations”, (Druckman, as cited in Iyengar 2005, p.5). Similarly, Iyengar (2005) observed that by de-emphasizing or emphasizing particular facets of an issue, framing helps to alter (p. 5) or in this case, re-enforce opinion about an issue. From the analysis, it was gathered that the criminal perceptions about Nigerians was actually being reinforced by the Dutch media. Most of the article analyzed- had ‘Nigeria’ or ‘Nigerian’ boldly reflected and woven in the caption, as if they served as pointers for the readers to remarkably note the nationality of the offender. This is opposed to other reports where other nationalities were indicted for similar offences. It was noticed that the emphasis of the reports were more on the nationality than on

the offenders itself. In one of the articles, that reported an increase in the number of trafficked persons from 716 in 2007 to 809 in 2008, the writer ended the report with an emphatic remark that said “*However, the number of victims from Nigeria fell from 102 to 62, due in part to the break-up of a gang which used voodoo and other threats to force under-age girls to become prostitutes*” (more victims of people trafficking recorded, 2009). The word ‘however’ seemed to establish the fact that Nigeria is a well known case. This is in line with Entman’s statement that news reporters bring in their own objectivity to convey dominant frames and activate the consciousness of certain issues in human minds (1993, p. 56). In some instances, the crimes were phrased as “Nigerians” attributing ownership of such crimes to Nigeria or Nigerians alike. This kind of media representation and emphasis apparently reinforces the negative image of Nigerians.

*Table 4 : Samples reflecting emphatic framing*

<b>Media</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Caption</b>
DutchNews.nl	25-04-2007	Five arrested for internet ‘Nigerian’ fraud
Expatica.nl	28-07-2008	Dutch MPs demand crackdown on ‘Nigerians’ gangs
NRC.NL	09-10 -2008	Amsterdam is the centre of ‘Nigerian’ spam network
NRC.NL	16-03-2009	‘Nigerian’ human traffickers go on trial in the Netherlands
Expatica.nl	07-03-2011	‘Dutch-Nigerian’ activist arrested for people smuggling



*Table 5: showing captions relating to other nationals*

<b>Media</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Caption</b>
Dutch News.nl (Rep ANP)	21-11-2008	Seven arrested for drugs, people trafficking
Dutch News.nl (RepTrouw)	06-02-2009	More victims of people trafficking recorded
DutchNews.nl	03-06-2008	International synthetic drugs gang arrested

In table 4c, emphasis was laid on the nationality of the offenders (Nigerian) where as in 4d; the captions did not reflect the nationalities, although they were cited within the body of the articles.

#### ***4.6 Types of crimes attributed to Nigerians***

The analysis identified that human smuggling / trafficking was the most extensively reported, (41%). According to Carvalho (2005), the volume of coverage a media gives to an event is a measure of the relative salience awarded to it (p.3). The salience awarded to this event can be ascribed (as revealed by media stories) to the chain of events which built upon each other, and took place in the Netherlands over time; and eventually revealed a pattern which generated huge public outrage due to the immoral nature of the exploitation associated with it.

A background article by *Nrc.nl* ("Nigerian human traffickers go on trial in the Netherlands", 2009) reported this - In 1999, Dutch parliamentarian Boris Dittrich gave voice to the growing public outrage over this situation when he said that "Dutch asylum policy was facilitating the prostitution business. The report also recounted a May 4, 2006 incident, where a certain Jenny was

abandoned in Schipol by her travelling companion (later identified as a trafficker). Prior to this period (1996 – 1999), over 400 Nigerian girls disappeared from their asylum shelters, only for under aged prostitutes to later emerge in Amsterdam red light district. The entire episode triggered police investigations, arrests, trial and jailing of convicted Nigerian suspects. The peak in publication was noticed around 2009, during which the suspects were tried and jailed.

Financial crime, popularly known as *419 scam*, was next (19.5%). Describing the nature of this scam, Wittenberg (2008) of *NRC.nl* wrote:

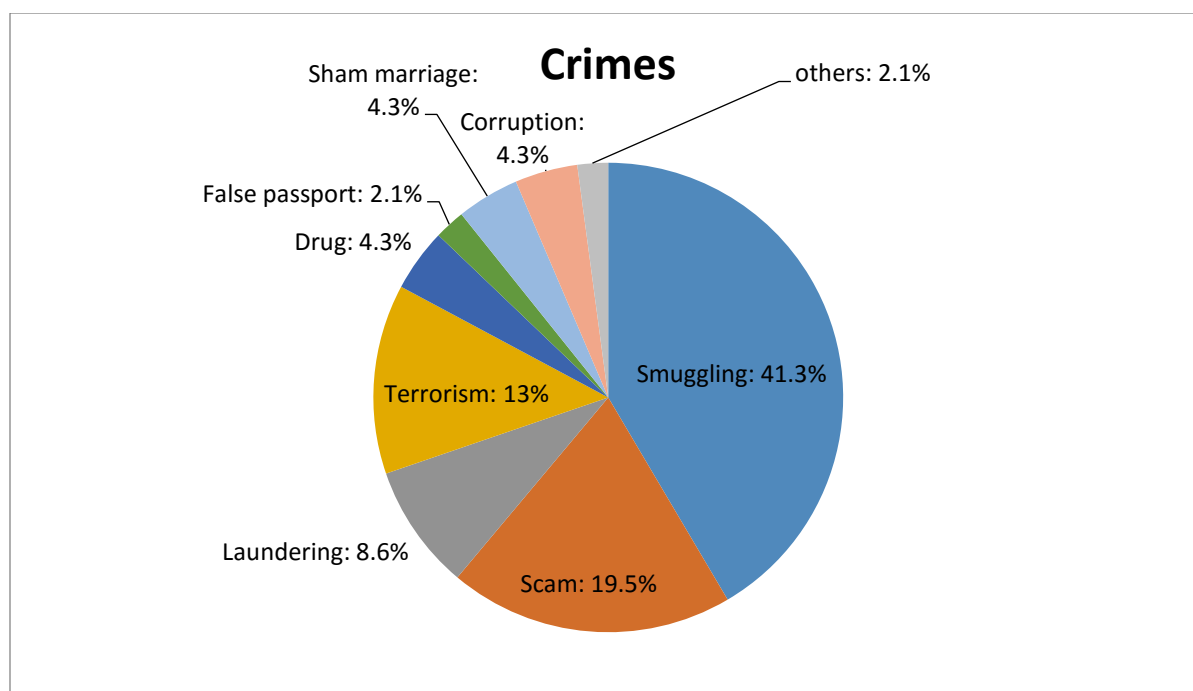
Typically, the so-called 419 fraud starts with an email. “Congratulations, you have won first prize in the Spanish lottery,” reads a typical email sent out in thousands to computers worldwide. Or “I am the widow of Nigeria’s ex-president Sani Abacha. Could you help me withdraw 6.6 million dollars from a Swiss bank account?” Another version reads: “I am a Lebanese businessman suffering from cancer. I have assets of 2.3 billion dollars, but I am a dying man and I want to give it all to charities. But I am no longer able to do this by myself” .All these messages promise their recipients huge fortunes. But before they receive anything, they must put up a deposit variously described as “administrative costs”, “transfer fees” or “an investment”. A respondent is then lured into a false sense of security by means of false documents such as bank statements or a letter from the central bank. The next stage sees the victim either transferring a sum of money or handing it over personally. He is then invited to Amsterdam for the weekend with all expenses paid by the swindlers. Once here, he is led to what he

believes is a branch of an ABN AMRO bank where he is welcomed by a trustworthy-looking Dutch receptionist. It is not until it is too late that the victim catches on to what has happened (Wittenberg, 2008).

Klaver (2002) in one of the captions in *NRC.nl* referred to it as “Spam from Nigeria”. In a similar report, DutchNews.nl (reporting from The Telegraph) called it the *notorious Nigerian banking scam* (Nigerian con trick gang arrested, 2007). Other terms used to describe this financial crime were Nigerian 419, Nigerian scam, Nigerian internet fraud, and Nigerian con trick. These suggest that the media portrays internet scam as being of Nigerian origin. The press also believed that scam operation in the Netherlands has been since the 90’s, and Amsterdam is the headquarters while foreigners were their target. An article in *NRC.nl* titled “Amsterdam is the centre of Nigerian spam network”; Wittenberg (2008) captured these facts:

The first Nigerian swindlers started using the Netherlands as a base back in 1990. The police were unaware of what was going on because the scam was not directed at Dutch citizens. Most of the victims were foreigners, often Americans (Wittenberg, 2008).

The other crimes were money laundering (8.6%), drug peddling (4.3%), sham marriage (4.3%) and false passport (2.1%). Although the report on terrorism was high at 13%, it was a onetime event, but of which generated lots of media attention within a short period. The crimes are presented in the pie chart below.



*Figure 2: Pie chart showing reported crimes*

#### ***4.7 Purpose of Human Trafficking / smuggling is for 'forced prostitution'***

Human smuggling entails that an individual or group of persons pays a certain amount of money to another party who helps them to prepare travelling documents (often forged documents) and travelling arrangements (sometimes illegal routes), and ensures that the potential migrant gets to the agreed destination. In this case, the potential migrant is a willing collaborator to the entire process. On the other hand, human trafficking is a much more serious offence. According to the United Nations definition:

Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception,

of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person - having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (United Nations [U N], 2006).

However, analysis of Dutch press showed that in the case of Nigerians, the trafficked persons are for 'forced prostitution'. It also emphasized that they are under aged and also controlled by charm (voodoo). All 3 media reported severally on this. *Expatica.nl* wrote:

The girls were tricked to Europe and forced into prostitution. Several of the victims were found in France, Italy and Spain working as streetwalkers. The gang controlled victims through voodoo threats, ("Dutch police end child trafficking ring, 2007")

While DutchNews.nl wrote:

The traffickers used voodoo to gain a hold over the girls before smuggling them abroad to pose as asylum seekers. Several of the children who disappeared from Dutch asylum seekers' centers' have been found working as street prostitutes in France, Italy and Spain, (Dutch smash international child trafficking ring, 2007)

And:

Several dozen under-aged girls were victims of the gang. They were brought to the Netherlands from Nigeria to claim asylum and later were

taken from refugee centers and forced into prostitution (Human trafficking suspects, 2008).

