

CRIME WAVES AND IMPLICATIONS ON SUSTAINABILITY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Crime is now a serious and popular phenomenon that needs to be tackled by every Nigerian, for it has become a bug that must be killed. Crime has become a bad phenomenon threatening the National security and even the world at large. The act of crime of any kind is being as desirable a time as some analyst argue, even some leaders patronize the act but it has grown to be a big problem facing mankind today. It therefore calls for attention in order to eliminate or at least minimize its repeated occurrence and devastating impact to human existence. Crime is eating deeper and wider the fabric of Nigerian society. People move around with fear and anxiety. Nigeria's daily newspapers are in some respects crime bulletin. Crime constitutes a major realm of societal concern, a specter which booms over larger in the pre-occupations of the State and its agencies and in the lives and perception of ordinary people. Against this background, this paper will attempt to define the concept of crime, types of crime, causes of crime, implications of crime on the Society and the measures to curb crime.

Key words: Crime, Crime waves, implication and measures for sustaining National Development

• Introduction

Crime, which has not been a serious and popular phenomenon to be tackled by our leaders, has become a bad phenomenon threatening the National security, a bug that must be killed. The bombing that occurred at Nyanyan motor park in Abuja on the 14th of April 2014, where hundreds of people were killed, the recent Jos bombing that occurred on the 20th of May this year, where several people lost their lives and the various attacks in different parts of this country has touched the psyche of humanity and wiped up sympathy and elucidated support from the citizens to fight crime as a common enemy. Crime has grown to be a big problem facing mankind today, it therefore

calls for attention in order to eliminate or at least minimize its repeated occurrence and devastating impact on human existence.

Modern societies of the world today is replete with stories of proven incidence of moral degeneration and laxities, cases of delinquency and wanton crime of inhumanity against humanity. Being a subject of socio-scientific study in Nigeria, crime manifests this problem in a more aggravated manner. The mass media serve up a regular diet of stories of rising crime vulnerable victims and uncaring offenders. The success of the police in dealing with the crime problem in general and with particular varieties of criminals and criminal activities comes under even more focused scrutiny. The seriousness of armed robbery forced the government to enact law which made death penalty for anyone found guilty of the offence. The ongoing attacks of Boko haram is a big monster terrorizing the country. Thousands of people had lost their lives as a result of the various bombings and shootings by this sect. The security agents that were to protect lives and properties of the citizens, many of them were killed during these attacks. The question bordering the minds of Nigerians is ‘who will deliver us from this monster called Boko haram’?

Crime wave refers to an increase in crime or perception of an increase in crime in a particular period and place. It means a sudden increase in the number of crimes committed in a country or area. The killings, rape, kidnappings are an ill wind which is not blowing no one any good. People now go about their normal activities in fear and trembling. There is virtually no safer place in the country. Bombings, raping, ritualism, armed robbery and other various criminal activities are here and there in the country. The objective of this paper is to

1. Explain the meanings of crime;
2. Explain the various types of crime;
3. Explain some of the causes of crime;
4. Explain the implications of crime in the society and
5. Suggest possible measures to curb crime in the society.

2. Concepts and Theoretical Framework

Crime as a concept is a relative term; for what is viewed and defined in one society as crime may not be so defined in another. Even in a society, what is viewed and defined as crime at some point in time may not be

defined as crime in another. Nonetheless, crime is an anti social behavior. It is an action or omission that constitutes an offence that may be prosecuted by the State and is punishable by law. It is an action or an instance of negligence that is deemed injurious to the public welfare or morals or to the interests of the State.

Giddens (2005) defines crime as any mode of behavior which breaks a law. In this sense, crime refers only to non-conformist conduct that breaks a law. The nature of behavior regarded as criminal, the relative seriousness of different crimes and the ways in which criminal activities are punished by State authorities has changed significantly over the years because of the changing trend from traditional societies to modern social systems. It is to be noted however that a crime may not necessarily cause public harm before it can be so defined e.g. homosexual relations.

Crime is used to mean an act or mode of behavior acted at a particular time in a particular place which breaks the law of a particular society in a particular time. Crime can also be defined as an act of violation of a penal law prohibiting such an act and imposing a penalty for the commission of it. (Abogunrin , 1994). Crimes refers primarily to an offence of public nature, to wrongs committed directly or indirectly against the society in its own name through judicial proceedings brought by the representatives of public interest.

