

ANALYSIS OF URBAN CRIME IN ABEOKUTA CITY, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study analyses urban crime in Abeokuta, with the view to suggesting measures towards mitigating crime in Abeokuta. The objectives are to investigate the incidents and nature of crime and their spatial expression in the study area; identify the causes and effects of the existing crime in the study area; and determine the problems faced by the agencies in charge of security in the city. Cluster sampling was adopted, and all the local governments grouped into wards. However, using the wards as the sampling units, 2 wards were randomly selected as the sampling clusters in each local government. In Abeokuta North, Lafenwa/Afonta (ward 8) and Ita Oshin/Olomore (ward 12) were randomly selected. Ake 1 (ward 1) and Itoko (ward 6) were randomly selected in Abeokuta South. However, in Obafemi Owode, Oba (ward 2) and Ofada (ward 3) were randomly selected. Systematic sampling was adopted in administering questionnaire on the basis of the 10th building interval in administering the questionnaire in each of the sampling clusters. 50 questionnaires were administered in each of the six representative clusters. Altogether, a total of 300 questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the study area. The study shows, among others, the 2015 police crime record of selected wards. Vandalism and theft ranked highest in the list of crimes in the study area. It recommends that the readjustment of some fundamental town planning principle such as zoning which favours mono usage or land use segregation above mixed uses.

Keywords: Crime, Planning, Poverty, Security, Urban.

INTRODUCTION

Most urban cities of the world have experienced a remarkable rapid urban growth resulting from industrialization and technological advancement. All over the world threats from terrorism, drug cartel and organized crime have been increasing at an alarming rate (Mishral, 2013). Consequently the event of 9/11 has clearly illustrated that nomination. In the data collected by the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) on 55 countries spread over six major

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world region including Africa, Asia central and eastern, Latin America and Western Europe that for the 1989 -1996 period, more than half of the urban respondents reported to have been victimized at least once, regardless of what part of the world they inhabited (Ackeman and Murray 2004). From the finding, it was evident that high crime rate is not a unique feature of a few nations but a statistically normal attribute of life, the world over (Fajemirokun, Adewale, Idowu, Oyewusi & Maiyegun, 2006).

In Nigeria, industrialization and unplanned urbanization characterized the economic and social growth processes. The spatial expression of these realities and the consequence of simultaneous urbanization with the uncontrolled growth pattern in the most of the urban cities are manifested in diverse urban problems such as urban decay where visible forms of drugs use anti –social behavior and criminal damage to public and private properties are the order of the day (Giblion, 2004).

Globally crime and criminalities have assumed different dimensions such that dealing with it demands a lot with respect of ethical dilemmas and decision in criminal justice (Pollocks 2012). While much has been said and observed in criminal matters all over the world, effective gathering of crime data, its analysis and information decision in planning and policy formulation requires a careful application of technological and scientific approach that integrates hard and software with traditional intelligence gathering (Chiney & Tompson, 2008; Bruce & Stallo 2009; Goor & Kurland, 2012).

Punch News Paper of 28 June, 2006 published that millions of small fire arms are circulating in West Africa, mostly in the land where rebels' activities are going on. It was also reported that there are at least 8 million small fire arms in West Africa, with more than half in the hands of the insurgents and criminals. In addition, it was equally reported that criminal elements in Ghana alone poses 40,000 small arms. The arms where often sold illegally in exchange for hard currency or goods such as diamonds, drugs and other contraband.

The estimate of this black market trade in small arms ranges from two (2) or ten(10) billion a year, Nigeria, Africans most populous nation with more than 130 million inhabitants is a small significant actor both as producer and consumer of weapons the paper recorded.

Similarly crime rate in South Africa is worrisome as social misfit parades the street looking for an opportunity to commit crime as social vices such as rape and armed robbery has contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country (Capeli, 1998; Ikturia & Bello 2011).

Ohunmelu (2005) noted that "with the population of Nigeria growing at an alarming rate according to statistics the ability of the existing law enforcement agencies to provide the need security and the ultimate safety of lives and property in these fast growing commercial cities has become a major sources of concern for Nigeria government.

The spatial distribution of crime incident varies in accordance with type. The most obvious difference is between urban and rural area with a much wider range of crimes securing in urban environments. These clearly results from the fact that there are far more goods available in cities to be stolen and sold. However it also reflects the fact that increasing numbers of people have moved to the cities in recent decades only to find themselves living in rundown areas in situation of social exclusion (Cozens, 2006).