And from NRC.nl:

Nigerian women have been vanishing from shelters in this manner since at least 1996, and the total number of missing women runs in the hundreds. Some women later popped up again working as prostitutes in the Netherlands, leading authorities to suspect they were being forced into prostitution (Kamerman and Dick Wittenberg, 2009).

All 3 media connected their story of human trafficking to the disappearance of Nigerian under aged girls from asylum centers in 2006, and associated the smuggling / trafficking process to fake documents especially travelling passports.

#### ***4.8 Framing causality: Netherlands is safe haven and gateway to Europe***

Frames help us to define what a particular issue is all about as well as identify the cause (Entman 1993, p. 52; Gray 2003, p. 12; and Aarts et al, 2011, p. 236). Dutch press ascribed the reasons why Nigerians are caught in the web of crimes in the Netherlands to the geographical location of the Netherlands as a transit country from Nigeria to other European countries. *NRC.nl* had it that:

Although it was clear that the Netherlands were being used as a transit country [...] it is nothing new that Nigerian human traffickers have been using the Netherlands as their gateway to Europe (Kamerman and Wittenberg, 2009).

While *Expatica.nl* wrote:

International gangs smuggled Nigerian children, mostly girls, to the Netherlands from where they were sent to other countries to work as prostitutes (“Dutch police end child trafficking ring”, 2007).

Schiphol airport, having direct flights from Nigeria is also framed as one of the cause:

From 1996 to 1999, some four-hundred Nigerian girls have disappeared from the government shelters, but Jenny's arrival proved that Schiphol, with its direct flights to Nigeria, was still very much a hub for human trafficking in 2006 (Kamerman and Wittenberg, 2009).

Dutch press also believes that less stringent punishment for crimes in the Netherlands has contributed to criminal Nigerians using it as their base and Amsterdam's strategic location to the airport as the headquarters:

The Netherlands is the centre of Nigerian scam operations and Amsterdam is its headquarters. Nigerian fraudsters regard the Netherlands as a safe haven. The police are seen as soft; moreover, south-east Amsterdam is home to a close-knit African community, making it easy to go underground. It is also conveniently near to Schiphol airport (Wittenberg, 2008).

From these stories, it means that the negative popularity for crimes gained by Nigerians in the Netherlands would not have been had these criminal groups had options of getting to their different destinations without having to pass through the Netherlands. Secondly, a more severe punishment for crimes would have served as a discouraging factor to criminally minded Nigerians. In

other words, it explains partly why and how the criminal perception of Nigerians gained ground and became aggravated in the Netherlands.

#### ***4.9 Criminal Nigerians framed as problematic to the Netherlands***

A press report by *Expatica.nl* titled "Dutch MPs demand crackdown on Nigerian gangs" (2008) expressed the fact that not only had the criminal activities of Nigerians in the Netherlands attracted the attention of some government officials, it is also seen as problematic, and needed to be dealt with. The report stated that:

Three parties in the Dutch parliament, the Christian Democrats, the conservative VVD and the populist Freedom Party have called on Justice Minister Ernst Hirsch-Ballin to create a permanent police unit to investigate Nigerian criminal gangs. They say that since 2007's abolition of a temporary police unit which had arrested a number of Nigerian criminals, new gangs have formed. The Freedom Party has also called on Deputy Justice Minister Nehabat Albayrak to change immigration legislation, so that foreigners suspected of criminal activity can be declared undesirable aliens (Dutch MPs demand crackdown on Nigerian gangs, 2008).

The press also expressed in their report that dealing with these criminal organizations had been a problem for Dutch authorities:

The Dutch authorities are faced with a choice: either arrest the Dutch branch of the organization, with the risk that someone else will take its place in no time, or go higher up the food chain. "We realized that if we wanted to uproot this organization, we would have to go all the way: from the country of origin to the country of destination," says Warner



Ten Kate of the national public prosecutor's office. However (...) Nigeria is a tougher nut to crack. There are no official police contacts, no extradition treaties, and no direct experience with the ill-reputed Nigerian police (Dutch MPs demand crackdown on Nigerian gangs, 2008).

These frames potentially cast doubts upon all Nigerians, including her government and even her police.

Taken together, if the Dutch political elites demand a special police unit to deal with criminal Nigerian gangs, and wants a new immigration legislature enacted against suspected foreigners (with Nigerians in mind); and the media frames it as a “crackdown”, one possible implication is that these messages might alter the opinion of the Dutch society towards viewing every Nigerian as a people to be wary of.

#### ***4.10 Summary***

In this chapter, the media representations of Nigerians regarding the criminal perceptions of her compatriots in the Netherlands are evaluated. It was found that 86 % of the reports concerning the criminal activities of Nigerians in the Netherlands were episodic, that is, they were reports of concrete instances of events concerning the criminal activities of Nigerians in the Netherlands. The implication of episodic reports is that causal and remedial attributions are directed towards groups and individuals, while the socio - political and historical context are not taken cognizance of. Hence Nigerians as a group are seen in the light of crimes. The media also portrayed the Nigerian nation itself as “notoriously corrupt”, and her people as persistent perpetrators of organized crimes such as human smuggling / trafficking, internet financial scam (Advanced fee fraud / 419), drug peddling and money laundering. They

were also reported to be involved in sham marriages, forged travel documents and forced prostitution. The analysis identified human smuggling / trafficking as the most extensively reported (41%), followed by internet scam. The media identified that Nigerians use the Netherlands as a gateway to Europe, through the direct flight from Nigeria to schiphol airport; and described the Netherlands as safe haven for Nigerian criminals, as a result of the softness of Dutch police. These criminal activities are also framed as being problematic to the Dutch government, who in turn demands a crackdown on the Nigerian group. These negative representations are potentially influence on average members of the average Dutch society, especially those who may have not have had the opportunity of travelling to or personally relating with Nigerians; and the only Nigeria that exists is the one that they know in the media.

# 5 FRAMING THE PERCEPTIONS OF NIGERIANS REGARDING THE CRIMINAL IMAGE OF HER CITIZENS IN DUTCH SOCIETY

This chapter on framing discusses the findings from my interviews with Nigerian respondents. The perspectives of Nigerians on the criminal perception of her people in the Netherlands are hereby explored. *Issue frames*, *identity frames* and *characterization frames (frame of moral evaluation)* were analyzed. Issue frames revealed the different elements of the situation (the criminal perceptions of Nigerians in Dutch society); including causes and suggestions for possible improvement. On the other hand, identity and characterization frames respectively showed how Nigerians conceive of themselves and also refer to other people that are connected to the situation in one way or the other.

The actual sub research question addressed is:

**How do Nigerians living in the Netherlands frame the criminal perceptions of Nigerians in the Netherlands?**

## ***5.1 Issue frames***

The starting point of this analysis is that frames are constructed to help us sort and categorize our experiences in relation to the issues (Gray, 2003, p.12). Issue frame is about defining what the problem is all about, as well as relating the different ways we talk about it, including causes and remedies (Aarts et al. 2011, p. 236).

### ***5.1.1 Defining the situation***

They help us to define a problem (Gray 2003, p.15), and by problem definition, frames helps to ascertain that a problem exists, and then determine what it is all about, (Aarts et al. 2011, p. 236)

With the exception of two, all the other (14) respondents agreed that Nigerians in the Netherlands have a perception of crime trailing them. The position of these exceptional two are that even though they understand that Nigerians have global perception issues, they have not and are not aware of any ugly experience here in the Netherlands. One of them mentioned that in her opinion, *“the problems of Dutch society with respect to crimes are not Nigerians, but Moroccans”* (Lola).

However, the remaining majority acknowledges the existence of an aggravated negative image of Nigerians in Dutch society. In several ways, they expressed their discomfort over the stereotype of crime, and described the situation as unfortunate. It is regrettable they said, that Nigerians at sight are adjudged criminals:

They see everybody as a drug dealer, as a 419er; they see everybody as eeh... just criminals, but it is not true. I have been in the system, I have lived here long, but I don't even know what they are talking about when they talk about drugs (Agu, AA64).

And:

(...) I have realized that many people are very reluctant to say that they are Nigerians, as a result of these factors. This is because when you say that you a Nigerian, you are automatically associated with these crimes (Joddy, AA68).

Judging from the statements above, it can be said that the existence of a criminal image of Nigerians in Dutch society cannot be denied (*“They see everybody as a drug dealer, as a 419er; as eeh... just criminals”* and *“when you say that you a Nigerian, you are automatically associated with these crimes”*).

Besides being aware of this situation, it is also seen as a burden that they have to always prove themselves otherwise:

[...] yes it is a burden that we carry as Nigerians, that within the community of nations, we have to be careful; you are aware of it, you are conscious of it. And it is not nice, to be conscious of the negative impacts that you have. You have to prove that you are not a criminal (Frank, AA32).

In other words, Nigerians must consciously or unconsciously distinguish themselves; they always have to go extra miles to prove themselves otherwise in order to earn the trust of their counterparts. But as Marc encouraged, *“you don’t need to allow it to put you down; you have to stand your ground, by showing the quality with which you are made of”*.

Next, it was also learnt that even though most of the respondents attested to the existence of the problem, the degree to which they experience it is relative, depending on their status in the society. For instance, those who work for international organizations have fewer challenges, based on the fact that in such organizations, professional ethics prohibits any kind of discriminations; *“It is against the principle, and if you do that, it is a serious offence”*(Ale). However, those who are in business seem to be affected the most, judging from his knowledge of the experience of his members (being a pastor of a church). He said that even:

When one is creative, or have business ideas for instance, it is easy to register the business; but then it is very difficult to get clients because the trust is not there (Ale, 104).

From all of the above, it can be concluded that there exists a criminal image of Nigerians circulating in the Netherlands, and that majority of Nigerians can attest to it, based on different experiences at different level.

### ***5.1.2 Issue framed as an unfair generalization***

Thinking of frame as a way of explaining the different ways people make sense of an issue (Aarts et al. 2011, p. 236), one of the frames of issue uncovered from this study is that of an *unfair generalization*. The respondents pointed out that in as much as some Nigerian citizens are as *guilty as charged*, they believe that the culprits are in the minority and it is unfair that their attitudes are used as a yardstick for judging the rest of Nigerians:

I really do think that it is a very unfair generalization ... and the reason is because if you go back to Nigeria itself, you will find a lot of very hardworking people; you find a lot of Nigerians who are doing very well in business. Really, the country is showing lots of promising advancement. So as a nation we have very good crop of people who are very progressive, very advanced and who can compete in any kind of environment (Arka, AA45).