Haralambos, (2004), defines crime as an inevitable and normal aspect of social life. Crime is present in all types of society; indeed, the crime rate is higher in the more advanced, industrialized countries. According to him, crime is an integral part of all healthy societies. It is inevitable because not every member of society can be equally committed to the collective sentiments (the shared values and moral beliefs) of society. Since individuals are exposed to different influences and circumstances, it is not 'impossible for all to be alike'. Therefore not everyone is equally reluctant to break the law. Webster's New Explorer Encyclopedic Dictionary(2006), defines crime as an act or the commission of an act that is forbidden or the omission of a duty that is commanded by a public law and that makes the offender liable to punishment by that law ; especially a gross violation of law. Crime refers to a great offence especially against morality. From the viewed point of the sociologist, crime has been defined as an act that is usually harmful or that is believed to be socially harmful by a group that has the power to enforce its beliefs and that places such an act under the ban of positive penalties.

Different theories have been propounded to explain crime. Some of these include differential association, labeling, conflict, structural and sub cultural theories. For the purpose of this paper, conflict theories will be applied.

Karl Marx did not write in detail about crime, it was later writers that are working within a Marxist framework that developed a Marxist theory of crime. Crime is seen from this perspective as the product of capitalism, with criminal behavior indicative of the contradictions and problems inherent in the capitalist system. The basic motivation of capitalism, such as the emphasis on materialism and self enrichment, encourage self interest, anti-social, criminal behavior. A Marxist understanding of crime begins with the recognition that crime is a material problem. Haralambos (2004) explained that many Marxist see crime as a natural outgrowth of capitalist society. They argue that a capitalist economic system generates crime for some reasons. Firstly, the economic infrastructure is the major influence upon social relationships, beliefs and values. Secondly, the capitalist mode of production emphasizes the maximization of profits and the accumulation of wealth. Thirdly, economic self interest rather than public duty motivates behavior. Fourthly, capitalism is based on the private ownership of property. Fifthly, personal gain rather than collective wellbeing is encouraged.

Capitalism is a competitive system. Mutual aid and co-operation for the betterment of all are discouraged in favour of individual achievement at the expense of others and competition breeds aggression, hostility and particularly for the losers, frustration. Conflict theorists focuses on how crime against people and property which are mostly committed by low status people, are often punished with prison sentences while crimes by people of higher status, such as embezzlement or fraud tend to be treated more leniently. Nothing was heard again about the allegation of fraud and mismanagement of fund by the former minister of petroleum resources, Mrs Diezani Allison Madueke. This may be due to the fact that she was occupying a high status in the society as a minister. Crime is a potent symbol of the antisocial nature of capitalism. All history involving capitalism is the history of class struggle. (Giddens2005).The meaning of crime changes as capitalism develops. Crime is to be understood as part of capitalist development. This theory can be rightly applied to crime of all types. The greed, selfinterest and hostility generated by the capitalist system motivate many crimes on all levels of society. Members of each stratum use whatever means and opportunities their class position provides them to commit crime. In higher income brackets, lawyers, businessmen and politicians have more effective means at their disposal to grab a larger share of the cake while in low income areas, the prostitutes use whatever they have to get what they can. Given the nature of Nigerian society, crime is rational. Competition is the order of the day and individual must fend themselves in order to survive. Crime then represents rational response to the competitiveness and inequality of life in capitalist society. Thus some engage in armed robbery in order to survive, they use force to collect goods and properties from people. People in higher income brackets, have access to the nation's wealth, so they

use their position to commit crime, e.g. corruption, embezzlement of public funds. They have effective means at their disposal and thereby use it to grab a larger share of the nation's cake. Through its ownership of the means of production, a minority is able to control, command, exploit and enjoy the fruits of the labor of the majority. Since one group gains at the expense of the other, a conflict of interest exists between the minority who owns the means of production and the majority who performs productive labor. Crime is a manifestation of society's material condition.

3. Types of Crimes

Although poorer members of society make up the bulk of the prison population, engaging in criminal activities is by no means confined to them. Many wealthy and powerful people carry out crimes, whose consequences can be much farther-reaching than the often petty crimes of the poor. (Giddens, 2005). The different types of crime include organized crime, violent crime, corporate crime, conventional crime, white collar crime and victimless crime. For the purpose of this paper, organized crime, violent crime and white collar crime will be discussed.

White-collar crime

According to Haralambos (2004), Edwin Sutherland was the first sociologist to study what has come to be known as white collar crime. He defines white collar crime as crimes committed by persons of high social status and respectability in the course of their occupations. Such crimes include bribery and corruption in business and politics, misconduct by professionals such as doctors and lawyers, the breaking of trade regulations, food and drug laws and the manufacture or sale of dangerous products. Giddens (2005), distinguished between white collar crime and crimes of the powerful. He stated that white collar crime mainly involves the use of middle class or professional position to engage in illegal activities while crime of the powerful refers to those in the authority conferred by a position is used in criminal ways- as when an official accepts a bribe to favour a particular policy. The cost of white collar crime is enormous. Some of its forms affect much larger number of people than lower class criminality. Tainted foods or drugs sold illegally can affect the health of many and might lead to fatalities.

