Crime in a Nigerian City: A Case Study of Warri Metropolis

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Abstract

Crime rates are much higher in cities than in rural areas and this has been the trend for several centuries. This paper argues that in the Nigerian situation (using Warri) as an example, lower arrest probabilities and lower probability of recognition is a feature of city life which seems to explain some of the city crime effects. Most of the effect can be related to observable characteristics of individuals and cities. The characteristics that seem most important are those that reflect class or status, tastes, social influences and family structure. However, we are left with trying to explain why these characteristics are connected with city/ urban life. Using the descriptive expo-factor survey method and a systematic randomized sampling method, the causes and effects of crime in the city of Warri were examined. The results revealed that crime rate in Warri metropolis was not only higher than in it's environs but it was also on the increase. In addition, the results showed that migration into Warri metropolis was spurred by the search for jobs. However, the city was unable to meet all its' employment needs and as a result unemployment with a response rate of 58.8% out of five variables topped the list of causes of crime. This paper therefore recommends that the government of Nigeria should de-emphasize 'certificates' and put more emphasis on skill and handwork, as well as large scale mechanized farming.

1. Introduction

In recent times and in several parts of the world, everybody has become interested in crime because it is a social problem, an epidemic disease that attacks the rights of individuals and groups. Crime has become a hot debate in the agenda of most nations yet it does not seem to be on the decline, rather it is on the increase. The value system of a society defines what is criminal. As a result, the rate, type, cause, and effect on each society or community may differ widely. Crime has been defined in various ways Marshall and Clark (1952) defined crime as "any act or omission prohibited by public law for the protection of the public and punishable by state in a judicial proceeding in its own name." Similarly, Tappan (1960) defined crime as "an instrumental act or omission in violation of criminal law, committed without justification and sanctioned by the state as felony or misdemeanor".

Again, Clinard (1974) wrote that crime refers to those activities which break the law of the land and are subject to official punishment after conviction. It has been shown that in Nigeria criminal act is influenced by societal disposition and psychological instinct that is inherent in man (Lagos State Government of the Federal Republic Nigeria). The Nigerian society places great emphasis on material wealth and as a result, it's youths are becoming prone to deviant behavior which is the first step away from the accepted norms of a society or an institution. Urbanization, the worship of money rather than honor and achievement, as well as the 'copy-cat' syndrome have been named amongst others as causes of crime in Nigeria (Igbenovia, 2003). Types of crime that have been identified range from petty – theft to violent crimes such as assault, kidnapping, murder and terrorism (in the most recent times). Violent crimes have been defined as crimes against persons (Clinard 1974, Nkpa, 1994, Schaefer and Lamn, 1995).

City growth is usually equated with urbanization. The urban revolution a process by which agriculturalists living in villages and towns first came to form larger, more complex civilized societies seem to have occurred essentially independently at different times in several areas of the world. The effect of the revolution was to bring a new set of social and economic institutions decisively and relatively rapidly into dominance.

Industrialization, specialization, and economic development are related to the theories of urbanization. Henshin (2008) observed that the industrial revolution stimulated rapid transportation and communication, and allowed people, resources, and products to be moved efficiently (all essential factors on which large cities depend). Urbanization has been defined (Mabagunje, 1964) as a process whereby people from different places migrate to a given geographical area, thereby increasing the population density of such an area. Falen (1972) wrote that urbanization can be demographically described as "the percentage of a nation's total population living in an urban area".

Louis Wirth in Otite, (1994) defined a city as "a relatively large and permanent settlement of social heterogeneous individuals". Though urbanization is good for promoting growth of industries and development in the economy of society, as observed by Krivo and Peterson (1996), it may also encourage crime since crime normally occur in large cities and in urbanized areas. In rural areas due to lower population density, criminals have less chances of hiding themselves because people know each other which is not the case with the urban settings. The argument is that there are fewer chances of arrest and recognition (Glaeser and Sacerdde 1996).

Warri metropolis is located in Delta State of Nigeria, on the northern bank of the Warri River in the western part of the Niger Delta. It covers an area of about 914 sq km and is presently the administrative headquarters of Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State. Warri has been an administrative headquarters from the time of the British colonial administration. Despite its history of ethnic wrangling/conflicts, by 1960, Warri had emerged as an urban centre compared with similar towns and provincial headquarters in Nigeria such as Lagos, Benin, Calabar and Port Harcourt, and like these towns could boast of a good port and some basic infrastructures and social amenities like modern markets, telephone services, electricity and portable drinking water.

