



RESEARCH ARTICLE

URBAN VIOLENCE AND INSECURITIES: EXPOSURE AND ADAPTATION IN SULEJA TOWN

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 16th May, 2011
Received in revised form
20th July, 2011
Accepted 12th August, 2011
Published online 17th September, 2011

Key words:

Unemployment,
Urban danger,
Crime network,
Gang-related violence,
Insecurity,
Housing density,
Youths.

ABSTRACT

The 21st century is often heralded as the 'urban century'. For the first time in history the majority of the world's population now live in cities, a figure forecast to rise to over 60% by 2030. Increasing urbanization raises crucial questions for security. At one end of the spectrum, it has been claimed that 'the scale of armed violence in large urban areas frequently exceeds that of all but the most devastating of current wars', while at the other, questions of poverty, health, and human insecurity are presented as finding their starkest manifestations in urban settings, particularly in the developing world. Urban people repeatedly stress the anxiety and fear they experience because they feel insecure and vulnerable. Most say they feel less secure and more vulnerable today than in previous times. They describe security as stability and continuity of livelihood, predictability of relationships, feeling safe and belonging to a social group. Forms and degrees of security and insecurity vary by region and differ by gender. Women are vulnerable to abuse and violence in the home. Men, particularly young men, are more likely to be picked up by the police. The origins and nature of insecurities are related to types of threat, shock and stress. People most frequently mention the following: Insecurities of work and livelihood, Crime and violence, Persecution by the police and lack of justice, Civil conflict and war, Macro policy shocks and stresses, Social vulnerability, Natural and human-made disasters, Health, illness and death. Insecurities and mishaps are an integral and pervasive part of the ill-being of the urban dwellers, threatening them and making them anxious, fearful and miserable. As a result of the unprecedented level of insecurity in Nigeria due to gang-related violence, this study examined violence-related crimes (armed robbery, the 'area boys' phenomenon and communal/street clashes) and security situation and coping measures in Suleja urban town. Field survey was carried out with 2000 structured questionnaires as the sample size. A national average household size of 6 people was used based on the number of household in Suleja is 41,258. 5% sample size of the total number of households was taken to produce 2000 questionnaires. This questionnaire was administered systematic random sampling techniques. Also, records of crime data were obtained from Suleja divisional police station from 2001 – 2008 for analysis. The surveyed result shows that (14%) of the respondents in Suleja have been victim of crime and violence while 86% of respondents claimed that they have never been victim of any crime and violence. However, 44% of the crime cases are armed robbery and burglary while 11% are other cases. Research findings also shown that 65% of victim of crime had no rescue, 19% were rescued by the vigilante groups, 15% of the victim were rescued by Neighbours while 1% of the respondents rescued by police intervention. In view of the above, it is recommended that job should be created and infrastructural provision strengthened. Government should also put crime prevention on its top priority list and allocate sufficient funds to cover increased welfare packages and acquisition of highly sophisticated modern security gadgets to aid surveillance and monitoring of criminals.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, rapid urbanization and deteriorating social and economic urban condition in Nigeria combined with increasing proportion of children and young people especially among the urban poor, have all contributed to providing fertile

ground for the recruitment of young people into groups and gangs engaged in local crimes and violence. Youth crime is increasing exponentially in both cities and towns of the north and south. Phenomena such as youth gangs and street children are growing in most communities in Nigeria and represent a new face of urban insecurity. This phenomenon is occasioned

