POLITICAL HOOLIGANISM AND PROGNOSIS OF VIOLENT CRIME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study examined political hooliganism and prognosis of violent crime in Nigeria. It observed that while there has been uptick in violent crime, there are no meaningful efforts to curtail it despite provisions existing within the Nigerian legal framework to combat such crimes. Using documentary research approaches, data were secondarily sourced from journal articles, newspaper publications, textbooks, government publications and internet materials. We found that violent crime has become worrisome and daring in present Nigeria, and this development is traumatic, and increases the pains associated with victims. The study recommended the need for the government to partner with professionals and private sector to create employment opportunities in the society. This can be achieved by implementing visionary and innovative policies and programmes. Also, more funding should be allocated to educational institutions and standard educational facilities should be provided because education enhances the reasoning process and productivity of the citizens.

Keywords: Crime, Political hooliganism, Prognosis, Violent crime, Law enforcement agencies.

Introduction
Violent crime is one of the continuous problems that bedevil the existence of mankind. In Nigeria today, the situation is most highly disturbing since the acts of violent crime have grown to form a major threat to Nigeria’s national security. According to some researchers, a period of social change produces a corresponding pattern of criminal behaviour. Across societies, social
transformations were accompanied by trends of crime (Liu & Messner, 2001; Liu, 2001; Gerber & Hout, 1998; Dutton & Lee, 1993; Lafree & Kick, 1986; Kick & Lafree, 1985).

Since 1999 till date, there has been uptake in violent crimes such as rape, robbery, murder, cultism in addition to newly emerging sectors of criminality like kidnapping, militancy, bunkering and terrorism (Iorhemen & Emmanuel, 2018; John, 2018; Clem, Emmanuel & Nyam, 2017; Amaize & Oyadongha, 2017; Umahi, 2017; Ugwuoke, Ngwu & Iziga, 2016; Ugwuoke, 2015; Eke, 2014). Nigeria is currently witnessing overwhelming increase in violent crime that threatens the foundation upon which the social order is preserved. The incidence of violent crime has constituted policy challenges to the country. Although, no political system is immune from it, the most alarming and scaring is the barbarity, lethargy and trauma that the perpetrators unleash on the hapless citizens. The growing incidents of armed robbery, murder and kidnapping have made the tranquility inherent in accountable political system to be ruined in Nigeria. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2016) observed that “Violent crime wreaks a terrible impact not only on individual victims, their families, and friends but also on nearby residents and the fabric of their neighbourhoods. Exposure to violent crime can damage people’s health and development, and violence can push communities into vicious circles of decay”.

In the words of Ezedike (2011), violent crime undermines the confidence in which social life depends. The rising incidents of armed robbery, assassination and ransom-driven kidnapping are now ravaging the country like a tsunami and spreading a climate of fears and anxieties about public safety (Ukoji & Okolie-Osemene, 2016). For Ogbodo (2012), “The first four years of transitional democracy in the country witnessed perceived and real increase in violent crime and disorder, so much so that safety and security issues ranked very high among citizens priority concerns. Increasing incidence of armed robbery led to a paralyzing fear which in turn affected economic and social life in the country”.

Similarly, the prevalence of violent crimes in Nigeria has cast asterisk on the political will of some of those in the corridors of power in the country to protect the citizens through the instrumentality of the law enforcement agencies, especially the Nigerian Police Force, whom the constitutional responsibility is to maintain law and order. Suffice it to say that a bizarre situation where any government abdicates its sole responsibility in this regard will give room to the emergence of a kind of Hobbesian state where life is solitary, nasty, brutish and short because of nihilism and violence of men (Emeh, 2011).

Overview of Violent Crime in Nigeria Political System

Prior to 1999, violent crime was not as worrisome and daring as it is today which has caused growing concern over increasing trends of it. National Bureau of Statistics (2017) observed that a total of 125,790 cases of offences were reported in 2016. Offence against property has the highest number of cases reported with 65,397 of such cases reported. Offence against persons recorded 45,554 cases reported while offence against lawful authority and local acts recorded the least with 12,144 and 2,695 cases recorded respectively. Lagos State has the highest percentage share of total cases reported with 36.08% and 45,385 cases recorded. FCT
Abuja and Delta State followed closely with 10.48% and 13,181 and 6.25% and 7,867 cases recorded of violent crimes respectively. Katsina State has the lowest percentage share of total cases reported with 0.10% and 120 cases recorded. Abia and Zamfara States followed closely with 0.29% and 364 and 0.38% and 483 cases recorded respectively.

