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## INVESTIGATING CRIME IN URBAN CENTERS (A CASE STUDY OF ABEOKUTA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OGUN STATE)

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### ABSTRACT

Crime and violence are viewed as roadblocks to development, especially in urban areas. Due to socioeconomic inequality and marginalisation, crime and violence rates are higher in urban areas. Finding the variables influencing crime in the Abeokuta South local government area was the aim of this study. The kind and quantity of crime in the area, the kinds of conduct that young people view as criminal, the features of slums that incite criminal activity, and whether or not there are discernible disparities in crime based on social class and educational attainment were all taken into account. This study employed a descriptive research design. Residents of the Abeokuta South local government area who were at least eighteen years old made up the target demographic. The municipal authority established wards and used a multistage cluster sampling method. There are 15 wards in the Abeokuta South local government area. Eight areas were selected as the sampling size when wards were used as the sampling units. Two areas from each ward were randomly selected as the sampling clusters. The descriptive technique was also used to analyze and present statistical and quantitative data. The survey found that pickpocketing and robberies were the two most frequent crimes in the Abeokuta South local government area. According to the study, fewer criminal acts would occur if there were more police officers and they had access to patrol cars. To combat unemployment and inactivity, the government ought to support youth in pursuing higher education.

**Keywords:** Urban crime, demography, poverty, security, environments, behaviour

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Criminal activity violates people's rights like a sickness. Everyone in society is interested in it as a consequence. It is said that crime rates will rise as cities become bigger. From ancient cultures to contemporary ones, crime has remained a heated issue and a daily discussion item. For instance, it is anticipated that crime rates will decline over time as economies expand and develop better each year. However, it does not diminish and has become more significant in the latter part of the 20th century. "Crime has certainly grown more relevant in the previous forty years," said Becker (1968:172). Each civilization has a unique set of values. The definition of crime is mostly based on these value systems. Throughout history, crime has taken place in every community for a variety of reasons, albeit the frequency, nature, causes, and effects on each civilization may have varied greatly. The percentage of the global population that lives in cities is steadily increasing. In the future, crime prevention techniques will therefore become more and more important in metropolitan settings. By the beginning of 2000, about 47% of the global population lived in cities, up from 30% in 1950. By 2030, 60% of people are expected to live in cities.

Mishral (2013) noted that as a consequence of industrialization and technical innovation, the majority

of metropolitan centres throughout the globe have seen remarkably fast urban expansion. Globally, the rates of terrorism, drug cartels, and organised crime are all rising alarmingly. The 9/11 events have adequately supported that nomination. According to data collected by the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) on 55 countries spread across six major world regions, including Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern, Latin America, and Western Europe, from 1989 to 1996, more than half of urban respondents, regardless of where they lived, reported being a victim at least once (Ackerman & Murra, 2004). Fajemirokun, Adewale, Idowu, Oyewusi and Maiyegun (2006) noted that the results show that experiencing a high crime rate is a statistically common aspect of life everywhere in the world, not just a feature of a select few nations.

According to the June 28, 2006, Punch News Paper, millions of small guns are supposedly in circulation throughout West Africa, primarily in areas where insurgents are active. Furthermore, it was estimated that over half of the 8 million small guns in use in West Africa belonged to criminals and militants. Moreover, it is estimated that criminal groups possess 40,000 small firearms in Ghana alone. Arms were regularly sold for money or illegal goods like cocaine, diamonds, and other contraband.

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Ohunmelu (2005) argues that the Nigerian government is increasingly concerned about the potential of the country's law enforcement agencies to maintain the ultimate safety of people and property in these quickly growing commercial cities. For the simple reason that data indicates Nigeria's population is expanding at a startling rate. Depending on the category, crime occurrences are distributed differently in space. The difference between urban and rural locations is the most noticeable, with metropolitan areas securing a considerably wider variety of offences. Unquestionably, this is brought on by the increased number of goods that can be taken and sold in urban areas. It also reflects the fact that a greater number of people have been moving to cities in recent years, only to end up living in impoverished areas where they are socially isolated (Cozens, 2006).

