



THE NEXUS BETWEEN BAD GOVERNANCE AND INCREASE IN CRIME RATE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the link between bad governance and increasing crime rate in Nigeria. The work holds that, the current security challenges that bedevilled Nigeria are attributable to poverty, youth unemployment, electoral mal-practices, and general bad governance. Since the country came back to democracy after a long period of military rule, there are incidences of increasing crime and criminality, ethnic, communal, religious and resource conflicts and these have continued to persist across most part of the country. This is catalysed by the apparent failure of the leadership to address key issues affecting the country such as poverty, unemployment etc. Thus, the paper concludes that tackling crime and criminal activities in Nigeria is apparently a huge task, but one which is not impossible. Therefore, Nigerians must unite and the governing class must develop a strong political will and total commitment to fighting crime by providing employment opportunities, shun tribalism and nepotism, adhere to rule of law, accountability and sound financial management.

Keywords: Governance, Bad governance, good governance, crime rate, Crime.

Introduction

Crime is a universal feature of all human societies because there is no human society where norms and values are not violated, from the simplest hunting and gathering societies to the most complex civilized ones, it is because of this universal character of crime that every society is expected to have specific mechanisms to reduce or prevent crime for the overall interest and wellbeing of the generality of the populace (Igbo, (2011).

Nigerians these days sleep with one eye closed because of the fear of rampaging armed robbery and other associated crimes. Each day unfolds its strange tales of one form of crime or the other. It is either there was a robbery attack, kidnapping, fraud, child trafficking or money laundering, killer herdsmen, Boko haram attack etc. Every society gets the kind of criminal it deserves because the society, perhaps prepare the crime while the criminals commit it. Because government has shunned its basic obligations of meeting the primary needs of the individual, criminal activities keep increasing in the society. Criminal activities in recent time have taken a new look and have become a serious threat to life

and property. Girls are now being gang raped, traditional rulers and clergies are being kidnapped, armed robbery is now been carried out during the day as opposed to night operation, money that belongs to the public being embezzled, etc. Therefore, there is urgent need than ever to reduce the activities of the criminals in Nigeria. According to Ikoh (2011) crime “inflicts severe strain on the social fabric and can lead to moral decadence and the disintegration of the society”. Every violent crime is always followed by wounds and injuries which could result into hospitalization of the victims. Victims of criminal activities may suffer shock; damage of vital organs or part of the body and even permanent disability. Besides, violent crime may bring about premature death, and consequently, turn members of the society into orphans, widows and widowers.

Eban (2011), noted that, criminal occurrences do aggravate emotions and tensions from the people in the society, it brought about—“outrage, sadness, anger, disgust, and shock”. For instance, armed robbery occurrences do induce fear in people which may have adverse effect on their health; as well as their socio-economic life.



The belief that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour supports the fact that, it is reasonable to attempt to prevent crime by preventing known offenders from continuing their criminal behaviour. Hence, this work focused on the options for dealing with crime through good governance and systemic resuscitation of Nigerian society. According to Ogunleye, *et al* 2011, Nigeria has been characterized with different turmoil ranging from human abduction, terrorism, bomb attacks and un-wiliness of the government to be assisted, this is what poses the dilemma over the security assistance offered by the United State of America and letter from neighbouring African states. Adebayo, (2013) observed that, insecurity and crime have been deeply rooted in the political history of Nigeria, particularly in recent time, hence, good governance, sustainable democracy and development by few patriotic citizens of the country become a struggle. Adebayo, noted that, the youths supposed to be the driving force for development, conversely in Nigeria, the youths are becoming volatile, because they have their energies misdirected, since they do not have a better engagement to which they could apply their energy. Adebayo insisted that, the reason unrest, violence and other forms of social vices in which youths are the vanguard is as a result of bad governance, poverty and high rate of unemployment in the country. He further noted that, rather than tracing the root causes of crime in Nigeria to uncorrelated factors, it will provide a framework for empirical examination when it is attributed to system collapse breeds by bad governance because brutal condition breeds brutal behaviour.

According to Ajaegbu, (2012) bad governance makes crime and other social vices order of the day in the country. Unemployment appears to be the root cause of crime and violence engagement in Nigeria, unemployment is usually accompanied with poverty. Ajaegbu stated further that, the fundamental reality is that, poverty is link with terrorism because it breeds hopelessness, frustration and terror tendencies.

This paper will therefore examine connection

between bad governance and the rate of crime in Nigeria to underscore the specific social factors responsible for the incessant insecurity.

Conceptual Clarification: Crime, Governance, Good Governance, Bad governance, Crime rate

Crime

There has not been agreement among the scholars about the uniformity or single definition of the term, “crime”. For the purpose of this paper, few definitions would be considered.