The major inhabitants of Warri Township are the Urhobos, the Ijaws and the Itsekiris. The Urhobos (by one Oral tradition) migrated from Oghara and Agbar-Otor (i.e. the Agbasas of Warri). Another oral tradition suggests that they migrated from Benin while the Ijaws and the Itsekiris migrated from the Creek areas of the River Niger and the Benin River. Emigrants from the neighboring local government areas (especially as a result of rural – urban migration) also live within the township but as visitors or tenants. These include the Okpe speaking people, the Ukwuanis, the Ikas, Ibos, Isokos, Hausas, and people from other states of the federation. Again, as a result of the establishment of companies like the Shell Petroleum Oil Company, Chevron, Total, Elf, and others, foreign nationals are also resident in Warri Township. The numerous ethnic groups that cut across local, state, and international boundaries account for the dense or congested population witnessed in Warri Township today as an urban city. Thus, Warri developed not only into a well known industrial centre in the south of Nigeria, but also became a fast growing centre for trade and commerce. It has so much influence over the surrounding suburbs and in fact can be described as a metropolis Henslin (2008) describes a metropolis as "a central city surrounded by smaller cities and their suburbs" to which it is linked by transportation and communication and connected economically and sometimes politically.

Today, Warri is an urban industrialized city with available natural and human resources, high level of incentives to workers by the multinational oil companies, available industrial spare parts, market forces and economic transactions at will and much other potentials. These facts serve as motivational factors to people including the criminally minded. In this regard, distinction in standards of living becomes a primary concern of people in the area, who are fortunate in their endeavors. But for the less fortunate or the low in-come earners or the have-nots, they 'stick' to or become prone to anti-social or criminal behavior so as to forcefully acquire the standard or status of the rich. In other words, materialism becomes the dictate of life.

Judging from available policy crime records (Division a Police Station GRA Warri) on crime rates in Warri town and its environs, the level of crime rate in Warri is much higher than in the environs which are also smaller in terms of size, population land mass, industrial layout, and composition. Galvin (2002) and Gaviria and Pages (2002) pointed out that as urbanization increases, so does crime. Therefore, one may argue that not only is more urbanization an indicator of higher crime rate but also (because it is one of the major factors responsible for city growth), that as cities grow so also do crime rates.

Crime in Cities

The city or urban community is often likened to the uncontrolled growth of urban settlement and several writers have re-affirmed the importance of crime prevention in urban areas.

Broom and Selzmick (1968) wrote that the distinctive feature of the mode of living of a man in the modern age is his concentration into gigantic aggregations around which cluster lesser centers and from which radiate the ideas and practices that we call civilization. According to them, adaptation to city life is thought to produce distinctive attitudes and traits. The urbanite has been characterized by his sophisticated and cosmopolitanism, his rationality and matter-of-factness, and reserve in social relations. Obviously, this characterization is partly caricature and no one urban personality is identifiable because of the wide variation among areas, occupations, and backgrounds. However, the large numbers, the density, and the diversity of people in a city necessarily affect personality and social relations. The urbanite sees many strangers with whom he has only brief inter-personal contacts. While he is physically close to a large number of people, he is socially close to few. Wirth (1938) championed the view that city life shapes city dwellers by creating an urban 'consciousness', a distinctive way of thinking about and a unique awareness of their surroundings.

He identified three distinctive elements which play a role in the shaping process as, large numbers of people, high density and the heterogeneous social characteristics found in cities. As a consequence of these characteristics, cities are highly depersonalizing places where kinship ties are weak and community identity fades. "Given the thousands of people and hundreds of settings that urban dwellers face each day it is not surprising that they respond with impersonality and emotional distance. Again due to heterogeneity, neighborhoods might be highly segregated along racial, ethnic religious or socio-economic lines" (Wirth 1938). However, Gans (1972) argued that urban life did not have a uniform impact on people and that the impact of the city on a particular person depended on the group to which that person belonged. Thus, social characteristics such as age, sex, income, education, and social or ethnic group membership are critical factors affecting peoples adaptation to cities.