by the growing unemployment rate in Nigeria which has been categorized as one of the serious impediment to social progress. Apart from representing a colossal waste of country manpower resources, it generates welfare loss in terms of lower output thereby leading to lower income and wellbeing (Akinboyo, 1987; and Raheem, 1993). The varying Socio-economic, socio-cultural and physical environmental factors inherent in our urban residential patterns have various implications for the input on the type as well as the rate of occurrence of crime or violence and the reaction of resident to it. Within these cities, disparities in the level of violence are based on neighbourhood income level. More prosperous areas in cities suffer from violent crimes, usually property related such as vehicle robbery while severe violence is generally concentrated in lower income areas (Garviria and Pages, 1999). Criminal victimization has serious consequences for the citizens and society, as crime causes loss of life and property as well as overwhelming fear of insecurity. These have serious consequences for democracy and economic development. Nigeria has witnessed upsurge in crimes during the past two decades. Increasing incidence of armed robbery (Etannibi and Innocent, 2005), militancy, kidnapping, and bombing has lead to a paralyzing fear which has in turn affected economic and social life in the country.

Security has always been crucial to the actualization of the condition for urbanization and modernization of any country, because every citizen has right to life, liberty and security of person while insecurity has a disproportionate impact on further alienating the poor and the marginalized. Thus freedom from crime, safety from violence at home, on the street, at work place and perceived feeling of security is viewed as uncompromising product of good governance. Nigerian's are highly exposed to insecurity resulting from various crime and violence and the police security force appears inefficient to combat crime.

Today, the incidence of police brutality, corruption, violence murder and abuse of power has punctuated almost every aspect of the society. Armed robbers in Nigeria operate almost freely in the society using deadly weapons without being challenged and detected by the police and where the police are fully informed, they give flimsy excuses that they do not have weapons to fight armed robbers. Inhabitants of cities and towns in Nigeria today use various security measures to safeguard their houses and neighbourhood from the men of the underworld as reflected in the design of house found in our society. The security measures includes; high walls fence (typical of prison yard) around residential units to prevent easy access to the houses, shielding of burglary proofs usually made of iron on the buildings doors, windows and foyers, massive gates with strong locks, installation of sensors lighting facilities at every corner of the house, construction of security post and use of private guards and security dogs at every entry point within the town, city, neighbourhood or compounds. All these measures have not curtailed these crime or violence because they could be traced to economic and urbanization problem. Therefore, crime and violence are seen as inherent attribute of man, which is only suppressed or tamed by law and civilization. It is against the foregoing background that this paper attempt to assess the prevalent crimes, violence in Suleja town in terms of its exposure and adaptation.

Definitions and Categories of the Multiple Complexity of Everyday Urban Violence

The World Health Organization (WHO) in its 2002 global report on violence define violence as: "...the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation."

Most generic definitions present violence as the use of physical force, which causes hurt to others in order to impose one's wishes. Keane (1996) give a broader definition, however, extend beyond physical violence to refer to psychological hurt, material deprivation and symbolic disadvantage. Most definitions recognize that violence involves the exercise of power that is invariably used to legitimize the use of force for specific gains (Galtung, 1985). Definitions of violence often overlap with those of conflict and crime, reflected in terms such as "violent crime", "criminal conflict", "conflictual violence" and "violent conflict". However, there are important distinctions between them (Keane, 1996). While violence and conflict are both concerned with power; conflict-based power struggles do not necessarily inflict physical or mental harm on others, while violence by its very nature does. Conflict, therefore, can be peacefully resolved through negotiation without recourse to force, but becomes violent/armed conflict when it includes fighting and killing. Crime is an act (usually a grave offence) punishable by law, i.e. the breach of a legal prohibition, and violent crime, in turn, has been defined as any act that causes a physical or psychological wound or damage and which is against the law.

The uncertainty generated by violence is expressed in fear and insecurity. Fear has been defined as "...the institutional, cultural and psychological repercussion of violence" (Cohen and Swift, 1993), and identified as an outcome of destabilization, exclusion and uncertainty (Kruijt and Koonings, 1999). Although perceptions of insecurity cannot be reflected in statistical evidence, they fundamentally affect well-being (Garretón, 1992). (12) At the same time, the "livelihood security" of the poor and their ability to access resources to ensure survival are closely linked, in an interconnected vicious cycle, to violence (Kaplinsky, 2001). This relates not only to the spatial, economic and social constraints that the complex layering of endemic violence imposes on their daily lives, but also to the fact that, as citizens, their insecurity is closely linked to the failure of the state's public security systems to protect them (McIlwaine and Moser, 2003).

