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The Wave Of Violent Crimes And Insecurity In Nigeria: Causes, Implications And Way Forward

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Abstract
Research has revealed increase in the pattern and trend of crimes and other forms of insecurity in Nigeria at a geometric rate compounding threats to lives and properties, hindering business activities and discouraging local and foreign investments. The paper x-rays the current wave of violent crimes and insecurity in Nigeria and submits that if not properly checked could lead to a state of lawlessness that could trigger to the disintegration of the country. This paper advances that apart from giving critical attention to issues of security in the areas of intelligence gathering and synergy among security agencies; adequate and appropriate training in line with global best practices; logistics; motivation of members of the security agents; and deploying advanced technology in the fight against the emerging crimes as well as addressing the issue of unemployment so as to reduce crime rate in the country is a task that must be prioritized by relevant authorities. Relative deprivation theory was used to corroborate the secondary data generated through a content analysis of the paper.

Keywords*:* Crime, Violence, Security and Insecurity

Introduction

It is obvious that the wave of violent crimes and insecurity in Nigeria is increasingly becoming worrisome and alarming to every responsible citizen. There are numerous security challenges which cut across the nooks and crannies of the country especially with the return to civil rule in 1999. Nigerians had anticipated that democracy would engender good governance, result in rapid socio-economic growth, improve standard of living and restore order and stability in the country. It is sad to note that return of democratic governance in Nigeria has not fulfilled much of the desired expectations. On the contrary, there has been an escalation of cultist clashes, baby factory, ritual killings, armed robbery, Farmers-Herders clashes, cattle rustling, pipe line vandalism, bunkering, secessionist agitations, political assassination, kidnapping and even insurgency and terrorism, among other vices. These and more are either caused or aggravated by unemployment, abject poverty and poor infrastructural facilities among other factors (Egwemi and Aliu, 2010).

In an attempt to fight the increasing waves of violent crimes in Nigeria, the federal government enacted the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2011, strengthened the Ministry of Defense with more funds to fight insecurity. This paper therefore seeks to explore the conceptual analysis of crime and insecurity facing Nigeria with emphasis on violent crime using relative deprivation theory to explore the proximate causes of violent crimes, the implications on the country, the challenges facing the security agencies and make recommendations that will assist in curbing the rise of violent crimes in Nigeria.

Conceptual Analysis

Crime by the Law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1999) is defined as, an act or omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment under the criminal code, or any Act or Law as established by the government at all levels. Crime is an infraction of both the basic principles of law and order and the norms of civilized behavior. Crime is an offence against the value system of the state or society. The cost and effects of crime vary among the various segments of the population and touches almost everyone by some degree and in general as the economic growth and development of countries increase, it is expected that crime rates reduces. Some cost of crime to victims and the society or the economy include: loss of income, property losses, loss in community productivity etc. Some other less tangible cost of crime include psychological trauma to victims and their families and friends, pain and suffering and a lower quality of life. In all of these and other associated losses, the ultimate cost is loss of life (Douglason, 2009).

Violence is the physical force which is destructive in nature and capable of causing fear in the mind of people. Therefore, violent crimes are those criminal activities that employ the use of cruelty to intimidate or cause terror (fear) with the intention to coerce an individual, group of people or the government in order to affect the conduct of the victim (individual, group of people) or influence the policy of the government. No society is immune from this problem but what differs is the frequency and magnitude of the situation and the response mechanisms to addressing it. What is more worrisome and terrifying is the escalation of violent crimes and the barbarity, lethality and trauma the perpetrators unleash on the hapless citizenry across the length and breadth of the Nigeria. Notable in this regard are the rising incidents of armed robbery, assassination, ransom-driven kidnapping and terrorism which currently ravage the Nigeria polity like a tsunami and escalating fear and anxiety about public safety with kidnappings for ransom and terrorism often leading to bloodshed and economic set-backs. The high rate of violent crimes has created an atmosphere of fear, anxiety and tension – a state of insecurity in Nigeria. Okechukwu (2012) argued that "violent crimes such as murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, bombing and terrorism are the most inhumane crimes that plague Nigeria.

