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A Phenomenological Study on Protective Factors Preventing College-Aged Criminal Activity During Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Melvis N. Asongwed

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

A Phenomenological Study on Protective Factors Preventing College-Aged Criminal
Activity During Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis

by

Melvis N. Asongwed

MS, Walden University, 2018

MSW, University of Maryland Baltimore, 2016

BSW, University of Maryland Baltimore County, 2015

AAS, Montgomery College Maryland, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

August 2023

Abstract

The Anglophone crisis, in which marginalization of the English-speaking regions in Cameroon began in October 2016 and has become one of the most prominent social problems in the nation's history. It has led to loss of lives, infrastructure damage, displacement of families, incidents of mass violence, unemployment, and a rise in criminal activity in the Anglophone regions. Grounded in the phenomenological approach and guided by the general strain theory (GST), this qualitative inquiry explored the protective factors that have reduced or prevented criminal activity for college students in the Anglophone regions during the crisis. Semi structure interviewing guided participant responses. Criterion sampling facilitated identifying eight participants, and participant inclusion was based on age, education status, geographical location, and criminal history. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis strategy guided data analysis. The results showed that personal and family values, religion and Christianity, education and awareness, employment opportunities, family support, counseling and mentorship, and legal consequences have served as protective factors preventing college-aged criminal activity. Findings also suggest that resources such as public sensitization and government subsidies would serve as mitigating factors for college-aged criminal activity. The findings may help public safety, educational organizations, and forensic psychology professionals develop positive social change through informed strategies for preventing and decreasing rates of college-aged illegal activity.

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Dedication

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” – Nelson Mandela

To the people of English Cameroon/Southern Cameron/Ambazonia, may the forces be with you through these trying times.

To those who have lost their lives during this ordeal, it is our hope that your deaths would not go in vain and that you find eternal rest.

Acknowledgments

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To my father, Rudolf Asongwed, in blessed memory.

To my children, Arielle and Nathan.

A debt of gratitude is owed to my husband, Ernest S. Missibi, whose constant support, warmth, and companionship I could never repay.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Description of Topic of Study

This study explored the protective factors that reduce or prevent criminal activity for college students in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon during the ongoing Anglophone crisis, using a descriptive phenomenological approach and guided by the general strain theory (GST; Agnew, 2013). Data points were ascertained through in-depth qualitative interviews with college students in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

Why the Study Is Needed

The relationship between trauma experienced in childhood and crime involvement has been well documented. Freeze (2019) highlighted strong relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and crime, recognizing that ACEs have a significant impact on crime. Freeze (2019) cited literature from the U.S. Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence that highlighted that two out of three of children exposed to violence are significantly affected.

Additionally, while some studies have explained that not all individuals who are exposed to violence tend to engage in violence, other studies have revealed a strong correlation between exposure to violence and the prediction of future violent behavior (Estrada et al., 2021; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). ACEs have been associated with an increase in delinquency and engagement in violent acts in addition to having detrimental effects on later health (Craig, 2019). Adverse events such as physical abuse and exposure

to violence in childhood have been associated with an increase in the likelihood of criminal offending (Craig, 2019).

Since the most recent phase of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, which began in October 2016, there has been a surge in violent confrontations between the masses, law enforcement, and the military (Bang & Balgah, 2022). Access to education has been affected, and educational resources are limited. Crime rates have escalated, and gang activity has been prominent in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Okereke, 2018). These events have been categorized as adverse life experiences that have caused significant strains on many Anglophone Cameroonians.

However, other studies have suggested that protective/mitigating factors for crime such as individual and environmental factors may reduce or prevent engagement in criminal behavior. Authors of such studies have suggested that future researchers explore this premise further, taking into consideration protective factors and their mitigating effects on crime/criminal activity (Agnew, 2017; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Thus, a study like this study, in which I sought to explore the protective factors that reduce or prevent criminal activity for college students in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon during the Anglophone crisis, was needed. This study may impact social change by contributing to literature on mitigating factors for crime and by increasing international awareness of the issues that have plagued the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

Preview of Major Sections

In subsequent sections, I discuss background information on the origin of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Following that, I highlight the problem statement identified regarding the phenomenon of college-aged criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. I then proceed to discuss the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the theoretical foundation that grounded the study. In the following sections, I describe the nature of the study, define key concepts, and clarify my assumptions. Subsequent sections include discussions on the scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. Chapter 1 concludes with a discussion of possible social change implications and a summary of the purpose and significance of the study.

Background

The origin of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon is rooted in the nation's colonial history and dates to July 14, 1884, when Cameroon became a German colony (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Morris-Chapman, 2019). After the First World War ended in 1919, the Germans handed then "Kamerun" to Britain and France during the Versailles treaty. The nation became a territory for Britain and France and was partitioned between the two. France took over 80% of the nation while Britain took over 20%.

Genesis of the Anglophone Crisis

On January 1, 1960, the French (Francophone) section of the nation gained its independence from France and became an independent nation as *La République du Cameroun*. The English region (Southern Cameroon Trustee Territory), which was still

under the British, had the option to either reunite with the French section or join Nigeria, which was also a British colony. However, on February 11, 1961, during the United Nations-organized plebiscite, Southern Cameroon (English) voted to merge with French Cameroon. Hence, the Federal Republic of Cameroon was formed (Bang & Balgah, 2022).

In 1972, the federal structure of the nation was changed by then-President Ahmadu Ahidjo to a unitary state called the United Republic of Cameroon. However, on February 4, 1984, Paul Biya (current president), who succeeded Ahmadu Ahidjo as president, changed the name of the country to *La Republique du Cameroon* (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Morris-Chapman, 2019).

Since the two colonies merged in 1961, the French majority has dominated the economic, education, social, and political sectors of the nation, thus marginalizing the English-speaking regions, whose residents only make up 14% of the country (Morris-Chapman, 2019). Major sectors in the Anglophone regions of the nation, including the education, public health, legal/judicial, and public safety and corrections sectors, have been significantly affected. There has been marginalization in several leadership roles, disparities in distribution of resources including education resources, housing, and employment, and an increased presence and dominance in leadership by French citizens (Morris-Chapman, 2019).

Other issues that have plagued the Anglophone regions include French language being made mandatory in English schools and French-speaking teachers appointed as lecturers, professors, and teachers in English-speaking schools. Additionally, French

methods of court proceedings have been enforced in Anglophone courts (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Morris-Chapman, 2019).

Thirty years after Cameroon gained independence, there was no college/university that was predominantly English speaking. Thus, Anglophones had to attend French universities. It was only in 1992 that the first English university, University of Buea, opened (Morris-Chapman, 2019). These issues appear to have intensified, and in 2016, Anglophones launched a strike and began rioting against marginalization.

Current Crisis

The most recent and severe Anglophone crisis leading to major humanitarian, political, and social issues in Cameroon began in October 2016 and is still ongoing (Okereke, 2018). This phase of the Anglophone crisis began as a peaceful protest by lawyer and teacher trade unions, whose members expressed grievances concerning the mandatory use of the French language in Anglophone schools and law courts. These peaceful protests were met with harsh consequences imposed by the government, including the imprisonment of protest leaders and some protesters as well as assaults on protesters (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Okereke, 2018).

The government's punitive response to the peaceful protest resulted in the formation of armed secessionist groups in 2018 (Bang & Balgah, 2022). These secessionist groups have over the years increased in momentum and have been demanding the independence of Anglophone regions from the rest of the nation, to form a new nation called the Ambazonia Republic (Bang & Balgah, 2022). This has led to

several violent confrontations between the secessionist groups and the military forces (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Okereke, 2018).

Since October 2016, thousands of lives have been lost, houses and schools have been burned down, unemployment rates have skyrocketed, students and teachers have been gunned down in their classrooms by the military, and many more horrific incidents have happened in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, which are the two English regions of the nation (Okereke, 2018). This crisis is one of the most prominent social problems in the history of Cameroon.

There has been a rise in rates of criminal activity, violence, and safety concerns due to the ongoing Anglophone crisis. On Saturday, October 24, 2020, eight middle school children were shot and killed, and at least 12 others were wounded in their classroom while class was in session by unknown gunmen in Kumba, located in the Southwest region of Cameroon (Amnesty International USA, 2020). The gunmen reportedly arrived on motorbikes and opened fire in the classroom, resulting in the deaths of eight young children and many others wounded as they fled the bullets. This incident is now called the Kumba Massacre. The following events took place just days before the Kumba Massacre:

Armed men targeted a college in the town of Limbe on Wednesday October 21, 2020. Nine children were kidnapped on the same day on their way to school in Fundong but were later released. Another twelve teachers and several students were abducted from a primary and secondary school in the town of Kumbo on Tuesday October 22, 2020. Eleven of those teachers were later freed two days

later, according to a representative of the church which runs the schools. On October 23, 2023, 15 school children from Bamenda were also kidnapped on their way back from school. Six of the children were released the next day, with several having to be hospitalized after being subjected to torture. A day later, gunmen killed eight school children in the town of Kumba at the private Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy. The United Nations (UN) described it as "the worst atrocity" since the beginning of the school year on October 5, 2020. The brazen attack was widely condemned both within and outside Cameroon, with President Paul Biya denouncing the "horrific murder" of school children. (Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020, p. 1).

Gaps in Knowledge

Although researchers have investigated this issue, research has not specifically addressed college-aged criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis and protective factors that have reduced or prevented it. To further explore the effects of the Anglophone crisis, I conducted an extensive literature search and review. Findings from this literature search highlighted gaps in literature exploring and analyzing some direct and indirect effects the crisis has had on specific sectors, including the education sector and the criminal justice sector for specific subgroups.

The majority of articles reviewed highlighted the effects the crisis has had on the economy, education, and public safety sectors in general, including the arrest and kidnapping of students, killings of students on campus and in classrooms, false imprisonment of students and burning down of schools and houses, and loss of

employment and livelihood (Kriesch, 2021; Mules & Ngong- Song, 2020; Okereke, 2018). However, individual perspectives on protective factors that have reduced or prevented crime because of strains caused by the crisis have not been explored.

Thus, a study that explored the impact that this crisis has had on college-aged criminal activity and the protective factors that have reduced or prevented it was essential, especially given the rapid increase in crime rates in the Anglophone regions of the nation. Understanding the impact of the crisis on college-aged criminal activity would likely create more awareness around the issues and would encourage the implementation of programs and interventions to decrease the rate of criminal activity amongst college students, thus enhancing social change.

Problem Statement

The specific problem addressed in this study was the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon and the impact the crisis has had on crime and criminal activity, especially on college-aged criminal activity. The Anglophone crisis is the most recent and most severe crisis leading to major social unrest and a significant increase in crime rates and criminal activity in Cameroon (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Craig, 2019; Okereke, 2018).

The crisis has become one of the most prominent social problems in the nation's history (Okereke, 2018). Since its most recent inception in October 2016, it has led to loss of lives, including the deaths of hundreds of students, teachers, and other school personnel. Additionally, unemployment rates have skyrocketed; massive destruction of property and infrastructure has been evident, including houses and schools burned down; and there has been an increase in criminal activity and violent crimes in the Anglophone

regions of the nation (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Kriesch, 2021; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Okereke, 2018).

The consequences of the crisis on the economy, education, and public safety have been far reaching. Education has been cited to be at the core of the dissenting voices of the current Anglophone crisis (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Kriesch, 2021; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Okereke, 2018). Students have been the most affected group and continue to be the center of violent victimization as the crisis progresses (Bang & Balgah, 2022, p. 12). According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2019), nearly 800,000 children have dropped out of school, and nearly 80% of schools in the Northwest and Southwest regions (English-speaking regions) have been closed.

With regards to specific implications for college education, school safety, and criminal activity, it is highlighted that “insecurity has kept some students away from the campuses and constantly disrupts academic activities. University lecturers are vulnerable to attacks and kidnapping. Many are frightened to continue working normally and have been seeking to leave the country” (Bang & Balgah, 2022, p. 12). It is well documented that violent victimization and exposure to violence are both risk factors for violent offending and criminal delinquency (Craig, 2019; Estrada et al., 2021; Freeze, 2019). Freeze (2019) further highlighted a strong relationship between ACEs and crime, recognizing that ACEs have significant impact on crime. Such evidence underscores the need to explore college-aged criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis while also exploring the protective factors that reduce or prevent crime involvement for college students.

Purpose of the Study

In this qualitative study, I explored the protective factors that have reduced or prevented criminal activity for college students in the North and Southwest regions of Cameroon during the Anglophone crisis. Additionally, I sought to understand the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis?

Theoretical Foundation

The general strain theory proposed by Robert Agnew in 1992 as a variation of strain theory, grounded the theoretical framework for the current study. Strain theory was developed by Robert Merton in the 1930s and suggested that for people who are financially stable, their probability of engaging in crime is relatively low and vice versa (Tutorsplit, 2021). Robert Merton also suggested that people turn to crime due to lack of means to achieve their goals and/or the American dream (Campbell, 2020; Tutorsplit, 2021).

In 1992, Robert Agnew expanded the strain theory, titling his work, *general strain theory*. He highlighted that strain is a significant contributing factor in crime involvement. The presence of strain elicits negative emotions, which could be manifested in a variety of wrongdoings, including criminal involvement. Robert Agnew highlighted

several strains, including loss, negative experiences such as abuse, and failure to attain goals such as financial goals (Campbell, 2020).

GST also proposed that crime is a result of certain types of strain, including those that are deemed unjust, uncontrollable, and extreme and tend to yield emotions that justify antisocial behaviors (Campbell, 2020). Some who are faced with these types of strain may turn to crime as a means of coping, while others may choose crime as a response to a lack of control over circumstances, peer pressure, and a need for autonomy (Campbell, 2020).

The logical connections between the GST presented and the nature of this study include the significant role played by strain in criminology. This was a phenomenological study, focused on the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during Cameroon's Anglophone crisis. The GST presumed that crime is a result of certain types of strain, including those that are deemed unjust, uncontrollable, and extreme and tend to yield emotions that justify antisocial behaviors (Campbell, 2020). Furthermore, the GST suggests that some who are faced with these types of strain may turn to crime as a means of coping, while others may choose crime as a response to a lack of control over circumstances, peer pressure, and a need for autonomy (Campbell, 2020).

The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon has created an atmosphere of fear, uncertainty, lack of control, social unrest, and instability and insecurity among youths (Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020). Literature highlights incidents of kidnapping, abduction, assault, and killing of students across the English-speaking regions of the nation (Mules

& Ngong-Song, 2020; Mates, 2019; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019). The GST can better explain the impact of strain (fear, uncertainty, lack of control, social unrest, and a general atmosphere of instability and insecurity) experienced by participants and their risks for criminal activity. A more detailed explanation of how crime and strain are connected and mitigating factors for crime will be presented in the literature review section (Chapter 2) of this study.

Nature of the Study

Systematic Approach/Method and Research Design

In this study, I explored the phenomenon of protective factors preventing or reducing college-aged criminal activity in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon during the Anglophone crisis with the tradition of descriptive phenomenology by Amedeo Giorgi. Descriptive phenomenology is grounded in philosophy and ends with the essence of experience (Mihalache, 2019). Phenomenology is conceptualized in the interior of the individual's awareness and involves seeking to understand the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for the individuals, groups, and communities involved (Mihalache, 2019). I chose the descriptive phenomenology approach for this study because it focuses on the lived experiences of participants. I sought to understand how participants make sense of their experiences and what the essence of the experiences are.

Data Collection Tools and Sources

For my research design, I collected primary data, and participants shared their experiences of the phenomenon. Data collection was done through individual in-depth

qualitative interviewing, using a researcher-developed, semi structured, standardized open-ended interview guide (Patton, 2015). Sources of data included college students in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, specifically the Northwest region. Criterion sampling facilitated identifying participants. Participants included current students attending a university located in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon, mainly the Northwest region. Participants were between the ages of 21 and 28 years old and had no history of a felony conviction. Communication features consisted of what, who, when, and how questions.

Data Points

Data points ascertained from my interview questions included consequences on housing, employment status of participants, employment opportunities, access to education and education resources, availability of basic necessities, transportation, economic consequences of the crisis, exposure to violence, victim of violence, perpetrator of violence, family support, personal and family values, the role of religion and Christianity, exposure to trauma, safety concerns, types of crimes by students, consequences of the crisis on families, participant contact with the law, criminal history, access to mental health services, cost and standards of living, and government efforts and future research opportunities.

Data Analysis

After data collection was completed, data transcription occurred using Temi transcription application. I then reviewed the transcripts individually, comparing them against the audio recordings. Data analysis for this study followed Braun and Clarke's

(2021) reflective thematic analysis and used an inductive orientation to data. Transcripts were first individually coded using Microsoft Word and then recoded using Delve qualitative coding software. The final data analysis emerged as I read and re-read transcripts to familiarize myself with the data, followed by creating codes and then collating and grouping codes into themes. The next stage of data analysis involved refining, defining, and naming themes. Chapter 3 further describes the cycles of coding, including Braun and Clarke's semantic coding, organizing, and categorizing codes using highlighting/color coding and then another round of coding including pattern coding, where similar codes were grouped into a smaller number of themes.

Definitions

For the current study, definitions of terms appear in alphabetical order.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs): Craig (2019) defines ACEs as adverse events experienced in childhood such as physical abuse, child neglect, witnessing violence, violent victimization, sexual abuse, having an incarcerated relative, emotional abuse, substance abuse, and other forms of trauma. According to Craig (2019), such adverse events may lower a person's future orientation, thereby increasing the likelihood for criminal activity.

Ambazonia: Ambazonia refers to the English-speaking regions of Cameroon, present-day Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, also known as Southern Cameroon.

Anglophone crisis: The Anglophone crisis, also known as the *Ambazonian crisis* (in the context of this study), refers to the latest phase of Cameroon's Anglophone crisis

that began in October 2016 and is still ongoing. The latest phase of the Anglophone crisis emerged as a peaceful protest by teachers' and lawyers' trade unions against the mandatory use of French language in English schools and courts of law among many other grievances (Bang & Balgah, 2022, p. 3). The crisis quickly escalated following the government's undemocratic response to the protest, including imprisonment of protesters and protest leaders' law (Bang & Balgah, 2022).

Anglophone regions/-Southern Cameroon: Anglophone regions, also known as Southern Cameroon, refer to the English-speaking regions of Cameroon, present-day Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon which were under the British administration as a Southern Cameroons Trustee Territory (Bang & Balgah, 2022, p. 3).

College aged: College-aged students, in the context of this study, refers to students who have completed high school and are currently enrolled in a college or university. These students are actively working towards earning an Associate degree, Higher National Diploma (HND), or Bachelor degree.

Colonization: Longley (2021) defined colonization as “the practice of one country taking full or partial political control of another country and occupying it with settlers for purposes of profiting from its resources and economy” (p. 1). Colonialism also involves political and economic control by a dominant country over a vulnerable territory (Longley, 2021, p. 1).

Felony: The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) defines a felony as “any offense punishable by death or imprisonment for more than one year” (U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Illinois, 2023.)

Protective factors: In the context of this study, protective factors are those individual and/or environmental factors that limit or prevent a person from engaging in criminal behavior (Agnew, 2017; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

Risk factors: Risk factors are those individual and environmental factors that make a person susceptible to criminal behavior and crime. These factors include certain adverse life experiences such as abuse, neglect, loss, violent victimization, and exposure to violence (Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

Strain: Strain, in the context of this study, refers to events that stretched a person beyond their physical, emotional, and mental capacities, thus eliciting negative emotions, which could be manifested in a variety of wrongdoings (Campbell, 2020). Examples of strain include loss, violent victimization, exposure to violence, negative experiences such as abuse, and failure to attain goals such as financial goals (Campbell, 2020).

Assumptions

Four assumptions guided the purpose of the study. The first assumption presumed that strain is a significant contributing factor to crime involvement. Thus, for those who have or are experiencing strain, their risk for engagement criminal activity tends to be higher (Freeze, 2019). The presence of strain elicits negative emotions, which could be manifested in a variety of wrongdoings, including criminal involvement (Campbell, 2020). The general strain theory proposes that crime is a result of certain types of strains, including those that are deemed unjust, uncontrollable, and extreme and tend to yield emotions that justify antisocial behaviors (Campbell, 2020). Some who are faced with these types of strain may turn to crime as a means of coping, while others may choose

crime as a response to a lack of control over circumstances, peer pressure, and a need for autonomy (Campbell, 2020).

The second assumption was that adverse childhood experiences (type of strain) such as physical abuse, child neglect, witnessing violence, violent victimization, sexual abuse, having an incarcerated relative, emotional abuse, substance abuse, and other forms of trauma have a direct effect on future offending and criminal activity. Research on adverse childhood experiences guided this assumption, suggesting that such adverse events may lower a person's future orientation, thereby increasing the likelihood of criminal activity (Craig, 2019).

The third assumption was that college-aged criminal activity tends to be higher in regions where there is civil unrest. Research guided the assumption because research suggests that the presence of adverse experiences, including those that are deemed unjust, uncontrollable, and extreme (as in the case of the Anglophone crisis), may force some to turn to crime as a means of coping while others may choose crime as a response to a lack of control over circumstances, peer pressure, and a need for autonomy (Campbell, 2020; Estrada et al., 2021). The fourth assumption was that for college students in regions where there is civil unrest forcing them to experience certain kinds of strains, some demographic, individual, and environmental factors may serve as protective factors that may reduce or prevent involvement in criminal activity.

Scope and Delimitations

The specific research problem addressed through the study was the protective factors that reduce or prevent college students' engagement in criminal activity. Specific

aspects of the research problem addressed in the study were tied to the assumptions previously mentioned. It was presumed that strain is a significant contributing factor in crime involvement. The presence of strain elicits negative emotions, which could be manifested in a variety of wrongdoings, including criminal involvement (Campbell, 2020).

It was also presumed that certain ACEs have a direct effect on future offending and criminal activity. Research on ACEs has suggested that such adverse events may lower a person's future orientation, thereby increasing the likelihood of criminal activity (Craig, 2019). Additionally, it was presumed that college-aged criminal activity tends to be higher in regions where there is civil unrest. Last, it was assumed that for college students in regions where there is civil unrest, certain protective factors may reduce or prevent involvement in criminal activity.

The study was guided by boundaries based on populations included and excluded from the sample and theoretical frameworks most related to the area of study. For the study, criterion sampling defined specific boundaries for inclusion and exclusion. Criteria for inclusion included being a college student in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, being between 21 and 28 years old, attending a college in the Anglophone region, and having no history of a felony conviction. While individuals between the ages of 18 and 20 would have been a good addition to the study sample, that group was excluded because of ethical concerns, especially given that different countries may have different laws pertaining to age of consent.

For the study, the general strain theory (Agnew, 2013) guided the study.

Frameworks that are related to the social issue addressed in this study as well the research problem but were not investigated in detail and excluded from the study included rational choice, psychological positivism, conflict theory, social strain theory, and structural functionalism. I decided on the GST because it explains the relationship between strain and crime. Research suggests that strain is a significant contributing factor in crime involvement (Campbell, 2020).

With regards to transferability, participants' demographics varied across age, economic characteristics, family status, gender, and student status. This variation in demographics moderated the transferability of findings. The open-ended nature of interview questions led to prolonged engagement of participants, which increased the chances of obtaining more in-depth information from participants based on their varying experiences of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). This potential for transferability improved delimitations of the study.

Limitations

Challenges and/or barriers related to design and/or methodological weaknesses addressed while conducting this study included obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from partner sites/organizations, sampling, and access to participants. The study's participants were based in another country; thus, recruiting participants and conducting interviews were met with some challenges, including communication, time differences, and access to technology.