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

This research utilizes primary and secondary data source to enable the collection of pertinent information needed to achieve its aim and objectives. Primary data was obtained through the use of structure questionnaire. Suleja been a commercial town that has experience high influx of people in recent time have a 2009 projected population of 247,546. With a national average household size of 6 people, the number of household in Suleja is 41,258. 5% sample size of the total number of households was taken to produce 2000

questionnaires. This questionnaire was administered systematically at every 10th house using personal interview method of questionnaire administration with the help of ten (10) research assistants who were students. Because of large sample size, questionnaire administration took fifteen days and the questionnaire addresses cases of exposure to insecurity and adaptation to all form security measures. Secondary data used for this study was obtain from Suleja divisional police station where records of crime from 2001 – 2008 was made available. This record was used to analyze the variations of crime and violence prevalent in Suleja.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social economic profile of the respondent

Assess the socio economic characteristic of the inhabitant of Suleja for this analysis is important; as crime and violence are factor that maybe determine by Gender, Age, Marital status, Educational level, occupation and income level are used to measure it. The field survey result (table 1) shows that 62.8% of respondents interviewed were male, 37.2% respondents were female, out of which the large proportion (56%) have lived in Suleja for three (3) years and above. 53.4% of the inhabitants had stayed in Suleja for 41-50 years, 30.4% of them are between age bracket of 31-40 years and the remaining of them are 30 years downward. Also, majority of respondent between age range 41-50 who are mostly married is not in any way connected to crime wave in the area but could have been preempted by the structure of questionnaire to choose household heads as the target group because of their maturity, experience and the ability to reveal cases of exposure to insecurity and reason for security measures adopted. However, it's noteworthy that the police report obtained shows that youth mostly between the ages range of 21-30 years constitute majority of the criminals held captive in the police custody. Educational level of respondents as presented in table 1 shows that majority (40%) of the respondents are graduate of schools of higher learning, 30% are holders of secondary school certificate, 11% are primary school certificate holders, 7% have informal education only and 7% are illiterate. This result implies that many household head in Suleja town are literate and are expected to be very conscious about things happening around them. Results also shown that majority of the respondents in Suleja are traders (40%), followed by inhabitants who are self employed (29%) in various specialized artisan jobs. Civil servants constitute 24% of Suleja populace and 7% of inhabitants of the town are engaged in private organization work. The dominance of traders in Suleja is as result of its proximity to Abuja and fairly easy access to land which motivate traders from different part of Nigeria to settle in Suleja for their businesses in order to tap from the intervening opportunity in FCT. Majority of the respondents (35%) in Suleja town has monthly income level between ₦21, 000 – ₦40, 000. While 32% make less than ₦20, 000 monthly, 13% realize between ₦41, 000– ₦60, 000 monthly, 11% make ₦61, 000– ₦80, 000 monthly and 4% earn above ₦81, 000.

Exposure to Insecurity

As a result of the unprecedented level of insecurity in Nigeria due to gang-related violence, this study examined violence-related crimes (armed robbery, the 'area boys' phenomenon