Utia (2010) and Ogunleye (2010), identified that Nigeria's urban crime rate must be examined in relation to at least three significant indicators. The degree of unemployment and inequality in Nigeria's metropolitan regions make up the remaining elements. The great bulk of the research on the issue uses money-metric indicators, such as consumption level and family income to assess and evaluate poverty (Baker, 2008). Although such indications are relevant, it is vital to keep in mind that they are not very helpful for the kinds of analysis we are examining here. Poor leadership or inadequate administration is solely to blame for the inequitable distribution of wealth in society and the poor planning for future economic growth. These circumstances contribute to socioeconomic inequality and unemployment in cities. In metropolitan places throughout Nigeria during the last twelve (12) years, social crime and violence have emerged and increased mostly as a result of unemployment and social inequality. In many Nigerian metropolitan areas, criminal activity and violence have developed hazardous tendencies, endangering lives and property, the sense of safety in the nation and the standard of living of its citizens (Agbola, 2000; Ahmed 2010). People feel scared, disoriented, impoverished, psychologically imbalanced, and unstable due to the ongoing threat of armed robbery, kidnapping, and terrorism, as seen in the northern states. Compared to the one police officer for every 400 people in the industrialized world, Nigeria's police force is small, vulnerable, and occasionally helpless, with an average of one police officer for every 5000 people. Regrettably, urban crime in Nigerian cities is influenced by demographics. Because there are more children and young people in the world, especially among the urban poor, there is a greater recruitment of youth into gangs and organizations that engage in neighbourhood crime and violence. Young males between the ages of 15 and 25 make up the bulk of both

offenders and victims of urban violence; this is the age range in which both men and women are most susceptible to exploitation, criminality, and victimization.

Examining the spatial distribution of crime concentrations is important from both an academic and practical standpoint in this regard. The research area, Abeokuta, exhibits a connection between the consequences of urbanization and rural-to-urban migration in terms of its recent crime profile. However, because of the increased population density, worse living conditions, and unemployment in Abeokuta's poorest districts, crime seems to be more common there. Victims are easy targets for criminals in the region because of the inadequate police. In addition, there have been crimes including armed robberies, pickpocketing, and vandalism in upscale neighbourhoods and business districts, raising questions about the study area's viability as a place to live and its capacity to draw investments that need proper security to survive.

## 2.0 Materials and methods

### Study area

Investigating crime in urban areas is particularly well-suited for conducting comparative research because it makes use of the relationship between two or more aspects under consideration, namely the competitive landscape and tactical reactions. The Abeokuta South local government area is located in the southwest Nigerian state of Ogun, in the city of Abeokuta. The towns and cities that make up the LGA, which was established in 1981, include Emero, Ijemo, Itoko, Oke Ijeun, and Ibara. Its administrative centre is located in Ake Abeokuta. With a population of 214,606 inhabitants and a total area of 71 km<sup>2</sup>, Abeokuta South is the largest city in the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria. The two religions with the closest ties in the region are Christianity and Islam. Notable festivals held there include the Egungun, Igunuko, and Oro festivals. The Alake Palace Ground, the Elite Club House, and the Akin Olugbade Social Centre are must-sees in Abeokuta South. Abeokuta South's total area is 71 km<sup>2</sup>, with an average temperature of 28 °C and a relative humidity of 56%.

To collect data for this study, questionnaires were given to respondents during interviews, and information was also gathered from previously published research journals. Additionally, information was gathered from the police stations in the Abeokuta South Local Government area's crime records.

### Method of data analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were used in the data analysis process. Following the acquisition, the data underwent cleaning

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and coding. The data was examined using the SPSS software. Data was cleaned based on response completeness and consistency.

### 3.0 Results and Discussion

The main objective was to shed light on the factors influencing crime in the local government area of Abeokuta South. The goal of the study was to identify the traits of the environments that promote criminal behaviour in addition to the types and frequency of crimes that occur in the Abeokuta South local government area, the behaviours that the youth there believe to be criminal, and the overall incidence of crimes in the area.

The study also tried to identify the location, crime's severity, and its kind. The outcomes are shown in table 1. Table 1 shows that 22.78% of the respondents said that most criminal activity occurred in Ijaye, where

there was a high rate of theft and mugging. 17.72% of respondents reported that pickpocketing was very common in the Sapon area, 15.19% reported that robbery was very common in Oke-Ilewo, 11.39% reported that pickpocketing was common in Oke Aregba Saba, and 10.13% reported that robbery was common in Adatan. Ijaye was also mentioned by the main sources due to the concentration of idle people there. Another significant location with a high crime rate was Sapon, which was attributed to the area's large concentration of young people without jobs and low-income residents. Another factor cited as being very important was poverty. Iyana Mortuary, Ibara, the Oke Sokori region, and the Saje area are some of the further locations mentioned. Additionally, it was noted that Abeokuta's high rate of alcohol abuse is a significant factor in crime.