Measures taken to address this challenge included collaborating with a partner organization to assist with recruitment of participants. Additionally, with regards to transferability and dependability, I used criterion sampling, which limited saturation to only a few cases that met the criteria for inclusion, thus limiting the diversity of participants (Patton, 2015). Criterion sampling also limited transferability (Patton, 2015).

Additional limitations and barriers included ethical concerns, vulnerability of participants, and research bias. Patton (2015) highlighted that interviews are interventions and affect people. Especially because the specific purpose of interviews is information gathering and not for therapeutic purposes. Thus, asking participants to reflect on experiences could have reintroduced memories of traumatic experiences and negative feelings, leading to the revelation of sensitive information that involved causing harm to others, violating laws, or committing horrific acts against others. This likely placed participants in a vulnerable position where they felt the need to share their experiences and might have had to suffer the repercussions of any reintroduction of trauma without appropriate intervention services.

Conflict of interest is an issue that could have arisen, given that I am from the same region as my participants. There was a possibility that I would know some of my participants, which would have created a conflict of interest. With regards to research bias, my personal experiences of the phenomenon of interest may have caused me to skew the research process unconsciously or consciously towards a desired outcome. However, being aware of this, I remained objective throughout the research process.

Significance

This study is significant in that it adds to the growing body of literature on protective factors that reduce or prevent criminal activity, especially given the intersection of crime, psychology, and the law. While qualitative research is not aimed at generalization, such findings sometimes provide information and insight into certain social problems that affect many communities and could provide solutions for addressing such problems.

Additionally, with knowledge on the protective factors that reduce or prevent criminal activity during a period of civil unrest, public safety organizations and practitioners may be equipped to better address these issues by providing supports and implementing structured programming that is informed and backed by research, thus bringing forth social change. The findings from this study reveal several protective factors preventing college-aged criminal activity and highlight supports and services that could be put in place to further prevent college students from engaging in illegal activity or reduce such activity.

Findings from this study go a step closer towards closing the gaps identified and addressed in this study. Research continues to inform practice in micro, mezzo, and macro settings. Thus, findings from this study may further inform practice and create room for more conversations on the social problem addressed here. My decision to focus on this social problem was made to bring awareness to the issue of the Anglophone crisis and the impact it has had on public safety, especially given the limited exposure the issue

has received. The current study contributes to social change by bringing awareness to the Anglophone crisis.

Summary

Chapter 1 opened with an introductory paragraph where I described the topic of the study and provided an explanation for why the study needed to be conducted. I also discussed social implications of the study in the introductory section. I proceeded to the next section where I detailed the background literature related to the scope of the study topic, described gaps in literature, and concluded with factors supporting the need for the study.

In the background section, I discussed the history of Cameroon, the genesis of the Anglophone crisis and the current crisis. Subsequent paragraphs included discussions of the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, and definitions. For the theoretical framework, I explained my choice of the general strain theory, and for the nature of the study, I described my choice of the descriptive phenomenological approach by Amedeo Giorgi. I then proceeded to discuss four assumptions and described why the assumptions were critical to the meaningfulness of the study. Scope and delimitations were also described, and limitations of the study were discussed. I concluded the chapter by discussing social change implications for public safety and future practice.

Chapter 2 entails an in-depth and extensive literature review. The section opens with an introduction where the research problem and purposes are restated. Subsequent sections involve discussions on literature search strategies, an overview of the theoretical

foundation, an exhaustive literature review, a summary, and conclusions. Areas that the literature review focuses on include the history of the Anglophone crisis, the current crisis, exposure to crime and risk for future violence, ACEs and the impact on future criminal involvement, and protective factors against criminal activity.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this study, I explored the protective factors that reduce or prevent college-aged criminal activity in the North and Southwest regions of Cameroon during the Anglophone crisis. I sought to fill a gap in the existing literature, which had failed to address how the Anglophone crisis has affected college students, particularly with regards to their involvement in criminal activity and what protective factors may reduce or prevent involvement in criminal activity. This is important to understand, given the rapid increase in crime rates in the Anglophone regions of the nation (Kriesch, 2021; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Okereke, 2018).

Synopsis of Current Literature Establishing Relevance of the Problem

Recent studies have highlighted the impact of the Anglophone crisis on major sectors, including the education and public safety sectors. The crisis has created an atmosphere of fear, uncertainty, and social unrest and a general atmosphere of instability and insecurity among youths (Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020). Literature highlights incidents of violent crime, including malicious destruction of property, abduction, aggravated assault, violent victimization, homicide, and genocide, including killing of students across the English-speaking regions of the nation (Kushner & Fagan, 2022; Mates, 2019; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019). These factors are all risk factors for criminal activity that were also reflected in the data obtained in this study (Craig, 2019; Estrada et al., 2021; Freeze, 2019). However, literature failed to address protective/mitigating factors preventing criminal activity specifically for this

study's population, college students. Some studies have found that certain individual and environmental factors may buffer the negative effects of the risk factors (Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

With regards to implications, especially for college education, student safety, and criminal activity, it is highlighted that “insecurity has kept some students away from the campuses and constantly disrupts academic activities. University lecturers are vulnerable to attacks and kidnapping. Many are frightened to continue working normally and have been seeking to leave the country” (Bang & Balgah, 2022, p. 12).

Research findings have suggested that violent victimization and exposure to violence are both risk factors for violent offending and criminal delinquency (Craig, 2019; Estrada et al., 2021; Freeze, 2019). Freeze (2019) highlighted a strong relationship between ACEs and crime, identifying that ACEs have a significant impact on crime. However, despite the established relationship between adverse life experience, violence victimization, and exposure to violence and criminal delinquency, other studies have echoed the mitigating effects of some personal and environmental characteristics serving as protective factors preventing criminal activity for some.

Preview of Major Sections in Chapter

Chapter 2 is organized into subsections, including the introduction and background section, literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, literature review, and summary. In the introduction and background section, the research problem and purposes are restated. Further, in the first section, the background of the Anglophone crisis and the identified purpose of the study and gap in literature are described. A

concise synopsis of the current literature that establishes the relevance of the problem is highlighted.

In the second section of Chapter 2 of this study, I describe the literature search strategies I used, including the key specific terms used and combinations of search terms. I further highlight all databases used for information gathering and detail the inclusion and exclusion criteria used for the literature search. In the third section, I provide a detailed description of the theoretical foundation used (GST proposed by Robert Agnew in 1992) and describe major theoretical propositions and major hypotheses. GST suggests that people turn to crime due to lack of means to achieve their goals and/or the American dream (Campbell, 2020; Tutorsplit, 2021).

The fourth section details the literature review, which focused on the history of the Anglophone crisis, the current crisis and its implications, strain/adverse life experiences and risk for future violence, ACEs and the impact on future criminal activity, strengths and weaknesses of the GST, and protective factors for criminal activity. Chapter 2 concludes with distinguishing findings. Gaps are also identified, and the implications of this study are discussed. An overview of Chapter 3 is introduced in the concluding paragraph.

Literature Search Strategy

For the study, information was gathered from databases such as the United Nations, Academic Search Complete, Complementary Index, PsycINFO, Education Source, ProQuest, SocINDEX with Full Text, Political Science Complete, Google Scholar, and APA PsycINFO. The focus for this study included the keywords

Cameroon's Anglophone crisis AND college-aged criminal activity and strains and risk for crime.

Key search terms and combinations of search terms included *adverse childhood experiences and crime; college-aged criminal activity; the Anglophone crisis; protective factors for crime; mitigating factors for crime; strain theory; general strain theory; Cameroon Anglophone crisis; protective factors for crime involvement during Cameroon Anglophone crisis; youth risk factors for crime involvement during Cameroon Anglophone crisis; college students and crime involvement during Cameroon Anglophone crisis; victims of crime during Cameroon Anglophone crisis; access to education during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon; youths and crime in Cameroon; education access in war zones; barriers to education during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon; Cameroon education in crisis; education in emergencies; history of Cameroon's Anglophone crisis; criminal activity in Cameroon; criminal activity in Cameroon during the Anglophone crisis; students and crime in Cameroon; Cameroon's history; how Cameroon became independent; and Cameroon's Anglophone crisis AND college-aged criminal activity.*

Studies were included in the literature review based on several criteria. Studies had to have been published within the last 5 years and be either peer reviewed or from scholarly sources and authoritative, credible sources. Additionally, they had to be studies that reported on the causes, effects, and implications of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. The second category for inclusion in the literature review included studies that reported on the relationship between strain/adverse life experiences and criminal

behavior and studies reporting on protective factors that reduce or prevent criminal activity. Studies discussing the historical context of the theoretical framework (GST) were also included.

For the exclusion criteria, non-peer-reviewed publications on the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon were excluded from the literature review. Subjective publications were also excluded. For my topic, specifically relating to the social problem of the Anglophone crisis, there was limited current research, and I did not find any recent dissertations and/or conference proceedings. Most recent publications were opinions and subjective reports. Eluke (2020) echoed the lack of investment in this issue (Anglophone crisis) by the scholarly community. I handled this by expanding my search and using broader search terms to generate more results.

As a student researcher, I was aware of my implicit and explicit biases and recognized how these biases could influence my literature search strategies, especially given my personal experiences of the crisis. However, in this study, my intent was to focus on exploring the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis, so I bracketed my personal experiences through journaling.

Theoretical Foundation

The GST proposed by Robert Agnew in 1992, which is a variation of strain theory, grounded this study. Strain theory was developed by Robert Merton in 1938 and suggests that for people who are financially stable, their probability of engaging in crime is relatively low and vice versa. Robert Merton also suggested that people turn to crime

due to lack of means to achieve their goals and/or the American dream (Campbell, 2020; Tutorsplot, 2021).

In 1992, Robert Agnew expanded on strain theory, titling his work *general strain theory*. GST proposes that strain is a significant contributing factor to crime involvement. The presence of strain elicits negative emotions, which could be manifested in a variety of wrongdoings, including criminal involvement (Tutorsplot, 2021). Robert Agnew highlighted several strains, including loss, negative experiences such as abuse, and failure to attain goals such as financial goals (Campbell, 2020).

The GST also proposed that crime is a result of certain types of strain, including those that are deemed unjust, uncontrollable, and extreme and tend to yield emotions that justify antisocial behaviors (Campbell, 2020). For some who are faced with these types of strain, they may turn to crime as a means of coping, while others may choose crime as a response to a lack of control over circumstances, peer pressure, and a need for autonomy (Campbell, 2020). Unfortunately, the GST failed to address specific protective/mitigating factors against crime and mostly addressed the risk factors (Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

The propositions of the GST influenced the four assumptions of this study: (a) strain is a significant contributing factor to crime involvement; (b) ACEs such as physical abuse, child neglect, witnessing violence, violent victimization, sexual abuse, having an incarcerated relative, emotional abuse, substance abuse, and other forms of trauma have a direct effect on future offending and criminal activity; (c) college-aged criminal activity tends to be higher in regions where there is civil unrest; and (d) for college students in

regions where there is civil unrest, certain demographic factors may serve as protective factors that may reduce or prevent involvement in criminal activity.

Research-Based Analysis of Theory and Applications

Researchers have used the GST to explain the effects of certain adverse life experiences/strain, including poverty, discrimination, exposure to violence, being a victim of violence, feeling unsafe, neglect, loss, and violent victimization, on crime (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). In a recent publication on specifying the types of strain most likely to lead to crime and delinquency, Agnew (2017) argued that the presence of some strains tends to increase the probability of negative emotions including anger and frustration that create pressure for corrective action. Agnew (2017) highlighted crime as a response to the pressure for corrective action.

To understand the relationship between victimization (strain) and crime/delinquency, Barbieri, Clipper, Narvey, Rude, Craig & Piquero (2019) conducted a systematic review of peer-reviewed articles investigating victimization as a source of strain as suggested in GST. Barbieri et al. highlighted that Robert Agnew, the founder of GST, proposed victimization as a type of strain that is most likely to lead to delinquency. They also suggested that while victimization has been understudied in criminological research, studies have established a correlation between victimization and violence and antisocial behavior (Barbieri et al., 2019). However, they failed to investigate the effects of protective and mitigating factors for crime such as individual and environmental factors that may reduce or prevent the occurrence of engagement in criminal behavior.

Barbieri et al. (2019) focused on the definition and operationalization of victimization. Seventeen measures of victimization were identified and were later narrowed down to six concepts, including prison/inmate victimization, bullying (traditional and cyber), violent victimization, school-based victimization, sexual assault/stalking/intimate partner violence (IPV) victimization, and multiple/nonspecific victimization (Barbieri et al., 2019). Barbieri et al. measured victimization as a source of strain.

Results suggested a significant correlation between “physical victimization measures and engagement in substance use, bullying behaviors, and general delinquency” (Barbieri et al., 2019, p. 1). Among the articles, 82.4% indicated statistically significant relationships between victimization and crime/delinquency. The GST was highlighted as one of the leading theories of crime and delinquency in the field of criminology (Barbieri et al., 2019). Barbieri et al. (2019) also noted that the GST “has been extensively tested and holds strong merit in the field of criminology” (p. 1). It was discussed that social supports tend to mitigate the risk of crime/delinquency and that subgroup characteristics may also influence the mitigating factors for strain (Barbieri et al., 2019). Researchers also suggested that individual perception of strains should be considered (Barbieri et al., 2019).

This study covered a significant amount of published peer-reviewed literature on the GST, especially on the relationship between some types of strain and crime over nearly two decades. It described a literature-based analysis of how the GST has been applied to studies such as this study. I sought to explore lived experiences of college

students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis. As highlighted in previous sections of this paper, research suggests that the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon is a social problem that has created a host of strains for individuals, groups, and communities in Cameroon. In this study, I presumed that strain is a significant contributing factor to crime involvement. However, I also presumed that some protective/mitigating factors may reduce or prevent risk of criminal activity for those who have experienced some strains.

Rationale for Choice of Theory

The logical connections between the general strain theory (Agnew, 2013) and the nature of this study include the significant role played by strain in criminology. This was a phenomenological study that focused on the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduce or prevent criminal activity during a crisis. The GST proposed that crime is a result of certain types of strain, including those that are deemed unjust, uncontrollable, and extreme and tend to yield emotions that justify antisocial behaviors (Campbell, 2020).

Furthermore, the GST suggests that some who are faced with these types of strain may turn to crime as a means of coping, while others may choose crime as a response to a lack of control over circumstances, peer pressure, and a need for autonomy (Campbell, 2020). However, past research related to the GST failed to investigate the effects of protective and mitigating factors for crime, such as individual and environmental factors that may reduce or prevent the occurrence of engagement in criminal behavior (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). This gap in the literature is what highlighted the need for a study like

this current study. In 2013, Agnew revised the GST and suggested that future studies take into consideration risk/propensity factors. It is noted that most studies on criminology tend to focus on the risk factors (Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon has created an atmosphere of fear, uncertainty, lack of control, and social unrest and a general atmosphere of instability and insecurity among youths (Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020). Literature highlights incidents of kidnapping, abduction, assault, and killing of students across the English-speaking regions of the nation (Ashu, 2020; Eluke, 2020; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019). For this study, the GST better explained the impact of strain (fear, uncertainty, lack of control, social unrest, and a general atmosphere of instability and insecurity) experienced by participants and their risks for criminal activity.

Furthermore, Robert Agnew's GST describes several strains including loss, negative experiences such as abuse, and failure to attain goals such as financial goals (Campbell, 2020). Such strains have been described in research as adverse life experiences and in childhood as adverse childhood experiences (Freeze, 2019). Studies have highlighted a correlation between such adverse experiences and crime (Freeze, 2019).

Freeze (2019) cited literature from the U.S. attorney general's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence, which highlights that two out of three children exposed to violence are significantly affected. It is noted that approximately

ninety percent of juvenile offenders in the United States [have experienced] some sort of traumatic event in childhood, and up to 30 percent of justice-involved

American youth meet the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder due to trauma experienced during childhood (Freeze, 2019, p. 4).

Some studies have presumed that some individual characteristics may serve as protective/mitigating factors that reduce or prevent crime, even for those who have experienced certain strains (Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

Such findings appear to be common among youth even in different geographical locations faced with similar adverse experiences. Thus, a study like this which explored the effects of the Anglophone crisis on students, as it relates to the protective factors that reduce or prevent crime involvement cannot be overemphasized and build on the GST. Since the Anglophone crisis began, access to education has been significantly affected, crime rates have increased, and gang activity has been prominent in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon (Ngong-Song, 2020).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Literature Review Strategy

Randolph's (2009) stages for conceptualizing the literature were integrated in this literature review. In subsequent paragraphs, I discuss the history of Cameroon, dating back to the days of colonialism through independence and present-day Cameroon. The social problem, the Anglophone crisis that prompted this study is rooted in the colonial history of the nation (Bang & Balgah, 2022). I then describe the current crisis and its effects on the economy, public safety, education sector, its implications on health and housing. I discuss efforts made towards ending the crisis and the extent of effectiveness of the efforts.

I proceed to analyzing previous literature on the relationship between strains/adverse life experiences including poverty, discrimination, exposure to violence, being a victim of violence, unsafe, neglect, loss, violent victimization etc. on crime. Studies have argued that certain strains including adverse childhood and life experiences have a tendency to increase the risk of future violence and criminal activity in many (Barbieri et al., 2019; Craig, 2019; Estrada et al., 2021; Freeze, 2019, p. 4). I offer strengths and weaknesses of the GST and briefly describe the protective factors that reduce or prevent crime and criminal activity and the mitigating factors for crime. I conclude chapter 2 by summarizing the literature on the effects of strains on crime and discussing social change implications. Chapter 3 is introduced in the conclusion of this chapter.

History of Cameroon

The origin of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon is rooted in the nation's colonial history and dates to July 14, 1884, when Cameroon became a German colony (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Bifuh-Ambe, 2020; Morris-Chapman, 2019). However, after the First World War ended in 1919, the Germans handed then "Kamerun" to Britain and France during the Versailles treaty (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020). The nation became a territory for Britain and France and was partitioned between the two. France took over 80% of the nation while Britain took over 20% (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020).

However, on January 1, 1960, the French (Francophone) section of the nation gained its independence from France and became an independent nation as *La Republique du Cameroon*. The English region (Southern Cameroon Trustee Territory)

which was still under the British had the option to either reunite with the French section or join Nigeria which was also a British colony (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020). However, on February 11, 1961, during the United Nations-organized plebiscite, Southern Cameroon (English) voted to merge with French Cameroon which led to the formation of the Federal Republic of Cameroon was formed (Bang & Balgah, 2022).

In 1972, the federal structure of the nation was changed by the then President Ahmadu Ahidjo, to a unitary state called the United Republic of Cameroon (Bang & Balgah, 2022). However, on February 4th, 1984, Paul Biya (current president), who succeeded Ahmadu Ahidjo changed the name of the country to *La Republique du Cameroon* (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Morris-Chapman, 2019).

Origin of the Anglophone Crisis

Since the two colonies merged in 1961, the French majority has dominated the economic, education, social and political sectors of the nation, thus marginalizing the English-speaking regions who only make up 14% of the country (Morris-Chapman, 2019). Major sectors in the Anglophone regions of the nation including the education sector, health sector, legal/judicial sectors, public safety, and corrections have been significantly affected as there has been marginalization in several leadership roles, distribution of resources including education resources, housing, and employments resources, and with an increasing presence and dominance in leadership by the French citizens (Morris-Chapman, 2019).

Bifuh-Ambe (2020) highlighted that even though there was a re-unification between the two Cameroon's, the educational practices, policies, culture, and policies of

the two states were still heavily influenced by the philosophies of the British and French. The French and English sectors mirrored the traditions and philosophies of the respective colonial Europeans thus losing much of their own identity (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020). This created a significant divide as the two states till date can still not agree on a structure of a central governance and continue to act as independent entities (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020). This is hugely responsible for the Anglophone crisis as the majority French continue to dominate the Anglophones (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020).

Other issues that have plagued the Anglophone regions include, French language being made mandatory in English schools and French speaking teachers appointed as lecturers, professors, and teachers in English speaking schools (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Morris-Chapman, 2019). Additionally, French methods of court proceedings being enforced in Anglophone Courts (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Morris-Chapman, 2019).

Thirty years after gaining its independence there was no college/university that was predominantly English speaking (Morris-Chapman, 2019). Thus, Anglophones had to attend French universities. It was only in 1992 that the first English university was open, University of Buea (Morris-Chapman, 2019). These issues appear to have intensified and in 2016, the Anglophones launched a strike and began rioting against marginalization (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020).

Current Crisis and Implications

The most recent and most severe Anglophone crisis leading to a major humanitarian, political and social issues in Cameroon began in October 2016 and is still ongoing (Okereke, 2018). This phase of the Anglophone crisis began as a peaceful

protest by lawyer and teacher trade unions who expressed grievances concerning the mandatory use of the French language in Anglophone schools and law courts (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018). These peaceful protests were met with harsh consequences imposed by the government, including the imprisonment of protest leaders and some protesters and assault on protesters (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018).

The government's punitive response to the peaceful protest resulted in the formation of armed secessionist groups in 2018 (Bang & Balgah, 2022). These secessionist groups have over the years increased in momentum and have been demanding the independence of Anglophone regions from the rest of the nation, to form a new nation called the Ambazonia Republic (Bang & Balgah, 2022). This has led to several violent confrontations between the secessionist groups and the military forces (Okereke, 2018; Bang & Balgah, 2022).

Since October 2016, thousands of lives have been lost, houses and schools burned down, unemployment rates have skyrocketed, students and teachers have been gunned down in their classrooms by the military and many more horrific incidents all events happening in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon which are the two English regions of the nation (Okereke, 2018). This crisis is one of the most prominent social problems in the history of Cameroon.

There has been a rise in rates of criminal activity, violence, and safety concerns due to the ongoing Anglophone crisis. On Saturday October 24, 2020, eight middle school children were shot and killed and at least twelve others wounded in their

classroom while class was in session by unknown gunmen in Kumba, located in the Southwest region of Cameroon (Mules & Ngong-Song, November 6, 2020, p. 1). The gunmen reportedly arrived on motorbikes and opened fire in the classroom resulting in the death of eight young children and many others wounded as they fled from the bullets. This incident is now called the Kumba Massacre (Mules & Ngong-Song, November 6, 2020).

In further highlighting the implications of the current crisis, Ashu (2020) conducted a literature review of journal articles, books, and internet-based publications as sources of information obtained from the Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group, United Nations High Commission for Refugees. This literature review examined the impact of the Anglophone conflict on women and children and the efforts by women to end the crisis. Findings from the study highlighted that the burden of the crisis has been felt most if not doubled by women and children in the following ways: loss of income generating activities; women deprived of health services; and children's right to education deprived (Amin, 2021; Ashu, 2020; Eluke, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019;).

Since the current phase of the crisis began in 2016, schools in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon have been disrupted with Mondays being known as "ghost town" days with all schools being closed on Mondays (Ashu, 2020). Ashu (2020) also cites reports from UNICEF highlighting that, as of 2020, more than 80 percent of schools in the English-speaking Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon have been closed (UN Peace and Security, 2019). Furthermore, research by UNICEF and Human Rights Watch indicates that by July 2018, about 58 schools were damaged in the English regions

and by June 2019 about 74 schools were destroyed, students and teachers being kidnaped and students being gun down in classrooms (Ashu, 2020).

Efforts Towards Resolving the Crisis

The current phase of Anglophone crisis began as a peaceful protest by lawyer and teacher trade unions however, the government's response to the protest is what escalated the crisis. The government's initial response was "intimidation, arrests, and torture" of peaceful protesters (Amin, 2021, p. 2). This approach at ending the protest was unsuccessful and the next attempts by the government included shutting down internet services in Anglophone regions, shutting down schools in the Anglophone regions and continuous intimidation and arrest of protesters (Amin, 2021). It is noted that the government's failure to address concerns of its citizen and response with violence forced civilians to fight back (Amin, 2021). The repercussions were devastating, there was a surge in violent crime rates and juvenile delinquency, unemployment and homeless rates skyrocketed, rates of prostitution and teenage pregnancy were also at an all-time high (Amin, 2021).