Dambazau, (2012) defined crime as violation of the rules agreed to be respected by all members of the society, and upon which the rest member of the society mete sanctions upon those guilty of the violation. Nigerian Criminal Code. (2007). defined crime as illegal act or an action prohibited by law or failure to act as required by law, illegal activity that involves breaking the law; immoral activity that is considered as an unacceptable act that is shameful, unwise or regrettable. Douglasson, (2009) defined crime as an offence against the value system of a society. According to annual law manual of Nigeria bar association 2019, crime is defined as an act or omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment under the criminal code, or any Act or Law, it is an infraction of both the basic principles of law and order and the norms of civilized behaviour.

Governance

Attempt to come up with a comprehensive meaning of the term “governance” has generated controversy among management experts and scholars from political science and political sociology particularly on the practical aspect of the term. But it has been widely agreed to be the management of the society by the people or as the exercise of authority to manage a country's affair and resources.

Good governance

Good governance is an ingredient that adds beauty to or decorates governance. According to United Nations economy and social council, (2006). It signifies a participative manner of



governing that function in a responsible, accountable and transparent manner based on the principle of efficiency, legitimacy and consensus for the purpose of promoting the rights of individual citizens and public interest, thus indicating the exercise of political will for ensuring the material welfare of society and sustainable development with social justice. Richardson (2011).

Bad governance

Bad governance is the opposite of good governance; it is the failure to govern competently, effectively and proficiently. Any leadership that is devoid of transparency, accountability, credibility, justice, selflessness and fair play is a bad leadership. In view of this, Sobhan (1998) argued that, the basic argument about the role of government in development holds that weak governance originates due to a sequential failure of the State to demonstrate a commitment to realize this vision, through putting in place policies and programs as well as redirecting its priorities. While visionary leaders are very rare in Nigeria, other bad leadership practices are also reasons behind crime and all forms of criminal behaviour in the country. Among other factors, corruption, nepotism, and injustice are also prevalent in the country and the major reasons crime perpetuates.

Crime Rate

Crime rate is the number of crimes committed during a period of time in a particular place, it is the number of crime reported to law enforcement agencies based on total population. Political instability, citizen alienation, terrorism, and violence define the Nigeria crime scene. Nigeria has recently been included among countries with the least peace in the world, according to the global peace index. It is the 17th less peaceful State. In addition, Nigeria is the third country most affected by terrorism, based on the global terrorism index (2019). One further serious threat in Nigeria is the risk of mass killing or genocide, Nigeria is the second in Africa with the highest risk of genocide and the sixth globally, this risk influences a population of over 200 million people. (Global Peace index 2018).

Factors Responsible for Prevalence of Crime in Nigeria.

Dambazau (2012) indicates that crime is highly correlated with youthfulness and male gender, and that early involvement in crime is predictive of subsequent involvement. Similarly, poverty, inequality, unemployment, disrupted family, inadequate socialization and the presence of criminal opportunities seem to be very important correlate of crime. These general findings about the primary correlates of crime seem likely to endure, although, there remains substantial debate among Criminologists and various academic disciplines about relative causal importance of, and relationship between different variables. This debate tends to obscure larger issues regarding the appropriate causal scope and scale for understanding and controlling crime, which variable interacting in what way should be considered, and at what level of analysis. The problem is not easy to solve because so many variables are inter-correlated. For example, poverty may correlate unemployment while unemployment might correlate crime and crime might be a consequence of bad governance. However, there are major factors being put forward by scholars as the causes of crime in Nigeria. They are:

- (I) Societal factor
- (ii) Motivation and Opportunity Factor.
- (iii) Socio- cultural Factor.

Societal factor deals with systematic interactions between social groups, it describes the way society is structured. It involves such things as relative distribution of the population among groups and the flow of information, resources and people between groups. Societal factors encompass the varieties and heterogeneity of racial, ethnic, cultural productive groups, their behaviour and beliefs and economic relations. In essence, the group one belongs to may have something to do with the exposure to crime.