National Bureau of Statistics (2017) further observed that offences against persons are those offences against human beings such as murder, manslaughter, infanticide, concealment of birth, rape and other physical abuse, etc. Offences against properties were those against human belonging: Properties of any kind like stealing, receiving stolen properties, obtaining property by false pretense, robbery, burglary and house breaking while offences against lawful authority are offences committed against any established institution of the law e.g. failure to pay tax to the appropriate authority (National Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

On the part of offense against persons, Lagos State recorded 220 murder cases, 44 armed robbery and 25 kidnap cases with 233 stolen vehicles and items worth N1.4 billion recovered in 2016 (Akoni & Olowoopejo). Similarly, Nigeria recorded 1827 rape cases and 886 kidnapp cases in 2015. This was against 1,959 and 1,788 rape cases that were recorded in 2014 and 2013 respectively. Lagos was on top of the rape record in 2015 with 513 cases, followed by Delta 205; Kano 189; Katsina 120; Ogun 76; Ondo 68 and Edo 55. In the same vein, Rivers State recorded the highest incidents of kidnapping in 2015 with 294 reported cases, followed by Lagos 142; Ebonyi 79; Ekiti 56; Ogun 52; Benue 41; Taraba 24 and Adamawa 38 (Adepegba, 2016).

Atoh (2012) observed that 1,629 murder cases were recorded in 1994. This number steadily increased to 2,120 in 2001 and climbed to a record high of 2,136 in 2003. Such a phenomenal increase of over 75 percent between 1994 and 2003 is worrisome. Armed robbery equally a violent crime was 2,044 in 1994, but rose to 3,889 in 2002 amounting to over a 52 percent increase in less than a decade. Though, there was a reduction in 2015 when 2,241 cases of armed robbery were recorded as against 2,841 and 2,988 that were recorded in 2014 and 2013 respectively (Adepegba, 2016). In 2007, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) recorded 34,738 incidences as crimes against persons and this figure escalated in 2008 to 35,108 incidences (Atoh, 2012).

A cursory look at some of the state level (disaggregated) data in Nigeria is equally worrisome. For instance, in 2002, 52 cases of armed robbery were reported in Abia State; but in 2004, it rose to 176. In Edo State, 71 cases of armed robbery were reported to the police in 2002; the number steadily increased to 144 in 2005 and 163 in 2006. In 2008, the Abia State Police Command recorded a total of 940 criminal cases and arrested 1,275 suspects. It is pertinent to recall that between 2009 and 2010 Aba, the economic hub of Abia State was laid prostrate by the activities of robbers and kidnappers especially through the exploits of the late Obioma Nwankwo (aka Osisikankwu). Lagos which is the commercial nerve center of Nigeria recorded a total of 12,837 criminal cases and arrested 14,996 suspects. In 2010, there were ten incidences of detonation of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and between January 2011 and June 2011 over six incidences of IEDs have been recorded with casualties (Atoh, 2012).
Causes and Consequences of Violent Crime in Nigeria

A day rarely passes without a report of violent crime in Nigeria. Also, many scholars and researchers over the years have continued to explore possible causes of this existential evil. According to Rotimi (2013), ranging from the nation’s economy and resource management, to her political and leadership profile, education and human development the sounds of the themes of justice and equity are long dead. There has been structural violence inflicted by the Nigerian government which touches the very foundation of living of average Nigerians, unsustainable and tough economic policies that harden survival in the country, public lies and unfriendly national responses to issues which anger human discretion - and these among many other immoral actions by the government have forced reprisal responses from Nigerians against the seemingly failing leadership with the resultant effect of rising incidence of violent crime in Nigeria.

Ezedike (2011) observed that the problem of violent crimes in Nigeria has been exacerbated by the high rate of unemployment and economic hardship which has pushed many jobless youths some of whom are university graduates into various deadly crimes. It is paradoxical that while most crimes are promoted by poverty, violent crimes at the same time retard economic development. Economic growth, simply put, is the increase in the standard of living in a nation’s population with sustained growth from a simple, low-income economy to a modern, high income economy. It is obvious that no nation can achieve meaningful economic development in an atmosphere of violent crimes, such as armed robbery, terrorism, arson, militancy and kidnapping (Ezedike, 2011).