According to Amin (2021) "by June 2019, four million people had been affected by the crisis: more than 1.3 million needed humanitarian assistance, more than 450,000 had been internally displaced, more than 32,000 had become refugees in Nigeria, and more than 2,000 had been killed" (p. 2). The World Bank reported poverty levels in the Northwest and Southwest regions were 57 percent and 21 percent respectively in 2019 (Amin, 2021, p. 7).

In discussing efforts to end the crisis by other nations, Eluke (2020) highlighted efforts by the United States including, open criticism of the crisis, withdrawal of military aid to Cameroon and withdrawing Cameroon's invitation into the State Partnership Program. Additionally, US President Donald Trump cancelled a trade deal with Cameroon, citing human rights violations as one of the main reasons (Eluke, 2020). Cameroon was recently removed from a trade program that allows African countries to sell goods to the United States on a duty-free basis, citing "persistent human rights" issues as a reason (Eluke, 2020, p. 192).

To date, no significant measures have been put in place to effectively address the crisis. Cameroon's President Paul Biya maintains that "Cameroon is one and indivisible" (Amin, 2021, p. 21). However, some civilians are of a different opinion. They describe the country as "two nations with two separate cultures, unequal and hostile to each other" (Amin, 2021, p. 21). In 2019, Cameroon's National Assembly and the Senate passed a bill that "provides for equal use of English and French in the nation's public institutions" (Amin, 2019 p21). Plans were made to implement the bill however, the issue persist, and the crisis is still ongoing. Bifuh-Ambe, (2020) discuss a way forward, highlighting the need for an educational policy that considers the educational, social and cultural needs of both states.

Eluke (2020) echoed the lack of investment in this issue by the scholarly community. I found that a significant amount of published literature on this crisis is not based on scholarly sources and not peer reviewed; it was mostly subjective reviews. I identified several gaps in literature including gaps in the description of experiences

in accessing education, housing, and other services by specific groups; specific public safety implications; risk and predictions of crime and criminal involvement; and the factors that reduce or prevent crime across groups (mitigation factors for criminal activity).

Strain and Crime: Is There a Correlation?

The General Strain Theory (GST) is the theoretical foundation for this study. In 1938, Robert Merton introduced the Strain Theory, which suggested that for people who are financially stable, their probability of engaging in crime is relatively low and vice versa (Tutorsplit, 2021). Robert Merton also suggested that people turn to crime due to lack of means to achieve their goals and/or the American dream (Campbell, 2020; Tutorsplit, 2021). In 1992, Robert Agnew expanded on the strain theory, introducing what is now known as the General Strain Theory. The GST proposed that strain is a significant contributing factor for crime involvement (Campbell, 2020). The presence of strain elicits negative emotions which could be manifested in a variety of wrongdoings, including criminal involvement (Campbell, 2020). Robert Agnew highlighted several strains including loss, negative experiences such as abuse, and failure to attain goals such as financial goals (Campbell, 2020).

The GST also proposed that for some, crime is a result of certain types of strain including those that are deemed unjust, uncontrollable, and extreme and tend to yield emotions that justify antisocial behaviors (Campbell, 2020). For those who are faced with these types of strain, some may turn to crime as a means of coping (criminal coping)

while others may choose crime as a response to a lack of control over circumstances, peer pressure and a need for autonomy (Campbell, 2020).

To further explain the nature of relationship between strain and crime, Freeze (2019) cited literature from the U.S. attorney general's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence, which highlighted that for children exposed to violence, two out of three of these children are significantly affected. It is noted that approximately "ninety percent of juvenile offenders in the United States [have experienced] some sort of traumatic event in childhood, and up to 30 percent of justice-involved American youth meet the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder due to trauma experienced during childhood" (Craig, 2019; Freeze, 2019, p. 4). In this study, the inclusion criteria limited participants to college students in the Anglophobe regions of Cameroon who have been victims of the crisis that has left thousands of people dead, homeless, victimized by violence, unemployed and feeling insecure (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018). All significant sources of strain and adverse life experiences.

Further emphasizing the correlation between strain and crime, findings from the study by Barbieri et al. (2019) also confirmed the relationship between strain and crime/delinquency. The study by Barbieri et al. (2019) consisted of a systematic literature review of one hundred and sixteen (116) published peer reviewed articles published between 2002 and 2018. However, only fifty-six (56) of the articles reviewed were included in the study based on the inclusion criteria for the study. Barbieri et al. (2019) measured victimization as a source of strain. Results suggested a significant correlation between "Physical victimization measures and engagement in substance use, bullying

behaviors, and general delinquency” (Barbieri et al., 2019, p. 1). Results also highlighted that, 82.4% of the articles found statistically significant relationships between victimization and crime/delinquency (Barbieri et al., 2019).

Barbieri et al. (2019) highlighted, that Robert Agnew, the founder of the GST, proposed victimization as a type of strain that is most likely to lead to delinquency. They also suggested that while victimization has been understudied in criminological research, “studies in the field of psychology have tied victimization to violence and antisocial behavior” (Barbieri et al., 2019; Campbell, 2020; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). As discussed in the rationale for theory choice section of this paper, the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon has created an atmosphere of fear, uncertainty, and lack of control, social unrest and a general atmosphere of instability and insecurity among youths (Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020). Literature highlights incidents of kidnapping, abduction, assault and killing of students across the English-speaking regions of the nation (Ashu, 2020; Eluke, 2020; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019). The GST better explains the nature of the strain/ delinquency relationship on college-aged criminal activity in Cameroon.

Strengths of General Strain Theory

In assessing the strengths of the GST, Agnew & Brezina (2019) noted that the GST highlights major types of strains that are most likely to cause involvement in crime including those deemed unjust, uncontrollable, and extreme and tend to yield emotions that justify antisocial behaviors such as loss, negative experiences such as abuse, and failure to attain goals such as financial goals (Agnew & Brezina, 2019; Campbell, 2020).

Individuals experiencing such strains may tend to crime as a response and to cope.

Another strength of the GST is that it provides in depth an explanation for criminal behavior over the lifespan, highlights group differences in crime and suggest strategies for controlling crime (Agnew & Brezina, 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

Furthermore, the GST is emphasized as one of the leading theories of crime and delinquency in the field of criminology and “has been extensively tested and holds strong merit in the field of criminology” (Barbieri et al., 2019, p. 1). The GST has been widely used by researchers to further investigate, explore, explain, and describe the effects of certain strains/adverse life experiences including poverty, discrimination, exposure to violence, being a victim of violence, unsafe, neglect, loss, violent victimization etc. on juvenile and criminal delinquency (Agnew & Brezina, 2019; Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Agnew (2017) argues that the presence of some strains tends to increase to probability of negative emotions including anger and frustration that create pressure for corrective action. Agnew highlights crime as a response to the pressure for corrective action (2017).

Weaknesses of General Strain Theory

A major weakness/limitation of the GST is that it is mainly focused on the effects of strain on offending and adopts more of a risk factor approach (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). While the relationship between strain and crime has been well established, some studies have highlighted that certain protective factors like individual and environmental characteristics may buffer the negative effects of risk factors (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Thus, exclusion of these protective factors robs the opportunity

for examining the potential for victim resilience (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). The GST failed to take into consideration protective factors that may mitigate risk (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Kushner & Fagan (2022) highlighted that the inattention to protective factors is not only by the GST and is common with most criminology theories, as this significant piece has been largely omitted and overlooked by researchers. The focus has mainly been on risk factors. This highlights the need for a study like this current study that explores the protective factors that have mitigated risk for criminal activity for college students.

Agnew revised the GST in 2013 and highlighted that a single risk characteristic may only produce a non-significant effect on the strain/offending relationship. Agnew advised that the combination of the risk factor and an individual's criminal propensity had a strong effect on the Strain/offending relationship (Agnew, 2013; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Agnew suggested that researchers should take into consideration risk/propensity factors. As one of most prominent crime theories, the failure to investigate protective/mitigating factors such as individual and environmental characteristics for crime is a significant limitation of the GST. Kushner & Fagan (2022) propose an expansion of the GST to include both protective and risk factors as potential modifiers of the strain/ offending relationship.

Protection and Resilience Against Crime: Mitigating Factors

A proposition of the GST is that criminal coping tends to be higher for individuals with a history of adverse life experiences and environmental risk factors that create a strong risk for engagement in criminal behavior (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). However,

some studies have shown limitations in this proposition. Researchers have argued that the proposition of criminal coping fails to take into consideration the potential effects that multiple protective factors have on the victimization/offending relationship (Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

Kushner & Fagan (2022) explored the relationship between criminal propensity/risk and protection/resilience on the victim/offending relationship using data obtained from a longitudinal study that focused on adolescent to adult health (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Negative binomial logistic regression models were used to assess the effects protective factors have on the victimization/offending relationship victim/offending relationship (Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

This study is comprehensive and touched on key points of the GST, addressed its strengths and weaknesses and it highlighted gaps in literature including, the failure of prior studies and GST to take into consideration factors that may “ameliorate the impact of victimization on offending” and the failure to investigate protective factors (Kushner & Fagan, 2022, p. 4). It is one of few studies that used data from a nationally representative sample of youth participating in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult health (Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

While the findings from this study supported the premise that strain increases the risk for offending, results also revealed that “contrary to GST, greater risk weakened the relationship between victimization and offending while greater protection strengthened this relationship” (Kushner & Fagan, 2022, p. 1). Kushner & Fagan (2022) suggested the need for further theoretical development and a “greater understanding of the subjective

experience of victimization/strain and pathways associated with increased risk and resiliency” (p. 1). They also suggested an expansion of the GST to include both protective and risk factors as potential modifiers of the strain/offending relationship (Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

Barbieri et al. (2019) and Kushner & Fagan (2022) discussed that individual and environmental characteristics such as social supports serve as mitigating factors for the risk of crime/delinquency however, it is also noted that when assessing the mediating of effects of certain protective factors on crime, researchers should take into consideration subgroup differences. This highlights the need for studies like this current study that would continue to bridge the gap in literature that fails to address the mitigating effects of individual and environmental characteristics on the victim/offending relationship while taking into consideration subgroup differences.

Distinguishing the Findings

For this current study, I synthesized studies that have explored the history of Cameroon and the origin of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Findings from studies from within the last five years informed this study’s inquiries about the causes of the Anglophone crisis. Three studies highlighted the history of the country and described how the history contributed to the current crisis. These studies found that the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon is rooted in the nation’s colonial history and dates to July 14, 1884, when Cameroon became a German colony (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Bifuh-Ambe, 2020; Morris-Chapman, 2019).

Six research studies investigated the current crisis including its causes, effects, and implications (Amin, 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Eluke, 2020; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018). Reoccurring themes across the studies that investigated the causes of the crisis included marginalization and oppression of the Anglophones. These studies also investigated the effects/implications of the crisis including imprisonment of protest leaders and some protesters and assault on protesters, homelessness, unemployment, increase in crime rates, public safety concerns, homicide and genocides and education consequences (Amin, 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Eluke, 2020; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018).

Ashu (2020) conducted a literature review of journal articles, books, and Internet based publications as sources of information obtained from the Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group, United Nations High Commission for Refugees. This review examined the impact and implications of the crisis. The themes in this study mirrored the themes highlighted in Amin (2021); Bang & Balgah (2022); Eluke (2020); Mules & Ngong-Song (2020); Nganji & Cockburn (2019); Okereke (2018) including destruction of infrastructure, unemployment, homicide, genocides, education consequences, increase in crime rates, public safety concerns and poverty.

Amin (2021) and Eluke (2020) explored efforts towards resolving the crisis by national and international bodies. Amin (2021) described national efforts by Cameroon's National Assembly including the passage of a bill by Senate that "provides for equal use of English and French in the nation's public institutions" (p21). Eluke (2020) highlighted international efforts by the United States including, open criticism of the crisis,

withdrawal of military aid to Cameroon and withdrawing Cameroon's invitation into the State Partnership Program. Additionally, US President Donald Trump cancelled a trade deal with Cameroon, citing human rights violations as one of the main reasons (Eluke, 2020). The studies by Amin (2021) and Eluke (2020) share common themes including the ineffectiveness of the efforts in ending the crisis. Amin (2021) and Bang and Bangalah (2022) also suggested that use of force does not resolve emergency crisis.

Eluke (2020) identified gaps in literature. They echoed the lack of investment in the issue of the Anglophone crisis by the scholarly community. This is consistent with my observations. I found that a significant amount of published literature on the Anglophone Crisis is not based on scholarly sources and not peer reviewed; it was mostly subjective reviews.

Another study by Bang & Balgah (2022) also identified a gap in literature and suggested that, literature on when instability becomes complex emergencies is very sparse and called for future researcher to explore this further. I identified several gaps in literature including gaps in the description of experiences in accessing education, housing, and other services by specific groups; specific public safety implications for subgroups; risk and predictions of crime and criminal involvement for subgroups; and the factors that reduce or prevent crime across groups (mitigation factors for crime).

For the study, I synthesized ongoing studies exploring the relationship between strain and crime. Findings from seven studies from within the last five years informed my proposed study's inquiries about the relationship between strain/adverse life experiences and crime (Agnew, 2017; Agnew & Brezina, 2019; Barbieri et al., 2019; Campbell, 2020;

Craig, 2019; Freeze, 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). All seven of the studies shared common themes including victimization being one of the most significant strains that posed a risk for crime coping as well as confirmation of the GST's proposition that experiencing certain types of strain may lead to criminal coping and that criminal coping tends to be higher for individuals with a history of strain/adverse life experiences and environmental risk factors that create a strong risk for engagement in criminal behavior (Agnew, 2017; Agnew & Brezina, 2019; Barbieri et al., 2019; Campbell, 2020; Freeze, 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

The study by Barbieri et al. (2019) is especially important because researchers reviewed a significant amount of the existing literature on the strain and Crime relationship across almost two decades. The study was a systematic literature review of one hundred and sixteen (116) published peer reviewed articles published between 2002 and 2018, fifty-six (56) were included in the study based on the inclusion criteria. Barbieri et al. (2019) measured victimization as a source of strain. Results suggested a significant correlation between "Physical victimization measures and engagement in substance use, bullying behaviors, and general delinquency" (Barbieri et al., 2019 p. 1). Results showed that 82.4% of the articles found statistically significant relationships between victimization and crime/delinquency (Barbieri et al., 2019).

Three studies highlighted the limitations/weaknesses of the GST. Barbieri et al. (2019) and Kushner & Fagan (2022) took a step further by investigating the weaknesses of the GST. Kushner & Fagan (2022) highlighted major weaknesses/limitations of the GST. It was highlighted that the GST is mainly focused on the effects of strain on

offending and adopts more of a risk factor approach (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). The GST also failed to take into consideration protective factors that may mitigate risk (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Another study by Agnew (2017) suggested that researchers should take into consideration risk/propensity factors when investigating the relationship between strain and crime.

Kushner & Fagan (2022) explored the relationship between criminal propensity/risk and protection/resilience on the victim/offending relationship using data from obtained from a longitudinal study that focused on adolescent to adult health (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Negative binomial logistic regression models were used to assess the effects protective factors have on the victimization/offending relationship. This study is the only study that used data from a nationally representative sample of youth participating in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult health (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). While the findings from this study supported the premise that strain increases the risk for offending, results also highlighted that “contrary to GST, greater risk weakened the relationship between victimization and offending while greater protection strengthened this relationship” (Kushner & Fagan, 2022 p. 1).

Kushner & Fagan’s (2022) recommendations include the expansion of the GST to include both protective and risk factors as potential modifiers of the strain/offending relationship. This echoed Barbieri et al. (2019) recommendations for future research. Barbieri et al. (2019) presumed that individual and environmental characteristics such as social supports serve as mitigating factors for the risk of crime/delinquency. Barbieri et

al. (2019) also noted that when assessing the mediating effects of certain protective factors on crime, researchers should take into consideration subgroup differences.

Barbieri et al. (2019) also proposed that researchers should take into consideration the extent to which an individual considers an event to be *strainful* or not. Barbieri et al. (2019) argued that even when an individual is victimized, if they do not perceive it as such, it would likely not create a need for coping. Thus, highlighting the need for studies like my proposed study that would continue to bridge the gap in literature that fails to address the mitigating effects of individual and environmental characteristics on the victim/offending relationship while taking into consideration subgroup differences and individual perceptions.

For the study, I applied the suggestions for future research by Barbieri et al. (2019) and Kushner & Fagan (2022) who presumed that, individual and environmental characteristics such as social supports serve as protective/mitigating factors for crime especially for those who have experienced certain types of strains. For the study, I explored the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis. This study is grounded in Amedeo Giorgi's descriptive phenomenology approach and incorporates subgroup differences as well as individuals' perceptions on their experiences as proposed by Barbieri et al. (2019). Descriptive phenomenology is grounded in philosophy and ends with the essence of experience (Mihalache, 2019).

Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter 2, I discussed the historical notions of Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, highlighting its causes, effects, and implications. I also explored national and international approaches towards ending the crisis. Recurring themes across studies, gaps in research and suggestions for future practice were discussed. Next, I highlighted the theoretical foundation for my study, the GST and, explored strengths and weaknesses of the GST. I then proceeded to exploring the relationship between strain and crime. I explored protective/mitigating factors for crime, identified themes and gaps in literature and discussed implications for future research. I concluded the chapter with distinguishing findings, identifying themes, patterns, and gaps in literature.

In Chapter 3, I restate the study purpose. I then describe the research design and rationale. I proceed to discussing the role of the researcher and provide an in-depth description of the methodology including sampling, interviewing, instrumentation, and data analysis plan. I also discuss ethical procedures. Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion on issues of trustworthiness and summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this study, I explored the protective factors that reduce or prevent criminal activity for college students in the North and Southwest regions of Cameroon during the Anglophone crisis. Additionally, I sought to understand the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis. In Chapter 3, I detail the following topics: research design and rationale, my role as a student researcher/observer participant, research methods, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. I conclude Chapter 3 with a summary of the major topics addressed and a transition into Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question for this study was developed to better understand the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that have reduced or prevented them from engaging in criminal activity. The research question was the following: What are the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis?

In this study, I sought to explore the experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. A significant number of scholarly sources have addressed the factors that have contributed to crime because of the crisis for this group, including unemployment, homelessness, uncertainty, increase in violent crime, and violent victimization (Amin, 2021; Ashu, 2020; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Eluke, 2020; Mules &

Ngong-Song, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018). However, studies have failed to address the protective factors that may prevent or reduce criminal activity for college students in Cameroon during the Anglophone crisis. This study was grounded in phenomenology and informed by the general strain theory (Agnew, 2013). Studies have highlighted limitations in the GST, specifically, its failure to consider individual and environmental factors that could serve as potential modifiers of the strain/offending relationship (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

In deciding on the research tradition, several qualitative research designs were explored, including social constructionism, narrative, ethnography, and phenomenology. Ethnography describes the behavior of a cultural group in relation to a phenomenon (Burkholder, Cox, Crawford & Hitchcock, 2019, p. 88). In ethnography, primary data collection involves immersion in culture for an extended period (Burkholder et al., 2019). Narrative inquiry, on the other hand, describes individual stories in relation to a phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2019).

The social constructionism/constructivism approach is rooted in the discipline of sociology. Patton (2015) highlighted that social constructionism holds the premise that “the human world is different from the natural physical world and therefore must be studied differently” (p. 120). Patton further highlighted that in social constructionism, the “world of human perception is not an absolute sense” (p. 120). In this approach, “essence does not reside in the phenomenon but rather in the group that constructs and designates the phenomenon’s essence” (Patton, 2015, p. 120). Questions in this approach are centered on how the people in a specific setting construct their reality, what they

perceive as real, and what the consequences are of what is perceived as real to these people (Patton, 2015). Ethnography focuses on a specific cultural group and did not align with the purpose of this study. Phenomenology, which was the qualitative research design chosen for this study, describes themes and patterns of lived experiences across individuals in relation to a phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2019, p. 88).

In phenomenological studies such as this study, the aim is to seek understanding of the lived experiences of a set of individuals who share a common experience (Burkholder et al., 2019). Thus, in this study, I used the descriptive phenomenological approach by Amedeo Giorgi. Descriptive phenomenology is grounded in philosophy and ends with the essence of experience (Mihalache, 2019). Phenomenology is conceptualized in the interior of the individual's awareness and involves seeking to understand the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of the phenomenon for individuals, groups, and communities involved (Mihalache, 2019).

Phenomenology was best suited for this study because of its focus on the lived experiences of participants, in relation to the protective factors that have reduced or prevented criminal activities in the phase of the Anglophone crisis. Phenomenology seeks to derive shared meaning from the individual experiences of participants and focuses on the collective experience of the phenomenon. For this study, I sought to understand how participants made sense of their experiences and what the essence of the experiences were. Themes and patterns of lived experiences across individuals in relation to a phenomenon were described and will be detailed in Chapters 4 and 5 (Burkholder et al., 2019, p. 88).

Barbieri et al. (2019) noted that when assessing the mediating effects of certain protective factors on crime, researchers should take into consideration subgroup differences. Barbieri et al. also proposed that researchers should take into consideration the extent to which an individual considers an event to be *strainful* or not, arguing that even when an individual is victimized, if they do not perceive it as such, they would likely not have a need for coping (Barbieri et al., 2019). This highlighted the need for studies such as this study, which allowed participants to describe their individual experiences while focusing on the collective experience of the phenomenon.

As in the narrative design, primary data collection for phenomenology is done through in-depth individual interviews (Burkholder et al., 2019). However, I decided on the phenomenological design over narrative inquiry because narrative design does not “seek to derive a shared meaning from individual experiences as does phenomenology” (Burkholder et al., 2019, p. 88). Rather, “narrative design seeks to understand the meaning of individual experiences in relation to a shared phenomenon” (Burkholder et al., 2019, p. 88). Narrative design focuses on the individual rather than the collective experience of a phenomenon.

Role of the Researcher

For this study, I sought to explore the lived experiences of participants in relation to the protective factors that have reduced or prevented criminal activities in the phase of the Anglophone crisis. I also sought to explore shared meaning derived from the individual experiences of participants and to understand their collective experience of the phenomenon. In the beginning stages of this project, I had a naïve notion about the

protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity for college students.

However, after I conducted a literature review, other topics of interest emerged.

First, I wanted to understand the shared meaning from the individual experiences of participants of the phenomenon. I also wanted to understand how participants made sense of their experiences and what the essence of the experiences was. I wanted to understand the extent of the mediating effects of certain protective factors on crime while taking into consideration subgroup differences.

Participant-Observer

As a student researcher, I adopted the role of participant-observer. Given that this was a qualitative study, I was the primary data collection instrument (Burkholder et al., 2019). Benefits of adopting the participant-observer role included having a deep understanding of how participants experienced the phenomenon of study. Another benefit of adopting the role of participant-observer as a student researcher was that it enabled me to develop a trusting relationship with participants (Burkholder et al., 2019).

Relationships With Participants and Power Differentials

As a victim of similar circumstances faced by the participants, my experience of the phenomenon studied here was what prompted me to conduct this study. In the past, I have participated in peaceful protests calling for interventions that would bring an end to the Anglophone crisis. While I did not anticipate any prior personal and/or professional relationships with my participants, it was important to note that I am from the same region as my participants and a victim of the social problem addressed in this study.

There was a possibility that I might know some of my participants, which would have created a conflict of interest and power differentials.