Security embodies a notion of order or the conditions necessary to maintain smooth functioning and reproduction of an existing state in the face of internal and external threat. Security also involves keeping peace within the borders of a sovereign state or other self-governing territories which is done by upholding the national law and defending against internal security threat. Security can be generally conceptualized from two stand points. One view is of the opinion of Thomas Hobbes. It is that the essence of formation of the state is security, and as such security is the primary responsibility of the state. This approach to understanding security was well captured in the supreme law of Nigeria, the 1999 Constitution of the FRN section 14(2) (b), when it states that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. The second view in conceptualizing security is that security is an important business of the citizens (non-state actors). In the context of this paper, security is seen as a situation, an atmosphere of being protected or the feelings of being protected from crime, danger or attack, a state of being safe or the feeling of being safe. It is a state of freedom from worries of loss that may occur as a result of crime where peace, stability, national cohesion, political and socio-economic objectives of the state are guaranteed. Therefore, security (both at individual and national levels) is vital for the socio-economic development of any

country. Absence or low level of violent crimes is a major factor in the security of any nation; therefore, the poor development status of Nigeria can easily be linked to the prevalence of violent crimes in the country.

Insecurity connotes a state or condition of being unsafe or the feeling of being unsafe characterized by self-doubt, anxiety, fear and vulnerability; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, moral panic, etc. At the national level, insecurity could be seen as the threat to the general peace ranging from civil disorder, large scale violence, or even an armed insurgency. Insecurity is simply the absence of security and the people affected by it are vulnerable to the threats and dangers when it occurs (Akpan, 2013). Thus, a high rate of violent crimes is a principal indicator of insecurity in any given nation.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts **Relative Deprivation Theory** to explain why people engage in violent crimes (killing, maiming, bombing, robbery, kidnap, rebellion, coups etc.). According to Gurr (1970), there is feeling of tension between one actual state, and what one feels should be. This explains the psychological causes of frustration and aggression as the primary source of violent acts among certain persons. Frustration is a much stronger motivating force and prolonged frustration may cause greater probability for aggression. Relative deprivation is the discrepancy between what people think they deserve and what they actually get (Gurr, 1970). Deprivation therefore occurs when individual`s value expectations exceed value capabilities. Value expectations include welfare, security, self-actualization etc. while value capabilities are those legitimate means for achieving the expectations – employment, for instance, income or social reality. Here, "incentives for success are provided by the established values of the culture, and the avenues available for moving toward this goal is largely limited by the class structure. It is the combination of the cultural emphasis and the social structure which produces intense pressure for deviation.

Relative deprivation is generally considered to be the central variable in the explanation of social movements and is used to explain the quest for social change that inspires social movements; most social movements emerge from collective feelings of relative deprivation (Morrison, 1971). It is noteworthy that Gurr does not look to a more absolute or objective indicator of deprivation as the source of violence. People can get used to a bad state of affairs, even one that offers so little access to life-sustaining resources that members of the group are starving or dying of remediable diseases or exposure. However, if there is a significant discrepancy between what they think they deserve and what they think they get, there is a likelihood of rebellion. Gurr posits this to be the case because there is a feeling that their expectation cannot be met if the status quo is maintained. This situation leads to frustration which, in turn, produces aggression at individual, group and societal levels. This theory could be used to link the rising number of unemployed and politically misused youth and violent crimes in Nigeria.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, section 16(1)(a) states that: "the state shall control the National economy in such a manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity." This constitutional responsibility of the state appears to have been abandoned by the government. In Nigeria, many academically and professionally qualified youth have been deprived employment opportunities; this is aside of the numerous population that lack any form of education or coping skills. A country that produces thousands of university graduates every year using obsolete curriculum and without commensurate employment

opportunities may be creating a fertile ground for all sorts of crimes. This condition has placed most youth in a state of idleness, creating more frustration in the supposed life-wire of the society. As frustration elongates and the feeling of deprivation of what is expected increases, there is a greater probability that the individual or people can resort to illegitimate activities in order to actualize their expectations in the society. The rise in violent crimes (robbery, kidnapping, thuggery, terrorism etc.) committed by youth is a sign of "unfulfilment" in the society because the society had already laid out expectations for individuals and established means of achieving them.

Nigeria is currently the 7th most populous nation in the world and would become the 3rd by 2050with its daily production of babies in excess of 13,000 per year yet the median age is 19. UNICEF (2019) stated that one out of every five out of school children in the world is a Nigerian. What this means is that with the geometric population increase, steady and gradual desert encroachment, the out of school children and the poorly educated will constitute a more serious threat if the prevalent frustration is not confronted to to reverse the ugly trend. The rising trend of crime in Nigeria is usually blamed on the high rate of unemployment. (Kilishi, Mobolaji, Usman, Yakubu and Yaru, 2011). The high rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria has made available, large people for recruitment by high profile criminals for violent crimes. This leads to a culture that, at least, accepts if not approve, violent action as a means to an end (Kenneth, 2009).