and communal/street clashes) and security situation and coping measures Suleja urban area. The field surveyed result has revealed (fig. 1) that, small proportions (14%) of the inhabitant of Suleja representing 280 respondent have been a victim of crime and violence while 86% declined been victim of any crime and violence. Crimes committed at homes accounted for 45% of all crimes in Suleja. About 44% of these crimes are armed robbery and burglary cases committed in business Premises while 11% of cases are committed in private and public transport (pickpocket, snatching of hand bags, snatching of cars and motorcycles). Investigation the prevailing situation of crimes and violence in the neighbourhood, the field data reveals that 42% of the crimes are theft/burglary cases, 21% are armed robbery cases, 6% are cases of rape while 31% were neutral about the issue. The reason for been neutral was the fear of indictment and the punished for making obnoxious comment that will infuriate anybody.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency (N=2000)	Valid Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	1257	62.8
Female	743	37.2
Age		
<20	160	8.0
21-30	161	8.1
31-40	607	30.4
41-50	1072	53.5
Length of Stay in Suleja		
<1 Year	362	16.0
1 – 3 Years	520	26.0
3 – 5 Years	520	26.0
5 Years and Above	598	30.0
Marital status		
Single	453	22.6
Married	1339	67.0
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	208	10.4
Education		
Primary school	220	11.0
Secondary school	599	30.0
Graduate	800	40.0
Qur'anic	141	7.0
Illiterate	240	12.0
Occupation		
Self employed	578	29.0
Trader	807	40.0
Civil servant	482	24.0
Staff of private organization	133	7.0
Income per month		
Less than ₦20, 000	646	32.0
₦21, 000–₦40, 000	707	35.0
₦41, 000–₦60, 000	254	13.0
₦61, 000–₦80, 000	213	11.0
₦81, 000 above	80	4.0

Source: Authors Field Survey, 2009

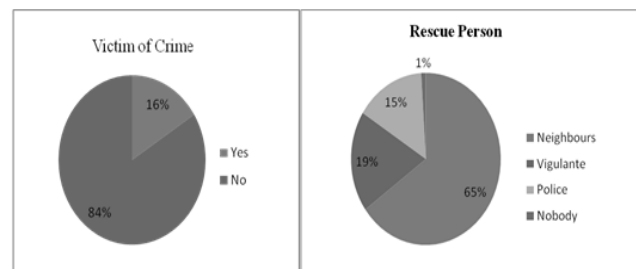


Fig 1: Victim of Crime and Rescue Person

Growing Trend of Crime Cases in Suleja

Assessing the extent of crime in Suleja town for a given periods of seven (7) years from a police records, the results show a wide trend in the pattern of crime committed. A total of 1,103 crime cases were recorded between year 2001 and 2008 in Suleja town. The analysis of result of reveals that

45.8% of crimes committed is against property, while 30.5% of offences are committed against persons, while 23.7% of offences are committed against local acts. The Nigeria police confirmed that property crime, which is associated with economic survival, had the highest proportion of criminal cases in Nigeria (FOS, 1996). Crime against property includes Theft / Stealing (69%) and Armed Robbery (31%) which are mostly perpetrated by youth within age range of 18 – 30. About 44% of this youth are graduate of polytechnic with ND, HND and Degree certificate, This ugly phenomenon portend serious negative consequences on the youth and the future of a country with dwindling social, political and economic uncertainties. The trend of crime in the study area over the years has shown fluctuations and a spectacular decrease in crime rate between 2001 and 2005(Fig. 2).This situation is partly explained by the measures put in place at various levels (both the state and local government) to curb the menace. The gradual increase from 2006 to 2008 was partly due to migration of displaced people into Suleja from Abuja as a result of the then demolition exercise at Abuja metropolis.

Table 2: Report of Crime/Violence Incidence and Police Responses

Variables		Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Report of Crime/Violence Incidence	Yes	121	43	43
	No	159	57	100
Total		280	100	
Police Response	Satisfactory	36	30	30
	Not Satisfactory	85	70	100
	Satisfactory			
Total		121	100	