Similarly, Odumakin (2017) noted that it is becoming more obvious that due to the high poverty level, Nigerian teenagers and young adults are increasingly getting involved in crime. Although the absence of comprehensive data has made it difficult to determine the level of children’s involvement in crime in the country, reports have continued to indicate that most violent crimes committed in the country are carried out by either young adults or teenagers. The recent post-elections violence in some parts of the North is a clear indication. Most of the suspects were teenagers and young adults. Emeh (2011) observed that the cankerworm of corruption has not only dwarfed the prospects of remarkable economic growth and development in the country, but has also precipitated abject poverty, deprivation, privation, suffering and despondency among the masses that now fuel crime and violence. Emeh further argued that aggravation of the widening gap between “the haves” (the rich) and “the have nots” (the poor) is not only getting out of hand and creating a social rift of “them” and “us” but is also spelling trouble everywhere through crime and criminality, including armed robbery and kidnapping which now threaten the safety of the affluent class in society.

Most Threatening Violent Crime Offences in Nigeria

- **Terrorism:** Nigeria is engulfed with acts of terrorism perpetrated mostly by the Boko-Haram sect which is antithetical to peaceful society. Beginning from 2010, the Boko Haram insurgent and terror group have engaged the Nigerian government in a protracted war of attrition. The fundamental misunderstanding of the terror group and
misinterpretation of its motive by the various interest groups and stakeholders have aided and abetted, if not strengthened, the group and the result has been an intractability of the war (Adamu, 2016).

Aro (2013) noted that since the end of the civil war, no calamity of enormous proportion has befallen the fledging nation – state more than the harrow unleashed by the dreadful sect - “Boko Haram”. Many lives have been lost and property worth billions of naira have been destroyed. Ironically, nobody is insulated from the attack. Government officials and buildings, traditional rulers, police and military formations and Church worshippers are targets. On daily basis, there is panic. More worrisome of the evolving threat of Boko Haram according to Onuoha (2012), is the inclusion of suicide bombing to its violent tactics. Since it mounted the first suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices attack at the Police Headquarters in the Federal Capital city, Abuja, on 16 June 2011, the sect has staged at least six other suicide bombings, with huge death toll and destruction of property resulting from these attacks. For instance, a series of coordinated gun assaults and suicide bombing attacks by the sect on 20 January 2012 in the city of Kano, the capital of Kano state, killed at least 211 people.

Similarly, Boko Haram attacks have not only crippled the Nigerian economy, hindered the socio-political and religious development of the country but potent the biggest challenge to the citizens. Uzodike (2012:91) observed that the group has carried out frequent attacks and bombings using suicide bombers in some cases. Target locations have included police stations, military facilities, Churches, schools, beer halls, newspaper offices, and the United Nations building in Abuja. In addition, the group has assassinated Muslim clerics and traditional leaders in the north for allegedly cooperating with state authorities (Agbiboa 2013b; HRW 2012). In corroborating the aforementioned, Adamu (2016) rightly observed that Boko-Haram insurgency, which has claimed more than 20,000 lives, with a further two million internally displaced persons and crippled the socio-economic life of the people of the Northeast geo-political zone, has often been misunderstood.

**Fulani Herdsmen Attack**: The attack by Fulani herdsmen remains a major issue and biggest security threat in Nigeria after the Boko Haram insurgency. So far, thousands have been killed and many more have been expelled from their homes. Adetula (2016) observed that before now, the herdsmen have been known to wreak havoc in certain communities in Nigeria, but now, the rate at which they commit these crimes has increased exponentially. Similarly, statistics provided by the Institute for Economics and Peace (2015) noted that 1,229 people were killed in 2014, up from 63 in 2013 and Benue State seems to be the hardest hit in recent times. Barely five days to the end of Governor Gabriel Suswam’s administration in May 2015, over 100 farmers and their family members were reportedly massacred in villages and refugee camps located in the Ukura, Per, Gafa and Tse-Gusa Local Government Areas of Benue state. Institute for Economics and Peace further observed that in July 2015, suspected herdsmen attacked Adeke, a
community on the outskirts of the state capital, Makurdi. In December 2015, six persons were killed at Idele village in the Oju Local Government Area. A reprisal attack by youths in the community saw three Fulani herdsmen killed and beheaded.