Fisher (1973) has attempted a synthesis of Wirth's and Gan's positions. He recognizes that the social characteristics considered important by Gans-race, sex, income level and so on - play significant roles in shaping the variety of lifestyles that emerge in cities. Though he also argues that the variables considered central by Wirth-size, identity and heterogeneity - are important lending an intensity to sub cultural groups that is not usually found in rural areas. In an urban setting, anonymity can be a source of freedom from the curious eyes of one's neighbors. People are freer, to pursue life styles that may be frowned upon in smaller towns (Glasser et al, 2000). Banfield (1970), sees the poor as the cause of urban problems. As he puts it, so long as the city contains a sizeable lower class, nothing basic can be done about its most serious problems. He identifies situational factors as the number of police available and the size of payroll as incentives to crime.

The probability that one will commit crime rests on his prowess to crime and this is determined by prosperity and incentive. Eitzn (1974) writes that given the propensity for alienation, hostility, and lack of ego strength among the poor, there are three ways in which the individual poor react to or copes with the conditions in which he/she finds himself/herself. He identified these conditions as follows: (1).Accommodation (2). Avoidance (3). Aggression in the sense that some individuals respond openly by attacking the system. This may take the form of participating in revolutionary or reform organisations, threats, complaints, destruction of property or theft. In general then, any repressed (the poor in this case) has three basic responses. They can put up with the evasive situation, they can withdraw from it, or they can fight it. Goode (1984) on his part explained that migrants who come into cities with much hopes and expectations for finding economic opportunities to their greatest dismay experience unemployment, and a squatting life in areas of lack of good or adequate supply of water and sanitary facilities. Yet these cities continue to grow. Berry (1967) also supported this view when he said that associations exist between the level of economic development of a country and the degree to which the country is urbanized. Clinard (1974) observed that "increasing urbanization has almost everywhere, whether in the United States, Latin America, Africa or Asia, been accompanied by a marked increase in various forms of deviant behaviour". In other words, the difference in deviancy between the rural and urban population lies in the increase of crime and delinquency rate during the process of industrialization which involves a host of other processes such as modernization and urbanization, He identified four stages of socio-cultural change, each bearing on deviance in the process of modernization. The first stage is that of tribal culture whereby delinquency is either absent or minimal. In this case, family and community control is responsible for prevention of crime.

The second stage is when we record rapid modernization and crime and juvenile delinquency becomes more pronounced, since urbanization an association of modernization destroys family cohesion and increasing growth of cities force a great number of juveniles out of the traditional cultural control.

The third stage denotes the offshoot of educational and economic security and social services which help to ensure conformity among youths and leads to reduction in the level of criminal and delinquent acts. Finally, the fourth stage is the manifestation of new and unfamiliar forms of adolescent behaviour. This is as a result of higher needs and anxieties arising from formal social control.

A more elaborate work has been done by Cohen (1955) where he identified six propositions as to why urbanization is associated with deviance as embodied in the social conception of crime. He saw urban life as influencing its inhabitants when comparison is made with the rural folk society. The propositions are as follows: Firstly, the fact that individualism is more pronounced in a city, calls for personal choice which in turn leads to a tendency to violate the law. Secondly, as a result of culture heterogeneity and conflict, there arises the need and opportunity for deviance. This can explain the crime rates obtained or observed in areas undergoing both racial and religious transition. Thirdly, in the relatively free association and interaction which modernization and urbanization encourages, the diffusion of deviant traits also neglects legitimate norms. Fourthly, the concept of mobility and social change creates avenue for moral and legal changes in urban areas which results in moral ambiguity. Fifthly, deviance also has been favoured by the presence of wealth in cities. In other words, availability of property motivates criminal conduct.