Violent Crime

This refers to any avoidable action that constitutes a violation of a human right in its widest meaning or which prevents the fulfillment of a basic human need. This relies on the principle that, for each fundamental human need, there should be a corresponding human right entitled to legal protection. Most people think of violence in a narrower contest, equating it with images of war, murder or riot. Violence comes in many

more forms. It includes accidental outbreak of violence as well as patterns of structural violence inherent in the daily operation of an institution, for example, sexual discrimination at work, or a whole society. Violence is abstractly prohibited by the criminal law as well as by the moral values of the society. It involves the conventional acts of murder, assault, rape, maltreatment and kidnapping.

Organized Crime

Organized crime refers to those activities that are illegal. It is a continuing conspiracy to gain money and power without regard for law by utilizing economic and physical force, public and private corruption, in an extension of the free enterprises system. According to Giddens (2005), precise information about the nature of this crime is difficult to obtain. The objective of this type of crime is to serve the interest of the thousands who have organized themselves into criminal enterprises. It embraces illegal gambling; drug trafficking, prostitution and large scale theft among other activities. Extensive criminal networks exist in some societies. Some of which have international connection. Organized crime operates outside the law most of the time and it often provided a way of channeling disadvantages minorities into remunerated but illegal enterprises. It provides illegal services and products to business, government and the public.

4. Causes and Implications of crime on National Development

Scholars in the field of criminology as well as interested observers of the crime problem have recognized that the type of socio-economic order which a country operates dictate, more or less, the type magnitude and seriousness of that country's crime problem. Thus, one finds that in socialist countries, the crime problem is dominated by drinking, drug and sexual offences that are manifestations of a rather rigid and controlling social order. One of those factors that can lead to crime is deprivation. Deprivation will only lead to crime where it is experienced as relative deprivation. (Haralambos2004). A group experiences relative deprivation when it feels deprived in comparison to other similar groups, or when its expectations are not met. Ethnic minorities today feel more deprived than they did in the past. Rising crime is partly the result of rising expectations for high standards of living, combined with restricted opportunities to achieve this success because of unemployment. Relative deprivation is experienced in all strata. Anybody can feel deprived and crime can, therefore, occur anywhere in the social structure and at any period, affluent or otherwise. It can explain the theft of luxuries as well as necessities, and crimes committed by white collar criminals who crave the lifestyles of those better off than themselves. It can also help to explain violent crime. Relative deprivation can cause frustration, which in turn can cause violence.

Marginalization can also cause crime. Marginal groups in society are those which lack organizations to represent their interests in political life. They are particularly prone to the use of violence and riots as forms

of political action. Also, unfavorable family milieu is one of the most important factors with an adverse influence on the child. Constant clashes between parents have a marked psychological effect on the child and may force him to leave home and seek satisfaction outside. The vicious home may cause emotional disturbances which find their outlet in crime. Furthermore, the association between unemployment and crime is a well established one, even though is not confined to the unemployed. The degradations of unemployment hinder an immense number of people from conforming to social norms; they cannot engender courage to resist the temptations of crime. The devil they say finds work for an idle hand. This may explain in part while many people especially the youths engage in various types of crimes like kidnapping, and they demand a huge amount of money as ransom before the victim can be released.

Poverty is another root cause of crime; even though crime is not confined to the poor. The disadvantages of poverty, the experience of want, push some people in to criminal activities. Ojesina, (1995), maintained that poverty is the root cause of many social evils. The sudden wealth of anyone who comes to power also encourages crime in Nigeria. Many of the politicians divert public funds into their own pockets apart from the fact that they get millions of naira as allowances. Delegates of the last Confab that was held in Nigeria got millions of naira as allowances after their deliberations (three million naira per month and twelve million naira for three months)! The professors in our higher institutions of learning do not earn as much as this per month. The motive of many of these politicians craving for power is not to serve the people but they see politics as an opportunity or an avenue where they can amass wealth. This partly accounts for the incessant killings in the country. Anybody that is seen as a threat to their political ambition may be killed or eliminated. According to Akeredolu (1982), there are those few who are wealthy with enough houses and money to feed the whole population of Gabon and the Gambia, in this same country where there are thousands of people who have the 'freedom' to be poor, be unemployed, go hungry and unable to rent descent room. There is a wide gap between 'social standards' and 'social realities'. The lack of fit between the goals prescribed for all and the uneven distribution of the means to achieve those goals constitute a crime engendering situation.