As pointed out by others, the issue is over generalized. They emphasized that it is unfair that all Nigerians are cast in the same basket with those who they say “*bring Nigerians bad names*”. In line with this, Frank, a general medical practitioner, remarked that he *feels very bad about it because there are lots of Nigerians who are doing many - many great things*” (AA 28).

In addition, Marc thinks that these generalizations are unrealistic. He added:

Anyone who thinks that the totality of a group is evil or is good, for me, he is uninformed because it does not happen anywhere in the world (Marc, AA15)

On the other hand, a few of the respondents believes that some of the crimes blamed on Nigerians are actually being committed by other Africans, but because Nigerians already have the bad name, they are in one way or the other named for these crimes. According to Barry and Joddy:

Some of the criminal activities that we are being accused of are perpetrated by our fellow Africans, and somehow, Nigerians have taken the blow for it (Barry, AA62).

And:

But now we have a bad name: "Who is committing these crimes?"... Nigerians!; And "Who is committing those crimes?" Nigerians! even though it may be people from other places. We have Ghanaians using Nigerian passports, committing crimes, but they will say it is Nigerians (Joddy, AA85).

### ***5.1.3 Framing mistrust***

Mistrust was also highlighted as an issue. Some of the respondents lamented that Nigerians are met with public distrust in the Netherlands. *"There is too much distrusts"*, Arka said, and *"when they know that you are a Nigerian, then they are extra careful"*, corroborated Ale. Nigerians perceive that people are careful with them, a situation that affects their sense of belonging. To make it

even more painful, some respondents emphasized that even when Nigerians make honest mistakes, it is taken as a willful act to commit crime:

Even when you make mistakes that other migrants make out of ignorance, they will feel that it is intentional, they will just associate it with being a Nigerian or being a criminal (Nze, AA10).

And:

Some of us in business are now handicapped; because once you say that you are a Nigerian, it presents you as someone who cannot be trusted. And even were you are trusted, if something should go wrong from an act of omission or nature, it is automatically assumed that you are fraudulent (Barry, AA61).

The *clause “they will just associate it with being a Nigerian or being a criminal”* indicates how the stereotype of crime is being roped around Nigerians in Dutch society. The name itself seems to connote crime. And *“once you say that you are a Nigerian, it presents you as someone who cannot be trusted”* shows the consequence of this negative connotation. One respondent who is self employed admitted that in order to counter this stigma, unless when it is demanded, he often tries to project his competence first, and build a certain level of confidence, before letting his clients know about his nationality. He affirmed:

I don’t start by introducing myself as a Nigerian. I focus on introducing what I do (Tom, AA139).



### ***5.1.4 Framing Causality***

Issue frames are also diagnostic (determining causes) or prognostic (offering solution (Gray 2003, p. 12; 2004, p. 167; Bonfadelli, Dahinden & Leonarz, 2007). As gathered from the interviews, the cause of the criminal perception of Nigerians which is apparently exacerbated in the Netherlands is multifaceted.

First, the respondents stated that factors such as easy access to Europe and then to the Netherlands through the Mediterranean, plus the direct flight from Nigeria to Schipol, coupled with the attractiveness of the Netherlands as a rich country played a role in encouraging the infiltration of criminal elements from Nigeria and fostering a more negative perception of Nigerians in the Netherlands:

Don't forget that anybody, educated or not, who just wanted to survive, and who could afford the terms of human smugglers, could just come to Europe because of its accessible route through the Mediterranean [...] once in Europe, and until now, they can settle in any European country because of the free movement within the E U territory (Marc, AA20).

And:

Netherlands is an economic giant [...] maintaining a status in the whole world [...] has infrastructure for a good working economy [...] envy of other European countries. Its democracy is strong [...] an airport that millions of people pass every day [...] and tourists come to Amsterdam a whole year round [...] Yes, Holland is a nice place to be (Frank, AA 34).

Following from above, the accessibility of Europe, coupled with the attractiveness of the Netherlands as a rich and tourist country made it a good destination for desperate Nigerians, as suggested by the phrase *who just wanted to survive*. Thus this massive inflow of non scrutinized persons, referred to in the above as *anybody*, supposedly increased the chances of infiltration into the Netherlands of Nigerians who make a living out of crimes.

On the other hand, with emphasis to the context of the Netherlands, the causes are explained as thus:

The Netherlands offer an attractive destination for Nigerians who make a living out of crime. For instance, with reference to drug peddling, Frank remarked that:

There are markets for drugs, which are allowed to be sold at certain selling points known as coffee shops (Frank, AA35).

Furthermore, the Netherlands, precisely Amsterdam, is a *transit hub*. This means that Nigerians that get intercepted in Schiphol for bearing fake passports are actually destined to other countries. Meanwhile, these arrests often make news headlines in the Netherlands, thereby elaborating the existing negative perceptions.

Besides, the Netherlands provides a space (a meeting point) that offers these criminals, especially 419 fraudsters, access to a wide array of unsuspecting victims – “*because tourists visit Amsterdam all year round*”, said Frank. The *red light district* was also mentioned as a factor that attracts criminal minded Nigerians to the Netherlands, especially those involved in human trafficking.

Still further, punishment for serious crimes is relatively less severe. As Frank puts it:

For instance, you give people longer terms when they don't pay tax, say 5 years; but when they kill people, you give them 2 years (Frank, AA36).

Figuratively referring to drugs, *when they kill people* is used above to show a more grievous offence compared to tax evasion, yet it attracts lesser punishment compared to tax evasion. This paradox according to the respondent makes it easier for Nigerians who make a living out of crime (in this case drugs) to be attracted to the Netherlands compared to other European countries.

Additionally, Nigerians feel that the skepticism resulting from the already existing negative image is re enforcing the status quo, as most Nigerians ultimately fall back to crime in the absence of honest means of living. The respondents complained about some employers being skeptical about employing Nigerians. According to Nze:

Some employers do not give them jobs [...] the tendency is that most of them get involved in whatever comes around [...] some of them end up in the hands of drug peddlers who eventually use them to do their business (Nze, AA6 & 8).

And:

I think that given the right opportunity, given the job, they don't want to do what they do. But nobody wants to hire them because they are Nigerian. So they sit at home doing nothing, and the cycle continues (Barry, AA 75).

And:

[...] In business and also in getting jobs [...] and then if you are creative, if you have business ideas; it is easy to register a business, but then it is very difficult to get clients because the trust is not there. So it keeps coming back [...] so the cycle continues because if you can't get jobs, if you can't get clients, then you will do otherwise (AA 106).

The statements above depict how the situation is reinforcing itself. The existing criminal image makes it somewhat difficult for some Nigerians to secure employment. Going by the clauses "*get involved in whatever comes around*", "*the cycle continues*" and "*then you will do otherwise connote*", it can be said that discrimination by private employers could have been a contributing factor towards falling back to crime. However, this study cannot completely attribute the inability of Nigerians to secure jobs to the negative perception of her citizens in the Netherlands, as securing employment has also been a challenge in recent times for most people in the Netherlands and Europe.

Another event that perhaps contributed significantly towards the exacerbation of the negative image of Nigerians in the Netherlands is the circumstances surrounding certain group of female under aged asylum seekers who eventually disappeared from their asylum home, and were later found in Amsterdam red light district. The case was not only a national issue; it generated lots of media and public attention in the Netherlands.

Concerning the blacklisting of Nigerian documents in the Netherlands, the respondents was not able to say with certainty why this is so. But one of them noted that most of those who came to the Netherlands through the asylum process had issues with fake documents. As echoed by Marc:

Those people that came for asylum lied about their birth certificate, lied about their nationality, lied about everything. So, most of the experiences that the Dutch government has with Nigerians are coming from these directions (Marc AA 20 & 25).

If as it is stated above, *“the experiences that the Dutch government has with Nigerians are coming from these directions”* (of lies concerning documents), it can thus be implied that these experiences may have in one way or the other contributed to the blacklisting of Nigerian documents in the Netherlands, coupled of course with the incessant interception of Nigerians bearing fake passports in Schipol airport. Similarly, Arka also pointed out that based on the same experience genuine cases of asylum applications are now met with skepticism.

When asked about the relocation of the visa section of the Netherlands embassy in Nigeria to Ghana and Benin republic, the embassy respondent reported that *“it was a measure intended by the Netherlands embassy to cut cost as a result of the economic meltdown”*. The respondent stressed that it is only the visa section that was relocated, and that consular activities are still being carried out at the Netherlands embassy in Nigeria.

### ***5.1.3 Framing remedies***

Frames can also be prognostic, that is, suggesting remedies to a problematic situation (Entman 1993, p. 52 Gray 2003, p. 12; Bonfadelli, Dahinden &

Leonarz, 2007).). Worthy of mentioning is that in the course of the field research, interviewed Nigerians in some way or the other had their consciousness awakened to the facts of the situation. It also awakened in them a sudden realization that they can actively do something (as groups or as individuals) which can in time improve their image in the Netherlands. Some of them are already actively embarking on activities which are intended to improve the negative impressions the Dutch have about Nigerians. For instance, the director of African Television emphasized that one of the visions of his media enterprise is to enlighten the viewers about the positive attributes of Nigeria and Nigerians, something often not told by Dutch media. In his view, Nigerians are “*denied of opportunities based on their criminal image*”. He said:

I realized that if we don't start telling our own story, we will remain like this forever [...] 50 years from now, we will still be suffering; they will still be looking at us as a country of criminals (Barry, AA65).

Other respondents emphasized stepping up personal social responsibilities as another way out. The respondents believe that if they could individually live right and act right; they will in one way or the other be correcting the wrong impression. In addition, one respondent suggested the importance of engaging in charity:

[...] by actively taking part in charity acts which could openly show us as responsible people; that is, by taking part in real community development activities. I think it is often a better way than just having propaganda saying we are good people! We are good people!! (Arka, AA50).

He explained that this charity act could be spear headed by Nigerian professionals who live in the Netherlands. He added that engaging in these activities would make a difference in that it will show the other side of Nigerians.

One other respondent also suggested that these professionals can further engage the Dutch society by *belonging to their clubs* (lawn tennis, football, swimming). Involving themselves with the society in this way will “*let them see us*”, Ale said.