Etiology of high rate of violent crimes and insecurity in Nigeria

Recently, Nigeria has witnessed, amongst others, the following forms of crime: armed robbery and other related types of stealing, financial crimes, transnational organized crimes (TOCs), kidnapping, vandalization of government infrastructures, terrorism and insurgency involving the use of heavy weapons and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Crimes, especially violent crimes in Nigeria are traceable to the post Civil War period (1967-1970) when arms and ammunitions became widely available in the country. The weapons got into the hands of unemployed youth who used them for criminal activities. Scholars have identified the rising crime rate in Nigeria asan indication of deeply rooted problems associated with youth unemployment resulting from bad governance. The government has been mired in corruption and the citizens have become desperately and hopelessly impoverished. Available records indicate that Nigeria is ranked sixth in the world oil producing country, yet a relatively large population lives below the poverty line of one (1) United State Dollar per day (Eregha, 2007). Ahokegh (2013),affirmed that poverty arising from injustices, lack of fairness in the polity and imbalance in resource allocation is responsible for the current state of insecurity in Nigeria. The major threatening organized violent criminal groups that have caused serious devastations to Nigeria in last decade are the Niger/Delta Militants and the Boko Haram and very recently, the abductors and kidnappers.

Niger-Delta Militancy: For over a decade, Nigeria has been affected by militancy from the restive youths of the Niger-Delta. The activities of the Niger Delta youth have moved grief to grievance, crime to criminality and has caused serious havoc in the south-south region where much part of Nigeria's crude oil is found. Some of their activities include oil pipeline vandalization, loss of lives; kidnapping of expatriates; the killing of the 12 policemen in Bayelsa on April 2013.One of the main grouse of the Militants, (and its supporters) is that the people of the Niger Delta have suffered unprecedented environmental degradation due to unchecked pollution caused by the oil industry. Consequently, the people have been continuously dispossessed of their lands by foreign oil

interests, just as the flora and fauna and marine life have been destroyed for many generations. Majority of the people of the Niger Delta have been deprived of their livelihood and rarely receive revenue or compensation because of corruption by their own indigenous leaders who collude with foreign oil companies. Majority of the youth are left unemployed.

Over the years, militants in the Niger/Delta enjoy widespread support and this precipitated the emergence of different militant groups that continuously destroyed oil installations. Some of the groups include Federation of Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), and Greenlanders (this led to the emergence of a new group called Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta [MEND]). The Niger-Delta crisis in Nigeria presents a classic example of this violent struggle that has been on since the Nigerian Civil War ended in 1970. The Niger Delta violent agitations have claimed the lives of Nigerians and foreigners, military and para-military personnel, and properties worth billions in various denominations. Nigeria has also recorded serious economic losses in oil revenue as a result of shortfall in crude oil exports by the oil companies occasioned by disruption of oil exploration activities by the militants.

Boko Haram: Boko Haram is the most notorious terrorist group is an Islamic fundamentalist group and has remained the harbinger of terrorism in Nigeria. Its members attack government institutions, the police, the military, public buildings, use suicide bombing and improvise explosive devices (IEDs). This terrorist group has an ideology that is aversed to western education and anything it represents. The group also seeks enthronement of Islamic (Sharia) Government in the whole of Northern Nigeria. Boko Haram killed more than 20,000 Nigerians between July 2009 and June 2019. The group viewed the western influence on Islamic society as the basis of the religion's weakness. Hence its declaration that western education and indeed all western institution are infidels and must be avoided by Muslims. When it first began propagating its doctrines over a decade ago, both clerics and the larger community ignored them and dismissed the preacher as unknowledgeable. Others saw them as propagandists who would not get the attention of the modern Muslims but events later proved all the speculators wrong as the sect began to grow from strength to strength. The sect led by Mohammed Yusuf, took advantage of the poor quality of the country's educational system, the incessant strike, cult activities, the uncoordinated leadership at all levels of government, poverty, corruption, insecurity and high rate of unemployment to lure many youths from schools and embrace *Yusufiya*. Many youths who were deprived or had the feelings of deprivation sought solace in the group. Yusuf was killed in a controversial circumstance in 2009. Thereafter, Shekau Abubarkar emerged as the new leader of the group. This deadly sect has caused lots of damages to the Nigeria citizens, its image and economy at large.