Individual characteristics such as my race, last name, physical features, and accent led participants to know that we were from the same region and have a similar culture. However, participants' knowledge that I was a doctoral student in the United States seemingly created a significant power difference. Members of the Anglophone community in Cameroon tend to view individuals like myself who are in the diaspora (specifically in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom) as superior, thus creating a power dynamic. However, sharing similar experiences with my participants enhanced my relationship with participants.

Managing Researcher Biases and Power Differentials

Every researcher comes into a study with biases that drive the initial desire to conduct a study (Stadtlander, 2018, p. 85). Being mindful of biases and power differences that influenced my role, including prejudices, unintentional biases that emerged during interviews, and stereotyping the experiences of participants, was important.

To ensure that I remained impartial and unbiased, I approached participants neutrally and refrained from implying by my questions. I mainly used open-ended questions in a semi structured format. Leading questions and suggestive nonverbal cues such as facial expressions that could have gestured the perspectives I wanted participants to share were avoided (Burkholder et al., 2019, p. 221; Stadtlander, 2018).

Engaging in self-narrative reflexive journaling is an effective way of setting aside biased thoughts (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I engaged in bracketing prior to interviewing

participants and during data analysis. Bracketing my personal experiences, biases, and perceptions prior to the interviewing process and again during data analysis controlled how I “altered participants’ responses” and enabled me to analyze my perceptions separately from those of my participants (Burkholder et al., 2019, p. 221). Self-reflective journaling sustained documentation for issues of trustworthiness, including credibility, dependability, and transferability.

Next, I refrained from any assumptions about participant experiences and allowed participants to share their experiences (Stadtlander, 2018). I refrained from engaging in any social conversations with participants and refrained from sharing my own experiences of the phenomenon. I was mindful that sharing my own experiences might influence how participants responded to interview questions (Stadtlander, 2018).

Ethical Issues

I offered a \$10 thank you gift to participants for their participation. Offering a gift to research participants can be seen as coercion and manipulation of the research process by the researcher (Patton, 2015). However, some studies have suggested that when a researcher is working with disadvantaged groups, offering gifts encourages participation (Knight et al., 2009). My participants were in another country, and access to internet and technology devices that were required for the interview process was limited. The purpose of the gift was to assist participants in accessing internet services and other resources that would be needed to facilitate the interview process and to show appreciation for contributing their experiences.

Additional ethical concerns included vulnerability of participants. Interviews are interventions and affect people, especially because the specific purpose of interviews is information gathering and not therapeutic purposes (Patton, 2015). Thus, asking participants to reflect on experiences may reintroduce memories of traumatic experiences and negative feelings and may even lead to the revelation of sensitive information about causing harm to others, violating laws, and committing horrific acts against others. This might place participants in a vulnerable position where they feel the need to share their experiences and may have to suffer the repercussions of any reintroduction of trauma without appropriate intervention services.

To address this, I offered participants information on accessing resources to address any trauma. Participants were advised beforehand of the risk of minimal psychological discomfort that might arise from sharing sensitive information. Thus, participants were encouraged to seek counseling services from a list of programs provided.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The focus population for this study encompassed college students in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Qualitative studies are typically not concerned “with representing the population but instead are focused on relevance to the research question”; thus, criterion sampling was used (Burkholder et al., 2019, p. 88). Criterion sampling is known to be a good technique for determining information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). Literature suggests that criterion-based case selection allows the researcher to

“review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Patton, 2015, p. 281). A disadvantage of criterion sampling is that it is mainly intended to recruit a few cases that meet a specific criterion, which poses a limitation to transferability (Patton, 2015).

Participant inclusion was based on age, education status, geographical location, and criminal history. Participants were between the ages of 21 and 28 years old. They were current students attending universities located in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. Participants with a history of a felony conviction were excluded from the study. Participants who met the age requirement and student status but were attending schools outside of the English-speaking regions were excluded from the study.

This study consisted of eight participants who were between the ages of 21 and 28 years old. Using a small sample size is effective for hard-to-reach populations. Literature has highlighted that “a relatively few people, such as between six and a dozen, may offer us insights into a phenomenon of interest” (Baker, et al., 2012, p. 8).

The reason for my small sample size was to avoid data and theoretical saturation. When a researcher has reached saturation, continued analysis no longer yields new information and all the phenomena explored in the study have been explained (Burkholder et al., 2019). Guest et al. (2006) discussed data saturation in their study. They used data from a study that involved 60 in-depth interviews and found that data saturation (which is an indication that over half of the participants have experienced similar events) had occurred within the first 12 interviews. Guest et al. highlighted that meta themes were present as early as six interviews. Baker, Edwards & Doidge (2012)

highlighted that “moving up, a small number of cases, or subjects, may be extremely valuable and represent adequate numbers for a research project” (p. 8).

To identify and contact participants I used a partner site. My prospective participants were based in another country thus reaching them and conducting interviews was somewhat challenging. Thus, I collaborated with partner sites (mainly universities) to assist with recruitment of participants. Flyers containing my contact information, the topic of study and inclusion criteria were sent to the partner sites for distribution. Interested candidates contacted me through WhatsApp messenger and/or by phone. The identity of the partner sites will be masked in my final capstone that would be publish in ProQuest.

Instrumentation

Data collection was done through individual in-depth qualitative interviewing, using a semi- structured standardized open-ended interview guide developed by the researcher (Patton, 2015). Development of the instrument was influenced by gaps identified in the literature review. Sources of data included college students in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. The interviews were audio recorded using a tape recorder and discarded after transcription and data analysis was complete. A notepad was used to record my reactions, side comments and any remarks I had. Interviews were conducted through video conferencing.

Participants informed consent was obtained first after participants express an interest in participating in the study by accepting the study invitation. Informed consent was sent through WhatsApp messenger and participants acknowledge receipt. Informed

consent was again obtained verbally prior to the start of interviews. Acknowledgements of the limitation of confidentiality was also verbally provided by participants prior to the start of the interview. If a participant did not feel safe and/or comfortable with video conferencing, the option of a phone interviews was available. Conducting interviews by phone at the request of a participant would mask the identity of participants thus upholding the Principle of Beneficence (Stadtlander, 2018).

To establish sufficiency of data collection instruments to answer research questions, interview questions were designed in a semi-structured open-ended format to allow participants the freedom to elaborate and go into depth in their responses (Patton, 2015). For each open-ended question, close-ended questions would be used to follow up for clarification and further inquiring.

Turner (2010) highlights that the open-ended nature of questions in the standardized open-ended interview allows for participants to provide as much in-depth information as possible and allows for the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of following up. A good interview evokes thoughts, feelings, and knowledge in both the interview and the interviewee (Patton, 2015). Thus, I designed interview questions in a way that they are empathetic but also allowed for thoughts and feelings to be evoked, which allowed participants to delve deeper into their experiences, hence in-depth responses.

Efforts to Ensure Content Validity and Credibility

In-depth qualitative interviewing was conducted using a semi- structured standardized open-ended interview guide. I used the same wordings and sequence of

questions which were determined in advance with all participants being asked the same exact questions and in the same order and questions were worded in an open-ended format (Patton 2015). The standardized open-ended interview increased comparability in responses thus ensuring content validity and credibility. This approach increased “comprehensiveness and made data collection systematic for each respondent” (Patton 2015, p.438). I engaged in periodic consultation with dissertation committee which maintained the validity of findings for the study.

However, the interview guide approach has a weakness in that salient topics risk being omitted and there can be different responses given the flexibility in sequencing and wording by the interviewer (Patton, 2015).

Procedures for Recruitment and Data Collection

Sources of data included college students in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, recruited through flyers and sampled through criterion sampling. Participants were included in the study based on a specific criterion which included age, education status and geographical location. Participants had to be between the ages of 21 and 28 years old and attending a university in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Participants with a history of a felony conviction were excluded.

The primary data collection instrument was a researcher developed guide. Data collection was completed by me (student researcher). Data collection was done through individual in-depth qualitative interviewing, using a semi- structured standardized open-ended interview guide developed by the researcher (Patton, 2015). For each open-ended question, close-ended questions, and clarification probs followed, to follow up for

clarification and further inquiring. Interview questions were empathetic but also thought and feelings provoking. This enabled participants to delve deeper and share their unique experiences of the phenomenon. Interviews were conducted through video conferencing and audio recorded using an audio tape recorder. A notebook was also be used to record my reactions, side comments and remarks and nonverbal cues from participants.

The interview guide consisted of what, who, when and how questions. The guide consisted of a series of demographic questions and questions on participants experiences of the phenomenon. Themes and patterns identified in the literature review were imbedded in the open-ended questions. Data collection was be done once for each participant and lasted approximately forty-five minutes. No breaks were taken during participant interviews. All data was collected over the course of a two-week period.

To prevent recruitment resulting in too few participants, flyers were distributed across several program departments at partner site. However, if recruitment resulted in too few participants, I reached out to partner site and request for flyers to be redistributed across the school campus and for methods of distribution to be changed.

Once participants confirmed their interest in participation either through email or by phone, the informed consent form designed by Walden University was sent to them. The informed consent form highlighted interview procedures, voluntary nature of the interview, risk, and benefits of being interviewed, privacy and contacts and questions.

Before beginning the interview, I again restated the purpose of the interview, interview procedures and all risks and benefits involved. This gave participants the chance to exit the process if they felt the need to. Before participants exited the interview,

the purpose of the interviews was restated, and participants were informed of data analysis procedures. Participants had the option to request interview transcripts. Fifteen minutes was set aside at the end of each interview for debriefing. Participants were not invited for any follow up interviews.

Data Analysis Plan

The research question for this study is: What are the lived experiences of college students and their protective and risk factors for criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis?

Research has revealed a correlation between certain types of strain including those that are deemed unjust, uncontrollable, and extreme and tend to yield emotions that justify antisocial behaviors and engagement in criminal behavior (Campbell, 2020). Other studies have suggested that while criminal coping tends to be higher for individuals with a history of adverse life experiences and environmental risk factors that create a strong risk for engagement in criminal behavior, some researchers have argued that the proposition of criminal coping fails to take into consideration the potential effects that multiple protective factors have on the victimization/offending relationship (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). This brings us to this study which explored the lived experiences of college students and their protective and risk factors for criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis.

Thus, data points I ascertained from the in-depth qualitative interviewing included, specific factors that may mitigate the risk of crime involvement including social, economic and safety needs including: housing situation, employment status of

participant, employment status family members, health conditions, access to healthcare, access to education and education resources, availability of basic necessities, exposure to violence, victim of violence, perpetrator of violence, family support, parental involvement, deaths in family, safety concerns, participant contact with the law, criminal history, and access to mental health services.

Both verbatim transcription and the summative method were used to transcribe data. Verbatim transcription was used to transcribe the participants spoken words while the summative method included my interpretation of non-verbal reactions and concepts. These approaches both focused on identifying major themes/reoccurring themes that emerge in the interview and highlighting participant experiences. A combination of these two approaches increased reliability, validity, and veracity of qualitative data collection (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006 p. 40).

Coding was done using semantic coding and pattern coding, an inductive orientation which is data driven. Semantic coding involves exploring meaning at the surface of data, often staying close to the language of participants or the overt meanings of data (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Pattern coding, groups similar identified codes/categories into a smaller number of themes, or constructs (Saldana, 2016).

In vivo coding and analysis were first considered for this study. In vivo coding, emphasis is placed on the spoken words of participants, thus, highlighting the voices of participants (Burkholder et al., 2019; Manning, 2017). In vivo coding has several limitations including the absence of assigning researcher-generated codes to data. Thus, making it difficult to code researcher notes taken during interviews (Manning, 2017). However, In

vivo coding was not effective in coding the data collected. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis which identifies themes or patterns across data was used (Barnert et al., 2015). Grounded theory which analyzes concepts and themes emerged from the data without reference to the literature was also considered for this proposed study however, based on the data collected grounded theory was not an effective data analysis strategy (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

In qualitative inquiry, temporality is derived from the lived experiences of participants (Caine Estefan, and Clandinin, 2013; Riessman, 2008). Discrepant cases were categorized and analyzed under a different section for further analysis. Discrepant cases that fitted into the themes of the study were incorporated however those that did not fit the themes of the study were placed under a miscellaneous section for future inquiry. However, after further analysis, discrepant cases that still differed from the transcribed lived experiences of participants, were placed under a miscellaneous section for future inquiry.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The research design for this study is descriptive phenomenology which focuses on the lived experiences of participants. In this study, I sought to understand how participants make sense of their experiences and what the essence of the experiences are. Thus, identifying and bracketing my biases through reflective journaling decreased issues of trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Stadlander, 2015).

Credibility

Burkholder et al (2019) highlight that for a study to be deemed credible, the findings of the study must be believable given the data presented. To ensure credibility I engaged in member checking, reflexivity, triangulation, and saturation.

Member Checks

Member checking involves sharing emergent patterns and findings with participants to get feedback on the accuracy of findings (Burkholder et al., 2019 p.191). However, while a pilot study was not completed for this study, to facilitate member checking, I member checked the interview guide for alignment with the research question and purpose. Walden University's Internal Review Board and two faculty staff members verified alignment of the interview guide. I also engaged in peer debriefing prior to interviewing and after every interview with a select group of colleagues who are all licensed clinical social workers. These peers also reviewed and assessed transcripts, methods, and findings. These strategies increased credibility of the findings (Burkholder et al., 2019). Additionally, I engaged in member checking/respondent validation by systematically soliciting feedback about the interview questions and data from participants at the end of each interview findings (Burkholder et al., 2019).

Reflectivity

Reflectivity is the process of engaging in self-evaluation by identifying and bracketing biases related to the phenomenon of study (Burkholder et al., 2019). To safeguard personal biases and power differentials between myself and participants, I bracketed biases by engaging in reflective journaling. I used journaling as a means of

self-expression and self-reflection and reflection about my research practices and assumptions throughout the research (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Journaling allowed me to reflect on how my assumptions and responses might delimit my engagement with data and to open-up new interpretative possibilities (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Safeguarding my biases allowed member checking the researcher developed instrumentation for clarity and facilitated triangulation of data for credibility and dependability. Safeguarding my biases further facilitated confirmability to the implications of findings for the current study (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Triangulation

Burkholder et al (2019) defines triangulation as the “use of more than one source to verify the basis of a claim” (p.93). For this study, triangulation was accomplished by asking the same set of questions to different participants. Triangulation also originated from participants accounts of their lived experiences prior to the crisis, during the crisis and now. A combination of participants accounts of their lived experiences, combined with feedback from consultations with dissertation committee also facilitated thoroughness to this study (Stadtlander, 2015). To further accomplish triangulation, Braun and Clarke’s (2021) systematic, inductive semantic coding and thematic analysis sustained triangulation.

Saturation

For saturation to occur, the following two criteria must be met (1) continued analysis yields no new information and (2) there are no unexplained phenomena and data gathered must be sufficient to answer the research question (Burkholder et al., 2019). For

this study, eight participants were interviewed, and data saturation occurred by the sixth interview. By the sixth interview, continued analysis did not yield any new information and the data gathered from interviews sufficiently answered the research question.

Transferability

Burkholder et al (2019) highlight that while generalization is not the focus of qualitative inquiry, qualitative studies are expected to have some meaning beyond the immediate instance of the study. The qualitative researcher has the responsibility to provide sufficient description of the settings and the assumptions of the study so that readers can make informed application of the findings of the study (Burkholder et al., 2019). For this study, a wide variety of themes emerged from participants accounts of their lived experiences which constituted of generalizability of the findings of the findings. Transferability is supported by thick description and variation in participant selection/maximum variation study (Burkholder et al., 2019).

Thick Description

To ensure thick description, I have provided sufficient clarity and a detailed account of the “interview locale, participants, and all actions identified” (Stadtlander, 2018 p.104). This allows for easy transferability of the findings to other diverse groups and setting, and further informing the science community of the diversity of findings.

Variation in Participant Selection

Maximum variation was accomplished by selecting an inclusion criterion that allowed for representation from a diverse background of participants (Burkholder et al., 2019; Stadtlander, 2018). Diversity factors included age, sex, student status, program of

study and socio-economic backgrounds. Recruiting from a diverse group of college students limited selection bias.

Dependability

To establish dependability, accuracy of data methods was shown through audit trails, member checks, triangulation, and reflectivity. I kept a detail record of all methods, processes and procedures done in the study including “whom I met with and what was discussed” (Stadtlander, 2018, p. 104). I maintained a record of all changes made throughout the data collection and data analysis process. To further ensure dependability, I engaged in bracketing through reflective journaling before and after participant selection, during data collection and data analysis. Reflective journaling clarified issues of trustworthiness for any future inquires exploring the protective factors preventing or reducing college-aged criminal activity.

Confirmability

Confirmability which is comparable to objectivity assesses the degree to which a “study’s findings reflect the results of the focus of the study and not of biases of the researcher” (Stadtlander, 2018 p. 105). Confirmability was accomplished through audit trails. Stadtlander (2018) highlights that an “adequate trail of records should be left to allow others to determine if the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if they are supported by the inquiry” (p.105). I also developed a method for tracking articles from research journals and have kept an adequate trail of records including interview guide, demographic form, interview transcripts, consent form, ethics forms, and list of codes and themes generated through data analysis.

Ethical Procedures

For the study, institutional permissions for conducting the study were obtained through Walden University's IRB following the approval of my proposal by dissertation committee. Consulting with a dissertation committee and IRB assigned person, determined recruitment strategy for this study. I also completed a mandatory course designed by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Program including modules on History and Ethical Principles; Informed Consent; Privacy and Confidentiality; Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research; Research with Prisoners; and Students in Research.

Ethical concerns in research often occur when the researcher engages in misconduct/behaviors that lead to inadequate treatment of human subjects in research including deception, force coercion and abuse (Stadtlander, 2018). The American Psychology Association (APA) has established a set of ethical guidelines and codes of conduct for research involving human subjects (APA, 2010). Ethical standards for this study were also informed by the Belmont report principles including Respect for Persons, Justice, and Beneficence (Stadtlander, 2018).

Belmont Principle Respect for Persons holds two ethical statements related to the principle of respect for persons: "Individuals are treated as autonomous agents and persons with diminished autonomy are given protection" (Stadtlander, 2018 p. 107). These two statements have four conditions developed that are requirements for IRB approval of research including "voluntary consent to participate in research; informed consent to participate in research; protection of privacy and confidentiality; the right to

withdraw from research participation without penalty” (Stadtlander, 2018 p. 107). These conditions were established this study. The research flyer and consent form included the ethics of participating (voluntary nature of the study and the right to withdraw), eligibility, the anonymous nature of the study, risks and benefits of the study and data collection and data storage procedures.

Belmont Principle Beneficence ensures securing the wellbeing of research subjects (Stadtlander, 2018). This principle was established in the study by treating participants with utmost respect, protecting participants from any harm or perceived harm, and managing all potential conflicts of interest to eliminate any potential biases. The Belmont Principle of Justice emphasizes fair treatments for all research subjects and a fair distribution of risks and benefits of the research study (Walden University, 2014).

Three rounds of ethics feedback were received from the IRB before recruitment began. Participants were college students in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Participants were recruited through a partner organization. I did not seek a letter of corporation from the partner organization given the partner organization only had the responsibility of posting research flyers. However, if I needed a letter of corporation, I contacted Walden University’s IRB to obtain one prior to recruiting participants. The identity of the partner organization is masked. Walden University’s approval number for this study is 04-10-23-0730961. It expires on April 9, 2024.

Ethical Concerns and Recruitment/Data Collection

Ethical challenges with recruiting participants from another country were intensified by variable laws on age of concern. An ethical challenge with recruiting for

this study concerned Belmont Principle, beneficence which requires that the potential benefits of the study to subjects be maximized, and the potential risk be minimized, generally that the benefits of the study outweigh the risks (APA, 2010). To enforce this principle, participants demographics were identified prior to conducting interviews. Participants demographic included age, geographical location, criminal history, student status and employment status. Participants with a felony criminal record were excluded from the study. Prisoners and those involved in the criminal justice system are considered a vulnerable population and susceptible to harm (APA, 2010).

Another challenge encountered with recruitment was connecting with a partner organization for distribution of recruitment flyers to prospective participants. The research flyer included the ethics of participating (voluntary nature of the study and the right to withdraw), eligibility, the anonymous nature of the study, risks and benefits of the study and data collection, gift, and data storage procedures. This minimized the risk of recruiting vulnerable participants and participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria. I reached out to several organizations and only successfully spoke with members of three organizations. However, after follow-up, only one partner organization responded positively to the request to distribute flyers.

Once participants contacted me to expressed interest in the study, I collected basic demographic information to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included volunteers who are current students attending, universities located in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon, mainly the Northwest and Southwest regions.

Participants must be between the ages of 21 and 28 years old, must be from the Northwest or Southwest Region of Cameroon and have never been convicted of a felony.

Participants of this study exercised the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview if they felt distressed or uncomfortable answering the interview questions. If participants expressed psychological distress, I ended the interview. I also provided participants with a list of community mental health programs for any participants experiencing psychological distress.

Informed Consent

For the study, informed consent was obtained at two points. First, participants provided consent before interviews were scheduled and again verbally at the beginning of the interview. Participants received a copy of the consent once inclusion criteria were met. They were encouraged to review the form and inform researcher of interest to participate after reviewing the form. Participants identity was kept anonymous and personal information was not for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, I did not ask for participants names at any time and will used code numbers and pseudonyms to provide legal protection to participants and the people they talked about.

The inform consent form described the criteria for participating and included a description of the following: study purpose; study procedures; voluntary nature of the study; risks and benefits of being in the study; payments including a \$10 gift; privacy, including the identity of participants being kept anonymous and the use of codes and pseudonyms; contacts and questions including the contact information of the researcher and Walden University's Research Participant Advocate and obtaining your consent.

Research interviews were conducted virtually through zoom video conferencing. Interviews were audio recorded, using an audio recorder, and transcribed using Temi transcription application. Also, the researcher did not ask for participants names at any time and used code numbers and pseudonyms to provide legal protection to participants and the people they talked about. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent.

Treatment of Data

Finklea and Theohary (2015) highlight the prevalence of cybercrime crime in the United States. It is noted that cybercrime has doubled in the United States from 2007. Thus, I made several efforts to safeguard sensitive information obtained from interviews. First, I installed an anti-virus software (McAfee) on my computer to minimize any risks of hacking. I connected to private Wi-Fi secure internet to transfer information over the internet.

For the study, participants identity was kept anonymous. Data is kept secure by using password protection and a two-step authentication on all devices that data is stored on. Researcher assigned codes and pseudonyms in place of any pieces of identifying information when possible. Participants names were not obtained at any point during the interview. Even though the interviews were conducted virtually, no video recordings were done. Once interviews were transcribed all audio recordings were immediately deleted/destroyed without any copies made (which will be within the week of the researchers' graduation from Walden University). Transcribed data was retained and

stored electronically on password protected (requiring a two-step authentication) cloud and google drive. After 5 years, electronic data (transcripts) stored on cloud and Google drive will be permanently deleted.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I described the research design and rational. I also described the role of the researcher. Next, provided a detailed description of the methods and procedures for the study including sampling and instrumentation. Next, I detailed my data collection and data analysis plan including data collection, coding methods, data transcription and storing data. I then discussed issues of trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Next, I discussed ethical procedures including The Belmont Principles. Lastly, ethical issues related to recruitments of participants, data collection, data storage, treatment of data and protecting data were discussed.

Chapter 4: Results

Purpose

In this study, I explored the protective factors that have reduced or prevented college-aged criminal activity in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon during the Anglophone crisis. I sought to understand the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the crisis.

Research Question

The research question of this study focused on exploring the lived experiences of college students in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon and the protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity for them during the crisis.

RQ: What are the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis?