An analysis of the impact of poverty on urban crime in Nigeria must necessary involves an examination of at least three important indicator (Utia, 2010; Ogunleye, 2010). The rest are level of unemployment and inequality in urban centers within Nigeria. Most of the vast literature on the study of poverty relies on money- metric measure such as a level of consumption and household income for measuring and evaluating (Baker, 2008). It is important to note that while those indicators are quite important they are little use for the kinds of analysis we have in mind hear. Failure of leadership or bad governance is wholly responsible for poor economic development planning and entrenching inequitable mechanism for the distribution of societal wealth. These conditions generate unemployment and social inequality in the cities. Unemployment and social inequality as we show the main causes for eruption and escalation of social crime and violence in urban areas across the breadth of Nigeria over the last twelve (12) years.

In many urban centers of Nigeria today , criminals activities and violence have assumed dangerous tendencies as they threaten lives and property, the national sense of well-being and reduces the citizen's quality of life (Agbola, 2000; Ahmed 2010). The fear of

armed robbery, kidnapping, and terrorism, as being experienced in the northern states, make citizens to be perpetually unsafe, displaced, deprived, mentally disturbed, and geographically unstable. With an average of one policeman to 5000 Nigerians as the police strength, compared to one of policeman to 400 persons in the developed world, and the inadequacy of internal security infrastructure, the police force is constrained, vulnerable and sometimes helpless. Unfortunately, there is a demographic dimension to urban crime in Nigerian cities. In recent years, the increasing proportion of children and young people, especially among the urban poor, among others, have offered the fertile ground for the recruitment of young people into groups and gangs engaged in local crime and violence. The majority of perpetrators and victims of urban violence are young men who are between 15 to 25 years old, an age when both men and women are at greatest risk of exploitation crime and victimization.

The recent crime profile of Abeokuta, the study area, has nexus with the urbanization and rural urban migration effects manifesting in it. However, incidence of crime in Abeokuta seems to be higher in the poorer neighborhoods where higher population density, deteriorated living condition and unemployment are rife. The inadequate policing in the areas make the victims soft targets for criminal tendencies. There are also incidents of crime such as armed robbery, pick pocketing, and vandalism in the posh residential areas and commercial precincts that raise poser about the livability of the study area, and the ability of it to attract investments that rely on adequate security for survival. The contaminatory effect of crime phobia on property values decline, especially in areas where crime rate is high, and the tendency for such neighborhoods to face great difficulties in attracting investment can also not be over-emphasized.

The study aims at investigating urban crime in Abeokuta with the aim of suggesting measures toward enhancing the security of the study area. The objectives are to investigate the incidents and nature of crime and their spatial expression in Abeokuta; identify the causes and effects of the existing crime in the Abeokuta; and determine the problems faced by the agencies in charge of security in the city.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed the primary and secondary sources of information in collecting data. Primary data were collected with the aid of questionnaires. Using cluster sampling technique, all the local governments in Abeokuta were clearly identified and grouped into wards. The 15 wards identified in Abeokuta South Local Government are: Ake 1 (ward 1), Ake 2 (ward 2), Ake 3 (ward 3), Emere (ward 4), Ijemo (ward 5), Itoko (ward 6), Ijaiye/Idi-Aba (ward 7), Erunbe/Ijoko/Ilogbo/Oke-Ejigbo (ward 8), Oke Ijeun (ward 9), Ago Ijesha/Ijeun-Titun/Ago Egun (ward 10), Sodeke/Isale Ijeun 1 (ward 11), Sodeke/Isale Ijeun 2 II (ward 12), Oke-yeke/Imo/Isabo (ward 13), Igbore/Itori/Ago-Oba (ward 14), and Ibara (ward 15). For Abeokuta North Local Government Area, the 16 wards identified are: odo/Ikereku/Ilowo (ward 1), Ikija (ward 2), Ago-oko (ward 3), Elega housing/Imala (ward 4), Iberekodo/Ilugun (ward 5), Ita-ota/Gbagura (ward 6), Ago iku/Ijaiye kukudi (ward 7), Lafenwa/Afonta (ward 8), Sabo Aiyetoro garage (ward 9), Oke Ago/Owu (ward 10), Totoro/Oke sokori (ward 11), Ita-oshin/Olomore (ward 12), Olorunda/Ijale (ward 13), Imala orile (ward 14), Idi-emi (ward 15) and Ibara orile (ward 16). Further, the 12 wards identified in Obafemi Owode Local Government Area include: Moko/Oki (ward 1), Oba (ward 2), Ofada (ward 3), Egbeda (ward 4), Owode (ward 5), Kajola (ward 6), Ajura (ward 7), Obafemi (ward 8), Moloko Asipa (ward 9), Ajebo (ward 10), Onidundu (ward 11) and Alapako oni (ward 12).