On the other hand, more of the responsibility for addressing the image of Nigerians in the Netherlands was assigned to the Nigerian embassy in the Netherlands. The entire respondents noted that the embassy needs to do more in terms of organizing Nigerians:

They can at least have meetings with Nigerians in order to talk about issues concerning Nigerians. They need to make their presence felt. Most Nigerians don't feel the presence of their embassy. In a foreign land like this, one needs a kind of structure to back you up [...] but most Nigerians don't have anybody to cater for them, they are alone on their own, disappointed and betrayed by their country as well (Frank, AA37).

And:

They can have something like a knowledge session or a welcome morning where they can say to Nigerians -“if you are new in the country, you can come” - So they will orientate them on the law of the land. Let them know about the stereotypes that exist and what to watch out for; educate them to be careful about this and that (Ale, AA115).

One other respondent remarked that these community town hall meetings are being practiced in some other countries. For instance:

In Spain, I understand that there is what is called citizen diplomacy, and she (the ambassador) is really implementing it. But here, there is none [...] nobody is taking care of anybody (Agu, AA82).

A representative of the Nigerian National Association in the Netherlands (NNA.NL) further acknowledged that the approach of the embassy in handling their clients is very important. This is because the embassy could be the first contact of some non Nigerians who may want one thing or the other with Nigeria or Nigerians. And as he puts it, *“the first response is very important”*.

Taken together, the statements above indicate that Nigerian embassy in the Netherlands needs a better organization of her people who are living in the Netherlands, and that her citizens would like to see this structure put in place. The respondent suggests that this kind of structure would at least create a forum for welcoming new Nigerian immigrants into the Dutch society, intimating them of the existing situations, and educating them on how to conduct themselves in their new environment.

## ***5.2 Identity framing***

*Identity* frames are constructed to refer to one's own individual or collective identity in relation to the issue at stake. They are “statements of one's own identity in relation to a problem (Aarts et al., 2011, p. 236). Following Rothman (in Dewulf, 2009), when ones frame of identity is challenged, he or she responds with vigorous defense (p. 169). This was true for the case of the respondents. Thus, it was not unusual that in their responses, they consciously or unconsciously made statements that served to reframe their



identity from that of crime. Statements such as “*we are hard working people*”, “*we can compete in any kind of environment*”, “*we are good people*” were actively or passively employed to negate the criminal stereotype.

Thus, a positive image is presented by proclaiming self righteousness and referring to an ability to earn honest living through diligence:

Anybody can say anything about Nigerians, but I know that we (referring to Nigerians) are good people, we are hard working people; for the better part, we have good honest hearts (Barry, AA73).

To make the above statement even more credible, an experience is referred to:

I know doctors and law graduates who came here from Nigeria, they were not ashamed of their degrees, and they went down and started cleaning toilets and doing all sorts of menial jobs just to survive. So our people are good people, we work hard (Barry, AA75).

*Cleaning toilets and doing all sorts of menial jobs just to survive* was used here to emphasize the earlier statements that the dignity of Nigerians lay in their hard work and honest living.

Beside the emphases on hard work, Nigerians also constructs other frames of identity that tends to shift the conversation from crime to positive personality attributes. As highlighted by Ale:

A typical Nigerian is first and foremost cheerful; he or she is happy, not daunted by difficulties. We are very resilient, we are persistent, we don't give up easily; we don't give up without a fight. We are very dogged and much focused. When we believe in something, we go for it

with the whole of our minds. We are very religious; whether you are a Christian or a Muslim. We are passionate about what we believe in, and we are also friendly (Ale AA 116).

Aarts et al. (2011) wrote that the construction of a commonly shared value is usually deployed to empower a group. As seen in the above quote, the use of “we” was deployed to reflect a perceived shared value which in essence serves to strengthen the collective identity of Nigerians in such a positive light that oppose the image of crime.

The analysis further revealed that in addition to the way Nigerians think of their selves, they also think highly of their country in spite of the negative connotation the name Nigeria bears, *“Nigeria is a great country, and we as the citizens should hold our heads high”* most of them said.

In fact, in Mobade’s opinion, the name Nigeria is not bad luck as it is thought, but a brand in itself:

Coming from Nigeria is a brand on its own; it is synonymous with ruggedness, die hard; because anybody who could survive in Nigeria could survive anywhere. In Nigeria, everything is possible, we are creative; we make things happen even in the midst of nothing. The system (referring to Nigeria) does not work. So, for you to achieve anything, you just have to be creative. So I think that these people recognize our resilience, our ruggedness. For me, I think that the asset they see in me is that creativity, and the mindset of everything is possible. In my office, whenever we are at a crossroad, they look for me; they call me “madam everything is possible” (Mobade, AA117).

Referring to Nigerian nation and its people in this way, this respondent constructs an identity of pride for her nation, as against that of shame brought about by the criminal stereotype. She further stressed that Nigerians should be confident to associate themselves with their nation as in fact, "*there is something in us that they want*", with 'they' being used in this statement to refer to the Dutch society.

### ***5.3 Characterization framing***

*Characterization* frame are statement of a person or group with reference to another person or group (Aarts et al., 2011, p.236). It is about taking stance, describing and making moral judgments concerning the attitudes of "others" in a given situation (Entman 1993, p. 52; Dewulf et al. 2009, p. 168), defining their roles in shaping our experiences (Gray 2003, p. 23). It could be positive, negative or neutral (Dewulf et al. 2009, p. 168). This analysis detected characterization frames, reflected at different levels and directed at different groups.

#### ***5.3.1 Positive characterization frames***

Positive characterization frame are in form of acknowledgement of "the other" (Gray 2003, p. 12). They are often positive remarks concerning the other's attitude.

The entire respondent acknowledged that at the government level, the Dutch has been fair in their dealings with Nigerians irrespective of the problematic image. Their system is fair, as rules are followed; and would not deny anyone an opportunity if indeed they merit it:

Dutch people are good people, they are fair; they can be strict, and that is because they like to follow the rules almost to a fault (Barry, AA71).

And:

If your field is highly relevant to them, they will take you [...] if you merit something, they will not deny you, they do not say that because you are from here or there, that you will not get it (Idem, AA102).

To further demonstrate this, Idem cited that there are Nigerians who are holding top positions in sensitive Dutch institutions such as the Dutch ministry of Justice, ABN AMRO Bank, Hospitals and so on.

Again, as stated by the embassy respondent, “*Dutch people are very humane, very – very accommodating*”. And to illustrate this, the respondent referred to two personal experiences. First by reminding the researcher that:

These are the people who gave you (the researcher) scholarship, yet they don’t know you.

Next, a case of one victim of human trafficking is also recalled:

We had a case of a lady who was trafficked [...] she reported the case to the Police. The man who brought her ran away, they (Dutch) took this girl, accommodated her, and they were giving her 800 Euros a month. Who will do that for you (referring to Nigeria)? She is not even a Dutch girl, she is not from Europe; she is from Africa! Nigeria! So they are doing a lot of things that people should see and appreciate (Embassy, AA134).

Still further, another respondent stresses that Nigerians are not specifically targeted; he also corroborates the strictness mentioned above by Barry:

I don't believe that they are after any Nigerian. When you do the right thing, you will always go along with them. But what annoys every Dutch person is to beat their system ... they don't like it (Agu, AA81).

But he added that unfortunately, *"our people sometimes indulge in short cuts"*.

Taken together, the statements above suggests that in the opinion of Nigerians, the Dutch government offers equal opportunities to all its populace (*they are fair, if you merit something, they will not deny you*). Thus, the Dutch are exonerated from explicit institutional bias. In other words, at the institutional level, there is no known discrimination against any nationality (*they do not say that because you are from here or there*), the emphasis is on merit and following the rules (*if you do the right thing you will always go along with them*).

On the other hand, in order to determine that the right thing is done, Nigerians are extra scrutinized based on the existing criminal profile:

People are careful with us, they are careful with Nigerians (Nze, AA5)

And:

But I know that when they know you are a Nigerian then they are extra careful (Ale, AA113).

It can therefore be said that it is in this extra scrutiny that an evidence of stigmatization lies. The Dutch being careful with Nigerians suggest that there is something negative to watch out for.

Another positive characterization frame that emerged concerns individual Dutch citizens; those whom the respondents described as "the international

mind ed” based on their exposure and connections with Nigerians. According to Idem:

They do not stereotype because through their own personal experience, they know that they cannot make a blanket statement about Nigerians (Idem, AA98).

*Blanket statement* as used above refers to criminal generalization. Thus, based on personal experience with Nigerians, this category of Dutch society are able to make balanced statements about Nigerians as opposed to those who are influenced by media reports. In fact, as Ale puts it, “*those kinds of people will even be the first to consciously reach out to you*”, because:

They know the country; they know the people and they were fortunate to know the good people. So the image is balanced (Ale, AA111).

The sentence *so the image is balanced* presupposes that they have knowledge of the context (*they know the country*), especially its rough side, but have also had good relationships with Nigerians in the past. And so, would not stereotype Nigerians with emphasis on crimes.

### **5.3.2 Negative characterization frame**

Negative characterization frame is always associated with blaming of the “the other” person or group (Gray 2003, p. 12; Dewulf et al. 2009, p. 168). First, the entire respondent largely blamed the Nigerian government for the criminal behavior of her citizens. The high poverty inequality gap arising from bad governance and successive governments’ manipulation of the citizens is the remote cause, they opined. For instance, according to Nze:

The government still has the colonial mentality of exploiting her citizens, so we just have to struggle for ourselves (Nze, AA 3).

He further stated that this survival instinct has been an outcome of governments' exploitation – *“a generational thing, something in our background that we cannot change”*. He continued saying: *“at home, we survive by ourselves”*. In his opinion, this situation has turned some Nigerians to frustrated persons, because *“you know that your country is rich, but it is in the hands of a few”* (Nze, AA4).

Following from above, another respondent, a medical practitioner, described Nigerians as *“traumatized persons”* (Frank, AA40), *“suffering from post traumatic stress disorders”* as a result of their government (AA41). He added:

We don't have normal people governing us. The normal ones among us are there, shouting and shouting but nobody hears [...] I am worried because we have not developed a foundation at the Nigerian level upon which they make sure that the decay from the leadership that trickles down to the bottom is dealt with. And so every day we wake up hoping that the little efforts that we make will trickle down the ladder and make change for us, our children and also our fellow Nigerians, but that hope is not coming through.