Motivation and opportunity are also one of the suggested causal factors of crime. Although ecological and societal factors must be included in any full explanation of crime, individual factor always intervenes between them and a criminal



act. For this reason, individual factors need to be the centre of any description of the causes of crime. It is important to define the word “motivation”, it is the driving force behind our actions. In this discussion, motivation is more than the “I want”, it includes “I could”, “What will it cost me compared to what i think i will get” etc. Motivation is an outcome of a process in which a goal is formulated, cost and benefits are assessed, and internal constraints on behaviour are applied time to time and situation to situation. In other words, sometimes a person's motivation is informed more by rational decision making, other times by emotion such as greed or lust. Similarly, some people tend to be more motivated by cost/benefits calculations more of the time than others. Moreover, the value people place on different objects or activities can vary as their ability to resist temptation varies. Motivation alone cannot cause a crime to occur, opportunity also is required. A person's propensity to commit a crime at a particular point in time is a function of both Motivation and opportunity. Some may be motivated to seek out and exploit criminal opportunity that offers extremely small reward; others will commit crime only when presented with relatively enormous opportunity; and very few will not commit crime regardless of the reward (Cohen, 1994).

Socio-cultural factor influences the strategies of behaviour and personal beliefs, value, needs and desires a person acquired over his or her life. These have been focus of many well known theories of crime that emphasize such things as social learning, rational choice and social strain. These include knowledge, skill, attitude and other cultural information we learn through interaction with other people and groups as well as cultural artefacts such as books and movies. Socio-culturally acquired traits affect which behavioural strategy one knows how to apply and they influence how we perceive the cost and benefits that affect the value we assign to material or symbolic good.

Ebbe (1989) examined the geographical distribution of crimes and delinquencies in Lagos. He found that most crimes were concentrated in

the high and medium rent residential districts of the formal Nigeria capital city. He concludes that patterns of crime in Lagos are conditions of lack of social integration created by the heterogeneity of the population and the resultant weak social control coupled with the bad economic conditions, some of the migrants and potential criminals become involved in crime.

Odekunle (1979) in contrast, represents a second major school of thought, which views the dynamics of underdevelopment as the major cause of crime and links all criminal acts in Nigeria to the nature of its political economy and bad governance. Making and enforcing laws serve the interest of the dominants foreign and internal elites. Their crimes are ignored while those of the working and lower classes, who commit crimes in order to survive in an unequal economic and political system, are selected out and punished by the criminal justice system. Increasing crime rate in Nigeria today is the consequence of bad governance which manifested in corruption, unemployment, unending borrowing for consumption and lavish life style of the so called public servants. (Gottfredson & Hirschi (1993).

Theoretical Framework

Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative deprivation theory holds that instead of an absolute standard of deprivation, a gap between expected and achieved welfare leads men to political violence and national insecurity (Richardson, 2011, p.1). Gurr (1970). Richardson (2011) highlight that, a gap between expected and achieved welfare creates collective discontent. This theory also applies to individuals who find their own welfare to be inferior to that of others to whom they compare themselves, an egoistic relative deprivation driven by an individual's feelings of being treated unfairly compare to others in their group. A good example is that of an employee who feels they should have gotten a promotion that went to another employee may feel relatively deprived. It is important first to understand relative deprivation as a theory of political violence (Richardson, 2011). The trajectories of political violence are vast and



certainly include all occasions of altercations between the state and agitated citizens. Richardson thus explains political violence as the result of collective discontent caused by a sense of relative deprivation. He sees relative deprivation as the term used to denote the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the “ought” and the “is” of collective value satisfaction, and that disposes men to crime. This gap between an individual's expected and achieved welfare results in collective discontent.

According to Hirschi (1993), relative deprivation theory actually refers to any perceived discrepancy between people's expectations and their capabilities to fulfil those expectations and this creates a gap between the deprived group and the state. Hence, Hirschi asserts that 'the greater the intensity of deprivation, the greater the magnitude of crime.

Relative Deprivation Theory and Nigeria: The connection

Nigerian youths have been watching in disbelief and utter helplessness as the nation's political elite engage in mindless spending spree while the youth at their own level are confronted by humongous unemployment crises. The story everywhere in the country is about public sector corruption. Brainard, Chollet & LaFleur, (2007) thus posit that the problem may lie in the fact that in too many places, the next generation is caught in a troubling cycle where the opportunities to make a useful contribution to society diminish as the number of youth soars. This alludes to relative deprivation as the preceding generations are assumed to have remained comparatively contented.

Brainard, Chollet & LaFleur indeed seem to have had the Nigerian nation in focus while taking the above positions. Then we must squarely bring into these conjectures the issues of poverty and under development. And so relative deprivation and poverty are interlaced in very many ways and they truly have bearing with criminal activities. Yet if poverty leads to insecurity, it is also true that the destabilizing effects of conflict and demographic and environmental challenges make

it harder for leaders, institutions, and outsiders to promote human development. In sum, poverty is both a cause of insecurity and a consequence of it and the surest indication of underdevelopment.