This sect seeks to erode the credibility and legitimacy of the government by making it appeared incapable of protecting lives and property of the citizens. Terrorism in Nigeria has been linked to religious, socio-political, economic and cultural factors. Even though terrorism originated from Islamic fanaticism, it is now driven by factors such as inequalities within the country and lack among Nigerians, in terms of livelihood (economic) resources, education or access to education and good values. The current challenge of terrorism to physical security is threatening the survival of Nigeria as a nation state.

Kidnapping: Kidnapping and (its twin), abduction have now become generic in both public and private discourse following its prevalence in the country. Literarily, the wordwas derived from "kid"

meaning; child and "nab" which means; to snatch. Adebayo (2013) pointed out that kidnapping is an emerging concern in Nigeria though it is not a new phenomenon. It has come to mean any illegal capture or detention of a person or people against their will, regardless of age. The kidnappers, who can be very erratic, have been found to engage in the criminality for several complex motives ranging from unemployment, idleness, vengeance, rituals, monetary gains and political reasons.

Kidnappings now occur in virtually all states in Nigeria and is common inc commercial towns and cities such as Lagos, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Bauchi, Benue and recently Taraba states, to mention a few. Most of the hostages are released after payment of ransom. Kidnapping has become a social enterprise and according to The Nation Newspaper (May 10, 2002), "kidnappers are businessmen, they just happen to be on the illegal side of it. Not only does kidnapping affect the psychology of the direct victims and their families, it spreads a fear that hinders direct economic investment in the area where such evils are perpetuated. The most disturbing fact about it is the involvement of top security personnel both as kingpins and victims. Where the guards become thieves then nothing is safe. Where senior security personnel pay ransom for their freedom or are said to be on the payroll of the criminals then the country is in for a big trouble."

Causes of violent crimes and insecurity in Nigeria

In identifying the causes of violent crimes in Nigeria, some foreign observers have linked terrorism in the country to a number of factors which include political conflicts, paradox growth of wealth, horizontal inequalities, ethno-religious distrust, poor governance, drug abuse and high level corruption (Kufour, 2012; Oluwarotimi, 2012).

Therefore, the increasing level of violent crimes in Nigeria can arguably be said to have been linked to failure of Nigeria's leadership to deliver good governance, and secure the welfare of the citizenry on the principles of freedom, equality, and justice.

Another point of note in reviewing violent crimes in Nigeria is the corrupt nature of our leaders. The ruling elites in Nigeria in both the military and democratic dispensation are dependent, parasitic, corrupt in nature, and poor in administration (Ali, 2013). Parents are now involved in their children`s examination malpractices and no family is immune from the evil of drug abuse; while trust exists only on the lips of average Nigeria. All these serve as easy links to crimes and criminality in Nigeria.

Globalization and the porosity of Nigerian borders have turned the country into a dumping ground of small arms and light weapons thereby aggravating and aiding the spate of violent crimes. This has reduced some segments of the nation into what scholars described as "ungovernable territories."

A high rate of unemployment in Nigeria has left most of the Nigeria youth idle, frustrated, deprived of their expectation and available for any criminal opportunity. Politicians have repeatedly recruited these youths as armed thugs and abandoned them after elections without retrieving weapons from them. Literature has established that such illegal weapons get used by thugs for crimes and for survival.

Population explosion (as Nigeria is one of the fastest growing population in the world increasing at 2.8% per annum) without commensurate resource to manage the population. The country is losing 350,000 hectares of land annually to desert encroachment while sand dunes are covering water sources affecting means of livelihood. A visible example is the Lake Chad Basin which has reduced to only 2,000 km sq. from its former 25,000 km sq. 50 years ago.

Implication of the violent crimes and insecurity on Nigeria

At sixty years of nationhood, Nigeria is still ranked among the poorest countries in the world. The country has also been ranked low in socio-economic indicators such as life expectancy, access to water, mortality rate, and crime rate, and still carries the tag of a developing economy. Nigeria is a country with abundant human and natural resources and yet is classified among the poorest countries in the world. The sad realities of Nigeria are not unconnected with the increasing criminality as well as insecurity whose root causes have been earlier explained.

The scenario of violent crimes, among others, would further aggravate developmental challenges which include endemic rural and urban migration, debilitating youth unemployment, low industrial output, unstable and deteriorating exchange rate, high inflation rate, inadequate physical and social infrastructure, huge domestic debt, and rising stock of external debt (Ewetan, 2013).

In a globalized world, investors are not only looking for high returns on their investments but also safe havens for their investments. Thus, the escalating rate of violent crimes in Nigeria has made the economy unattractive to foreign investors, and this has impacted negatively on economic growth and development. Crime is dysfunctional as it threatens the stability of a Nation (Adebayo, 2013). Economic development does not thrive in an atmosphere of instability. Ivan and Ginkel (2013) argue that there is a complex but important connection between political violence and socio-economic development. Development cannot be achieved in any nation where there are conflicts, crises and wars.