However, using the wards as the sampling units, 2 wards were randomly selected as the sampling clusters in each local government. In Abeokuta North, Lafenwa/Afonta (ward 8) and Ita Oshin/Olomore (ward 12) were randomly selected. Ake 1 (ward 1) and Itoko (ward 6) were randomly selected in Abeokuta South. However, in Obafemi Owode, Oba (ward 2) and Ofada (ward 3) were randomly selected. Systematic sampling was adopted in administering questionnaire on the basis of the 10th building interval in administering the questionnaire in each of the sampling clusters. 50 questionnaires were administered in each of the six representative clusters. Altogether, a total of 300 questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the study area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Foremost, that most of the respondents (84%) have been victims of crime, as shown in table 1 is an evidence that the study area is crime infested, and most of the respondents who supplied information for the research have firsthand experiences, and are in a good position to give accurate and germane information. From the results of data, it was gleaned that Ake and Itoko(Abeokuta south) Sabo/Aiyetoro Garage and Ita-Oshin/Olomore(Abeokuta north) Oba and Ofada (Obafemi Owode Local Government) are the areas where crime was most dominant. Table 1 shows that Pickpocketing and petty stealing accounted for the most crime (24.4%) in the study area. This is followed by armed robbery (18.2%); vandalism (14.8%), Violence (14.3%), Burglary (10.6%) kidnapping and skirmishes between cultist groups (7.4%), murder (7.1%), and sexual harassments (2.9%) Majority of the respondents (50%) reckoned unemployment was the cause of crime in their neighborhood. This is followed by those who opined that poverty was the major cause of crime (17%); those who felt crime was influenced by peer grouping (13%); those who felt illiteracy accounted for crime (8%); those who felt lack of parental care was responsible for crime (7%);and those who cited other factors as causal links to crime (5%). That majority of the respondents (39%) suggested that vigilante groups would offer better checks on crime in the area reflects a low level of confidence on the official security apparatus. The efficiency of the six police divisional headquarters covering the study area is essentially constrained by manpower. The 733 officers in the six divisional headquarter in Abeokuta, in light of the United Nations Standard of 1 police to every 500 persons in a community, will not suffice in adequately protecting a population of 593100. The threshold police manpower strength that will be considered ideal is a minimum 1186. This is besides the lack of intelligence and surveillance equipment like CCTVs; inadequacy of arms and ammunition; corruption; and inadequacy of welfare .

Table 1: Perception of Crime in the Study Area

Experience of Crime		
Option	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	253	84
No	47	16.0
Total	300	100
Causes of crime		
Option	Frequency	Percentage
Unemployment	150	50.0
Poverty	51	17.0
Illiteracy	24	8.0
Peer Group	39	13.0
Lack of Parental Care	21	7.0
Others	15	5.0
Total	300	100
Mitigating Initiatives Against Crime		
Option	Frequency	Percentage
Organisation of Vigilante Group	117	39.0
Provision of Street Light	75	25.0
Individual Purchase of Security Dog	36	12.0
Employment of Police Services	72	24.0
Total	300	100

Authors' Survey Analysis (2015)

Table 2: Monthly Profile of Crime in Abeokuta for the Year 2015

Types of Crime	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Freq	%
Burglary	6	7	6	4	4	3	2	1	3	2	1	4	43	10.6
Vandalism	7	6	4	3	5	6	5	2	5	7	6	4	60	14.8
Violence	-	2	3	6	5	7	7	2	5	6	7	8	58	14.3
Sexual harassment	1	-	1	-	2	-	-	1	2	-	2	3	12	2.9%
Drug														
Murder	4	3	3	2	5	3	1	-	2	2	2	2	29	7.1
Pickpocketing and petty stealing	3	7	8	9	6	5	10	3	2	12	15	17	99	24.4
Kidnapping and cultism	2	3	-	4	6	3	1	1	2	-	6	2	30	7.4
Armed robbery	2	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9	10	11	12	74	18.2

Source: Eleweran Police Divisional Head Quarter, Abeokuta(2015)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The spread of crime in cities world-wide has become almost intractable. The need for a participatory approach, which considers all stakeholders such as the government, the security personnel and the communities cannot be overemphasized. In the case under consideration, spatial planning solutions such as the permissibility of mixed uses can be adopted in neighborhoods as a strategy towards discouraging the formation of crime susceptible ghost zones. The issue of security should always guide the design of roads in the residential environment. Security gates and bumps should be provided for restriction and vehicular speed control in residential areas. There is the need for the provision of facilities such as street light and recreational facilities as a strategy towards providing a milieu that discourages criminal tendencies. Residents should also be encouraged to form security groups in order to safe guard their lives and properties. Besides the need for recruitment of more people in the Ogun State Police command, increased investment in the capacity building of the police force especially in the area of intelligence, there is also the need to enhance its effectiveness with the provision of surveillance equipment like CCTVs; arms and ammunition. The welfare of the police force is also an important incentivizing factor that cannot be wished away. Poverty alleviation schemes involving direct transfer of income in the form of social security and indirect empowerment strategies such as exposure of the youth demographic that is most vulnerable to crime recruitment to vocational training programmes are veritable proactive ideas towards crime prevention.

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