Source: Authors Field Survey 2009

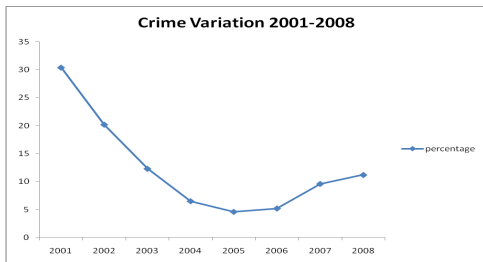


Fig 2: Crime Variation in Suleja

In our society, most occasion crime cases are not usually reported to the police. Result of the analysis from police report of crime incidence reveals that 57% (Table 2) of those who at one time fall victim of crime did not report such incident to the police and this is because of the total lack of trust and confidence in the Nigerian police force as a lot of people have attributed the occurrence of some criminal disturbance to have connection with the police force. 43% of crime victim did report cases of crime incident to the police and in most instance the police showed lukewarm attitude to come to their aid even when they are called immediately as the crime is ongoing and after the criminal have finished perpetrating their evil act. The result of the analysis also revealed that 85% of crime victims who reported occurrence of crime expressed their dissatisfaction with the manner the police responded to their plight while 36% were indeed impressed with police response to solve their predicament. Some of the persecution by Police and lack of Justice as expressed by the people interview are summarized below

.....Now even the police will rob you; you go in to report a crime and you come out feeling violated.

—A 44-year-old woman, Morocco Road, Suleja

When the police come here, it is to rob us...to humiliate everybody.

—A discussion group, Kwamba Area, Suleja

Imagine when we send these thieves to the police. We end up being disappointed to see them back the same day.

—Residence, Bakin Ikum, Suleja

This implies that the response rate of Nigeria security force to control and overcome the forces of criminal is indeed low by every standard of measurement compared to what is obtainable in America, Europe, Asia and other part of African countries. This is a clarion call on the need for government at all levels and stakeholders to stand up to their responsibility in restructuring the Nigerian security system by providing the police and other security agencies with all that is needed to safeguard the life and property of citizens of the country. The legitimacy and authority of the state over the people can be sustained only to the extent it can guarantee the security of life and property of the citizens (Walter, 2004)

Adaptation to violence and insecurity

Because of the fear of insecurity in Suleja, many people have adapted to different security measure to safeguard their lives and properties both at individual household level and at the level of neighbourhoods. It is evident in this survey (fig. 3) that majority (94%) of the respondents adopted the concept neighbourhood vigilante group as a measure of security in their neighbourhoods while 6% hopefully rely on police patrol service. At individual/household level, the result reveals that majority (43%) of the inhabitants adopted the use burglary proof to safeguard and protect their homes, 19% of the respondents uses protected high burglary fence to safeguard their homes, 15% build high fence (typical of prison yard) reinforced with security wire(barb wired/ metal hook), 14% did not adapt any security measure and few (9%) engage the combine service of private security guard, fixed burglary proof, high fence with security wires to safeguard their homes. This implies that the residents of Suleja are conscious of the security of their life’s and properties and are doing everything within their power to keep their homes safe from crimes and violence.

.....People can now rob you in broad daylight. We have to secure ourselves in a way possible

—A discussion with respondent in Base, Kaduna road, Suleja

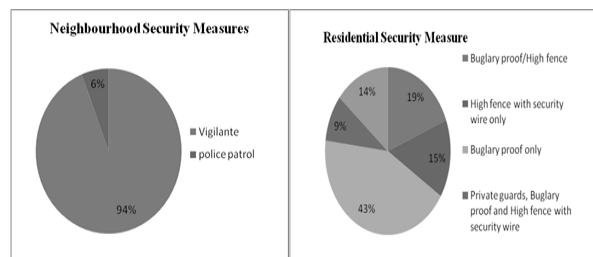


Fig 3: Neighbourhood and residential security measure

Virtually all the respondents (92%) in Suleja uses all forms of adaptive security measure to provide adequate security for

their homes and 82% are of the opinion that the security measures adopted are by far appears to be effective but causes a lot of inconveniences (Table 3). To one degree or another, people speak of declining public safety as an element of increasing insecurity in almost every country, in both rural and urban areas. Increasing crime is linked to breakdown in social cohesion, difficulties in finding employment, hunger, increased migration, drugs and drug trafficking, actions and inactions of the police, and the building of roads that allow strangers to enter communities easily. People connect crime with decline in social community, with competitiveness and looking out only for themselves. While the well-off have more to lose from theft, Suleja people say that "crime and violence are experienced by poorer more than richer households."