The wave of violent crimes in Nigeria suggest that even the huge amount of the Nation's fund that could have been used for more socio-economic development is now committed to the fighting against violent crimes and replacement of destroyed infrastructures. In fact insecurity in Nigeria has retarded socio-economic development in the following ways: Social dislocation and population displacement; heightens citizenship question which encourages hostility between "indigenes" and "settlers"; dislocation and disruption of family and communal life; general atmosphere of mistrust, fear, anxiety; dehumanization of women, children, and men especially in areas where rape, child abuse and neglect are used as instruments of war; deepening of hunger and poverty in the polity; halts business operations; increases security spending by business organizations and governments; and causes migration of people from the country in search of safety.

Nevertheless, the relationship between security and development has also been conceived to be bilateral in nature. There will be no development without security and no security without development. And both development and security also depend on respect for human rights and the rule of law. Klingebiel (2006) argued that in an increasingly interconnected world, progress in the areas of development, security and human rights must go hand in hand. Development is necessary for security to thrive while security, on the other hand, is a precondition for development.

Challenges confronting the security forces in curbing violent crimes in Nigeria

Government ineptitude and laxity in dealing with security challenges has posed a problem to the security forces in discharging their duties. The Nation's borders are porous thereby making it possible for infiltration of mercenaries and arms proliferation into the country especially following the Arab spring.

The Nigeria security forces suffer deficit of modern fighting equipment, training and motivation. The Nigerian military has admitted that hundreds of its men fled the heavily equipped Boko Haram attackers,

but said their apparent escape to neighboring Cameroon was a "tactical maneuver" (NnenahIbeh, 2014).

The way forward

As overwhelming and complex as the security challenges in Nigeria appears to be, they are not insurmountable. Indeed, they can be managed and possibly be ameliorated if the government complies with their constitutional responsibilities. Thus, the following recommendations are offered:

The government should put up all necessary steps to improve the level of gainful employment of the Nigeria youths. This will improve the socio-economic status of the youths; give them sense of belonging by attachment, investment, involvement and belief thereby taking their attention off crime and idleness.

In improving the employment base of Nigeria, the Federal government should realize that the quality of education in the country is fast depreciating just as the exchange rate of Naira. Our methods of teaching are archaic; our curriculum are outdated and infrastructure are decaying. Knowledge and skills suitable to the dynamic nature of the 21st century society should be made available in our educational institutions.

For crime-reduction to be feasible, this paper is of the opinion that not all the criminals can be eliminated, captured or locked up indefinitely to prevent them from pursuing their malevolent lifestyle. Therefore, de-radicalization and rehabilitation programmes should assumes supreme importance. According to Yalwa(2014), most of the members of Boko Haram that surrendered their weapons are unemployed youth that needed rehabilitation and reintegration back to the society.

Governments at all levels should formulate and implement redistributive policies that will reduce the feeling of inequality and curtail the availability and consumption of substances of abuse among the citizens.

Corruption is a major cause of crimes because corruption itself is a crime. Honesty, sincerity and determination by all good citizens particularly leaders is required as many contemporary youths perceive government as a group of corrupt people. This is often frustrating and fuels aggression towards authorities. Corrupt attitudes by government officials has promoted the belief of celebrating illegally accumulated wealth and the attendant upsurge in crime.

There is need for immediate over hauling of the security forces. They should be equipped with modern technology to combat the rising wave of crimes. The welfare of security personnel should be prioritised,; proper inter agency collaboration both within and across African states should be encouraged.

Conclusion

It is true that security is a major issue globally. Over the years, Nigeria's security situation has deteriorated due to poor governance, political desperation and government's inability to deliver the needed dividends of democracy with emphases on employment and productive engagement of the citizenry in the country. Deliberate efforts must be put in place to ensure proper profiling of Nigerians via synergized data bank to ease tracking and tracing of criminals by security agencies.

This paper submitted that the feelings of deprivation produce frustration and could be expressed through aggression (violence). One of the major means of depriving Nigerians of their expectation is the high rate of unemployment which has engulfed the youths.

Government should be proactive by dwelling more on intelligence and dialogue rather than the use of force. Population regulation and responsive education should not be compromised. Resource management and the rule of law must always be ensured. Finally, there should be improvement of power

generation, stability and distribution should be pursued as bedrock of industrialization and youth employment.

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