In February 2016, as a result of a clash between herdsmen and farmers in Benue State, 40 more people were killed, about 2,000 displaced and not less than 100 were seriously injured. Most recently, more than 92 Nigerians were massacred by suspected Fulani Herdsmen in Benue and Niger states. Also, before this time, there have been reported attacks by the Fulani Herdsmen in southern states of the country, including Enugu, Ekiti and Ondo states. Recently, Jos (2017) reported that between September 8, 2017 and October 17, 2017, in just five weeks, two major communities of Irigwe land were attacked and sacked. Seventy-five people were killed, 23 injured, 489 houses burnt and 13,726 people out of a total population of 80,000 people were displaced. Jos further observed that on October 15, 2017, 29 people were massacred in a classroom under the military watch at Miango in the Bassa LGA of Plateau State. Again, the perpetrators have not been arrested and justice has not been done in this situation.

The above scenario has dire consequences for sustainable and educational development in the regions of attack in particular and Nigeria in general. The Fulani herdsmen and farmers crisis is pervasive and the property destroyed potentially and in real terms, drags their economic fortune back by several steps. Besides the property destroyed, economic life in those regions is automatically grounded to a halt. People are no longer free to go about their farming, economic and educational activities for fear of being killed. This is made worse as several thousands of people have migrated swiftly to other parts of Nigeria. The overall implication for sustainable development is that the farming, economic and educational activities are fast deteriorating. The murderous campaigns and vicious onslaughts on individuals and institutions provide highly unfavorable business environment for internal and foreign investment, which is a major factor in the achievement of sustainable development (Damba, 2007).

Kidnapping: Kidnapping has gained grounds in Nigeria. Killing and maiming of innocent people have continued unabatedly across the states. Research reveals that scores of young men and women lose their lives daily to kidnappers and other criminals. The social media and newspapers are replete with scary stories of crime of various dimensions being committed across Nigeria. In the words of Ajah, Nwokeoma and Okpan (2017), “kidnapping and hostage taking are among the terrorizing crimes in Nigeria which are mostly common in the southern part of the country. The authors further noted that Nigeria has 6th largest kidnapping cases in the world”.

Apparently, the recorded cases of kidnapping in Nigeria show that “353 cases of kidnapping were recorded in 2008 and 512 cases of kidnapping and 30 dead persons in kidnapping den was recorded in 2009. The Nigerian Police record shows also that in 2009, kidnappers and hostage keepers got N15 million ransom and about N100 million between 2006 – 2008. Apart from this proximate impact on the victims, kidnapping exert
enormous and far reaching economic and social costs. It induces and creates a palpable ambience of fear and despair for all citizens and stultify economic growth and sustainable development. It is thus one major development challenge bedeviling Nigeria today. It drives away investment, both domestic and foreign direct investments and consequently slows down growth” (Ajah, Nwokeoma & Okpan, 2017).

Armed Robbery: Armed robbery in the contemporary Nigeria democratic system has risen to an alarming height. Cases of armed robbery have increased due to increased level of poverty among the populace. The crime rate in any country is directly tied to the level of poverty in the country. No doubt, the rate of unemployment in Nigeria has become high as thousands of graduates leave school without any hope of getting a decent job. While social services are unavailable to those without jobs, millions of Nigerians watch helplessly as corrupt leaders loot the nation’s treasury with reckless abandon. Oputeh (2015) in his words, observed that the corruption and unemployment situation compound the social problems in the country as many unemployed youth easily turn to crime as a way to make ends meet or in defiance of the society that has failed to provide for their basic needs. The reasons for increase in the crime rate in Nigeria are, however, not meant to validate the actions of those who perpetuate armed robbery or any similarly related crimes.

Similarly, Tolofari (2010) reported that it is very obvious that armed robbery is a serious problem of this country as already pointed out. While decent law abiding citizens are going about their legitimate businesses, armed robbers are always at their doorsteps and in their path waylaying and killing them. In most cases they rape the daughters and wives of those they rob and dispossess them of their valuables. This is a clear evidence of jungle society where there is no security; and according to Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), where life is brutish and short (Tolofari, 2010).