Prosperity means more opportunities for theft. It elevates criminal statistics. Cohen also argues that the formal administration in urban areas is responsible for increasing the awareness of the amount of crime in existence. In other words, the larger the police force and the more organized, equipped and efficient they are, the greater the volume of crime it will be able to detect. Cousine and Paul (1979) observed that crime rate in American urban centers exceeds that of the rural areas. In agreement with Durkheim, they believed that self destruction is also apt to be associated with urbanism and urban areas are associated with higher suicide rates than rural areas. In fact, as identified by Hees (1986), the development of modern cities has had an enormous impact, not only on habit and modes of behaviour but on patterns of thought and feeling. From the beginning of large urban agglomerations, in the 18th century, views about the effects of cities on social life have been polarized and remain so today. Some saw cities as representing "civilized virtue", the fount of dynamism and cultural creativity and others branded the city as a smoking inferno thronged with aggressive and mutually distrustful crowds, riddled with crime, violence and corruption (Hees 1986).

On his part, Igun (1981) mentioned that increasing unemployment and under-employment in agriculture and in the cities are caused by insufficient productive equipment and resources for labour to work with; these are compounded by lack of education and training on the part of the labour force, strikes, violence, subversion and economic frustrations which manifest themselves in various kinds of social and political unrest. Johnson (1973) in his analysis of social problems, takes urban society as the central theme, and argues that poverty, crime, health care, drug abuse, environmental erosion, technical unemployment, and social problems are rational in their impact on a society marked by urbanization and in the resources which must be mobilized to deal with them. Urbanization has raised a central question. In the light of the concentration of diverse population in relatively small geographical spaces, how can a sense of community be engendered to link the individual in society to the overall organization upon which he is functionally dependent but from which he is psychologically distant?
One irony of history, Moris declares, is that social "progress" carries with it the seeds of a greater volume of criminal behaviour" (Moris and Hawkins, 1970).

Disturbed by the increasing tide of delinquency, representatives of the 'under-developed' nations asked him how they might curb this trend, and he advised them to reject the techniques for building a modern nation. Their people should remain 'ignorant, bigoted and ill-educated' (Moris and Hawkins (1970). The development of efficient communication and transportation systems should be avoided to ensure that the villagers would remain isolated all their lives,; Schools should not provide hope that children can rise above their father's level of achievement. He concludes that as legitimate opportunities increase, so also do illegitimate opportunities. In short, the fundamental characteristics and by-products of urbanization would have to be avoided and the benefits of advanced technology would have to be given up. There is no doubt that the urban environment raises social needs for law enforcement and provide a setting appropriate for public strategies. However, it also creates difficulties for effective law enforcement. The crime problem is conceived largely in terms of the violent offences of homicide, forcible rape, and various other sex transgressions. Special concern over violent crime is justified by the high priority given to physical security and the protection of sex and family life among the fundamental values. Nevertheless, only 8 percent of all arrests reported by the police are for these crimes.

Other kinds of crime constitute the primary workload of the system of criminal justice. Approximately 70 percent of reported arrests are for rimes suggesting personal dis-organization, drunkenness, drunk driving and disorderly conduct alone comprises about 22 percent of reported arrests, larceny theft, burglary, break-entering and automobile theft comprise 16 percent (Johnson, 1973). Crime statistics in Asaba, Warri, and Sapele also indicate that crimes committed in these cities include kidnapping, armed robbery and activities of 419 dupes. They suggest that it may well be that lower working.

City Growth and Problems in Nigeria

Glaeser and Sarcodote (1999) explained that 45-60% of the urban crime effect can be related to observable characteristics of individuals and cities. Writers such as Mabogunje view urbanization in Nigeria as a development spread over a wide technological spectrum from pre-industrial to industrial. As national income rises, we can expect an increasing substantial drift towards modern industrial technology which is bound to have great impact on the character of Nigerian cities. However, the effectiveness of this impact will be partly conditioned by the extent of the survival of the pre-industrial past. The larger this survival, the less effective the modern impact. This of course is the short term view. It is possible that in the long-run assuming a progressively per capita income the position will change for most of the urban centres irrespective of the extent of the survival from the pie-industrial past. So far, the impact of modern technological development on Nigerian cities have been very dramatic and often less easy to assimilate, in short while it has served to transform medieval European cities, its effect in Nigeria so far has been to create twin-cities-one traditional and one modern. The interaction between these two provides the really exciting basis for understanding urban forms and functions in Nigeria.