Any society that is prone to crime is not likely to develop as it is supposed to, because crime is an ill wind which blows no one any good. Crime brings a bad change to the societal structure; it serves as a clog in the wheel of national development. Corruption, which is an aspect of white collar crime, is a growing problem that hobbles and robs poor people of opportunities for economic and social advance. Corruption is a perennial subject of global concern. Gboyega (1996) contends that corruption has always been endemic, pervading all levels of government. Whether in the public or private sector, it is a common place seeing

officials, unto who people's trust are put converting official properties to theirs. Also, the norms and values that are the bed rock of the society are easily destroyed where there is lack of trust and confidence between the leaders and the led. Corruption has also had some negative impact on our national development in the area of job placement. The main criteria for job placement tend to centre on kinship, nepotism and the capacity or ability to offer some form of gratification (Oluwole 2011). Jobs are secure much more by the use of 'connection'. This development is at variance with effective utilization of manpower. Muftau, 2011, said corruption is one of the most hateful sins in the eyes of the creator of the whole universe.

Criminal activities usually lead to a breakdown of law and order, creating a state of insecurity in the country. Nobody feels save, especially this time of Boko haram and bombings. There is the fear that these criminals can strike at anytime, targeting men, women and children, the would be leaders of tomorrow. Hundreds of people were killed at the Nyanyan bomb blast that occurred on the 14th of April 2014. States of Borno, Adamawa, Kaduna, Plateau, Bauchi, experienced bomb blast at different times; leaving hundreds of people dead and many were seriously injured. Many villages were deserted while people were moving around with fear and trembling. The attack on army barrack in Kaduna by these insurgents is a pointer that no place is safe in the country. As a result of insecurity, both foreign and domestic investors are scared away thereby reducing the pace of development in the country. (Shobayo and Leon 2014)

More so, common good which is the working together for the greater benefit of everyone in the community in a democratic society, is being destroyed by criminals. Building of infrastructure is an example of common good; the act of destroying these infrastructures can hinder the development of the society. Public funds that are meant for the development of the society will then be diverted to security, in an attempt to curb or prevent further occurrence, thereby retarding the development in these areas. Furthermore, destruction of lives and properties is unpatriotic, the love and devotion for the country's values and principles is at stake and the unity in diversity is no longer celebrated as strength. Nigeria has now become a society where one can no longer reside freely outside his own ethnic group. (Ajise, 2011). The bombings and killings in some parts of this country had made many people to flee from the troublesome and unsafe places or areas. Also, criminal activities affect adversely the international image of the country. This drives potential investors away and it also affects tourism and the expected national revenue from it. This is so because no one wants to go to unsafe areas. (Ajise 2012)

Crime can demoralize the security forces. This happens when their acts are mostly targeted at the security officials. This is exactly what happens when the police headquarters at Abuja was bombed by suicide bomber on the 17th of June 2011. Prostitution is one of the leading factors that led to the spread of

HIV/AIDS. The government is spending a lot of money on the campaign against AIDS, the money that should be used to develop the nation. Prostitution is an economic waste, because of the effect it has on the family and a waste on the country because the prostitutes will collect money from their clients without paying any tax to the economy. They are seen as socio-economic parasites to the normal economic circle of the nation.

i. Conclusion

The repeated occurrence of crime in the society and the devastating effect it has on its victims has called for a collective, conscious and planned effort to fight it as a bad phenomenon. Crime should be got rid of in a root-and-branch restructuring of society. Crime hinders national development. The perpetrators of these social vices must be brought to book. People who are to contribute immensely to nation building always falls victims of murder, kidnapping and killing. For the nation to develop something should be done to get rid of crime, especially the menace of book haram that has turned many to widows and widowers. Many communities and villages were burnt, some people were abducted, and many villages were deserted in the northern part of this country. In fact, we need urgent help. Crime brings about moral laxity, retardation of progress, growth and development. Hence, justice and fairness must be articulately encouraged to sustain the polity and to promote democratic values for the growth, progress and development of the nation.

This paper has explained what crime is, its types, causes and its implications on the society. Attention is drawn to the fact that crime is a social evil and efforts should be geared up to combat it. For the nation to survive, for peace to reign, for unity to be sustained, crime rate must be reduced to the barest minimum. In order to reduce the rate of crime in the society, the government should create employment opportunities for its citizens so as not to be the devil's workshop. The unemployed man, if gainfully engaged, may not likely to be the devil's workshop. The various agents of socialization, i.e. the family, school, peer group, mass media and religious organizations should awake from slumber. They should inculcate morals into the child early in life. People should fear God and resist evil. Also, government should continue in its struggle to alleviate poverty. Many of those being used to kidnap or hired as an assassin, are unemployed, many of whom cannot fend for themselves, who readily make themselves available to be used.

Attention should also be paid to the rural areas. If these areas are developed, it will reduce the rate of rural-urban migration in search of nonexisting white collar jobs. There should also be more operational and basic research into the problems of crime and criminal administration by those within and without the system of criminal justice. The strongest recommendation of this paper is that criminal activities should be abhorred and discouraged.

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