Table 1: Area where crime is occurring, type of crime, and level of crime

| Location       | Type of Crime                         | Intensity | Frequency | Percent       |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| Ijaye          | Theft and Mugging                     | Very high | 18        | 22.78         |
| Oke Ilewo      | Robbery                               | Very High | 12        | 15.19         |
| Itoku          | Mugging                               | Moderate  | 5         | 6.33          |
| Oke-Itoku Road | Pick-pocketing, Robbery with violence | Very high | 6         | 7.59          |
| Panseke        | Pick-pocketing and Murder             | Low       | 7         | 8.86          |
| Sapon          | Pick-pocketing                        | Very high | 14        | 17.72         |
| Adatan         | Robbery                               | High      | 8         | 10.13         |
| Oke Aregba     | Pick-pocketing and murder             | High      | 9         | 11.39         |
| <b>Total</b>   |                                       |           | <b>79</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

#### Nature and incidence of crimes in Abeokuta South Local Government Area

The study's initial goal was to determine the types and frequency of crimes in the Abeokuta South local government area and to identify the most prevalent criminal activity in Abeokuta. The outcomes are shown in Figure 1. According to Figure 1, 28.7% of the respondents identified robbery as the most prevalent sort of crime, followed by theft (6.6%), carjacking (6.5%), pickpocketing (23.1%), mugging (14.8%), violent robbery (8.3%), sexual abuse (7.4%), and murder (4.6%). Tume (2010) argues that in today's communities, stories of drug warfare, sexual assault, gang warfare, muggings, gunfights, murders, and mob justice have

become all too common. Tume goes on to say that urban insecurity is, becoming a more widespread problem worldwide, not only as a result of terrorist attacks but also because of the regular violence that many people experience daily, which is made worse by the rapidly growing population of cities.

This study further explored the common features of the environments that influence criminal behaviour which is evident in the identified crime environments through the physical characteristics as shown in Table 3.

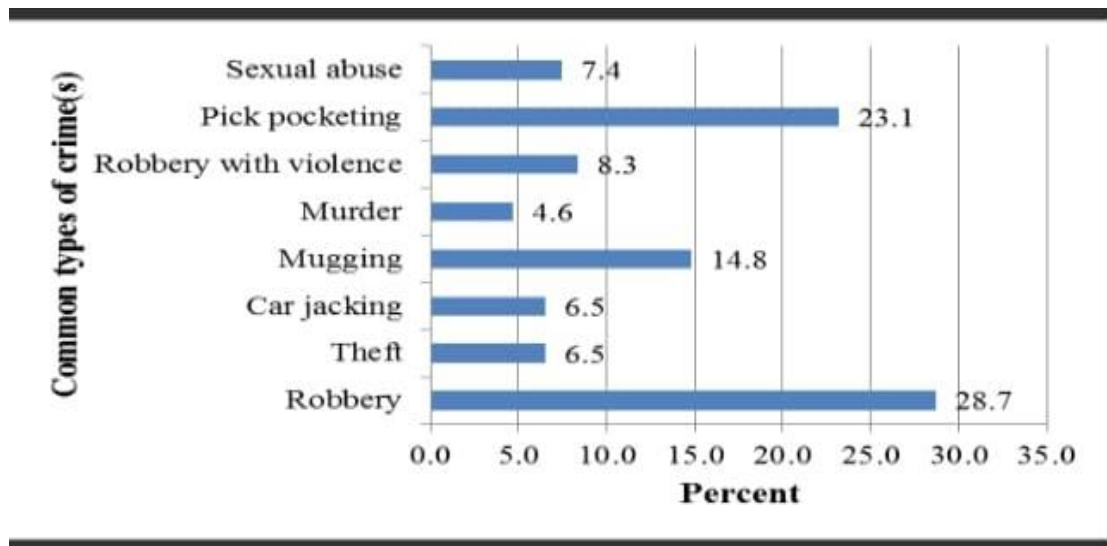


Figure 1: Common types of crime(s) in Abeokuta

**Table 2: Environmental Characteristics**

| Environmental Characteristics  | SA   | A    | N  | D  | SD | Total | Mean  |
|--|------|------|----|----|----|-------|-------|
| Crime is influenced by an unsanitary environment.  | 39   | 46   | 6  | 17 | 0  | 108   | 3.991 |
| Numerous waste disposal sites in the area serve as havens for criminal activity.         | 14   | 64   | 20 | 10 | 0  | 108   | 3.76  |
| Insufficient space causes congestion   | 40   | 46   | 15 | 2  | 5  | 108   | 4.056 |
| Public bridges in isolated places are an example of poor environmental design.           | 20   | 65   | 16 | 7  | 0  | 108   | 3.907 |
| Absence of naturally occurring access controls, such as gates, landscaping, and fencing. | 28   | 54   | 24 | 2  | 0  | 108   | 4.000 |
| Cell Representative (Total cell score/probable cell score x 100)                         | 26.1 | 50.9 | 15 | 7  | 1  |       |       |