Mabogunje (1981) further explains the nature of Nigeria's urban problem. According to him, urbanization as a process of human agglomeration in multi-functional settlements of relatively substantial size is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria and can be traced to the last millennium for some parts of the country. What is new however, is the growing failure of these centers to fulfill much of the expectations both of those who live in them and those who have to depend on them for services. 'This failure of Nigerian urban centers can be categorized under four heads: "employment, livability, manageability, and serviceability".

With respect to employment, it is now common knowledge that the rate of urban unemployment in Nigeria has been increasing at a rather alarming rate (Aubi et al, 2004). A labour force survey of 1966/67 showed that whilst the overall unemployment rate for the country was only 1.7 percent that for the urban areas was as high as 8 percent. Nearly 70% of the unemployed had no previous working experience and one can assume that most of them are young school leavers in search of new employment opportunities. In the context of Nigeria, it is always important to stress that urban centers with these high rates of unemployment include not only the rapidly growing industrial centers but also the stagnating pre-colonial traditional cities which are even now only marginally integrated into the spatial economy. Such cities have no viable economic base and although they have already lost much of their youthful population, they still contain a sizeable proportion of people who are unemployed or those who have to eke out a living.

The issue of livability has become very pressing of late, especially with the increasing environmental deterioration in the large metropolitan centers. It involves not only living conditions but also ease of circulation in the city. Both in the rapidly growing industrial areas and the stagnating traditional centers, living conditions have been worsening over the years. In the former, there is a tremendous presence of population on limited facilities and this is manifested in the growth of squatters settlements, over-crowded habitation, breakdown of waste disposal arrangements, inadequate water and power supply and generally poor environmental sanitation. In the latter, the reverse is the case. Onokerhoraye (1995) identified the high level of rural-urban migration to the city of Benin consequently the town is characterized by a relatively high percentage of newcomers, the presence of a large number of young people, the sometimes large number of temporary migrants and ethnic differentiation. One major problem associated with these characteristics relates to the fact that many inhabitants in the town integrate poorly with the new environment. As a result, there are high rates of crime, separation of families, increased instability in marriage and family life, conflict among ethnic groups and juvenile delinquency.

Theory

Sociologists have attempted to describe and explain the redistribution of crime by geographical area. Members of the "Chicago School' applied the concept of ecology to the growth of cities and argued that behaviour could be explained in terms of the urban environment. In particular, they argued that the growth of cities produced distinctive neighborhoods each with its own characteristic style of life. Shaw and Mckay (1942) applied this perspective to the study of deviance. They divided the city of Chicago into fire zones drawn at two-mile intervals and radiating outwards in concentric circles from the central business district and examined the rate of crime for each delinquency from the juvenile court. They discovered that the delinquency rate steadily decreased from zone I. The area surrounding the central business district to zone v on the outskirts of the city. Their method was applied to a number of American cities and produced similar results.

Shaw and Mckay explain their results in the following way. Zone I is a 'zone of transition'. It has a relatively high rate of population turnover. There are two main reasons for this. First, rural migrants to the city usually begin their urban life in zone I. They often have little money and zone I provides the cheapest accommodation. It is the typical inner city slum. Many migrants move out to higher income areas once they have become established, so making room for new arrivals. The expansion of the central business district into the zone of transition provides the second reason for high population turnover: This produced population movement as the business district 'invades' former residential areas. They reason that these processes of city growth explain the high concentration of crime and delinquency in the zone of transition.

They also argue that a high rate of population turnover prevents the formation of a stable community and results in social disorganization. Indications of social disorganization include delinquency, prostitution, gambling, illegal drug use, a high consumption of alcohol, violence and broken families, behaviour which is characteristic of the zone of transition. Such behavior can flourish because in an area of shifting population social controls such as gossip, public opinion, public surveillance, and parental control are not sufficiently strong to prevent the development of deviant norms and values.

Atubi and Onokala (2004) noted that efficient transportation provides mobility for the populace and the movement of goods and services in the area. They also observed that as a result there is a growing congestion in Warri. People migrate from the rural areas around Warn into the city of Warn in search of jobs or better life styles. Settlement areas are usually the inner city slums like Okere, Agbasa, and Maciva. These areas have relatively high rates of population turnover. Often times these persons come in with little money and they find the cheapest accommodation in these slum areas. Those who find jobs or get established in business move out to higher income areas like the G.R.A, Okumagba Layout, etc. This makes room for the arrival of new migrants. There is a continuous shifting population. The central business centre of the metropolis has also expanded into these areas (e.g. Okere market). The central business centre of Warn is Warri-Sapele Road.