In Chapter 4, I begin with restating the purpose of the study and the research question. I then proceed to describing the setting, including a description of any personal or organizational conditions that influenced participants or their experience at the time of the study that may have influenced the interpretation of the study results. Next, I describe the participant demographics and data collection methods. I detail Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis and semantic coding and pattern coding strategies. I discuss issues of trustworthiness and the results of the study. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary.

Setting

Participants contacted me on WhatsApp Messenger. I interviewed all participants on Zoom video conferencing from the privacy of a home office. Video conferencing provided me with a cost-effective and convenient alternative to in-person interviews. Additionally, video conferencing facilitated high-quality and in-depth qualitative interviews where in person interviewing was not feasible and facilitated international communication (Gray et al., 2020).

Verbal informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the interviews, after I reviewed the process of informed consent and explained the anonymous nature of the study. The anonymous nature of the study enhanced the principle of beneficence (Stadtlander, 2018). Participants were made aware of the option of phone interviews if they did not feel safe and/or comfortable with video conferencing. I emphasized that if they experienced any discomfort, they could withdraw at any time.

All interviews were conducted individually in one setting and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Participants received a \$10 MTN gift card for volunteering. A separate Microsoft Word document was developed to document and track the gifts. Tracking the gifts facilitated the principle of ethical beneficence. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were engaged in a debriefing session, as shown in Appendix F.

Participants were urged to speak with a counselor from the list of community providers provided if they experienced any psychological symptoms following participation the interview. For this study, there were no follow-up requirements. No

participant reported experiencing any psychological distress or discomfort during the interview session.

Demographics

The defined population for this phenomenological study included college students between the ages of 21 and 28 years old who were current students attending universities located in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon (mainly the Northwest region), were from the Northwest region of Cameroon, and had never been convicted of a felony. Eight participants were interviewed for the study, five females and three males. Inclusion and exclusion criteria are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Select Participant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be between the ages of 21 and 28 years old • Current student attending a university located in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon • Must be from the Northwest or Southwest region of Cameroon • Never been convicted of a felony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of a felony conviction • Adult between the ages of 18 and 20 years old • Meet age and student status criteria but not from the Anglophone region

For the study, I defined protective factors as those individual and/or environmental factors that mitigate the risk for criminal behavior after exposure to a strain/stressful or adverse life event, thereby limiting or preventing a person from engaging in criminal behavior (Agnew, 2017; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). I defined college-aged students in the context of this study as students who had completed high

school and were currently enrolled in a college or university. These students were actively working towards earning an associate’s degree, Higher National Diploma (HND), or bachelor’s degree. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) definition of a felony was adopted for this study. The DOJ defines a felony as “any offense punishable by death or imprisonment for more than one year” (U.S. Attorney’s Office, Northern District of Illinois, 2023).

Demographic information was collected using an 11-item researcher developed demographic form shown in Appendix D.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Age/ Sex	College/Yr.	On campus/ Off campus	Student status	Employment status	Housing status
1LR-25 F	Senior	On campus	Full time	Unemployed	Off campus
2M-22 F	Sophomore	On campus	Full time	Unemployed	Off campus
3ST-25 F	Senior	On campus	Part time	Unemployed	Off campus
4G- 27 F	Senior	On campus	Full time	Employed part time	Off campus
5BR-23 M	Sophomore	On campus	Part time	Employed	Off campus
6N- 21 M	Sophomore	On campus	Full time	Unemployed	Off campus
7YP-25 F	Freshman	On campus	Full time	Unemployed	Off campus
8CN-24 M	Sophomore	On campus	Full time	Unemployed	Off campus

Note. Codes were used to label participants. No identifiable information was requested or required, which facilitated participants’ identity being kept anonymous.

Data Collection

Participants

Seventeen participants expressed interest in participation. Two participants declined participation in the study after reviewing the informed consent form, specifically citing the audio recording as their reason. Three participants did not meet the age requirement; two were 19 years old, and one was 20 years old. Thus, they were excluded from participating. Another participant who was not fluent in English was excluded as the resources for an effective translation were not available. One participant reported a history of a felony charge for which he served time in prison and was later released. This participant noted that this offense occurred several years ago when he was a teenager; however, this participant was excluded from the study.

Ten participants met the inclusion criteria, agreed to participate in the study, and were scheduled for interviewing. However, one participant was a no-show for their interview, and follow-up attempts were unsuccessful. One other participant experienced significant issues with their network (internet connection) and was rescheduled twice. Unfortunately, the issue persisted. This participant was not interviewed; however, they received a \$10 thank you gift for their efforts and willingness to participate. Eight participants were interviewed for the study.

Data Collection

For the study, I gathered participants' lived experiences and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis using the 14-item researcher developed semi structured standardized open-ended interview guide

shown in Appendix E. Development of the instrument was influenced by the research question and gaps identified in the literature review. The guide consisted of open-ended questions exploring participants' lived experiences and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity. The interview guide consisted of what, who, when, and how questions. Establishing ethical congruence was the first objective of data collection.

During data collection, I did not deviate from the interview guide. However, for each open-ended question, I included follow-up questions for clarification, further inquiring, and confirmation inquiries. Clarifying participants' lived experiences during the interviews reduced ethical concerns of beneficence. Eight participants were interviewed for the study. I reached saturation by the sixth interview, which was an indication that nearly half of the participants had experienced similar events (Guest et al., 2006). Data saturation occurs when continued analysis no longer yields new information and all the phenomena explored in the study have been explained (Burkholder et al., 2019).

I began interviewing participants within 4 days after IRB approval. Data collection was completed over the course of 6 days. All interviews were conducted in one setting through Zoom video conferencing and lasted an average of 45 minutes each. Participants' lived experiences were captured verbatim using a digital audio recorder (Voice Recorder & Audio Editor sold by TapMedia Ltd, which has a size of 104 MB). This voice recorder captured 335.5 minutes (6 hours) of audio recording. Table 3 shows the sufficiency of researcher-developed and secondary data collection instruments.

Table 3*Sufficiency of Researcher-Developed and Secondary Data Collection Instruments*

Research question	Data needed (demographic, background, perceptual)	Collection of data	Instruments
Protective factors Demographic form	Demographic, background, perceptual	Age, sex, employment status, first language, student status, student's residency status, criminal history, student's place of origin, and preferred method of contact	Demographic form
RQ: What are the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis?	Background, perceptual, demographic	Perceptions, lived experiences	Interview guide, digital audio recordings, and researcher journal notes

Note. This data collection matrix was adapted from *Completing Your Qualitative*

Dissertation: A Roadmap From Beginning to End (3rd ed) by L. D. Bloomberg and M.

Volpe, 2010, SAGE Publications. Copyright 2016 by Sage Publications Inc.

Variations in Data Collection

Organizational conditions influenced the recruitment of participants, diversity of participants, and interpretation of findings. Six organizations were identified and contacted. However, after several follow-up attempts to collaborate with partner organizations from both the Northwest and Southwest regions, only one organization responded favorably to the request to distribute research flyers. The original plan for the study was to recruit college students from both Anglophone regions of Cameroon, including the Northwest and Southwest regions, with the help of partner organizations.

Hence, all participants for the study were recruited from one academic institution in the Northwest region. To prevent recruitment resulting in too few participants and to improve diversity, flyers were distributed across several program departments at the partner organization.

During data collection, one participant encountered persistent issues with their internet connection. The interview was rescheduled; however, the issue persisted. Consequently, this participant was not interviewed but received the \$10 thank you gift.

Data Analysis

The demographic survey captured demographic information before the interview. I then used a Microsoft Word document to track, sort, and code participants' demographic responses using a table. The Microsoft Word document was termed "Demographics Inclusion Criteria Met," and another Microsoft Word document was termed "Exclusion Criteria Met." Both documents were stored electronically on a

password-protected computer. Table 2 shows participants' demographics for the study, including age, sex, college year, employment status, housing status, and student status.

Following data collection, the audio recordings were transferred to a secured laptop and then uploaded to the Temi application for verbatim transcription. The interview transcripts were then downloaded on a secure laptop and transferred to Microsoft Word documents. I then compared the transcripts against the audio recordings for accuracy and edited the transcripts word for word to match the audio recordings (verbatim transcription). Verbatim transcription and reflective journaling increased reliability, validity, and veracity of qualitative data collection (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006, p. 40).

Data analysis for this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflective thematic analysis and used an inductive orientation to data. Reflective thematic analysis involves six stages: (a) familiarizing oneself with the data set; (b) coding; (c) generating initial themes; (d) developing and reviewing themes; (e) refining, defining, and naming themes; and (f) writing up.

Coding Procedures

I decided on two methods of coding, semantic coding and pattern coding. Lived experiences were coded using Braun and Clarke's (2021) semantic coding, an inductive orientation that is data driven, and pattern coding. Semantic coding involved exploring meaning at the surface of data, often staying close to the language of participants or the overt meanings of data (Braun & Clarke). Pattern coding involved grouping similar identified codes/categories into a smaller number of themes or constructs (Saldana,

2016). I took the dataset as the starting point for engaging with meaning of participants' lived experiences. The inductive approach gave voice to participants and told their stories in a straightforward way (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Transcripts were first individually color-coded using the Microsoft Word application and a note pad for note taking. Participants' statements linking to the research questions were highlighted in turquoise. Participants' statements linking to the purpose of the study were highlighted in yellow. Other participants' statements on their lived experiences made references to risk factors, which I highlighted in teal; illegal activities by students, which I highlighted in pink; and safety and security concerns, which I highlighted in gray and dark yellow.

I then recoded using Delve qualitative coding software. Where I uploaded the transcripts for a second round of coding and analysis. I used both semantic and pattern coding for the Microsoft Word application and Delve coding software. For this study, I decided on two cycles of coding, semantic coding, and pattern coding. Pattern coding grouped similar identified codes/categories into a smaller number of themes or constructs (Saldana, 2016). I finished transcribing and coding participants' lived experiences within 2 weeks of interviewing.

Braun and Clarke Reflective Thematic Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative inquiry often requires a systematic process for contextualizing the data, which involves data coding to develop themes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Data analysis for this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflective thematic analysis and used an inductive orientation to data.

Reflective thematic analysis has six stages: (a) familiarizing oneself with the data set; (b) coding; (c) generating initial themes; (d) developing and reviewing themes; (e) refining, defining, and naming themes; and (f) writing up.

Stage 1

The first stage of data analysis involved comparing the transcripts against the audio recordings for accuracy and edited the transcripts word for word to match the audio recordings (verbatim transcription). I then engaged in reading the transcripts verbatim and highlighting comments and statements that led to emerging themes connecting to the research purpose, research question, and the interview questions. To capture participants lived experiences and the protective factors that have reduced or prevented criminal activity, I engaged in reading and re-reading transcripts to familiarize myself with the content of data through the process of immersion (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Stage 2

In the second stage of data analysis, I engaged in semantic coding. Systematically working through my data set in a fine-grained way and exploring meaning at the surface of data, often staying close to the language of participants. Codes were generated from participant statements linking to the research purpose, research question and interview questions. I then assigned code labels. For example, specific codes identified from both cycles of coding included “Advise/mentorship/counseling” had a frequency count of sixteen and was reflected in five transcripts. Participant 4G highlighted the role of counseling and mentorship:

And also, uh, if there are more counselors. More counselors who, who are pleased with what they do. And some of these NGOs. There are some NGOs around that they volunteer to counsel some of these uh, these, some of these students, especially the ones that are on drugs and it helps them it helps the students a lot some even change. There are some people who often go for counseling offering them some knowledge and they mentor them in that in the event even if they want to deviate from the right path, those counselors always help them to go back to the right path. (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023)

Another code “separation and displacement of families” had a frequency count of nine and was reflected in six transcripts. Participant 7YP stated “many lives have been lost during the crisis. Many families have been separated during the crisis” (7YP, interview on April 15, 2023). Participant 5BR stated “and we have many, uh, many civilians who have been displaced in different areas. We have some displaced to Littoral. We have some in Nigeria as refugees that has really affected them. They no longer live again in their own home. They live like on the streets, and it is not safe. So, it has really affected the general public” (5BR, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Other codes generated included school dropouts which had a frequency count of ten and reflected in six transcripts; self-awareness and personal values which had a frequency count of fifteen and was reflected in seven transcripts; idleness which had a frequency count of nine and was reflected in seven transcripts; kidnapping and ransom which had a frequency of fifteen and was reflected in seven transcripts; violent

victimization which had a frequency count of eighteen and was reflected in eight transcripts. For example, participant 4G stated:

Well, my personal experiences, I've experienced how people were shot to death, which were very traumatizing. There were times that you can't even go to the market to, to buy, and there was, there was this period that I had to sleep in mud because of gunshots. The military and the separatist fighters, they got into fight at the market, and we were caught in the middle. So, I had to sleep in mud to, to prevent myself from getting shots (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Stage 3

Next, I began generating initial themes. I engaged in the active process of theme development based around the data, the research question and my knowledge and insights. In addition to Braun and Clarke's (2021) semantic coding, I also engaged in pattern coding in this phase of the data analysis. Here, I merged the initial codes generated from the Microsoft word coding and analysis with those generated from Delve qualitative coding software. Engaging in pattern coding in this phase further facilitated the grouping of similar codes identified into a smaller number of themes (Saldana, 2016).

I identified shared pattern across data, and then, I compiled clusters of codes that shared core ideas and concepts and which provided meaningful answers to the research question and purpose. Codes were collated and then grouped into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Sixteen themes emerged from codes including religion and Christianity, risk factors, government subsidies, safety issues, economic consequences, crimes by students, the impact on male students, education consequences, agriculture consequences,

employment opportunities, kidnapping and ransom, housing consequences, legal consequences of criminal activities, implications on transportation, counseling and mentorship services and future research.

Stage 4

I proceeded to phase four, developing and reviewing themes. In this phase, I tasked myself with assessing the fit of themes generated to the data and overall analysis by reviewing the full data set (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I reviewed the themes to ensure that they aligned with the coded extracts and then with the full data set. I also reviewed themes to ensure that the themes each told a compelling story about specific patterns of shared meaning related to the data set and ensured that the themes collectively highlight patterns across the data set in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

I then explored the relationship between themes and existing knowledge. I merged the themes, grouping similar themes together. Themes that emerged from grouping smaller themes under a broader category included perceptions of the crisis and essence of lived experiences, perceptions of protective factors, supports and services as protective factors and public safety implications.

Stage 5

The fifth phase of data analysis involved refining, defining, and naming themes. Here, I again reviewed themes to ensure that each theme was clearly demarcated and built around core concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I proceeded to writing a brief synopsis of each theme and named the themes. In the final phase of data analysis, I engaged in writing up my analysis.

Discrepant cases that did not fit into the themes of the study were not incorporated and were set aside for further analysis. After further analysis, discrepant cases that emerged from interview question 14, “is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?” included recommendations for future research. These cases were placed under chapter 5, recommendations for future research. In responding to interview question 14, two participants identified other areas where future research should be done including the effects of the crisis on the agriculture sector (8CN, Interview on April 17, 2023). Finding ways to disarm the public by getting guns off the streets/ the heavy presence of arms circulating in communities (3ST, Interview on April 16, 2023). The future of the crisis (8CN, Interview on April 17, 2023).

Evidence of Ethical Trustworthiness

Credibility

Triangulation, reflectivity, member checks and saturation solidified credibility for the study. Credibility was also enforced by using exploratory and confirmation probes during interviewing to identify biases, identify and clarify any inconsistencies in participants responses (Burkholder et al., 2019). In instances where I did not understand a participant, I used clarification probes such as “to clarify you said”, “When you say”, “you mentioned”, “You talked about.”

Triangulation through the use of what, who, where, when and how questions created an avenue to explore participants life experiences in a broader sense.

Triangulation was further accomplished by asking the same set of questions to different participants. Triangulation also originated from participants accounts of their lived

experiences prior to the crisis, during the crisis and now. A combination of participants accounts of their lived experiences, combined with feedback from consultations with dissertation committee also facilitated thoroughness to this study (Stadtlander, 2015). To further accomplish triangulation, Braun and Clarke's (2021) systematic, inductive semantic coding and thematic analysis sustained triangulation.

To facilitate member checking, I member checked the interview guide for alignment with the research question and purpose. Walden University's Internal Review Board and two faculty staff members verified alignment of the interview guide. I also engaged in peer debriefing prior to interviewing and after every interview with a select group of colleagues who are all licensed clinical social workers. These peers also reviewed and assessed transcripts, methods, and findings. These strategies increased credibility of the findings (Burkholder et al., 2019). Additionally, I engaged in member checking/respondent validation by systematically soliciting feedback about the interview questions and data from participants at the end of each interview (Burkholder et al., 2019, p.93).

Reflectivity also solidified credibility for the study. To safeguard personal biases and power differentials between myself and participants, I bracketed biases by engaging in reflective journaling. I used journaling as a means of self-expression and self-reflection and reflection about my research practices and assumptions throughout the research (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Journaling allowed me to reflect on how my assumptions and responses might delimit my engagement with data and to open-up new interpretative possibilities (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Safeguarding my biases allowed member checking

the researcher developed instrumentation for clarity and facilitated triangulation of data for credibility and dependability. Safeguarding my biases further facilitated confirmability to the implications of findings for the current study (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

For this study, eight participants were interviewed, and data saturation occurred by the sixth interview. By the sixth interview, continued analysis did not yield any new information and the data gathered from interviews sufficiently answered the research question and there were no unexplained phenomena. This added to the credibility of findings.

Transferability

For this study, a wide variety of themes emerged from participants accounts of their lived experiences which constituted generalizability of the findings (Burkholder et al., 2019) Additionally, participants with diverse socio-economic backgrounds were interviewed. Transferability was supported by thick description and variation in participant selection/maximum variation. To ensure thick description, I have provided sufficient clarity and a detailed account of the “interview locale, participants, and all actions identified” (Stadtlander, 2018, p.104). This allows for easy transferability of the findings to other diverse groups and setting, and further informing the science community of the diversity of findings.

Maximum variation was accomplished by selecting an inclusion criterion that allowed for representation from a diverse background of participants (Burkholder et al., 2019; Stadtlander, 2018). Diversity factors included age, sex, student status, program of

study and socio-economic backgrounds. Recruiting from a diverse group of college students limited selection bias.

Dependability

To establish dependability, accuracy of data methods was shown through audit trails, member checks, triangulation, and reflectivity. I kept a detail record of all methods, processes and procedures done in the study including “whom I met with and what was discussed” (Stadtlander, 2018, p. 104). I maintained a record of all changes made throughout the data collection and data analysis process. To further ensure dependability, I engaged in bracketing through reflective journaling before and after participant selection, during data collection and data analysis. Reflective journaling clarified issues of trustworthiness for any future inquires exploring the protective factors preventing or reducing college-aged criminal activity.

Confirmability

Confirmability was accomplished through audit trails. Stadtlander (2018) highlights that an “adequate trail of records should be left to allow others to determine if the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if they are supported by the inquiry” (p. 105). I also developed a method for tracking articles from research journals and have kept an adequate trail of records including interview guide, demographic form, interview transcripts, consent form, ethics forms, and list of codes and themes generated through data analysis.

Results

The General Strain theory proposed that crime is a result of certain types of strain including those that are deemed unjust, uncontrollable, and extreme and tend to yield emotions that justify antisocial behaviors (Campbell, 2020). The GST also suggested that for some who are faced with these types of strain, they may turn to crime as a means of coping while others may choose crime as a response to a lack of control over circumstances, peer pressure and a need for autonomy (Campbell, 2020).

In 2013, Agnew revised the GST and suggested that future studies take into consideration risk/propensity factors. Recent research findings suggested expanding the GST, taking into consideration certain individual and environmental factors that may influence the strain/ offending relationship, thus reducing or preventing the occurrence of engagement in criminal behavior (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

In this study, I explored the phenomenon of protective factors preventing or reducing college-aged- criminal activity in the anglophone regions of Cameroon during the anglophone crisis with the tradition of descriptive phenomenology by Amedeo Giorgi. Descriptive phenomenology is grounded in philosophy and ends with the essence of experience (Mihalache, 2019). It is conceptualized in the interior of the individual's awareness and seeks to understand the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of the phenomenon for individuals, groups and communities involved (Mihalache, 2019).

After interviewing college students to gain insight into their lived experiences and the factors that have prevented or reduced criminal activity for them, four themes

emerged including (1) perceptions of the crisis and essence of lived experiences (2) perceptions of protective factors (3) supports and services as protective factors (4) public safety implications.

Theme 1: Perceptions of the Crisis and Essence of Lived Experiences

The goal of this descriptive phenomenology study was to explore the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis. The research question of the study focused on the lived experiences of participants and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis.

The first theme addressed the lived experiences of participants and the essence of their experiences. Participants described their lived experiences and the essence of these experiences during the crisis by citing several strains and factors affecting the education, economic, public safety and housing sectors, including school delays, school dropouts, idleness, kidnapping and ransoms, crimes by students (exam fraud, theft, prostitution, scamming, gambling, drug use), violent victimization, poverty, separation and displacement, economic consequences and safety, and security issues. Some participants described the crisis as a “nightmare” that has led to loss of thousands of lives, infrastructure, and freedom.

Well, what I can say is that the crisis started in 2016 and it all started like a joke, but currently it has led to mass killing, a lot of destruction, high crime rates, low standard of living due to economic hardship, the displacement of individuals, and

also high level of illiteracy since most students had stopped going to school (2M, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Initial Reactions

Four participants shared their initial reactions to the crisis as being optimistic for change. Consistent with research on the origin of the current crisis, they assumed the crisis was going to bring an end to the marginalization of the Anglophone people especially in the education and legal sectors (Amin, 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Morris-Chapman, 2019). Unfortunately, they note that this was not the case. Initial reactions were reflected in five transcripts and had a frequency of six.

Participant 3ST, a 25-year-old college senior shared her initial reaction to the crisis. She stated that “for us in the English-speaking regions, you know, when the crisis started, we were happy about it from the start, you know, we thought maybe they were, they were going to see our reasons for the crisis and maybe it would be sorted out. But, um, in the long run we noticed that it was causing more damage” (3ST, Interview on April 16, 2023).

Participant 4G, a 27-year-old college senior, described her initial reactions as follows: “well, the crisis is a socio-political problem in the northwest region, that was basically how it started before it developed to other things that we cannot even really explain right now. The activist started complaining about, uh, education and from there it got to roads and so many that other things. Now we don't even really know where the crisis is leading to” (4G, interview on April 14, 2023). Participant 1LR, a 25-year-old college senior, shared that during the inception of the crisis “at first, we were happy

because we thought we were going on some few days back to come back to school. But with time we started losing lives.” She further highlighted that:

You can say in the beginning it was more fighting, fighting about equality from the lawyers and the teachers. But as time went by, it seems like the fight was against them because they were the last people they want to see. The, the separatist fighters now fight against the teachers and students. And it's like they don't want them to lend the education on the thought that it's the government's education (1LR, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Participant 5BR, a 23-year-old college sophomore and law student, initially saw the crisis as a solution to the marginalization of the Anglophone people of Cameroon. He stated,

Alright, for me talking about this uh, ongoing crisis in the Anglophone region of Cameroon, this is a civil war. This war started in 2016, October 2016. At that time, I was in from five just started. It was just, uh, it was just a crisis between the lawyers and the teachers in English speaking region that is like to put an end to the French speaking language in Anglophone schools and Anglophone law court. Then due to, such things, due to that, the military coming into the whole thing they did not take in like simple measures like soft measures. They took harsh measures then force measures. Then going into 2017, you can see that this crisis increased, like it became an armed conflict between the Cameroon forces and the Ambazonian forces which lead to many, many, many people being killed (5BR, Interview on April 14, 2023).