Everyday I am afraid of the next.

—A youth, prison yard area, Suleja

Where there is no security, there is no life.

—A man, New Market, Suleja

Table 3: Reason for Adaptation to Security Measure and Convenience in Measure of Adaptation

Variables		Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Reason for Adaptation to security Measure	Adequate Security	1843	92	92
	Beauty	157	8	100
Total		2000	100	
Convenience in Measure of Adaptation	Yes	366	18	18
	No	1634	82	100
Total		2000	100	

Source: Authors Field Survey, 2009

Virtually all the respondents (92%) in Suleja uses all forms of adaptive security measure to provide adequate security for their homes and 82% are of the opinion that the security measures adopted are by far appears to be effective but causes a lot of inconveniences. These adaptive strategies can cause tremendous loss of life and property to families especially where there is an incident of fire disaster, easy evacuation of property and rescue of life become an arduous task in highly fortified burglary house. It creates poor scenic appearance and blight to our cities, towns and urban centers. Most residential units are fast becoming like prison yards because of high fences around dwelling units, thereby restricting them from openness and inconvenience of the dwellers due to insecurity.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Nigeria has a complex political history. Frequent and abrupt changes in government have led to sharp changes in economic and social policies. These have impacted adversely on the population and have worsened income distribution. It has aggravated unemployment with high wave of youth engagement in all forms of criminal activities; a situation that endanger the securities of communities.

In Nigeria, emphasis is placed on individual pursuit of wealth to the neglect of social development which is concerned with a general improvement in the quality of life of the people. In

any country experiencing techno-industrial change, the emergence or aggregation of certain social problems is to be expected. However, unless government tackles earnestly the socio economic problems, criminal activities will not abate. To effectively combat crime, comprehensive socio-economic development planning aimed at effective and equitable social service delivery as well as efficacious citizen political participation is indispensable. The following recommendation will help reduce crime rate in Suleja town and Nigeria as a whole:

Adequate Funding, Training and Rebranding of the Nigeria Police Force:

Government should put crime prevention on its top priority list and allocate sufficient funds to it. Funding should cover increased welfare packages and acquisition of highly sophisticated modern security gadgets to aid surveillance and monitoring of criminals. GIS technology is found very efficient in crime control and should be adopted. GIS as a tool can be used by police personnel to plan effectively for emergency response, to map and analyze crime occurrences with a view to determining factors leading to such crimes and how they can be effectively managed. With GIS, the police and other law enforcement agents could produce maps showing the scene of crimes and the routes leading to scene areas by performing queries to display the shortest route to the scene of crime from the police station in the event of emergency (Francis *et al*, 2006).

Employment Creation and Infrastructural Provision

Government should expedite action in power generation, transmission and distribution to ensure regular supply of power needed to keep small scale industries in the mainstream of the economy as they are known to be the largest employer of labour worldwide. Government should revive all poverty alleviation programmes, initiate new ones and strictly monitor their implementation.

Environmental Lightening

Criminal activities are mostly committed in dark areas of a community. Government at all levels and stakeholders should ensure that all areas of their community are illuminated at nights to lighten up dark areas. Floodlights and searchlight can be mounted at different location in neighborhoods to lighten up areas and this will help reduces fear and creates confidence in and around the environment.

Establishment of State Police

Although, this have become a controversial issue in recent time and an issue of debate given the present state Nigeria of police, people awareness, literacy and development. But, it's a matter of the state police and federal police knowing there area of jurisdiction and partner in an effort to combat crime. Having state police will increase surveillance and harmonious Partnership State and federal security force can enable prevention and ultimately eliminate violence, crime and insecurity.

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