At present, no place is safe from the ravages of armed thieves. They attack houses, offices, shops, restaurants and Churches to steal, rap, mutilate and kill; banks with dynamites work, strike service stations, and traffic victims are inclined to the victims. The security situation in Nigeria today is so frightening that armed thieves operate on a daily basis, leaving sadness, tears and blood on their way. Indeed, experts contend that perhaps one of the most gruesome and crippling indices accounting for the “failed state” status of Nigeria in most recent times, has been the unprecedented, wide spread and growing incidence of mass armed robbery and human kidnapping and extortion in many states across the nation. Pervasive armed robbery and kidnapping are especially crippling to a society, expert assert, because of the special toll they take on the core psyche of a people, as it is often tantamount in the minds of the people to the humiliation of the main symbols and institutions of national security, the police and the armed forces, and further underlines how easy it is to terrorize the country (Anosike, 2009). Conclusively, experts argue that the widespread occurrence of armed robbery and kidnapping in the society, such as has become commonplace lately in many parts of Nigeria, has the most potential
to undermine the peace and security of the Nigerian people, disrupt economic activities, paralyze industrial and economic development and progress, and lead to greater unemployment, and in general, to the immobilization of government and society (Anosike, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is the frustration-aggression theory. Frustration-aggression is an approach in psychology developed by Leonard Berkowitz (1969). This theory states that “aggression is the result of blocking or frustrating a person's efforts to attain a goal. In this context, it is not difficult to find a link among the social phenomena of political hooliganism and violent crime in Nigeria” (Ajah & Ugwuoke, 2018). An observation of the Nigerian society shows that Nigeria political system is pervaded with frustrating events and frustrating circumstances, one in which it could be said that frustration is endemic.

Discussion and Analysis

Accordingly, Ajah, Nwokeoma and Okpa (2017) observed that “the failure of political leaders to deliver on their campaign promises has escalated the incidence of violent crime in Nigeria thereby threatening the peaceful coexistence of the country. The country is gradually degenerating into Hobbesian State which was characterized by anarchy, nasty and brutish. Also, democratic failure in Nigeria has caused moral decadence among the citizens and increasing the wave of violent crime such as armed robbery, rape, terrorism, kidnapping and murder”.

Apparently, the failure of democracy in Nigeria has created division, unemployment, moral decadence and frustration which are watering the ground for violent crime. Odumakin (2017) observed that due to the high poverty level, Nigerian teenagers and young adults are increasingly getting involved in violent crime. Accordingly, Ezedike (2011) argued that the problem of violent crimes in Nigeria has been exacerbated by the high rate of unemployment and economic hardship which have pushed many jobless youths, some of whom are graduates, into various deadly crimes. It is paradoxical that while most crimes are promoted by poverty, violent crimes at the same time retard economic development. An idle mind is the devil’s workshop. There is no doubt, our youths are frustrated because of democratic failure in Nigeria.

Conclusion

In the words of Aguirre and Herrera (2016:661), “A political system is complete when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government de facto has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share with other bodies de jure”. Similarly, the survival of a country depends on the functionality of its political system. No country is guaranteed a continuous existence if its political system failed to abide by the practices and principles that guide it. Also, a society is a failed society when political leaders can no longer fulfill its basic responsibility to provide development, security and effective control over its territory and borders.
Sadly, in Nigeria, it is obvious that the democratic process that begun in 1999, after decades of military rule, is nothing but a scam. Nigerians of all stripes are reeling in disappointment as they live through a “one chance democracy” that has turned out to be the most visionless and corrupt in the nation’s cheered history. Poverty and frustration are at rift. The most worrisome is the proliferation of arms, as arms that are imported and distributed to thugs by unscrupulous politicians for the purposes of election rigging are not retrieved after such elections and these guns are used against the citizens thereby creating feelings of insecurity, fear and anxiety among Nigerians. In critical assessment of patterns of violent crime during democratic transition in Nigeria, the study found that the expectations and hopes that come with democracy have been truncated in Nigeria. In this view, the arrival of democratic government has given Nigerian citizens cruel treatment of desperate hopes. Indeed, the engagement in intimidation and immoral practices by selfish political leaders breed ground for crimes thereby making hopes and expectations that come with democracy objects of caricature.

**Recommendations**

This study recommends the need for the government to partner with professionals and private sector to create employment needs of the society. This can be achieved by implementing visionary and innovative policies and programmes. There should also be tolerance of divergent public views and complaints to avoid crises that trigger off violent crime because a democratic government that does not tolerate complaints and public views cannot succeed. More funding should be allocated to educational institutions and also standard educational facilities should be provided because education enhances the reasoning process and productivity of the citizens. Also, there is need to implement policies and programmes that will encourage entrepreneurs among the citizens because high level of entrepreneurship is what has led to the economic development of many great nations. Finally, there is need to review the current strategy of dealing with the issue of violent crime in Nigeria. In particular, there is the need to explore the laws guiding violent crimes and the extent to which they are enforced with a view to establishing their efficacy.

**References**