School Delays and School Interruptions

Consisted with other research on education implications of the crisis, school delays were reflected in eight transcripts and had a frequency of thirteen (Ashu 2020; UN Peace and Security, 2019). Participants shared that with the inception of the crisis, school were abruptly shut down in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon for nearly two years. Some students report being held back for up to three years because of the crisis. In describing their lived experiences as it relates to school delays participant 5BR shared his experience.

Uh, normally this crisis, um, has affected me in many ways. First, in my educational career. It is when I was in form five in 2016 that the crisis started in October, which was when I was about preparing for exam, the ordinary level examination. We just got an alert that the school has to stop for a moment. That there is a crisis. There's, there's a strike. They just mentioned there's a strike between the teachers and lawyers and francophone. So we just have to step back. In school we did not prepare or study so that entire year, that 2016 I had to fail my exam based on the fact that there was no more school, all those stuffs. And then talking another effect again, I had to stay back at home for one year did not go to school and no data that really affected me. I even witness some of my classmates, who were killed due to this crisis. Also, we ran out, ran out of school. So me too I had to stay back at home for one year before I continue going to school (5BR, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Participant 4G shared her experience on school delays highlighting that she was experienced a two-year delay in her education.

Well, the entire population has been, has greatly been affected by the crisis, especially civilians and students, because we were deprived for a very long time from school, we could not go to school. And right now, even though classes are ongoing, but it's not yet safe a hundred percent, and there are certain days that we were forced to stay at home, we cannot attend classes. I was supposed to be done with school by now, but I delayed, I, I stayed two years at home because we could not go to school because no schools were functioning at that time. There was total lockdown no schools, were in function at that time (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

In describing school interruptions, participant 3ST highlighted several challenges she has encountered as a student during the crisis including random interruptions due to safety concerns.

Educationally, we have a lot of challenges. Because there are sometimes, we don't go to school for days. At times even weeks, like, there was eleven February which is youth day that past in February. For that eleven February, maybe they had to start ghost town at least from the ninth and maybe to that 11th or even the 13th. And through that, throughout that period, there was no school. Imagine you have exams coming up and then your education is interrupted like that. You, you have some courses, you don't even, you don't, you end up, you not even cover some courses because of this kind of interruptions. So, at times you go to take the exams

unprepared because of the crisis. Some days you don't get to go to school because of shooting. Last year there was shooting on campus and one, one, there were two people who were taken by stray bullets, and one lost his life. Like you get off and you're going to school. You don't know if you come back from school alive or not. So education in the northwest is survival for the fittest. So, some days you sit in school and there's shooting and you have to run back home. You don't even know you pass through the bushes and you're lucky to get the house (3ST, Interview on April 16, 2023).

School Dropouts

In the same light as delays and interruptions in education, participants highlighted that these interruptions in education coupled with other safety and economic factors like poverty due to loss of income and high cost of living, led to many students dropping out of school. School dropouts was mentioned in six transcripts with a frequency of ten. Participants suggested that “school dropouts” were engaging in illegal activities and were supposedly responsible for some of the criminal activities taking place on campus. Cyber-crimes, drug use and theft were linked to males while prostitution was linked to females. For example, one participant stated,

You cannot really move freely, especially at night because there, there's a lot of, there are a lot of thieves now, so many school dropouts that are now, uh, those, those school dropout have now gone to the streets. So many of them are thieves. (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Participant 2M, a 22-year-old college sophomore, shared her experiences on the issue of school dropouts.

Well, yes, for students who could not, uh, succeed to go to school during the crisis period, like the first three years as the crisis started causing them to miss their back work they are now behind and their junior ones are, are ahead of them. Some of them had to drop out of school, some of them had to engage in criminal activities. Some of them are hawking at the street and some don't even have the interest to go back to school (2M, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Idleness

Participants shared that school delays and interruptions and high rates of school dropout had increased rates of “idleness” among students. Idleness which had a frequency count of nine and was reflected in seven transcripts. Participants highlighted idleness as a significant risk factor for illegal activity.

Yes. Crime rates as I earlier said, has increased drastically. You know, idleness, when someone's ideal, they can do all also sort of things. Uh, students now, because as a result of the idleness, some of them who have dropped out of from school, right now, they are in their houses. Some of them are stealing, some of them are taking drugs, some of them cyber-crimes, scamming. The rate of scamming now has increased. It has increased. Those are things that never existed. It was not very rampant before the crisis. But now students know they have to look for a means to survive and they go now as they, they decide doing the illegal stuffs (6N, Interview on April 17, 2023).

Participant 6N, 21-year-old college sophomore further highlighted their experiences, establishing a correlation between school dropouts, idleness and engaging in illegal activities like cyber-crimes, gambling drug use and theft. These categories of crimes were linked to males.

Students, those students who have dropped out from school. They have no other means other than to indulge themselves into activities which are, which are criminal. Some of them now are into cybercrimes. Some of them steal, some of them take, they take drugs all because of idleness. We all know that if they're in school, if they're occupied in school, they do not have time for those things. But because of the crisis, they are now, most of them are idle and they are now doing things which they never had, they never intended to do (6N, Interview on April 17, 2023).

Kidnapping and Ransom

Consistent with previous research findings, kidnapping of students and demands for ransom is one of the most prominent issues that has plagued the Anglophone regions during the Anglophone crisis (Amin, 2021; Ashu, 2020; Eluke, 2020). Participants reported that because of high rates of kidnapping students, they fear moving around. Some participants noted that the fear of being kidnapped has prevented them from attending school regularly. Others highlighted instances where fellow school mates and family members have been kidnapped. Kidnapping was reflected in seven transcripts and appeared fifteen times in transcripts. There was no variation in gender with regards to being victims of kidnappings.

Participant 7YP, 25-year-old college sophomore noted that “when you want to go to school, you’re afraid that they may kidnap you and take away and which there’re going to ask your parents for a huge sum of money for ransom” (7YP, Interview on April 15, 2023). Another participant stated “I also have instances where my own classmates, they have been, they like on their way out of school. They're being kidnapped and beaten and then they ask for a ransom of money before releasing them. So, uh, security is not guaranteed. They're not, their, the safety is not there” (6N, Interview on April 17, 2023).

Participant 5BR stated:

Also, we're no longer safe. They like kidnap us, they kidnap students, ask for ransom you can no longer move freely. They kidnap you and they ask for money. Anywhere you meet them, they’ll bring you trouble, we are no longer free moving here in the streets (5BR, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Further highlighting incidents of kidnapping and demands for ransom presenting as threats to public safety, another participant described some of the ways in which students are being kidnapped including through public transport and walking home from school.

It's kidnapping. Yeah. They get to kidnap students a lot. Know, sometimes even when going to school itself, you enter a wrong taxi. The mode of transport, if you take a wrong taxi, because sometimes the guys get to disguise, they disguise and they come as drivers, you enter the wrong vehicle, they carry you to the bush and you have to pay a ransom. You have to pay. Sometimes if you leave around the school premises, you might leave from school and while going to the house and

you get kidnapped. Or sometimes they might even just watch your movements to notice where you stay. When they notice where you stay, they might come in the night and they just take you away and they start asking for ransom. That's a lot of problem. And sometimes they get to shoot even around the school. Like I said, some students, they were taken, they were shot by stray bullets. They were shooting in school and two students were shot. One lost his life (3ST, Interview on April 16, 2023).

Violent Victimization and Exposure to Violence

Consistent with prior research findings on violent victimization, participants highlighted several incidences of violent victimization including killing of students, armed robbery, kidnapping and threats of violence (Amin, 2021; Ashu, 2020; Eluke, 2020). Violent victimization had a frequency count of eighteen and was reflected in eight transcripts. Male students were linked to gang victimization while female students were linked to rape, STIs and pregnancies resulting from rape.

There was a certain day that the Ambazonian forces attack us in school, that said day, three students were being killed. And I, even though I survived it that was so bad. I still feel so bad. I feel like not going to school again cause of that incident. I feel like not going to school again. So that put a negative notion on my mind concerning education. So normally it has affected me (5BR, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Another participant recounted an incident where she was caught in a crossfire between the military and separatist fighters.

Well, my personal experiences, I've experienced how people were shot to death, which were very traumatizing. There were times that you can't even go to the market to, to buy, and there was, there was this period that I had to sleep in mud because of gunshots. The military and the separatist fighters, they got into fight at the market, and we were caught in the middle. So, I had to sleep in mud to, to prevent myself from getting shots (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Two participants recounted incidents where they received phone calls with threats of violence against them if they did adhere to the financial demands of the perpetrators. It was emphasized that male students, especially those over the age of 18-years-old and those who are mature looking tend to be victims of violence perpetrated by both the military forces and separatist fighters. The separatist fighters abduct such male students and force them to join the separatist fighters. The military on the other hand reportedly considers most adult males in the Anglophone regions as “Amba boy” part of the separatist groups making them an easy target for violent victimization.

One participant noted “and sometimes, you know the security men actually at school, there are policemen at in the school. You know, they're always rough all the time. They, have to hijack especially the boys. They meet them, take things from them. At times they'll even fight. You can imagine normal civilian fighting with the policeman, he can clear you at least 50 yards and then you fall in the gutter” (3ST, interview on April 16, 2023). Referencing the victimization of male students by military officers, another participant stated, “they stop boys harass them, check their phones to see if they are scammers to take money from them” (1LR, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Violent victimization was also reported to be perpetuated in the form of rape by military officers leading to Sexually transmitted Infections (STI) and teenage pregnancy. Thereby posing a risk to public safety and public health during the crisis. Participants recounted incidences of rape leading to Sexually transmitted Infections (STI) and pregnancy. Participant 4G recounted an incident where a student was gang raped. She noted that it was later discovered the incident was perpetrated by college students. She also highlighted incidences of rape leading to pregnancy and STIs by military officers.

There is a lot of rape, and a lot of teenage pregnancy, which also comes as a result of rape and the spread of sexually transmitting infections as a result of the rape, especially in student areas. There, there are a lot of military personnel stations in Bambili, and then there are so many camps of these separatist fighters here, you hear of rape every day, students being raped, students being raped, students are being killed by separatist fighters or by, by the military. The students were, there were a group of students, and they were confused for separatist fighters, and they got killed. Girls were raped and some of them get pregnant, some contract STI, some contract HIV and so on (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Crimes by Students

Consistent with prior research findings on the increase in crime rates during the Anglophone crisis, in describing their lived experiences and the essence of their experiences, participants discussed the types of illegal activities students tend to engage in (Mules & Ngong-Song, November 6, 2020). Illegal activities amongst students highlighted by participants include exam fraud, theft, prostitution, cyber-

crimes/scamming, rape, gambling, drug use, drug trafficking. It was revealed that male students tend to engage in cyber-crimes including scamming, theft, and gambling while female students engaged in prostitution both as a source of income to sustain their basic needs.

Cyber-crimes/scamming were mentioned in four transcripts and had a frequency of eight. Participant 8CN, 24-year-old college sophomore shared his experiences with illegal activity.

If you go into the university campus, you realize that, let me say 50%, not even 50%. I think 70% of the boys are involved in cyber criminalities. These are things that were not existing for the Anglophone crisis. These are things children were not doing because normally they had something do. If you go to the northwest region today that you want to look for something like doing believe me, you will be very difficult for you to find something that will give you money. Mm-hmm. So most often, most often you realize that all the boys are into cyber criminality and girls into prostitution. I think in Bambili after that, cyber criminality, when it comes to boys, I think gambling is the most recent one that maybe will even overtake the cyber criminality (8CN, Interview on April 17, 2023).

Another participant highlighted other illegal activities by students including drug trafficking, theft, and scamming.

I know what the law requires of me, but I've seen, I've come about across many students who are seriously engaged into these activities. Some of them are into drug trafficking, others theft. So, there are many, there are

many, many things they are engaging themselves into like scamming and the rest and all those things are illegal. Yeah. It's, it's a crime. It's against the law (6N, Interview on April 17, 2023).

Participants also highlighted incidences of rape committed against students by their fellow students and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) and unplanned pregnancy as a result.

There have been crimes, like just of recent, a girl was raped by two college students. Like I earlier said that is a lot of theft okay. There is a lot of rape, and a lot of teenage pregnancy, which also comes as a result of rape and the spread of sexually transmitting infections as a result of the rape, especially in student areas. There, there are a lot of military personnel stations in Bambili, and then there are so many camps of these separatist fighters here, you hear of rape every day, students being raped, students are being killed by separatist fighters or by, by the military. The students were, there were a group of students, and they were confused for separatist fighters, and they got killed. Girls were raped and some of them get pregnant, some contract STI, some contract HIV and so on. So there's lot of rape, even though they always try to blame it on the separatist fighters but students are also involved. Those boys were students from the university who raped the girl and there is also a lot of killings among students (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

With regards to crimes by students causing threats to public safety, another participant highlighted the presence of unregulated arms circulating in communities leading to an increase in acts of violence:

Yes especially in the university area there is a lot of theft. Like now there is a lot of theft because of the presence of arms like guns. So many students now get guns. Even in your mini cite, they, they just break into your room now carelessly and attack you, steal from you. Some people even get killed. So, arms are circulating now, that's like, like it's so random right now.

Exam Fraud

Participants expressed concerns about the quality of education received and the validity of test scores. It was revealed that both male and female students engaged in exam fraud with male students offering money to instructors for passed grades and female students on the other hand engaging in sextual activities with instructors for passed grades. It was stated “when exams come, and they are not prepared for it they go back and pay some of the lecturers and get good results. While some of the girls involved in sexual activities with some the lecture just to get high marks and good result” (ILR, Interview on April 13, 2023). It was also revealed that some students issue threats to instructors for passed graded.

They threaten their life. Some of them claim to be part of the separatist fighters, like they can come threaten the lecturer and they are like, if you don't pass me, you don't give me a pass mark, I'm going to kill you or I'll harm your family.

Some of the lecturers have been kidnapped and, and, and, and they ask for ransom

from them and they'll at the end still give those students marks, pass them (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Separation and Displacement

Consistent with research findings, it was revealed that hundreds of thousands of individuals and families have been internally displaced, and another several thousands have become refugees in neighboring countries like Nigeria (Amin, 2021). Six participants discussed separation from their families, living with strangers and Anglophone citizens becoming refugees in Nigeria. Participants also revealed Anglophone citizens migrating to the Francophone regions in search for jobs and safety. Three participants experience on separation and displacement are highlighted below.

Mm-hmm In the Anglophone regions you can see that, you can see that all those government structures there, there have been damage. We no longer have access to them, we have markets that have been burn, schools that have been burn. So that has really affected the general public. And we have many, uh, many civilians who have been displaced in different areas. We have some displaced to Litoral, We have some in Nigeria as refugees that has really affected them. They no longer live again in their own home. They live like on the streets, and it is not safe. So, it has really affected the general public (5BR, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Another participant stated:

When you look at the social life, the social life equally has been distracted because there was a time in the northwest region where you can just see people outside at, uh, at seven o'clock. I mean, early in the morning, if you walk in the

street at eight o'clock, maybe they will just pick a dead body. Most of the youth are living the, the region coming down to the, to the French speaking regions (8CN, Interview on April 17, 2023).

Participant 2M stated:

When I was struggling to have my ordinary level for the very first time, during revision period, they came and kidnapped our uh, principal. And so, uh, school was locked down and I had to relocate from the area, which I was studying to somewhere else, which was a little bit secure. And from there I had a lot of, I faced a lot of difficulties. I, I had to live with someone who I was not used to it. The environment was not conducive enough. I just had to manage the, so it was not easy (2M, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Economic Implications

In addition to loss of thousands of lives and disruptions in day-to-day activities, participants highlighted economic consequences to be amongst the most devastating. Mandatory “ghost town” days significantly affected businesses causing businesses to close and leading to a loss of income. The loss of income has led to high rates of poverty, housing issues, low standard of living, high cost of living and high costs of transportation. Participants recount incidences of markets being burned down and roads being blocked. Ghost town days and roads being blocked has significantly affected the flow of goods and services across several the Anglophone regions. Causing a significant increase in the cost of goods and services including food and transportation services.

Participants noted that economic hardship has led to an increase crime rates especially among students whose basic needs are not met. Economic hardship was reflected in seven transcripts with a frequency count of 21. One participant stated, “the agriculture, which is the backbone of the economy, has been dropping since most of the youth are longer willing to go back to the northwest region where we used to farm and farm, all those things. They are all down in the French speaking region (8CN, Interview on April 17, 2023.) Another emphasized the effects on the economy because of businesses being burned down.

Aside from school, you have businesses like economically, there are times you go to, markets are burnt every day. You might leave your shop like, like I said, if ghost town is declared and you are asked not to open your shop. Imagine if you're forced by the government's order to open the shop. You might just wake up one day and you find your shop on fire. Or if they say you shouldn't go to school. And there was this time they wrote notes threatening to burn down houses. If they keep on going to school, you might just go out one day and I'm coming back to find your house on fire. Where are you supposed to go from there? You become homeless to, it's really bad sometimes you want to travel out of town, the declare ghost town. You cannot actually travel because vehicles do not move on such day we have to stay back (3ST, Interview on April 16, 2023).

Participants also highlighted experiencing low standards of living and high cost of living because of increase in prices due to limitations in supply and roadblocks.

Um, I, um, standard of living. It has really dropped because while people are struggling, people are suffering from this, most businesspeople take it as, as an advantage to increase the price of things. Making life for students, especially very difficult because they're not working. And they rely on their parents. So the little they receive from their parents, it, it makes it almost difficult for them to survive. Cause almost everything is expensive. What was normally this amount you go to buy they'll tell you that it is this amount because they have blocked places, they're not able to go and buy, uh, for food items that they work in the farm. They'll tell you that, um, the separatist fighters are in the bush, so they cannot go to the farm, it's risky. It's basically they have to um; they have to take the risk to go and get this small one. So, they have to increase the prices making standards of living very expensive (1LR, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Participant 4G, a 27-year-old college senior who is also employed part-time noted that “shops have been burned down. So many shops have been burned down because of this crisis. Traders, small traders can no longer go to the market to sell their food stuffs and small items. There is too much poverty now. People are really suffering. Going to the market is even unsafe sometimes” (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

In further describing the economic consequences, participants highlighted high cost of living and low standards of living as a result of markets being burned down, businesses closed, high rates of unemployment, housing crisis, displacement and high poverty rates also serving as forms of strain making students vulnerable to crime due to a lack of needs. For participant 6N, he stated,

You know, as a result of the crisis, cost of living has increased. Things are expensive and it's not easy for those who are poor or those who are not employed, those who are managing to, to cater of them for themselves. So it has not really be easy on them, both the students and both, uh, the poor majority (6N, Interview on April 17, 2023).

This confirmed findings from (Amin, 2021; Campbell, 2020; Barbieri et al., 2019; Craig, 2019; Estrada et al., 2021; Freeze, 2019). According to Amin (2021) “by June 2019, four million people had been affected by the crisis: more than 1.3 million needed humanitarian assistance, more than 450,000 had been internally displaced, more than 32,000 had become refugees in Nigeria, and more than 2,000 had been killed” (p. 2). The World Bank reported poverty levels in the Northwest and Southwest regions were 57 percent and 21 percent respectively in 2019 (Amin, 2021, p. 7).

Theme 2: Perceptions of Protective Factors

Participants identified several individual and environmental factors that have served as protective factors preventing/ reducing college-aged criminal activity during Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis. Consistent with prior research findings, results from this study reveal that certain individual and environmental characteristics may buffer the negative effects of risk factors/strains discussed under theme one (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

Themes two and three answer the second part of the research question, on protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis. Protective factors identified include, personal and family values, religion and

Christianity, education and awareness, employment opportunities, family support, peer influences, counseling and mentorship and legal consequences. Each protective factor identified is described below.

Personal Values and Family Background

Consistent with prior research findings, all participants highlighted personal values and family background as protective factors that have buffered the negative effects of risk factors/strains discussed under theme one (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Personal values and family background had a frequency of 19 across transcripts. All participants highlighted that their personal values and awareness of what is considered right and wrong has served as a protective factor against engaging in illegal activity.

One participant stated “where you grow up matters. The kind of lifestyle, the way you are being brought up, the way I was being brought up. Okay. I know there are certain things I must not do and there are things I have to do” (6N, Interview on April 17, 2023).

Participant 3ST stated:

Uh, I would say it's determination when, you know what you went there for, I guess nothing like that should be able to move you from it. You know, the crisis started when I was in lower sixth, but I kept on going because, I want to be educated. I need the education. So, determination has been the push factor. I want to make it in school (3ST, Interview on April 16, 2023).

Another participant noted:

Uh, I've never thought of it. Maybe because I don't, I don't like anything violence. Okay. Like I'm scared of it. Yeah. Like even as I talk of the separatist fighters, attacking like that if I hear that they are there, I don't go to school, I just prepare to stay at home. I don't like anything that has any form of violence in it. Yeah. I don't like it (1LR, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Participant 1LR further stated:

I think it's just their personal mindset, to discipline them themselves. That's the only thing which could, which could prevent them from doing such acts. Because if they discipline themselves, they'll not involve themselves in such things. Especially the inhuman ones. Like going to join to fight your fellow human beings. That's inhuman, so it takes self-discipline and home discipline (1LR, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Participants also highlighted that family background factors including the way they were raised have served as a protective factor against criminal activity. Coming from a stable family background has served as a protective factor. Participant 4G stated “because of my background and I have a conscience. I don't think engaging in a criminal activity that is going to hurt another person is going to make me feel good.” Another participant highlighted the values his mother and older brother instilled in him as a child, teaching him right from wrong and educating him on the importance of staying focused on his goals.

I think one factor that has really prevented me was, is the way mom grew me up.

I think the way you grew up, the family you grew up in says a lot, even though I

come from a family where they believe that everybody is a thief and all that that stuff, they're bad guys. But you wouldn't even believe that in the family of more than 30. I'm the only one with advance level. I'm the only one who has ever stepped into the university. So all those things that I happen to do on my own. Yeah. All those things that I happen to do on my own, I believe that I can equally make a change. So go going into any illegal activity has never really be my portion. Yeah (8CN, Interview on April 17, 2023).

Peer Influences

Both positive and negative peer influences were cited as factors influencing college-aged criminal activities. Four participants discussed the effects of peer influences. It was revealed that positive peer influences tend to serve as a protective factor preventing/ reducing college-aged criminal activity. Participant 2M, 22-year-old college sophomore highlighted the impact of positive peer influences. She stated,

well just the fact that my friends, uh, my friends are God fearing and they don't do such, they don't carry out such activities. I think that's also another reason why I could not fall in such, I could not be a victim to that (2M, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Furthermore, results showed that strains like a lack of family support, basic needs not met and financial difficulties leave students vulnerable to negative peer influences. Participant 8CN shared a personal experience of how he was influenced negatively by a peer. For participant 8CN he shared that there was a time when he deviated from his goals and began spiraling in the wrong direction. He noted that at the time, given the lack

of support from his family “I hadn’t heard from my family in months. I felt abandoned.” Consequently, he was influenced by a peer (roommate), and he began drinking, smoking and gambling. However, before long, he became conscious of his individual characteristics (working hard, self-sufficiency, personal awareness, personal values and independence, goals) and environmental factors (including awareness of legal consequences, advice provided by his mother and brother) and he was able to get back on track. One participant stated:

I think there are situations whereby you get into those activities because of the type of friends you hang with. I was in, uh, school for almost one month. My parents never called me. I had nothing there to eat. And it was, I just felt like if I go down there, if I can drink, if I smoke, I will feel free. Nothing from my parents. I had to, follow the friend I was staying with and started drinking and smoking. After that I vomited, and I thought I drank but poison. After some time, I realized I was, it’s that particular thing that carried me away. And equally gambling there are times when you don’t have money, you feel like if I do this, I will get some cash to take care of myself. Yeah. I think those are one of the things that forced me to do all those things. But being in a university, I’ve learned a lot and I think I’ve grown enough to do not all that again. (8CN, Interview on April 17, 2023)

Family Support

Participants highlighted family support as a protective factor preventing/reducing college-aged criminal activity during the Anglophone. Consistent with prior research

findings, seven participants highlighted family support as a protective factor that has buffered the negative effects of risk factors/strains discussed under theme one (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Family support had a frequency count of eleven across seven transcripts. Family support was described by participants as parents and other family members (siblings, uncles) providing for the education, financial, safety, spiritual and psychological needs of their children.