These statements depict the extent of the frustration of Nigerians with their government, as shown in the phrases *frustrated persons*, *traumatized persons*; *just have to survive by ourselves*. It also depicts the citizens as victims; victim of a nation that exploits and marginalizes its citizens (*your country is rich, but in the hands of a few*). The Nigerian leaders therefore are largely blamed for

handing down a survival instinct that pushes her citizens beyond bounds and limits into crimes.

Secondly, the Dutch press was blamed for their negative coverage of Nigerians in Dutch society “*we only get reported when we do something wrong*”, Obade said. And this they believe fuelled the negative perception of Nigerians in the Netherlands. According to some respondents:

The news is not balanced, because once it involves a Nigerian, because of the bias, it is exaggerated (Ale, AA 106).

And:

There is no balanced reporting, anything from the other side is headline; it is headline! Major headline!! I am not saying that we do not have crimes and criminalities among us; we do, but it is usually blown out of proportion. (Emb, AA129 & AA126).

To further illustrate this biasness, Obade cited this example:

... For instance if someone who is mixed does something good, the press will go like: “A Dutch born Nigerian has done so - so and so”. But if the same person commits a crime, then it will go like: “A Nigerian born Dutch has done so - so”. They will like to highlight the point that there is a Nigerian blood running in the vein of that person who committed an offence (Obade, AA118).

Judging from the statements above, it can be deduced that Nigerians feel that Dutch press are biased in their reporting of Nigerians. Their emphasis is on bad news, and particularly when it is related to crimes, it is *blown out of proportion; it is exaggerated*.



### ***5.3.3 Neutral characterization frames***

Another frame of “the other” identified from this analysis was neither positive nor negative, but indicates the acknowledgement of Nigerians concerning the wrongs of some of her compatriots. The respondents recognized that some Nigerians are indeed guilty of the crimes that lead to the deterioration of the image of Nigerians in the Netherlands, especially fraud:

They (Dutch) have had a lot of experience with Nigerians who had done a lot of stuff here, especially in Amsterdam. Some of them were involved in 419 and all, and so have really tarnished our image (Ale AA104)

And:

... If Nigerians are stigmatized as criminals, it then means that there is a reason; we Nigerians gave them the reason ... when 0.1 percent of Nigerians made their daily activity fraud, when Dutch citizens or European citizens are victims of this crime, it is only fair that their brothers and sisters in the media announce and publish these crimes (Barry, AA59 and 60).

Obade summarized it this way:

There is always a Nigerian mentioned in relation to women or drug trafficking, financial fraud. They are always catching them in Schipol with fake visa, or drug related offences. Nigerians are always caught with cash in Schipol; thousands of Euros beyond the maximum limit that is allowed. Again we are always flashy and showing off. If you also go to bureau the change, they are always there, sending and transferring huge amount of money (Obade, AA 123)

In the first statement, the respondent affirms the wrongs of Nigerians. At the same time, *some of them* is used as a frame of “the other” to refer to the wrongdoers, indicating the speaker’s intension to show what “the other” has done to shape the experience of a we-group (*have really tarnished our image*). And in the second statement, the respondent also acknowledges that Nigerians are indeed guilty of the crimes they are being accused of, while maintaining that the perpetrators of these crimes (the other) are insignificant though (0.1 percent). This notion is further emphasized by NNA.nl (Nigerian National Association in the Netherlands), using the phrase *that minority* to distinguish the group of wrongdoers, (the other), from the rest of Nigerians whom they said are law abiding:

The greater majority of Nigerians are law abiding, they are here to make a living, and do the best for themselves and their families. At the same time you have Nigerians who always end up on the other side of the law, and it is that minority that gives Nigeria the bad name (NNA.nl AA86).

## **5.4 Summary**

In this chapter, the perspectives of Nigerians regarding the criminal perceptions of her citizens in the Netherlands were analyzed, with particular emphasis on how they frame the problem (issue frames), how they identify themselves in relation to the issue (Identity frames) and how they view those around them with reference to the problem (characterization frames).

Through issue frames it was detected that Nigerians are not only aware of the criminal perception of her citizens in Dutch society; it also found out that Nigerians perceive it as a burden that they have to consciously or

unconsciously prove that they are not criminals. The respondents also pointed out that it is an unfair generalization that the entire Nigerians are at sight pre judged criminals until otherwise proven. The analysis revealed that they face a challenge of societal mistrust such that even innocent mistakes are taken as willful tendency to commit crime. The respondents ascribed the pull factors responsible for the high ratio of Nigerian born criminals in Dutch society to the easy access of Europe and then to the Netherlands through the Mediterranean, the availability of direct flight from Nigeria to Schiphol airport, coupled with the attractiveness of the Netherlands as a viable destination for criminal elements; in terms of the availability of selling points for drugs and hence drug traffickers, presence of red light districts for prostitutes and hence human traffickers / smugglers, Amsterdam as tourist destination and hence a wide array of unsuspecting targets for fraudsters, and less punishment for severe crimes. All these causes were attributed to have contributed to the infiltrations of criminal elements from Nigeria into Dutch society, and of course, their activities added up to exacerbate the criminal image of Nigerians in Dutch society. As a way to improve this image, the respondents suggested stepping up personal responsibilities, active participation in charity acts, involvement of Nigerian professionals in Dutch clubs; and better organization of Nigerian citizens by her embassy.

Next was identity framing. Identity framing revealed that the respondents were actively constructing an identity of hard working people, good and honest people, in other to counter the stereotype of crime. They also deployed other positive attributes such as resilience, persistence, doggedness, cheerfulness, friendliness and religiosity to describe their selves. The nation itself was described as a great country and a brand on its own.

Lastly, under characterization framing, 3 sub frames – positive, negative and neutral were identified. Under positive characterization frame, Nigerians acknowledged that Dutch system is fair; and that her people are accommodating and humane. They also acknowledged that irrespective of the criminal image of Nigerians, some category of Dutch citizens still warm up to them, those they described as “the internationally minded”. On the other hand, negative characterization frames were directed at Nigerian leaders, whom the respondents blamed for the ordeals of her citizens; an ordeal that pushes some Nigerian citizens into resorting to crime. Dutch media was also blamed for her exaggerated negative and unbalanced reporting, which ultimately compounded the already battered image. Finally, under neutral characterization frame, the respondent acknowledged that indeed, there is no denying that some of her compatriots are guilty of the crimes Nigerians are being accused of. However, they stressed that this category of Nigerians are in the minority.

# 6 EXPERIENCES AND INTEGRATION OF NIGERIANS IN THE NETHERLANDS

The last two chapters (4 and 5) revealed the perspectives of Dutch media and that of Nigerian respondents respectively concerning the criminal perceptions of Nigerians in Dutch society. This chapter is hereby dedicated to exploring the impacts of these perceptions on the integration of Nigerians in the Netherlands. Thus, references are made to the frames identified in chapters 4 and 5. In addition, selected personal experiences of some Nigerians which serve to help us make sense of the realities of these integration challenges are featured in text boxes, and are introduced by the concept of construction of realities. The areas of integration recognised by Dutch literature are explored. These are *structural (socio economic)* integration on one hand; and *social and cultural* integration on the other hand.

The research question addressed is:

**How does the criminal perception of Nigerians in the Netherlands impact their integration experience in the Netherlands?**

## ***6.1 Structural integration***

Structural (socio – economic) integration refers to the rights of immigrants to access key institutions (employment, housing, health, education, political positions, citizenship and welfare) in their host society ((Penninx, 2005, p. 139; Snel et al., 2006, p. 267; Bakker et al, 2013, p. 433). However, for the purpose of analysis, this study will group structural (socio – economic) integration into *economic related integration* (employment and labour), and *other rights* (housing, health, education, political position, welfare and citizenship). The rationale being that the economic institution involves a broad

range of actors such as private employers, labour union, trade organizations, financial institutions and the government as well, while the government is primarily responsible for these “other rights”.

### ***6.1.1 Economic related integration***

According to Castles et al. (2002), integration of immigrants takes place at every level and in every sector of a host society, and it involves a broad range of social actors; including public officials, political decision makers, private employers, trade union officials, fellow workers, service providers and even neighbours (p. 113). Similarly, employment, one of the identified areas of structural integration, is considered one of the key areas that are indicative of successful integration (Ager and Strang, 2008, p.169). It can be described as holding a job which is commensurate to one's qualification or skills. According to the study conducted by Ager and Strang (2008), it was discovered that refugees or immigrants consider themselves integrated when they are able to find jobs. In other words, when immigrants are able to participate in the economic and financial institutions in their host society, then they feel that they are integrated.

However, this study identified employment as one of the areas Nigerians are experiencing challenges in their integration experience in Dutch society. One respondent, a PhD holder from a Dutch University, summarized her experience as thus:

### **Situation related first order reality (Watzlawick in Ford 1999)**

#### ***Couldn't get a job***

*My parents came here as Shell staff and that is how we studied here. And later I went to do my PhD in the UK because the course I wanted to study is not offered in English here. But I returned here and for quite a while, I was not even getting response to all my applications. Something just told me to rearrange my CV and I shortened my name and emphasized less about my identity. It was not long after that some people called me. That was how I got my first job (Lola).*

Two other respondents recounted similar experiences as above. And another two categorically emphasised that some employers would not employ Nigerians:

*[...] Nobody wants to hire them because they are Nigerians (Barry).*

And:

Some employers don't give them jobs. So you do not have even space to prove who you are (Nze, AA7).

*"Because they are Nigerians"* as used here transcends to "because they are believed to be criminals", after all, Nigerians are at sight adjudged criminals. And *"spaces to prove who you are"* points towards having the opportunity to show that you are not a criminal in the first place. Nevertheless, the emphasis is on *some employers* as stated in the second statement. And this means that it is not all Dutch employers, but just some Dutch employers who are skeptical about employing Nigerians, just as explained by Nze *"they are afraid of us"*. It can thus be said that this skepticism is arising from the criminal image of Nigerian citizens as revealed in the 2 previous chapters.

Further, it can be deduced from the findings in chapter 5 that this group apparently belong to the category of Dutch society that stigmatize Nigerians; that is, those who probably have Dutch media as their only source of information concerning Nigerians. And according to the respondent, the press is biased and only negative news about Nigerians gets reported. It is also possible that they belong to the category of those who have had negative experiences in the hands of Nigerians:

[...] it is like they have had a lot of experience with Nigerians who had done a lot of stuff here, especially in Amsterdam (Ale, 104).