The relative deprivation nexus of the insecurity and poverty question in the country indeed fundamentally borders on governance issues. These matters for instance have to do with the provision of basic amenities, employment opportunities, fair play in appointment being made by government, obedient to the rule of law, providing enabling environment for small businesses, engaging youths in productive activities. Until and unless these issues are addressed, crime rate in Nigeria will keep increasing.

Insecurity of lives and properties in Nigeria is being championed with ethnic bias by unemployed youths. Abundant supplies of valuable natural resources give increased incentives to powerful elements of the society to seize areas or the entire state to control access to valuable resources. Such development generates civil strife. The disadvantaged segment of the society is invariably encouraged to form rebel groups and fight over abundant supplies of valuable natural resources.

Bad Governance and Crime in Nigeria

Ideal democratic governance shall involve leaders and policy makers with good attitudes, motivation, disposition, and habits in a desired direction that is primarily a function of political leadership. It must be a leadership whose sincerity of purpose is so transparent as to induce people to adopt the desired pattern of behaviour, and whose dedication to the cause is sufficiently total and selfless to inspire public confidence. But in Nigeria, people are demoralized because what is in theory seems to be disconnected from what they see in practice. The leaders speaks much of the rule of law but do less in practice, electoral mal practices and disobedient to electoral acts have been the agents of bad governance over the years, making it very easy for the vulnerable to engaging in criminal activities. In the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), Nigeria is ranked 41st of 52 countries, below countries such as Mali



(27th) where international intervention was deemed necessary to maintain order in the country. Leadership or governance, as argued by Igbo (2011) has to practice what it advocates. Thus, in the Afro barometer poll of 2012, 70% of respondents were of the opinion that Nigeria was heading in the wrong direction. The only aspect of development Nigeria can boast of is not more than rapid population growth which can be impetus for development if it is built alongside economic security or capital accumulation, political stability, fair play, and technological capability. Alienation, feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness and estrangement from the society may predispose an individual or group of people to participate in the struggle against the government in situation where feeling of frustration become wide spread among the population, and the feeling is that people are getting less than they deserve, the most advisable thing for political leaders to do is to find out what the expectations of such individuals or groups are and to see ways of negotiating with them.

Omoyibo, (2013) has lamented concerning the nation's wealth and high rate of poverty, that despite Nigeria's economic growth and its abundant natural/mineral resources, a large number of its citizens are wallowing in abject poverty. In 2018, national bureau of statistics said, more than 80 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty representing 33% of the population (NBS, 2018). World Bank poverty assessment report (2020) projected that Nigeria poverty will hit 95.1 million in 2022. The report noted that COVID 19 crisis is driving up Nigeria poverty rate, pushing up more than 5 million additional people into poverty. Giving the effect of the crisis, however, the poverty headcount rate is projected to jump from 40.2% in 2020 to 42.6% in 2022, implying that the number of poor people was 89.0 million in 2020 and would be 95.1 million in 2022. The growing gap between the rich and the poor affects the society, thus, increased violence. (World Bank, 2020). National bureau of statistics declared that in 2018, 19.61% of youths in Nigeria are without a source of livelihood, this reconfirm the perception that high growth rates have failed to improve Nigeria's entrenched macro-economic

deficiencies, born out of decades of failed governance, mismanagement and conflict, as a result, the youths are consciously or sub-consciously revolting through violent agitations and many have gone into criminality (Adebayo, 2013). Tackling crime in Nigeria is a very huge task, but not impossible, first of all, good governance will certainly be a giant stride towards achieving peace in any nation. For the entire Nigerians, it should be noted that insecurity, such as the current insurgency, kidnapping, Boko Haram terrorist is like a disaster, everyone is a potential victim of its menace. Therefore, fight against crime in Nigeria is a responsibility of government by tackling the root cause of poverty, unemployment, electoral mal practices and the overall bad governance.

Recommendations

Nigeria electoral system should be revisited and amending every section that promotes injustice and nepotism in the electoral act.

- Employment opportunities should be open to all Nigerians, not to only the children of political elites.
- Government at all level should create an unbiased enabling environment for small and medium businesses to engage the youths who cannot be engaged in Government employment scheme.
- Tribalism, ethnic supremacy and religion intolerance, should be abolished in its entirety in Nigeria.
- Government policies that promote unity and oneness should be encouraged.

Conclusion

Insurgencies and other form of crimes in Nigeria are connected to bad leadership. But in as much as government has a bulk of the blames in inducing crime, other factors that seem to assume intervening variables (e.g. religious radicalism, and or indoctrination of youth with negative ideologies, ethnicity and unity challenges) are also attributable to crime committal. To tackle this menace, Nigerians must be united, leaders must commit themselves to the greatest good for the greatest number of the citizens.



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