Participant 2M, 22-year-old college sophomore highlighted the mitigating effects of family support stating “well, I've never attempted to commit any neither do I even think of doing that because I always have everything I need. In a case where I need something, which is a necessity for me I have a father who always listens to my cry and react to my, to my needs whenever I ask him anything, he gets it for me if he's able to.

Consistent with existing research on the strain/crime relationship, it was revealed that the lack of family support and adverse life experiences leaves some vulnerable to a life of crime as a means of sustaining themselves (Freeze, 2019). Participant 2M further emphasized the role of family support stating “just around my area last year a student, a university student had to steal a phone from his friend just to sell. And when we had, when we tried to find out why he did that, he said he was being neglected by his family. They don't want to see him around and he's struggling all on his own. So maybe he, he did that because he's not anyone to support him” (2M, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Counseling and Mentorship

Participants used the words advice, counseling, and mentorship in describing the role of counseling and mentorship serving as protective factors preventing/reducing

college-age criminal activity. Five participants highlighted that in addition to providing for the financial needs, providing advice, counseling and mentorship has been amongst the strongest protective factors preventing college-aged criminal activity. Counseling and mentorship had a frequency count of 16 across transcripts.

Well advice is the highest you can offer. Sensitization is like advising to advise students on what to do and what not to do. The good and the bad. Like for me, my father, my dad always advised me whenever I'm living the house, he'll tell me that you're not going there for, for to live luxurious life. That I should live a simple life like we have always been living back home. He never trained us with money. So, the little we have, we always appreciate it. So, advice is the highest thing you can do for them (2M, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Another participant highlighted the role of counseling and mentorship services.

And, uh, if there are more counselors Okay. More counselors who, who are pleased with what they do. And some of these NGOs. There are some NGOs around that they volunteer to counsel some of these uh, these, some of these students, especially the ones that are on drugs and it helps them it helps the students and some even change. There are some people who often go for counseling offering them some knowledge and they mentor them in that in the event even if they want to deviate from the right path, those counselors always help them to go back to the right path (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Participants emphasized the need for follow up through providing advise on a consistent basis. It was revealed that providing guidance through advice and mentorship serves as a protective factor preventing students from engaging in illegal activities.

I think if they are talked to you know advice and well brought up, I don't think child who is well brought up would do that type of things. And then, um, you have someone to really guide them, and like when you send them to school, don't just send them to school and leave them there, follow them up. Even though being too protective also spoils the child but, at least there are ways to talk to a child, which should make the child try to always remember home and will never, um, bring shame to the house (1LR, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Religion and Christianity

Christianity, religion, and spirituality were highlighted as individual and environmental factors that have served as protective factors that have buffered the negative effects of risk factors/strains discussed under theme one such as violent victimization (Agnew, 2013; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Participants noted that for those who identify as Christian, the values of the doctrine prohibit them from engaging in certain behaviors (sin) especially those that go against the Christian doctrine. Participants noted that the Christian doctrine teaches moral values (right from wrong), and Christians are expected to hold themselves in high moral standards.

Five participants identified as Christian and aligned themselves with the teachings of the doctrine. For these participants, they highlighted that their lived experiences and

values as Christians have served as protective factors preventing them from engaging in criminal activity.

First of all illegal activity is not a good thing. You know we have different types of students; we have genuine students that cannot engage into such activities or who see it as a sin. We have genuine students like those that are being engaged in church. Those of us that are being engaged in church we cannot involve in such because they are sinful acts. So, we don't intend to go against the Bible and the Church, so we don't engage in such because we see it as a sin, it is a sin (5BR, Interview on April 14, 2023).

In further highlighting the role of Christianity and religion as a protective factor preventing criminal activity, participant 4G stated “there are some students that maybe if probably if their backgrounds they were from a Christian home, they'll probably not engage in some of those criminal activities” (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023). Another participant then stated “well just the fact that my friends, uh, my friends are God fearing and they don't do such, they don't carry out such activities. I think that's also another reason why I could not fall in such, I could not be a victim to that” (2M, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Employment Opportunities

Two participants (5BR and 4G) reported being employed while attending school and one other (8CN) reported working during the holidays and during school breaks to raise money for their needs. Seven participants cited idleness as a major risk factor for cyber-crimes, gambling, and drug use. They emphasized the importance of creating

employment opportunities for students both on and off campus like mobile jobs as a means of both keeping students occupied and providing a source of income. As noted under family support, it was reported that the lack of necessities has pushed some students to crime.

For those participants who reported being employed, they emphasized that working has served as a protective factor preventing them from engaging in illegal activity especially in the absence of family support.

Yeah, normally working has really helped me. Cause my ordinary and advance level, my ordinary level, and my advance level, I did, I did all that myself. And immediately when we're closing from, uh, for any holidays, I'm rushing to Douala, to come sell down the street just to have my cash. And as you know, not everybody in the university would endeavor to do that. A student from the university will hardly go down the street to sell and have cash because pride alone plays a greater part there. And even if the university is made up of one hundred students, only 5% will endeavor to sell down the street to have the cash. They always wait on their parents. But immediately I realized where I come from. I think I've been making a really good progress because I, I no longer depends on my parents. Right now, they don't even know where I am. They don't know I'm down in Douala during holidays working. I think working has really, really helped me. (8CN, Interview on April 17, 2023)

Participant 4G also shared her experiences with being employed as protective factor preventing her from engaging in illegal activity.

For me, if there are more job opportunities for some of those students that engage into crime, that they can easily have money on their own by working. Maybe they have job opportunities aside from school they can do, is going to probably reduce the crime rate for them. Like me I work parttime and many of my friends do, we are always busy and no time for idling around or thinking of that. After school and work you are so tired you just want to do your assignments and rest and ready for the next day (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Legal Consequences

Awareness of legal consequences of criminal activity has served as a protective factor preventing/reducing criminal activity for some students. Four participants highlighted the risks and implications for engaging in criminal activities including imprisonment, being charged as a separatist fighter and death. Participant 5BR stated:

Talking on other factors that have prevented especially most of the student from illegal activity Mm-hmm is the military forces because if you're engaged in any criminal acts and are caught, you will be considered as Ambazonian and you're going to be killed. That has put a barrier between us and those illegal activities. Like to engage in such illegal activities because we are very afraid of military because if you are being caught, they are going to kill you so that, that is like a barrier between us and criminal activity. If you manage to engage any illegal activities and they manage to catch you as a criminal, they'll automatically say that you are an Ambazonian force of which they are going to kill you

automatically. So, for me, I see no reason engaging in any illegal activities. (5BR, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Furthermore, participant 4G highlighted that engaging in illegal activity is considered simultaneous with being a separatist fighter and the legal consequences are far-reaching. She highlights that this has served as a protective factor preventing college-aged criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis. She states:

Well, there are some students that are afraid of the law. So, I think, yes, I think that that prevents some of them from engaging into crime and some afraid of probably getting shot, afraid of dying. I'm bringing that up because some of them say they want to join the separatist fighters, but so many people always say if you want to join the separatist fighters, you're as good as a dead man. So, some people might have that thought of joining the separatist fighter, which joining them means you are, you are already getting into crime and the thought of them dying in the process of that is going to probably bring them back to the right track (4G, Interview April 14, 2023).

Education and Awareness

Six participants cited education as a resource, highlighting that having knowledge of what the law requires and being aware of their own goals, unique individual characteristics and being aware of the consequences of engaging in criminal activity, has served as a resource for mitigating the risk of engaging in criminal activity. It was also revealed that some students engage in crime out of negligence.

And I think giving more educative seminars to students, talking to them about the dangers, most of the dangers or the disadvantages of involving in these crimes.

Because I think some can be due to negligence of the effect of their crime. So, I, think with that it can help with reduce crime (1LR, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Participant 6N highlighted the positive effects education has had on him as it relates understanding conflict and crisis management.

And then education too is another thing. Education is a resource. For the positive aspect, now as I, for one, I'm a law student, and so, um, it has made me to understand how conflict can, how crisis can be created, how problems conflict, can come up. And then I've also learned how I can avoid social situations from happening again. So, it has broadened my horizon, my understanding about, um, conflict management, how crisis management (6N, Interview on April 17, 2023).

Theme 3: Supports and Services as Protective Factors

Consistent with prior research findings, certain individual and environmental characteristics serve as potential modifiers of the strain/ offending relationship. Findings from the study suggest that resources such as student employment, public sensitization through mentorship and education and government subsidies including reduced food prices for students, reduce transportation costs, affordable student housing, provision of education resources like books, computers and financial aid to students would serve as mitigating factors for college-aged criminal activity (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Seven participants described the supports and services that will further buffer the negative effects of risk factors/strains discussed under theme one.

Participants emphasized the need for government subsidies and public assistance.

Participant 4G stated:

There are some students who, uh, their houses got burnt as a result of this crisis and they are now homeless. If they can probably provide, uh, houses for them to stay in, this can go a long way to reduce crime because some of them now live on the streets. They have become street children and some of them are now turds. They, have to robe others for them to survive. And aside from that, also, like I said, if they can provide more jobs for some of these students while schooling, they can be working so they can have money to take care of themselves because some of them, their parents have lost, their businesses as a result of this crisis; their parents business burned and all the like. So, if there can be more money circulating in the economy, that is going to go a long way to, uh, boast some of these students and keep them away from crimes (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Another participant highlighted the need for affordable transportation and sensitization through educative seminars about the dangers of engaging in criminal activity. Participant 1LR stated:

Putting a minimal, a minimum transport fare for students who leave from town to school. Reducing their transport fare too will make them to have some extra money on them. And I think giving more educative seminars to students, talking to them about the danger, most of the dangers or the disadvantages of involving in these crimes because I think some can be due to negligence of the effect of crime.

So, I, think with that it can help with reduce crime (1LR, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Participants highlighted the need for creation of job opportunities for students. Results indicated that risk factors such as idleness, poverty, cybercrimes, gambling, and drug use were partly because of lack of employment opportunities for students and lack of financial resources. Findings revealed that the creation of job opportunities for students would go a long way in mitigating the risk for criminal activity for college students especially given the high cost of living. One participant highlighted that “I think if they can have some form of subsidies, subsidize or speaking to the students, if they can create, um, more jobs, more um, part-time jobs that student can take up around campus, evening jobs because they go to school during the day” (1LR, Interview on April 13, 2023). Participant 5BR further highlighted the need for creation of employment opportunities stating:

Things like, especially for the government to provide for us is uh, things like job opportunities, mobile jobs and government subsidies. Because for me, if I manage to have a little job that I'm keeping myself busy with, I don't see no reason trying to engage in illegal activities. So for me, I think they need to provide us mobile jobs and then need to make the environment safe for us. Like providing military to protect and secure us. (5BR, Interview on April 14, 2023)

The need for financial assistance as a protective factor was emphasized. Tied to the economic implications of the crisis previously discussed, participants highlighted the

need for financial aid for student and for provision of educational resources like textbooks and computers. Participant 8CN stated:

I think in terms of things like a laptop, I, for once, I don't have even, there are times in class where they ask me to do all that stuff on the laptop. I need to maybe go visit a friend as I did the other day. And while coming back I met somebody with a cutlass of which my life at that moment was already at stake (8CN, Interview on April 17, 2023).

To further address the need for government subsidies as a protective factor preventing college-aged criminal activity, participant 1LR cited high cost of living and highlighted the need to improve standards of living. She stated:

I just think the general factor is to make, to better their standard of living. Yeah. Because this crisis makes everything so, so expensive. Starting from the transport fare from town to Bambili. Um, feeding around the school campus is very expensive. Normal food stuffs, very expensive. Housing expensive, everything tends to be too expensive. And the workload on students too is much and they need resources to get over it. So, I think that's the main reason why they get involved in all those (1LR, Interview on April 13, 2023).

1LR, age 25, a college senior provided suggestions for affordable food on campus for students. She suggested,

I think if, um, like the farmers around the school, if they can be given subsidies like, so, as to help them to produce their crops, you make them to sell at more cheaper prices for the students, which will reduce that, their expenses. Mm-hmm.

And then I think too, if the government, we used to have a school restaurant, where students could eat at a very low price. Like they get a plate of food for hundred Frans. But now I can I say, it's not active (1LR, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Participants also emphasized the need for public sensitization through education and motivation as a protective factor to buffer the negative effects of risk factors/strains discussed under theme one (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Participant 2M, 22-year-old college sophomore, stated, “public sensitization can also help for preventing high crime rates among students.”

Theme 4: Public Safety Implications

Consistent with prior research findings on public safety implications because of the Anglophone crisis, findings from this study revealed that threats to public safety and national security have been amongst the top contributors to college-aged criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis (Amin, 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Mules & Ngong-Song, November 6, 2020; Eluke, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018). In detailing their lived experiences, all participants highlighted issues with safety including kidnappings and demands for ransoms, gunshots, stray bullets, violent victimization (armed robbery, robbery, rape), exposure to violence, the loss of live, exploitation by military officers, exploitation by separatist fighters, threats of harm against them, loss of freedom of movement and ghost town days.

Public safety implications were referenced in all eight transcripts with a frequency count of over 30 across the transcripts. Participants highlighted issues with

gunshots and stray bullets. It was noted that going to school is not safe as many students have been victims of gun violence, including being killed by stray bullets. One participant stated, “it's very risky for students to go to school because when they shoot guns stray bullets pick students from any distance and when attending classes in school, they are afraid that they can attack the school at any time” (7YP, Interview on April 15, 2023). In recounting her personal experiences with safety, participant 4G stated:

Well, my personal experiences, I've experienced how people were shot to death, which were very traumatizing. There were times that you can't even go to the market to, to buy, and there was, there was this period that I had to sleep in mud because of gunshots. The military and the separatist fighters, they got into fight at the market, and we were caught in the middle. So, I had to sleep in mud to, to prevent myself from getting shots. (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023)

In further describing experiences with safety and public safety concerns, participant 5BR noted that,

Uh, yeah because let's say during the crisis, there became a certain time after that 2016 we spent one year at home coming back again to school in 2018. There was a certain day that the Ambazonian forces attack us in school, that said day, three students were being killed. And I, even though I survived it that was so bad. I still feel so bad. I feel like not going to school again because of that incident. I feel like not going to school again. So that put a negative notion on my mind concerning education. So normally it has affected me (5BR, Interview on April 14, 2023).

While describing her lived experiences, participant 3ST detailed several public safety issues including kidnapping and violent victimization by the military and separatist fighters. These issues have left college students vulnerable to violent victimization making them susceptible to criminal activity.

Uh, the population. We, the population we, we have, we are really affected because we have been traumatized by both sides. Both the terrorist guys and the, the governments side. The army, sometimes even the army, when you meet on the road, we have been kidnaped up sometimes even by the army themselves. And some people are they even get raped. At times houses are burnt down by the army themselves and some of those activities are done by the boys who claim to fight for us, for our freedom. Sometimes they kidnap us on the roads. When you're going to school, they get to you, you are kidnapped and taken into the bush by the same boys who said they were fighting for your freedom. They get to demand for huge sums of money from your family. And imagine if your family is not able to, to raise that amount. You go through so much. There was this friend of mine who has been kidnapped twice by the boys and last, it was her father who was taken again. Her father was beaten because they said the man was, um, he was not an Anglophone. They were demanding that he should leave Bamenda. Imagine you raise your family; you have to build a house and stay there. And then one morning you are asked to leave because you are not from there. Yeah, that's so traumatizing (3ST, Interview on April 16, 2023).

Participants also expressed concern about the circulation of weapons in the community and the ease at which civilians can access weapons.

Yes especially in the university area there is a lot of theft. Like now there is a lot of theft because of the presence of arms like guns. So many students now get guns. Even in your mini cite, they, they just break into your room now carelessly and attack you, steal from you. Some people even get killed. So arms are circulating now, that's like, like it's so random right now (4G, Interview on April 14, 2023).

Another participant stated:

Due to the fight against the government and the unknown armed boys. So since this, uh, um, armed weapons are circulating, people now have access to stuff like guns, which they use now to threaten the safety and security of students like us because they always believe that students have a lot of money and always they always come around to exploit from the students. So we are not really safe at all during this crisis period (2M, Interview on April 13, 2023).

Disturbingly, participants did not highlight any recent specific measures put in place by public safety officials to address college-aged criminal activities and to prevent students from engaging in crime. Participants shared that there is no end in sight to the crisis and living in chaos has quickly become a norm. Half of participants shared that they have lost hope for resolution of the crisis. However, all participants shared that certain individual and environmental characteristics like those highlighted under themes two (protective factors) and theme three (supports and services) continue to serve as

protective factor preventing/reducing college-aged criminal activity during the anglophone.

Summary

For the study, the research question explored the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis. Findings from the study sufficiently answered the research question. Theme one, perceptions of the crisis and essence of lived experiences, answered the first part of the research question exploring the lived experiences of college students. Participants described their lived experiences and the essence of their experiences highlighting key factors that contributed to their experiences including initial response to the crisis, education implications, idleness, kidnapping and demands for ransom, violent victimization and exposure to violence, crimes by students, separation and displacement and economic implications.

Themes two and three perceptions of protective factors and supports and services answered the second part of the research question on protective factors that have reduced or prevented college-age criminal activity. Consistent with prior research, key findings from this study revealed that certain individual and environmental characteristics including personal and family values, religion and Christianity, education and awareness, employment opportunities, family support, counseling and mentorship and legal consequences have served as protective factors preventing college-aged criminal activity during the crisis. Findings also suggest that resources such as public sensitization and

government subsidies, would serve as mitigating factors for college-aged criminal activity (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

The fourth theme, public safety implications, echoed some of the strains discussed under theme one including violent victimization (kidnapping, rape, armed robbery), exposure to violence, gunshots, and stray bullets, have served as risk factors for college-aged criminal activity. However, findings from the study also suggested that despite the significant presence of adverse life experiences (strains/risk factors), certain individual and environmental characteristics (protective factors) have buffered the negative effects of such risk factors/strains discussed under theme one, perceptions of the crisis and essence of lived experiences.

In Chapter 4, I described the setting, demographics, data collection and data analysis of the study. I described strategies for coding and data analysis. I then described evidence of trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I concluded chapter by addressing themes that emerged from data and the findings derived from participants lived experiences.

Chapter 5 opens with an interpretation of the findings. I describe the ways in which findings both confirm and extend knowledge in the discipline by comparing them with what has been found in the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. I then analyze and interpret the findings in the context of the theoretical framework, the General Strain Theory. I discuss the limitations of the study and offer suggestions for future research. Chapter 5 concludes with a description of the potential impact for positive social change at the individual, family, organizational, and societal/policy levels.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this study, I explored the protective factors that have reduced or prevented criminal activity for college students in the North and Southwest regions of Cameroon during the Anglophone crisis. I sought to understand the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis. As discussed in Chapter 3, this study supports previous qualitative inquiry that has addressed the mitigating effects of certain individual and environmental characteristics on the strain/offending relationship.

This descriptive phenomenological study differed from previous research on the effects of the Anglophone crisis in that this study explored, for the first time, protective factors preventing or reducing criminal activity for a specific group, college students, and guided by Robert Agnew's GST. Additionally, this study adhered to the most recent research recommendations suggesting taking into consideration both protective and risk factors as potential modifiers of the strain/offending relationship and taking into consideration subgroup differences when exploring this relationship (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

In this study, in-depth semi structured open-ended qualitative interviewing facilitated capturing participants' lived experiences. This interviewing technique provided the opportunity for participants to share their unique lived experiences and to define and describe the essence of their experiences (Mihalache, 2019). Descriptive phenomenology helped me to understand the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived

experience of the phenomenon for participants, and it helped me develop themes from participants' responses. Agnew's GST grounded this study.

Semantic and pattern coding was done using an inductive orientation, and Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflective thematic analysis facilitated data analysis. Braun and Clarke's semantic method for qualitative coding added sustenance by capturing explicitly expressed meaning and staying close to the language of participants. Pattern coding further added sustenance to the final rounds of coding by grouping similar identified codes into a smaller number of themes or constructs (Saldana, 2016). After coding, several themes emerged from the findings, including perceptions of the crisis and essence of lived experiences, perceptions of lived experiences, supports, and services and public safety implications.

Participants' lived experiences and their protective factors that have reduced or prevented college-aged criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis were manifested in the essence of their experiences. The emergent findings of the study showed that several individual and environmental characteristics serve as potential modifiers of the strain/offending relationship. Findings revealed that these individual and environmental factors served as protective factors that have buffered the negative effects of risk factors/strains.

In Chapter 5, I provide an interpretation of the findings, describing in what ways the findings confirm and extend knowledge in the discipline by comparing them with what has been found in the peer-reviewed literature. I proceed to discussing the limitations of the study. I then offer suggestions for future research on the strain/offending relationship and on the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Chapter 5 concludes

with describing social change implications. Given the deficiency of scholarly literature on certain individual and environmental characteristics serving as protective factors preventing criminal activity, this study contributed to ongoing research investigating the mitigating effects of certain individual and environmental characteristics on the strain/offending relationship.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this phenomenological study provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of participants. I sought to understand the lived experiences of a set of individuals (college students) who share a common experience, the Anglophone crisis, and to understand the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience and their protective factors preventing or reducing college-aged criminal activity (Burkholder et al., 2019; Mihalache, 2019).

The key findings from this study confirmed the current body of knowledge (Agnew, 2017; Agnew & Brezina, 2019; Barbieri et al., 2019; Campbell, 2020; Craig, 2019; Freeze, 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022), including victimization being one of the most significant strains that posed a risk for crime coping. It also confirmed GST's proposition that experiencing certain types of strain may lead to criminal coping and that criminal coping tends to be higher for individuals with a history of strain/adverse life experiences and environmental risk factors that create a strong risk for engagement in criminal behavior.

Furthermore, the findings both confirmed and contributed to the current body of knowledge on the limitations of GST (Agnew, 2017; Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner &

Fagan, 2022), highlighting that GST is mainly focused on the effects of strain on offending and adopts more of a risk factor approach. The GST also failed to take into consideration protective factors that may mitigate risk (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Findings from this study confirmed that certain individual and environmental characteristics such as personal and family values, religion and Christianity, counseling and mentorship, education and awareness, family support, and social supports serve as protective factors, mitigating the risks the strain/offending relationship (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). These findings also extended knowledge on the mitigating effects of individual and environmental characteristics (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

The findings extended knowledge by demonstrating the severity of the devastating effects the Anglophone crisis has had on individuals, groups, and communities, including loss of thousands of lives, destruction of infrastructure, poverty, high cost of living and low standard of living, high rates of unemployment, increased criminal activity, threats to public safety and national security, disruption of education, housing crisis, separation and displacement, kidnapping and demands for ransom, and no freedom of movement (Amin, 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Eluke, 2020; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018).

This study was guided by one inquiry. The research question inquired about the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors preventing or reducing college-aged criminal activity. In describing their lived experiences, participants highlighted experiencing several adverse life experiences/risk factors/strains, including

violent victimization, kidnapping and demands for ransom, negative peer influences, school delays and interruptions leading to school dropouts, poverty, high cost of living and low standard of living, separation of families and displacement, homelessness, high unemployment, and idleness, which increased their susceptibility to criminal activity and significant implications the public safety, public health, education, and economics.