Nevertheless, it is with caution that this study attributes the challenge in the employment sector to the otherwise negative image of Nigerians in Dutch society, as there are other probable reasons why Nigerians are experiencing difficulty. For instance, the much talked about economic recession could be a factor.

Another area that Nigerians are experiencing challenge in relation to economic integration is in terms of business opportunities. Some of the respondents complained that they are finding it difficult to engage in honest businesses because of lack of trust. According to these respondents:

It affects us from doing legitimate business; a lot of doors have been closed on our face. We don't get the opportunities because they are afraid of us. (Barry, AA62)

And:



[...] there are too much distrusting, Nigerians find it difficult to engage in genuine businesses (Arka, AA51)

And:

[...] They will rather do business with people from other countries (Obade, AA120).

And:

And then if you are creative or have business ideas [...] it is easy to register a business, but then it is very difficult to get clients because the trust is not there (Ale, AA105).

In chapter 5, the respondent lamented that Nigerians are mistrusted to the point that even genuine mistakes are taken as willful acts to commit crime. Following from the above statements, it can be seen that one of the consequences of this mistrust is that Nigerians are experiencing challenges in terms of engaging in business transactions. Their counterparts and potential clients are afraid to deal with them because of the stereotype of fraud that they have.

Another challenge is in relation to financial transactions. The respondent noted that financial deals have been problematic to Nigerians in Dutch society as a result of the stereotype of fraud that Nigerians have. Obade remarked:

[...] if you apply for loan, they will check you inside out and you might not get it after all because of the stereotype of fraud that we have (Mobade, AA120).

Going further, she recounts a personal experience:

## **Event related First order reality (Watzlawick in Ford 1999)**

### ***Denied a credit card***

*Personally, I applied for a credit card from my bank. Of course I had a good job and a very good salary being a staff of an oil company. Unfortunately, I did not have a Dutch passport then so I presented my Nigerian passport. This people refused. They said to me "sorry madam, everything seems to be Ok, but you need a Dutch passport". Tell me, must one have the passport of a country before you can have a credit card. I live in their country and work in an organization in their country, fat salary and have their residence permit. Another one was when I was looking for job; on my CV I had my full names and my nationality. For almost two years, no one invited me. I only realized what was happening when my cousin who is a mix, a Dutch - Nigerian born and I applied for the same job, in fact I was the one who told her about the job. Sharp - sharp they called her. My dear, I had to adjust my CV, and not long after, I was at least invited. I did not get the job but at least I was invited. My dear, better allow yourself to be seen, interviewed before revealing your identity, and make sure your name on the CV is as brief as possible (Mobade).*

As revealed in chapter 4, Nigerians are mostly associated with financial fraud such as the notorious 419 scam. In chapter 5, the respondents also acknowledged that some Nigerians are indeed guilty as alleged, especially in Amsterdam. Based on the lack of trust created by these fraudulent acts, Nigerians in the Netherlands are experiencing difficulties securing loans, credit cards and all other financial related deals.

### **6.1.2 Other rights**

*Other rights* as adopted in this study include housing, health, education, political position, welfare and citizenship. Provision of these services is essentially the responsibilities of the government. The respondent revealed that at the institutional (government) level the Dutch government has been fair in terms of providing access to housing market, health, education, welfare

institutions (unemployment and children benefits) and citizenship. One respondent, an ICT consultant in a Dutch firm affirmed that:

[...] If you merit something, they will not deny you, they will give it to you. They do not say that because you are from here or there, that you will not get it (Idem, AA102).

Another respondent corroborated this, saying:

Dutch people are good people, they are fair (Barry, AA75).

In the same vein, the embassy representative described the Dutch as being “*very accommodating*”.

Meanwhile, *they* and *Dutch people* are used here to represent Dutch institutions and or policies. And this is to say that Dutch system offers equal rights and opportunities to all its residence and that accessing these rights are primarily based on merit. Thus taken together, the statements above are in line with Snel et al. 2006 which referred to the Netherlands as an advanced welfare state, promoting equal treatment of all persons living in the Netherlands in all circumstances (Vink, 2007, p. 341).

But on the other hand, the respondents highlighted that although the emphasis is on merit, the process of arriving at this merit is tougher for Nigerians compared to most other immigrants in the Netherlands. They recognized that the Dutch are extra careful with Nigerians. Ale remarked:

But I know that when they know you are a Nigerian, then they are extra careful (Ale).

There is no doubt that this extra scrutiny is as a result of the criminal perceptions of Nigerians in the Netherlands, which were extensively dealt

with in the 2 previous chapters. For instance, the press identified possession of fake documents as one of the crimes Nigerians are involved with in the Netherlands. The respondents are also aware of experiences of fake documents, as revealed in this statement:

Look here, if you don't have a job and you are not properly documented, you are doomed. You cannot even be treated supposing you fall sick. And now, even if you happen to have someone help you with his permit (document) so that you can even have medical assistance or work in order to even eat, and you happen to be caught; the moment they know that you are a Nigerian, they will say "fake document"; they will quickly associate you with carrying fake document because of the Nigerian thing (Nze, AA9).

The *Nigerian thing* as used above refers to the criminal image of Nigerians. It can be deduced that it is based on this issue of document mistrust that documents from Nigeria intended for use in Dutch society are extensively verified by Dutch government itself before it can be accepted in the Netherlands, and legalization of documents in Nigeria is up until this moment suspended.

## **6.2 Social integration**

Social integration is the informal social contacts of immigrants with native (Dutch) people (Snel, 2006, p. 267). It refers to an interactive process which entails having a sense of belonging, identifying with the members of the host society and building personal relationships (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 11).

### ***6.2 1 Interactive process as part of social integration***

Ager and Strang (2008) wrote that perceived unfriendliness undermines other successful areas of integration (p.180). According to the respondents, one of the social challenges they face as Nigerians in the Netherlands with respect to the image of Nigerians is in the skepticism they encounter in the course of social interactions. The consciousness that the general public is cynical about Nigerians gives Nigerians an uncomfortable feeling. As Nze stated:

People are careful with us, and it gives you that feeling that you are not accepted (Nze AA5).

To illustrate this feeling of discomfort, Idem presented this scenario of an African person sitting near a Dutch passenger in a train, and suddenly this Dutch passenger realizes that this fellow black or African traveller is also a Nigerian:

[...] and if they find out that you are also a Nigerian, then in fact your case will graduate to another level because you will see the person tighten his or her grips on their belongings and adjust them. I don't think that any Nigerian who wants to answer a call from Nigeria while in the train will mention 'Nigeria' in the course of the conversation, because revealing your identity will just make you look like a criminal (Idem, AA100).

By presenting this scenario, Idem tries to illustrate how the criminal perception of Nigerian is impacting on the day to day interactional experiences of Nigerians, and ultimately, on the sense of belongings of Nigerians in Dutch society. Ale relates this experience below to further show this:

## **Event related First order reality (Watzlawick in Ford 1999)**

### ***Football team detained by the Police***

*It was about the church football club, TOD football club. So it happened that they went to play a match in Zoetermeer, and the people they were playing against were below us in the league. So they needed a win in order to be above us. But then, when they discovered that we were leading, then they became violent and stopped the game. So the game was not concluded. And then our boys went to the dressing room. While they were in the dressing room, some people came, banging on their door and saying that they had come to beat them up. So, our boys refused to open the door, they refused to have a fight with them. About 15 minutes later, our boys heard heavy bangs on the door and it was the police. They were about 20 to 25 police, heavily armed and wearing bullet proofs. They (the police) said that somebody in the Dutch football club called and reported that our boys were carrying weapons, and that they attacked them with a weapon. So the police arrested all our players, including the supporters, but they did not arrest anybody from the opponent. We had to go to the police station that Saturday; I was in the police station till about 12 mid night in order to get them released. Later we filled the case to the police, we said "look, this is racism, this is not nice. So if two people are fighting why will you arrest everybody on one team and leave the other one". Thank God that there was a CCTV camera there. So when they looked at the CCTV camera, they realized that our boys didn't do anything, and then they had to release them. But as you can see, it was a predetermined profiling. That's like a month or two months ago that this thing happened (Ale)*

He later added that:

Even people in the office; they don't warm up to you. So you need to deliver, you need to prove yourself before they can open up to you (Ale, AA 108)

This constant effort to *prove oneself* otherwise (that one is not a criminal) "*places a burden on Nigerians*", just as Frank rightly puts it. And in my own opinion, it undermines the integration of Nigerians in the Netherlands as this

is in line with the findings of Ager and Strang (2008), where social connection was found to be one of the defining features of an integrated community (p. 177).

Furthermore, Kuhlman (1991) identified psychological adjustment as an essential part of integration (p. 8). Hence, thinking of psychological adjustment as part of social integration, this research found that it is another area Nigerians are affected in terms of their social integration. When asked how he thinks that the negative image of Nigerians is potentially affecting Nigerians, Marc quickly responded:

Psychologically! Because once you mention Nigeria, everybody on the table turns to look at you (Marc AA21).

He also said that another thing that happens is that as soon as Nigerians are mentioned on the news on any negative issue, one is sure to be confronted with it the next day because your colleagues will bring it to your notice in the office and even demands your explanation on it.

Barry also said that he has had a fair share of experience as a journalist, whereby people he meets in the course of his interaction suddenly presume him to be criminally minded because of his huge size:

**Event related First order reality (Watzlawick in Ford 1999)**

***A fair share of being victimized as a Nigerian***

*I have been approached as a big black man by some elements who think that I would be involved in those things. You know, looking at me, because of my size, automatically people think that I may be vicious or criminally minded, because of the size and my country of origin. I have been approached by shameless elements who think that because I am a Nigerian, I must be involved with all these things. I have had my share of these things; I have had my share of being victimized. Even where I made innocent mistakes, I was considered a criminal or treated as a criminal for innocent omission or commission. So you're talking to somebody who has really suffered (Barry).*

Again, he has been frequently confronted about Nigerian fraud, whenever his acquaintances realize that he is a Nigerian:

**Reality based on casual conversation Eggins & Slade 1997**

***Fraud country! Bunkering country!!***

*I met a Dutch man in the shop just about 4 weeks ago. I said hello and he said hi. Then he asked me if I were a Ghanaian and I said no; that I'm a Nigerian. And then he said aaahhhh! , fraud country!!! And I said noo!! What do you mean? Do you mean oil country? And then he said ok; Boko haram country! I found out that I could not win this guy. Then I said to him "my country gives your country oil, why should you call us fraud country". And he said ok, "I would not call you fraud country, I would rather call you bunkering country, because you bunker the oil as well".*

*So, this is from a Dutch man, jokingly but seriously, he told me that my country is fraudulent. So this is the image that we have. I have been met in elevators where people say fraud / 419 countries, even our fellow Africans have talked to us rudely because we are Nigerians. But yes, our people did it to us (Barry).*



These two experiences gives a vivid impression of the kind of image circulating in Dutch society about Nigerians; the image of crime, especially fraud.