**Table 3: Physical Characteristics**

| Physical Characteristics   | SA   | A    | N    | D   | SD  | Total | Mean  |
|--|------|------|------|-----|-----|-------|-------|
| Local housing in the area in terms of physical condition         | 40   | 48   | 13   | 5   | 2   | 108   | 4.102 |
| Local street lighting in the area                                | 31   | 61   | 4    | 12  | 0   | 108   | 4.028 |
| Type of paths and roads in the area and                          | 24   | 62   | 15   | 7   | 0   | 108   | 3.954 |
| Authorities responsible for security having access to the area   | 31   | 53   | 19   | 0   | 5   | 108   | 3.972 |
| Poor physical planning of the residential houses in the area     | 36   | 54   | 13   | 5   | 0   | 108   | 4.120 |
| Unlit pavements and lanes in areas                               | 26   | 62   | 20   | 0   | 0   | 108   | 4.056 |
| Bad layouts and designs for housing                              | 31   | 50   | 16   | 11  | 0   | 108   | 3.935 |
| Cell Representative (Total cell score/probable cell score x 100) | 28.9 | 51.6 | 13.2 | 5.3 | 0.9 |       |       |

The aforementioned analysis shows that, when looking at different types of crimes, shanties, poorly designed housing, dark sidewalks and lanes, and dilapidated residential apartments are common physical characteristics found in high-crime concentration areas.

Furthermore, mixed uses and inadequate physical planning are undesirable physical traits that also attract crime.

The overall findings are consistent with those of Shikuku (2018), who recently brought up another method of

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applying natural access control to reduce crime in Abeokuta. Furthermore, a Shikuku (2018) survey found that 96% of respondents believed that suspicious activity is caused by dark corners and inadequate security lighting in a several Abeokuta South local government districts.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Urban crime arises from urbanization, which is one of the main problems facing our cities. Theoretically, physical aspects of the surroundings present chances for criminal activity. So, the purpose of this study was to assess the factors influencing urban crime in the Abeokuta South Local Government area. The specific objectives of the study were to ascertain the nature of crimes committed in the Abeokuta South Local Government area and the attributes of the surrounding areas that may foster criminal activity. The data analysis revealed that pickpocketing and robbery were the most common criminal activities in the Abeokuta South Local Government area. In the Abeokuta South Local Government area, unemployment and inactivity are the main causes of crime. A large number of young individuals within the working-age population worsen unemployment, inactivity, drug use, and alcohol consumption, which increases the likelihood of making bad decisions such as engaging in criminal activity. Furthermore, the study found that Ijaye, Itoku, Adatan, and Oke Aregba were the main locations of criminal events. It also proved that firearms, knives, pangas, and improvised or illegal handguns were used in the assaults. Hence, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Increasing security officer patrols and community policing initiatives reduce criminal activity. The study suggests that increasing the number of police officers, vehicles, or patrol cars might help to reduce crime.
- ii. To lower the incidence of carjacking, residents of the Abeokuta South Local Government area should be made aware of the installation of engine immobilizer devices, which prevent a vehicle from starting until they receive the appropriate signal from the driver.
- iii. Policy suggestions urge for improved collaboration between local communities and government organizations. Encourage community engagement and involvement in the administration about problems like policy formation, planning, execution, and monitoring security.
- iv. The study also recommends that high-rise apartment complexes be constructed in place of slums as part of a government upgrade initiative. The urban slum problem cannot be solved by merely moving people without considering their social and economic needs. Instead, a community-based strategy is needed.

- v. The study makes recommendations on how the community, government, and non-governmental organizations might decrease adolescent criminality via the introduction of vocational training which can assist young people in starting their businesses, therefore reducing unemployment and idleness.
- vi. The study also suggests enhanced police-public interactions, disarmament, and more community involvement in security. The community policing program promotes community policing forums and develops outreach and experimental community policing initiatives.
- vii. It also discovered that the bulk of the respondents engaged in criminal activity were young persons with just a high school education. According to the report, the government could assist young people in getting more education which would reduce laziness and unemployment.

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