Confirming findings on safety needs, several participants expressed an urgent need for safety and recounted near-death experiences. Participants highlighted several threats to safety and public safety concerns, including the frequency of kidnapping and demands for ransom; robbery; harassment; and random shooting and acts of violence, perpetuated by the separatist fighters, the military, and sometimes civilians and students. Participant 3 provided insight into public safety issues (Amin, 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Eluke, 2020; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018).

Consistent with knowledge in the discipline, findings from this study confirmed prior research findings on public safety concerns, including the increased presence of unregulated arms circulating in communities leading to an increase in acts of violence, violent victimization, and the ease with which students are able to access such weapons, leading to the deaths of thousands (Amin, 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Eluke, 2020; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018).

Further confirming prior findings on public safety and public health concerns during the crisis, participants recounted incidences of rape leading to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy among college students (Amin, 2021; Ashu, 2020;

Eluke, 2020; Njanji & Cockburn, 2019). Participants also emphasized incidences of rape leading to pregnancy and STIs by military officers. These findings extend knowledge in the discipline emphasizing the correlation between violent victimization and an increased risk for criminal behavior knowledge (Agnew, 2017; Agnew & Brezina, 2019; Barbieri et al., 2019; Campbell, 2020; Craig, 2019; Freeze, 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

Both confirming and extending knowledge in the discipline on education in the face of complex emergencies, findings from this study emphasized several education consequences, including school delays, school dropouts, ghost town days, school being closed, low quality of education, and the closure of several schools in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon (Amin, 2021; Ashu, 2020; Eluke, 2020; UN Peace and Security, 2019). Prior findings from UNICEF (2019) revealed that nearly 800,000 children had dropped out of school and nearly 80% of schools in the Northwest and Southwest regions (English speaking regions) had been closed.

Additionally, findings from this study are consistent with prior findings which highlighted that “insecurity has kept some students away from the campuses and constantly disrupts academic activities. University lecturers are vulnerable to attacks and kidnapping. Many are frightened to continue working normally and have been seeking to leave the country” (Bang & Balgah, 2022, p. 12).

The key findings from this study confirmed the current body of knowledge on the economic consequences of the Anglophone crisis and how these economic consequences have contributed to an increase in crime rates generally and to college-aged criminal activity. Consistent with prior research findings, results from this study emphasized an

increase in the cost of living and a decrease in the standard of living due to high rates of poverty. Findings suggested that closing of businesses and displacement have led to high rates of unemployment leading to poverty and a housing crisis. These findings are consistent with literature that suggests that certain ACEs and adverse life experiences such as poverty and unmet needs make a person susceptible to committing a crime (Amin, 2021; Campbell, 2020; Freeze, 2019).

Findings from this study further confirmed and extended knowledge on the role of environmental characteristics serving as protective factors (Agnew, 2017; Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). All participants emphasized the role of supports and services such as counseling and mentorship, public sensitization, government subsidies towards housing, transportation, financial aid, grants to farmers, creating employment opportunities for students such as mobile jobs, and grants to students for items such as textbooks and computers. Participants highlighted that the implementation/provision of such supports and services would increase their quality of life and improve standards of living, thereby preventing/reducing the need for engaging in illegal activity. It was also highlighted that employment opportunities for students would decrease the rates of cybercrime and gambling, especially for male students.

Overall, key findings from this study, including perceptions of the crisis and essence of lived experiences, perceptions of protective factors, supports and services as protective factors, and public safety implications, confirmed that the presence of strain plays a significant role in causing an individual to engage in criminal activity (Amin, 2021; Barbieri et al., 2019; Campbell, 2020; Craig, 2019; Estrada et al., 2021; Freeze,

2019). However, findings also confirm and extend knowledge, in that results show that despite the significant presence of strains/adverse life experiences/risk factors making individuals susceptible to criminal activity, certain individual and environmental characteristics have served as protective/mitigating factors for the strain/offender relationship (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

Limitations of the Study

Exploring the lived experiences of participants required capturing the essence of participants' experience. For this study, I explored the lived experiences of participants (college students) and their protective factors preventing/reducing college-age criminal activity. As discussed in Chapter 1, the results of the study presented some challenges to the limitations of trustworthiness.

To begin, the sampling strategy for this study, criterion sampling, facilitated identifying participants and limited transferability. Criterion sampling limited saturation to only a few cases that met the criteria for inclusion, thus limiting the diversity of participants (Patton, 2015). Criterion sampling has a tendency of limiting transferability of findings (Patton, 2015).

Criterion sampling led to the exclusion of four individuals. The interviewing strategy further led to two individuals declining participation. Limitation in resources led to the exclusion of two other participants. The unique experiences of those excluded from the study, specifically those who met the criteria for inclusion and those above 18 years old but under 21 years old, could have added diversity to the findings, thereby increasing transferability.

The qualitative inquiry as a methodological approach limited dependability. The qualitative design phenomenology is subjective to attempts to understand and explain the life experiences of a phenomenon; it is subjective to meaning ascribed to the lived experiences and the essence of lived experiences. This methodological approach has the potential for researcher-induced bias, which can affect the outcome of the study, thus limiting dependability of the study findings (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015).

Adults between the ages of 18 and 20 years old were excluded from the sample. While this group would have been a good addition to the study's sample, thereby expanding the criteria for inclusion and improving diversity, this group was excluded because of ethical concerns regarding age of consent. A major concern was that different jurisdictions tend to have different laws pertaining to age of consent, varying between the ages of 12 and 21 years old. This group was also excluded because of prior knowledge obtained from the literature review on education being delayed, causing students to be entering college 2 or more years older than the typical age of 18 years (Kriesch, 2021; Mules & Ngong- Song, 2020; Okereke, 2018). However, this exclusion posed a limitation to the inclusion criteria, thus limiting the diversity of participants, hence limiting transferability.

College students with a history of a felony conviction were excluded from the study. Gathering the experiences of such students and the factors that could have prevented or limited their chances of engaging in felony offenses would have added more insight into the protective factors preventing college-aged criminal activity, thereby

increasing transferability. However, due to limits in confidentiality, this group was excluded, thereby limiting the diversity of participants.

Participants in the study were recruited from one university in the Anglophone region of Cameroon, which only covers approximately 55% the Anglophone region. Thus, there is a significant percentage of the population studied that was not included in the study sample, thereby limiting transferability of findings. I planned on recruiting students across two to three universities in both Anglophone regions. Due to a lack of responses from partner organizations, I only recruited participants from one university. However, participants were recruited across several disciplines, including faculty of law and political science, nursing, mass communication, business management, and computer engineering, which increased participant diversity.

Another limitation of this study as it relates to participant recruitment is that I failed to take into consideration the experiences of other students in postsecondary education programs such as independent private/public career schools. This limitation in the diversity of participants limited transferability of findings. Additionally, the researcher-developed interview guide posed a limitation to the findings. The interview guide was designed for American English speakers. While all participants confirmed English as a first language, British English is the official language of the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. British English and American English differ in pronunciation of words, vocabulary, spelling, and grammar. This etymology of communication styles posed a limitation to transferability of findings.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) highlight that the use of semi-structured open-ended interview guide increases researcher autonomy there by decreasing transferability. Additionally, given that qualitative interviews are subjective to participant experiences, factors such as social desirability, recall bias and measuring the subjective truth of participants posed a limitation to dependability.

Recommendations

The intent of this qualitative phenomenology provided an impetus for understanding the lived experiences of college students in the Anglophone region of Cameroon and their protective factors that prevented or reduced college-aged criminal activity. The impacts of the Anglophone crisis continue to burden the current public safety, education, and public health sectors (Amin, 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Eluke, 2020; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018). Economic conditions, public safety concerns, education interruptions, insecurity, instability, continue to contribute to risk factors for criminal activity (Amin, 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Eluke, 2020; Mules & Ngong-Song, 2020; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018). The deficits of scholarly literature exploring individual and environmental characteristics serving as protective factors preventing/ reducing criminal activity beyond five years among college students highlighted the need for a future qualitative inquiry.

Moreover, no funding was received for conducting this study. It is recommended that future qualitative inquiry could benefit from funding through research grants that would support recruiting a larger group of participants. Adequate funding could extend

the findings by expanding the inclusion criteria and using a larger sample. Transferability of findings could be limited due to the small sample size.

For this study the qualitative design was phenomenology, and the GST was the theoretical foundation. Future inquiry using another criminology theory like the Social Disorganization Theory (SDT) and qualitative design could extend knowledge in the field and confirm current findings, especially given the limitations of the GST. A major weakness/limitation of the GST is that it is mainly focused on the effects of strain on offending and adopts more of a risk factor approach (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). The findings from this study are consistent with prior findings that have highlighted that certain protective factors like individual and environmental characteristics may buffer the negative effects of risk factors. Thus, exclusion of these protective factors robs the opportunity for examining the potential for victim resilience (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). In this respect, findings from future qualitative inquiry could add new contributions to the field of forensic psychology.

Research shows that college students, especially those pursuing education in the face of socio-political emergencies, and who lack the support of their families are the most vulnerable to illegal activity such as gambling, scamming, and substance related illegal activity. Future qualitative inquiry should examine carefully individual and subgroup differences as proposed by Barbieri et al. (2019).

Agnew revised the GST in 2013 and highlighted that a single risk characteristic may only produce a non-significant effect on the strain/offending relationship. Agnew advised that the combination of the risk factor and an individual's criminal propensity

had a strong effect on the Strain/offending relationship (Agnew, 2013; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Agnew suggested that researchers should take into consideration risk/propensity factors. Despite Agnew's (2013) recommendation, there still is a deficit of literature exploring risk/propensity factors beyond five years. Thus, exemplifying the need for a future qualitative inquiry.

Participants of the study included college students between the ages of 21 and 28 years old. This criteria for inclusion excluded from the study a significant group of adults thus limiting transferability of the findings. Additionally, the study did not take into consideration other students completing post-secondary education in programs like independent private/public career schools. This also excluded a significant group of adults with unique experiences who could have shared their lived experiences thus adding diversity to the sample, hence increasing generalizability and transferability of the findings. This exemplifies the need for future qualitative inquiry with a broader criterion for inclusion which could improve diversity of participants and increasing generalizability and transferability of findings.

Lastly participants suggested areas for future research including exploring the effects of the Anglophone crisis on the agriculture and transportation sectors. Participants highlighted that agriculture/farming is the backbone of the economy in the Northwest region. Road blockages have hindered the movement of goods and services which had led to significant increases in food and transportation costs. Participants complained of the high cost of living and poverty and noted that food, transportation, and other subsidies

from the government could serve as a major protective factor mitigating the risk for illegal activity.

Future qualitative studies should inquire how agriculture and transportation consequences influence economic conditions including high cost of living and poverty and how that affects students' ability to afford for basic needs like food and transportation. These economic conditions are strains and influence the strain/ offender relationship (Campbell 2020; Tutorsplot, Theories of Crime in Sociology, 2021).

Another participant suggested the need for a study that explores public safety concerns specifically regarding the circulation of arms amongst civilians and what that means for safety.

Implications

The significance of this study contributed to social change by adding to the growing body of literature on protective factors that reduce or prevent criminal activity especially given the intersection of crime, psychology, and the law. While qualitative research is not aimed at generalization, such findings sometimes provide information and insight to certain social problems that affect many communities and could provide solutions for addressing such problems.

While the strain offender relationship has been well established by the GST and other studies have supported this proposition (Agnew, 2013; Freeze, 2019), the GST failed to take into consideration protective factors that may mitigate risk (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Kushner & Fagan (2022) highlighted that the inattention to protective factors is not only by the GST and is common with most criminology theories, as this

significant piece has been largely omitted and overlooked by researchers. The focus has mainly been on risk factors. Kushner & Fagan (2022) propose an expansion of the GST to include both protective and risk factors as potential modifiers of the strain/ offending relationship.

Findings from this study both confirm and extend knowledge on protective factors that may mitigate risk. With knowledge on the mitigating effects of certain individual and environmental characteristics (protective factors) on the strain offending relationship especially during periods of civil unrest, forensic psychology professionals, public safety and educational organizations would be equipped to better address these issues from an evidence-based standpoint. There by providing appropriate supports and services, and implementing structured programming, that are informed and backed by research thus, bringing forth social change.

Consistent with research, the findings from this study revealed several individual and environmental characteristics such as personal and family values, counseling and mentoring, education and awareness, religion and Christianity, employment opportunities, serving as protective factors preventing/reducing college-aged criminal activity (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Findings also highlight the importance of supports and services like public sensitization through education and creating awareness and government subsidies through affordable programs like housing, transportation, food, financial aid that could be put in place to further prevent or reduce college students from engaging in illegal activity. Implementation of such programs

would improve standards of living and help mitigate the risks associated with high costs of living for the individuals, groups and communities thereby improving public safety.

Findings from this study go a step closer towards bridging the gaps identified and addressed in this study by contributing to ongoing research investigating the mitigating effects of certain individual and environmental characteristics on the strain/ offending relationship. Research continues to inform practice in both micro, mezzo and macro settings, therefore, serving individuals, groups and communities using evidence-based approaches is if not, the most effective way of impacting positive social change. Thus, findings from this study further inform practice and create room for more conversations on the social problem, the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon.

My decision to focus on this social problem was to bring awareness to the issue of the Anglophone crisis and the impact it has had on public safety and education. Especially given the limited exposure the issue has received. The current study contributed to social change by bringing awareness to the Anglophone crisis.

Conclusion of Findings

The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon is one of the most prominent social issues that have plagued the nation in several decades leading to major political and social unrest (Amin, 2021; Okereke, 2018). This phase of the Anglophone crisis began as a peaceful protest by lawyer and teacher trade unions who expressed grievances concerning the marginalization of the Anglophone people in the education and legal sectors. These peaceful protests were met with harsh consequences imposed by the government,

including the imprisonment of protest leaders and some protesters and assault on protesters (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018).

The government's punitive response to the peaceful protest resulted in the formation of armed secessionist groups in 2018. These secessionist groups have over the years increased in momentum and have been demanding the independence of Anglophone regions from the rest of the nation, to form a new nation called the Ambazonia Republic (Bang & Balgah, 2022). This has led to several violent confrontations between the secessionist groups and the military forces (Bang & Balgah, 2022; Okereke, 2018).

Consistent with prior research, findings from this study highlighted the loss of lives, socio-economic consequences like loss of businesses, low standard of living and high costs of living, poverty, and destruction of infrastructure. Findings also showed public safety issues including increase in crime rates, violent victimization, exposure to violence, lack of safety, no freedom of movement, consistent with prior research findings that have highlighted the rise in rates of criminal activity, violence, and safety concerns due to the ongoing Anglophone crisis (Amin, 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Okereke, 2018).

While the relationship between strain and crime has been well established (Barbieri et al., 2019; Campbell, 2020; Freeze 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022), some studies have highlighted that certain protective factors like individual and environmental characteristics may buffer the negative effects of risk factors. Thus, exclusion of these

protective factors robs the opportunity for examining the potential for victim resilience (Barbieri et al., 2019; Kushner & Fagan, 2022).

The GST failed to take into consideration protective factors that may mitigate risk (Kushner & Fagan, 2022). Kushner & Fagan (2022) highlighted that the inattention to protective factors is not only by the GST and is common with most criminology theories, as this significant piece has been largely omitted and overlooked by researchers. The focus has mainly been on risk factors. Kushner & Fagan (2022) propose an expansion of the GST to include both protective and risk factors as potential modifiers of the strain/offending relationship. Hence, a study like this which explored the mitigating effects of individual and environmental characteristics (protective factors) on the strain offending relationship.

Participants of the study shared their lived experiences and the essence of their experiences highlighting several strains (risk factors) including violent victimization, kidnapping and demands for ransom, negative peer influences, school delays and interruptions leading to school dropouts, poverty, high cost of living and low standard of living, separation of families and displacement, homelessness, high unemployment rates, and idleness.

However, participants also shared that despite the significant presence of strains/adverse life experiences/ risk factors, making them susceptible to criminal activity, certain individual and environmental characteristics including counseling and mentoring, personal and family values, family support, religion and Christianity, employment opportunities, education and awareness, and supports and services through

government subsidies and public sensitization, have served as protective/mitigating factors for the strain/ offender relationship.

In conclusion, these findings confirm and extend knowledge in the discipline of forensic psychology. Given the deficiency of scholarly literature on certain individual and environmental characteristics serving as protective factors preventing criminal activity, this study contributed to ongoing research investigating the mitigating effects of certain individual and environmental characteristics on the strain offending relationship. Eluke (2020) echoed the lack of investment in the social issue, the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon by the scholarly community. This study further contributes to ongoing research investigating the issue of the Anglophone crisis. It provides suggestions for furthering qualitative inquiry on protective factors as modifiers for the strain/ offending relationship thus, impacting positive social change.

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Appendix A: List of Acronyms

Title	Acronym
Adverse Childhood Experiences	ACEs
Department of Justice	DOJ
General Strain Theory	GST
Higher National Diploma	HND
Internal Review Board	IRB
National Institute of Health	NIH
Non-Governmental Organization	NGO
Sexually Transmitted Infection	STI
Social Disorganization Theory	SDT
United Nations	UN
United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund	UNICEF
World Health Organization	WHO

Appendix B: Telephone Script

Greetings. I am a Doctoral Student in Forensic Psychology program at Walden University. To fulfill the final stage of my program which is the dissertation, I am conducting a research study on College-Aged illegal Activity during the Anglophone Crisis. I am exploring the protective factors that have reduced or prevented college students from engaging in illegal activities in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, during the Anglophone crisis.

I am seeking your assistance with participant recruitment for my research study. I noticed your student demographics aligns with the inclusion criteria for my current doctoral study. Which seeks six to eight volunteers who are current students attending a university located in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. Participants must be between the ages of 21 and 28 years old, must be from the Northwest or Southwest Region of Cameroon and have never been convicted of a felony.

The outcome of this research study may better inform the public safety sector on the protective factors that prevent or reduce college-aged illegal activity. It may better inform the public safety sector and education sector on the mitigating effects of certain protective factors on college-aged illegal activity. The information from the study may also help public safety and education organizations develop informed strategies for preventing and decreasing the rates college-aged illegal activity.

If the organization has an interest in the study, after I receive IRB approval, I will forward flyers for you to post for recruitment of participants. Interested participants would contact me for further information and directions as applicable. Participants would

be interviewed through zoom conferencing for approximately forty-five to sixty minutes.

If the organization requires a Letter of Cooperation, I will email a draft Letter of Cooperation, for your signature and review, outlining the researchers and organizations responsibility. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer

WALDEN UNIVERSITY
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR
RESEARCH STUDY ON PROTECTIVE
FACTORS FOR COLLEGE-AGED
ILLEGAL ACTIVITY.



| EXPLORING THE MITIGATING EFFECTS OF CERTAIN FACTORS ON ILLEGAL ACTIVITY |



Things you should know

Participation involves 45-60 minutes interview on zoom

Participation is voluntary.

Your identity is kept anonymous.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Melvis A. on WhatsApp messenger 202-322-4707 or via email: Melvis.asongwed@waldenu.edu

YOU MAY QUALIFY IF YOU

- Are currently attending a college/university in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon
- Are from the Northwest/Southwest Region
- Are between the ages 21 and 28 years old.
- Have never been convicted of a felony.



{Your name **WILL NOT** be asked at any time. Information you share will help the public safety sector to better understand the mitigating factors for illegal activity involvement.}

You will receive \$10 thank you gift for your participation.



Appendix D: Demographic Form

Background Information

The following questions ask information about your general background. College students here refers to students who have completed high school and are currently enrolled in and are attending a university.

- I. What is your English-speaking ability: English a first language English as a second language
- II. What region are you from
- III. Have you ever been convicted of a felony
- IV. College year: Freshman (F) Sophomore (S) Junior (J) Senior (S) Graduate Foundation (GF) Graduate Advanced (GA)
- V. How old are you
- VI. What is your sex? Male (M) Female (F) Choose not to answer (NA)
- VII. Do you live on campus or off campus
- VIII. Are you a fulltime or part-time student
- IX. Do you attend classes on campus or off campus
- X. Are you employed
- XI. What is your preferred method of contact? Telephone, email?
 Telephone email: _____

We've been talking about your background now we will transition to the core part of the interview where you will be sharing your experiences of the protective factors that have reduce or prevented illegal activity for college students in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon during the Anglophone crisis. Please answer the questions honestly and thoroughly to the best of your ability.

Appendix E: Researcher-Developed Interview Guide

RQ: What are the lived experiences of college students and their protective factors that reduced or prevented criminal activity during the Anglophone crisis?

The following set of questions asks general information about the Anglophone crisis. Please answer each question honestly and thoroughly to the best of your ability.

- 1) What can you tell me about the crisis in general?
- 2) Who has been affected most by this crisis? And Why?
- 3) What can you tell me about your experience with the Anglophone crisis in general?
 - How has the crisis affected or not affected you and in what ways?
- 4) What challenges if any have you encountered as a student since the inception of the crisis?
- 5) In your experience, how has the crisis impacted college students overall?
- 6) What other areas of life have been affected by the crisis?
 - How have these areas been affected?

Part Two

The next set of questions ask information about college-aged illegal activity during the Anglophone Crisis. Please answer each question honestly and thoroughly to the best of your ability.

- 7) Thinking back to your experiences, how has the crisis affected public safety in general?
- 8) Have you observed, learned of or experienced any increase in illegal activity among students?
- 9) How has the crisis affected the safety and security of college students like yourself?
 - What are some of the challenges “IF ANY” students have encountered with regards to safety both on and off campus?
- 10) Have you observed, experienced, or learned of any illegal activities by college students during the crisis? Please tell me about it.
- 11) Have you considered engaging in illegal activity at any point in time during the crisis while attending college? Why or why not? Explain.
 - If you or any other students have been engaged in illegal activity, tell me about what happened and why?
 - Why do you think you/they engaged in illegal activity?
 - What factors do you think pushed you/them towards illegal activity?

- What factors do you think could have prevented you/them from engaging in illegal activity?
- 12) What factors have reduced or prevented illegal activity for college students during the Anglophone crisis?
- Are there any specific factors that have helped keep students away from engaging in illegal activity? If so, what are some of these factors?
- 13) What supports or resources do you think would reduce or prevent college-aged illegal activity for students like yourself?

We are now in the last phase of our interview. We will talk about anything I omitted, summarize, and conclude.

- 14) Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?
- a. Are there any areas or topics I might have missed?
 - b. Do you have any question for me?
 - c. Do you have any concerns?

Thank you for your time and participation.

Appendix F: Debriefing

Dear participant,

Thank you for participating in this study. The study focused on exploring the protective factors that reduced or prevented illegal activity for college students in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon during the Anglophone crisis. Your time and responses are very much appreciated.

I would like to reiterate that your identity will be kept anonymous. Once interviews are transcribed all audio recordings will be immediately deleted/destroyed without any copies made (which will be within the week of the researchers' graduation from Walden University). Transcribed data will be retained and stored electronically on password protected (requiring a two-step authentication) cloud and google drive. After 5 years, electronic data (transcripts) stored on cloud and goggle drive will be permanently deleted. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not ask for your names at any time and will use code numbers (or pseudonyms) to provide legal protection to you and the people you might have talked about.

The information you have shared will further inform the public safety sector of some of the protective factors against illegal activity for college students like yourself. This study will likely also bring awareness to the Anglophone crisis and its effects on college-aged illegal activity.

After the interview, you may have felt afraid, bad, or had feelings of guilt and shame regarding some of the information shared. If so, you are encouraged to speak with a mental health provider/counselor about your feelings to help overcome any feelings of anxiety and negative emotions. The doctoral student-researcher and Walden University

urge you to seek support and assistance from the listing of local professional counselors provided in the consent form. Contact the doctoral student researcher for a summary of the study findings, and if you have questions about the current study. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,