However, in spite of the image crises, with regards to building personal relationships, it was discovered that reasonable number of Nigerians are still able to make personal connections with some members of the Dutch society, although most of Nigerians still prefer to only stick with people of their own speech community. Some of them have Dutch partners and sometimes also Dutch friends. For example 4 out of the 16 respondents interviewed have Dutch spouses. The embassy respondent summarized it this way:

When we are celebrating our independence, you need to be there. You will see Nigerians coming with their Dutch wives, husbands, Dutch children (Embassy, AA133).

Taken together, this finding further confirms the opinion of Nigerians as revealed in chapter 5; that not all Dutch people are the same, and that those who have had personal experiences with Nigerians does not stigmatize them. In fact, they *“even warm up to them”*. Furthermore, it is also possible that indeed as one of the respondent puts it, *“there is something in us (Nigerians) that the Dutch society wants”*, even amidst the negative image.

### **6.3 Cultural integration**

Cultural integration is defined in terms of cultural and religious rights of immigrants, whereby they have equal rights to organize themselves and meet together as cultural, ethnic or religious groups; belonging to town meetings and having the freedom to practice ones faith belongs to this category (Penninx, 2005, p. 139).

Of the entire respondent interviewed, none of them complained of any form of interference in terms of practicing their faith or organizing themselves as associations, as well as holding town meetings. The chairman of the Nigerian National Association of Nigeria, Netherlands branch confirmed this, stressing that Nigerians have never been denied the rights accorded other minority organizations in the Netherlands. By this, the statement that the Netherlands is a multicultural society (Vink, 2007; Duyvendak & Scholten, 2011) holds, availing its residence the opportunity to develop and maintain their own cultural identities (Vink, 2007, p. 341).

#### **6.4 Summary**

In this chapter, the impact of the criminal perception of Nigerians on their integration experience in the Netherlands was analyzed under the aspects of integration recognized in Dutch literature. That is: *structural* (socio – economic), *social* and *cultural domain*.

Structural integration was further classified as *economic related integration* and *other rights*. Under economic related integration, it was revealed that Nigerians are experiencing challenges in Dutch society in terms of securing employments with private employers, securing business opportunities as well as accessing financial deals; all due to the criminal perceptions of Nigerians and the resultant skepticism. In terms of *other rights* which is principally the responsibility of the government (state controlled employment, health, housing, welfare benefits), it was revealed that Nigerians are in principle not out rightly discriminated against; the emphasis is on merit. That is to say that every individual in Dutch society gets the rights due him or her once it is merited. However, to arrive at this merit, Nigerians are extra scrutinized

compared to most immigrants, and this is consequent upon the criminal image of Nigerians in Dutch society.

With reference to *social integration*, it was shown that the negative image of Nigerians is impacting on the interactions of Nigerians in Dutch society; more often than not, Nigerians are met with skepticism from the general public. In addition, they are also psychologically affected. However, some Nigerians are able to break these barriers and build personal relationships with some members of the Dutch society.

*Culturally*, as shown by this study, Nigerians are well integrated, as they have not experienced any known form of barrier in terms of their faith and cultural practice.

# **7 CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from this research, based on the general research question; having provided answers to the specific research questions. This will be followed by discussion, which is essentially a reflection of the research process and the limitations. The chapter will be concluded with a recommendation for further research.

## **7.1 Conclusion**

In this study, the impact of the criminal perceptions of Nigerians on the integration of Nigerians in Dutch society was examined. The concept of framing was employed to analyze the perceptions of the Dutch society, (represented here by its media), and that of Nigerians (represented by 16 respondents) concerning the criminal perceptions of Nigerian citizens in Dutch society. The knowledge generated from these frames was significant in that it helped to deepen our understanding of the roles of these perceptions on the integration of Nigerians in the Netherlands. The overall research question that formed the basics for the research was:

***How is the criminal perception of Nigerians framed in Dutch society; and how do these frames play a role in the integration experiences of Nigerians in the Netherlands?***

Dinnie, (as cited in Matiza and Oni, 2014) holds that personal experience, stereotype and of course the media plays a very significant role in how a country is perceived (p. 663). Studies have shown how the media in particular contributes to the negative perception of immigrants (minorities) by always

portraying them in the light of crime. Van Dijk (2013) concluded that in line with the news value of negative reporting of minority, negative events receive most attention by the press (p. 285). This was also the case for Nigerians in Dutch society. It was shown that Dutch media perceives and portrays the Nigerian nation and her citizens as “notoriously corrupt”, recurrently involving in organized crime such as internet (419) frauds, money laundering, human trafficking and smuggling, prostitution, drug peddling, fake documentations and even terrorism.

The respondents on the other hand confirmed that the consistent negative Dutch media coverage of Nigerians contributed to the exacerbation of the image of her citizens in Dutch society. Consequently, Nigerians are often met with skepticism in Dutch society. However, while acknowledging the wrongs of some of her compatriots, Nigerians continued to maintain that the majority of her citizens are hard working and law abiding and as such, considers it unfair that the generality of Nigerians are cast in the same basket with those whom they say bring them shame. Again, they consider it a burden to be constantly aware of their negative image in Dutch society, and thus must consciously or unconsciously demonstrate in the course of their interactions that they are not to be reckoned with crime.

When ones frame of identity is challenged, he or she responds with vigorous defense (Rothman in Dewulf, 2009 p. 169). Therefore, through identity framing, it was revealed that the respondents were deploying frames which were intended to negate the identity of crime, and construct that of uprightness. Such frames were for instance “we are good people”, “we are

hard working”, “we are creative”, “we have a good heart”, “and we are honest” and so on.

Alternatively, describing and making moral judgments concerning the attitudes of “others” in a given situation is a function of characterization framing (Entman 1993, p. 52; Dewulf et al. 2009, p. 168). So then, on the basis of their experience, Nigerians distinguished 2 kinds of Dutch society: the international minded and the non international minded. The international minded are those who have had international exposure, had good personal experiences with Nigerians and thus are willing to relate with them while the other category are those who supposedly have the media as their only source of information concerning Nigerians, thus they stereotype and stigmatize Nigerians. However, they affirmed that the Dutch system itself (the institutions) are fair, humane and accommodating and are therefore exonerated from outright institutional bias.

How an issue is framed has tremendous effect on our judgement and actions Iyengar (1990, p. 20). For instance, the criminal portrayal of Nigerians by Dutch media was potentially the basis on which the Dutch society constructs the criminal image about Nigerians. Recalling that perceived image of a nation is the mental picture of a nation in the mind of other nationalities (Li & Chitty, 2009, p. 1), it is important to note that these images are significant in that they exert influence on the relationship between Nigerians and the Dutch; in the area of integration.

Integration of Nigerians in Dutch society was considered under structural (socio – economic), social and cultural integration. Furthermore, structural domain was distinguished as other rights and economic related integration.

Penninx (2005) noted that up until 1980, Dutch policies at least in principle, offers equal rights in the social economics domain (p. 139), while Vink (2007) established that eventually, by her 1983 minority policy, Dutch system offered equal opportunities to all her residents (p. 340), with regards to the structural domain. This is also true in the case of Nigerians, as it was found that Nigerians do not experience any barriers to full participation with respect to institutional rights and benefits. They emphasized that access to these benefits are basically on merit and Nigerians are not discriminated against.

Based on the above, one can say that Nigerians are well integrated. However, in order to arrive at this merit, Nigerians are extra scrutinized. And this is attributed to their criminal image in the Netherlands. Let it be recalled from the media evaluation that fake documents issues were identified as one of the crimes ascribed to Nigerians in Dutch society. It can therefore be suggested that one outcome arising from the issues of fake documents is the blacklisting of the Nigerian documents in the Netherlands. Hence, documents from Nigeria are personally investigated by the Dutch government itself, before it is accepted to be used in Dutch society. Be that as it may, this extra scrutiny and the blacklisting of Nigerian document in Dutch society raises a question as to the level of integration of Nigerians in Dutch society, because based on Castels et al., (2002) rigid systems and restrictive rules makes integration incomplete (p. 114).

Structural integration was also considered in form of economic related integration. It was identified that Nigerians are experiencing constraints with particular emphasis to economic related issues, especially among private

driven economic sectors. This could be seen as one outcome of stigmatization from the second category of Dutch society whom the respondents said stereotype Nigerians; those who are influenced by the negative media reports or past ugly experiences. Those who are in business are constrained too, with reference to getting clients and obtaining financial deals. These constraints are as a result of lack of trust, created by the criminal image of Nigerians, consequent upon incidences and negative media coverage of Nigerian's fraudulent practices in the Netherlands.

With reference to social integration, it was discovered that the criminal image of Nigerians have effect on the interaction of Nigerians with the Dutch general public. Experiences of skepticism abound, and this leads to psychological defeat. Meanwhile, Kuhlman (1991) identified psychological aspect of integration as an important aspect (p. 3). For Nigerians, the consciousness of their negative image affects them psychologically, and impacts on their sense of belonging. Besides, constantly having to actively or passively proof their innocence suggests a false or perhaps a disturbing sense of belonging, again questioning their integration status in the Netherlands.

Castels et al., (2002) recognized that there is a growing concern for a balanced portrayal of the cultural aspects of immigrant and minority groups in the media (p. 138). Findings from this research did not recognize any positive portrayal of Nigerians culture by the media, but it did not identify any form of constraints regarding religious or cultural practices of Nigerians in the Netherlands either. In other words, Nigerians can be said to be culturally well integrated.



However, successful integration can only be achieved if the host society provides access to services, employment, and accepts immigrants in social interactions (Castels et al., 2002, p. 113). With regards to services (rights and welfare), the government has done its part, but of course, it has little influence on the private sectors and interpersonal relationships. Thus, the criminal perception of Nigerians in Dutch society unfortunately hampers the integration of her citizens in other areas. These effects are seen in the aspects of economic related integration, psychological impacts and social interaction. In some cases, societal acceptance of Nigerians has remained an issue; a *Dent* in their integration. And following Ager and strang (2008), this perceived unfriendliness undermines other successful aspects of integration (p. 180). Surprisingly, it was noticed that in spite of the challenges, a good number of Nigerians are somehow still managing to break some of these barriers; building personal relationships and thriving - they are not *daunted* - given the opportunity of those members of Dutch society whom they say does not stigmatize them.