As a result, no stable community is formed and there is no room for the formation of strong social ties, In other words, norms and values that direct or control behaviour are neither formed nor internalized. There is no opportunity for such and this creates social disorganization and alienation. Henslin (2008) observed that "if you know urban life, you know that impersonality and self interest are ordinary characteristics of the city and that these characteristics are carried to extremes." The individual has more freedom to act in any manner he chooses during the 'time gap' between the initial entry point and the point at which he gets established. Again the migrants who are unable to get legitimate jobs for a long time may get frustrated and use illegitimate means to get to the goal of better lifestyles. Organized crimes such as armed robbery, gambling, prostitution, violence (assault) kidnapping, oil bungkering, '419', theft and assassinations are most likely to thrive in those zones of transition.

Method

The expo-facto survey research method was adopted in this study. A large number of people in Warn were systematically questioned about their opinions, attitudes or behaviours to find out how they think, feel and act concerning crime. The research instrument used was the questionnaire.

1. Ekurede Itsekiri
2. Edjeba
3. Ogunnu
4. lgbudu

5. Odion (Makiava)
6. Ogbe ljoh
7. G.R.A. (NPA); (b) A' Division Police Station.

Samples of 450 subjects were selected based on probability sampling method. This was to ensure that each of the units within the population had equal chance of being selected. In selecting the sample of 450 subjects, stratified random sampling procedure was applied. Thirty-five persons were selected out of each of the selected ten population units in Ward South Local Government Area (with the exception of Okere Prisons and A' Division Police Station). A systematic random sample was drawn from each of the strata. The systematic sampling included persons from poor, working class or wealthy homes, victims, criminals, the police as well as the literate and the illiterate. It also included males and females of the Christian and other religions and of various educational levels. They were served questionnaires and interviewed personally by the researcher and their views were used as the true measure of crime in Warn city. 50 persons were selected from Okere Prisons and 'A' Division Police station respectively. Data collected were analysed using simple percentage statistics.

Findings

The following were some of the findings of the study

1. Unemployment is the major cause of crime in the city of Warri.
2. There is a significant relationship between urbanization and industrialization and the increasing crime rates in the growing city of Warri
3. The crime control instrument has failed to some extent.
4. Youth unrest and violence, armed robbery and car theft are the most common crimes in Warri.
5. There is a strong evidence of White-collar crime in Warri
6. The Socio-economic life of the dwellers is negatively affected by its increasing crime rate.
7. Most crimes committed in Warri are committed by Youths within the age group of 13-25 years.

Conclusions

This research concludes that Warn metropolis is still experiencing a steady stream of urbanization and as a result, crime will continue to be on the increase and at an alarming rate. The study revealed that out of 400 respondents interviewed, 240 (60%) opinion rated that crime rates have risen by approximately 50% and above since their stay in Warn. 337 (82.7%) respondents out of the 400 given questionnaires have lived in Warn for at least 17 years. Ethnic conflict and violence, fueled by strong intra-group social capital and weak intra-group social capital may hinder economic growth and the effectiveness of urban governments in areas like Warn where multiple ethnic groups are present. There is no doubt that the rising rate of crime in the city calls for greater concern than has already been exhibited.

With the example of Warn metropolis, this research finally concludes that the nature of Nigerian cities create crime. The most notable aspect of this is the urbanizing nature and process that is associated with other factors which germinate or generate crime. It is argued that, as urbanization increases, so does crime (Galvin 2002:130). It is therefore obvious that the way out for our cities as far as crime is concerned is to continue to create highly sophisticated and effective as well as practical measures for crime; and to improve on the old ones. It is also necessary to 'fight' corruption. Also noteworthy however, is the fact that the fight is to effectively and practically control crime (that is ensuring a higher degree of effective control) and not to wipe out crime because crime is an integral part of cities.

Recommendations

1. The various efforts by various governments to create new jobs for the jobless are noteworthy. But these efforts must not only be continued but must be increased.
2. Equal access to gainful employment for all irrespective of level/class in terms of affluence, wealth, power etc must be ensured or guaranteed.

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