As a final conclusion, this study revealed that Nigerians has an image of crime circulating in Dutch society. This criminal image which is being fuelled by the criminal portrayal of Nigerians in Dutch media has some measure of influence on Dutch public perception of Nigerians; and consequently, an impact on the integration of Nigerian citizens in the Netherlands. These impacts are reflected in the area of economic related integration, social interaction, and psychological integration of Nigerians in the Netherlands.

## ***7.2 Discussion: The research process***

The entire process of writing this thesis was for me a huge learning experience, partly because it was my first attempt at social science. First, I struggled a lot with finding relevant materials for this work. But somehow during the later stage, I realized that by following the references of other authors it becomes a lot easier to access related articles. My referencing style was also poor, but it became better with time.

Social science research is indeed an ongoing process. I cannot remember how many times I had to rephrase the general research question so as to accommodate the changes in the sub research questions and vice versa. For example, when it was not possible to access Dutch authorities, the questions changed. The questions also changed after the field work so as to suit the findings.

Again, the nature of the topic made it somewhat difficult to define the sub research questions as "stand alone" question because I had multiple but related units of observations and a different unit of analysis. For instance, the word 'perception' applied to both the Dutch and Nigerians, and often times during the write up, I found it difficult to make it clear to the reader whose perception I was describing - the Dutch or Nigerians. My initial research question was "how does the Dutch society frame the criminal perception of Nigerians in Dutch society"? While the second one read "how does Nigerians *themselves* perceive the criminal perception of Nigerians in Dutch society", with the word 'themselves' being used to show that it was the perception of Nigerians that is being described. At some point, I decided to interchange the word perception with either frame (for perceive) or criminal image (for

criminal perception) so as to enhance clarity and reduce repetition. Furthermore, at some point, I wished I had stuck to Nigerians or Dutch society alone because having to fit the different perspectives into a single conclusion became a bit challenging too.

I realized too that time is of an essence in conducting research. I found out that the longer I interacted with the work, the more I understood it. More time also allowed me to read more widely, thereby getting inspired when the morale was low, as well as refining the study. The importance of understanding the context cannot be over emphasized. Being an insider, I understood the situation, and this helped me to know what to ask. In the end I believe I had lots of information which seemed relevant.

For me, the concept of framing was ideal in organizing this information. With the concept of framing, I was able to represent the different perceptions and constructed realities (of the media and respondents). The different aspects of the framing theory - issue frame, identity frame, and characterization frame - were completely adequate in capturing the different perspectives discovered from the analysis.

The concept of reflexivity also got me thinking of my role in this work as an insider. At a point I got personal and started to feel depressed about my findings, especially the media evaluation and the work of previous researchers concerning the criminal activities of Nigerians in Europe. It felt even more uncomfortable that I will have to present these findings about my own people before other students. But I was purposed to be as objective as I could. Besides, I was encouraged by the optimism of some respondents who professed that some other countries had gone through similar image crises,

but had turned out well; and that Nigeria will overcome its own. At this point I would like to encourage Nigerians with this favourite quote from one of the respondents:

Coming from Nigeria is a brand on its own; it is synonymous with ruggedness, die hard; because anybody who could survive in Nigeria could survive anywhere. In Nigeria, everything is possible, we are creative; we make things happen even in the midst of nothing. The system (referring to Nigeria) does not work. So, for you to achieve anything, you just have to be creative. So I think that these people recognize our resilience, our ruggedness. For me, I think that the asset they see in me is that creativity, and the mindset of everything is possible. In my office, whenever we are at a crossroad, they look for me; they call me "madam everything is possible" [...] But I also want everybody to know that there is something in us that they want, so we should not go out there defeated, but try to see how we can use our potential to make a change (Mobade, AA117 & 126).

### ***7.3 Limitations***

My position in relation to this topic and to working with Nigerian respondents is as an insider. But, my position as a researcher in Dutch society was as an outsider. As such, having to carry out a media analysis, when most newspapers are in Dutch language was for me a huge challenge, because of language barrier. I finally resorted to only on - line sources, whereby I could translate the reports first, before proceeding to make out a meaning out of it. Unfortunately, I was able to identify only 3 on – line media, with the latest archive dating back to just 2006. This limited my sources, and in the end, I was

constrained to a media evaluation (requires about 50 articles), as opposed to a media analysis (requires about 250 articles).

Still, from my position as an outsider, I encountered the challenge of access. Initially, I proposed to interview respondents from the Dutch society (my third unit of observation). But in order to avoid individually biased opinion and get genuine and balanced information from those who deal directly with the public, I proposed to have interviews with Dutch instituted authorities instead. So, on my list were Dutch immigration Department (IND), Dutch police, European Union law enforcement agency (EUROPOL), the central administrative department (Gemeente), Dutch ministry of internal affairs and Timing job agency. To these organizations, I contacted and sent out my proposed interview questions, based on their demand for a preview. Sadly it was only IND that replied, and even at that, IND referred me to somewhere else where in turn I was referred to somewhere else. Eventually, at the end of two months, I have not had even one invitation for an interview. At that moment, it occurred to me that I might be dealing with a sensitive topic. And so, I dropped the sub research question that was related to this.

Besides getting the opinion of instituted authorities, it would have been worthwhile too to have the perspectives of the ordinary citizens in Dutch society concerning their perceptions of Nigerians in the Netherlands. Hence, in spite of the negative image, some Nigerians are still found occupying top positions in some Dutch establishments. It would have been interesting therefore to find out what the motivation of these Dutch employers are. These concerns bring us to the recommendations.

#### ***7.4 Recommendation for future research***

Based on the above limitations, I put forward the following recommendations which I believe would be easier for a researcher from an insider position.

First, I recommend a media analysis, (as opposed to a media evaluation done in this study), on the same subject as the one studied in this thesis, covering at least 250 articles and dating back to late 80's up to early 90's. According to the respondents, this was the period during which the 419 scam that contributed significantly to the fraudulent image of Nigerians in the Netherlands was at its peak. Unfortunately, the on – line sources that I could access did not cover these periods. I believe that expanding on the number of articles will give a deeper insight of the subject studied in this thesis.

Secondly, it will be fascinating to also investigate this subject from the perspectives of the average member of Dutch society in general, as well as the perspectives of the authorities. Another study can also be approached from the perspectives of examining the extent to which negative media representation of Nigerians has influenced the general public's perceptions of Nigerians in Dutch society.

#### ***7.5 Societal relevance of this research***

This thesis is the first of its kind: never has the perspective of Nigerians on the criminal perceptions of her citizens, nor the implications it has on their integration in Dutch society been known, especially in the Netherlands where the image crises of Nigerians seems to be worsened. That was why I found a way to weave in the cause of this problematic issue in addition to the suggested remedies. I am hoping that the Nigerian embassy could find the

knowledge generated herein useful. I am also hoping that some of the knowledge identified could be of relevance to Dutch authorities, policy wise.

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## ***Appendix 1 interview guide (Dutch authorities)***

Date:

Place:

Time:

Establishment / Organization:

Designation:

### ***About Issue framing***

- a. Please can you tell me your role / schedule in this organization?
- b. In your official duty in this establishment, have you had contacts with Nigerians?
- c. I saw in some newspaper and even some Nigerians say it themselves that they have poor image in the Netherlands. Do you know anything about this? Or
- d. Have you any idea what it is all about?
- e. If No, then . . . but are you aware that Nigerians in the Netherlands are associated with certain negative image?
- f. Can you tell me any experience you ever had with Nigerians?
- g. How is your experience with Nigerians different from that of other Nationalities?
- h. In that case, speaking for yourself, what can you say or what do you think of a typical Nigerian?
- i. How is your dealing with Nigerians different from your dealings with other non Dutch?

***Stereotype (characterization framing)***

- j.*** I have been here a short while, but I am sure you will know better. Exactly what are people saying about Nigerians?
- k.*** What positive or negative thing are people saying
- l.*** Share with me your own experience or the experience of someone else that you might know concerning Nigerians
- m.*** When you meet a Nigerian for instance, 'What is the first thought that comes to your mind?
- n.*** In one or two or three different words, please describe a typical Nigerian.

## ***Appendix 2: interview guide (Nigerians)***

Date:

Place:

Time:

Establishment / Organization:

Position/ Designation:

Sex:

### ***Issue framing***

- a. How long have you been in the Netherlands?
- b. How long have you worked with this organization?
- c. Please can you tell me your role / schedule in this organization?
- d. It is public knowledge that Nigerians are associated with negative image. Are you aware of it?
- e. But how is it here in the Netherlands?
- f. If yes, how do you feel about it?.
- g. Every country in the world has good and bad people too. But why is the case of Nigerians different in the Netherlands?
- h. Have you any idea what it is all about, how it all started?
- i. Do you think that this negative image is affecting Nigerians in any way in the Netherlands .....

.....In terms of relationships

.....interaction

.....Access to social services or benefits

..... jobs or employer / employee relationship

.....general wellbeing of Nigerians in the Netherlands

- j. Do you see any difference in the relation between the Dutch and Nigerians in Netherlands and the Dutch and other African groups in the Netherlands?
- k. Opinion / perception can be changed ... tell me in your opinion, what you think can be done to improve the image here
- 1. Dele Mammodu wrote an article titled “the burden of being a Nigerian”  
Has being a Nigerian ever been a burden for you?
- l. Have you ever been negatively confronted about being a Nigerian or
- m. looked down upon or
- n. treated in a way that is not nice /
- o. or did not get a particular benefit or
- p. or lost a friendship once he /she found out you are a Nigerian
- q. or found it difficult to mingle with other Nationalities
- r. Denied an opportunity here in the Netherlands simply because you are a Nigerian..... Pls tell me your experience
- s. You know in your mind that Nigerians are perceived as dubious people ... how do you deal with or cope with the mere thought of this as you interact with other nationalities in your office, in your relationships, with non-Nigerians around you generally
- t. Ever had to deny being a Nigerian?
- u. Ever had to behave in a certain way because of the image problem

