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Armed Robbery Attacks and Everyday Life in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined armed robbery attacks and everyday life in Nigeria as part of a victimization survey. The study noted that the phenomenon of armed robbery, like other organized criminal activities such as kidnapping for ransom, armed banditry, and terrorism, constitutes a big source of concern because apart from the resultant human losses, it constitutes a serious impediment to direct foreign investment as no investor would want

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to do business in an environment characterized by threat to security. The study used 819 respondents spread across 4 geopolitical zones of the country, by means of the other-administered questionnaire method. The study indicated that over 39% of the respondents had experienced armed robbery attacks at least once, while 56% others knew at least somebody who was killed by robbers. Over 60% live with the fear of robbery attacks on daily basis. The paper observed that the nation's highways have remained unsafe even as the security strategies devised by successive Nigerian governments have been largely ineffectual. These findings were considered very alarming by security standards. The paper disagreed with the usual notion which attributes the menace of armed robbery in the country to unemployment. Rather, it identified Nigeria's weak security architecture with emphasis on method of policing and societal value system as areas that require a paradigm shift.

Keywords: Armed robbery, Crime victims, Hotspot, Security, Violence.

Introduction

The Nigeria society started to experience the escalation of armed robbery activities in the country from 1970, at the end of the Nigeria/Biafra War (Eze, 2016; Eke, 2014; Ajayi, 2011; Ugwuoke, 2010; Igbo, 2007; Oputa, 1975). Over the years, particularly from 1970, armed robbery became the most common and feared crime in Nigeria because of its regularity (Alemika, Igbo & Nnorom, 2005:54). No place or time is safe from armed robbery attacks in Nigeria. Armed robbers can strike in homes, on the highways, markets, banks, offices and even places of worship both during the day and night. The rampant nature, severity, rising victim mortality, media hype and moral panic of armed robbery attacks have mapped Nigeria into the league of countries that have been experiencing the trend of the activities of armed robbery incidents which cut across regional boundaries to assume a global phenomenon. This aligned with previous literature on trends of armed robbery attacks globally (Sidhu, 2005; Machado & Levenstein, 2004; Thompson, 2004; Swanson, Chamelin & Territo, 2003; Iwarimie-Jaja, 2003; Inciardi, 2002; Reid, 2000; Gabor, 1989). Ugwuoke (2005) argued that the crime of violence including armed robbery has escalated due to the proliferation of weapons resulting from numerous political conflicts within the African continent. In Nigeria, as armed robbery activities overwhelm the society with its attendant hype and victims, it earned itself numerous media coverage with sensational headlines (Bello, 2017; Umahi, 2017; Onyejiuwa, 2017a; Folaranmi, 2017; Usman, 2015; Ogara, 2009; Dambazau, 2007).

Violent criminal activities especially robbery, point to the fact that the Nigerian society is insecure and has become vulnerable to crime (Ugwuoke, 2014; Nwalozie, 2011). Notwithstanding the tough punitive interventions by successive Nigerian governments, the climax of which was the promulgation of Decree No. 47 of 1970 which prescribed death sentence by firing squad, armed robbery has none-the-less, continued to grow, both in scope and frightening dimensions alongside the country's pace of development, occasioned by the oil windfall of the 1970s. As the oil boom led to increased cash liquidity and expanding economy, robbery activities became more widespread. As noted by Ugwuoke, (2014), the spate of armed robbery in Nigeria permeated the geographical space at such a rate that both rural and urban inhabitants were no longer strangers to this

forceful emerging sector of criminality in the country. Within a very short time, the escalation in cases of armed robbery, and the public anxiety it generated, created moral panic among the citizenry (Hayes & Prenzler, 2012).

Even though armed robbery is no longer a strange phenomenon in Nigeria, it still remains active in public discourse given the security problems it engenders on daily basis. As an aspect of violent crimes, armed robbery has contributed significantly altering social life as night life has virtually grinded to a halt in most urban towns, cities, and villages. People are no longer usually at ease at social functions like child naming, wedding and burial ceremonies since such functions in some of the occasions have become targets for armed robbery attacks. Many times, robbers have capitalized on such functions which provide an assemblage of people who are often dispossessed of their valuable items by these dare-devil armed robbers. The frequency of such raids has made attendance at social functions in Nigeria a serious security risk. A society like Nigeria, with such level of robbery activities usually suffers from the resultant traumatic impacts (Ugwuoke, 2014; Adler, Mueller & Laufer, 1998).

Ugwuoke (2014) noted that in Nigeria, the fear of violent crimes like armed robbery, kidnapping and banditry has also had tremendous effects on economic activities as people restrict their desires to embark on some business trips or transactions. Night travel which flourished in Nigeria for many decades has become rare as night robbery attacks against travelers have also become prevalent. The anxieties members of the public and travelers experience on Nigerian highways were narrated in the following statement which further highlights the public outcry about dangers on the highways:

Nigerian roads have become death traps to travelers because of the deplorable state and the grave insecurity...Traveling on the nation's highways is like a journey through the valley of the shadow of death. It is akin to dancing on a mine laden field. If you travel successfully from one point to another, count yourself lucky. In fact, anything can happen to you on the highway anytime (Umahi, 2017:38).

Aside from the dangers of night travels on Nigeria's highways, the process of transactions in banks is equally risky as many bank staff, customers, passersby, and policemen on guard duty, have lost their lives to numerous bank robberies across the nation (Amaize, 2017; Onyejiuwa, 2017a; Onyejiuwa, 2017b; Usman, 2015; Ogara, 2011; Ogara, 2009; Nnadozie, Edike & Agbo, 2009). In the light of the above, Nigeria could be described as a nation under siege by robbers. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the phenomenon of armed robbery attacks as it affects the people of Nigeria on daily basis.

For ease of convenience, this paper is structured into seven major sections. Section one contains this introduction while section two deals with the theoretical framework. The third leg deals with the study methodology, while the fourth part deals with review of literature. Section five encompasses the findings of the study while the sixth segment is concerned with the discussion of the findings. The seventh section concludes the paper by way of recommendations.

Theoretical Framework

The Social disorganization theory was used to explain this study. Adler, Mueller, and Laufer (1998) stated that social disorganization theory is a version of the cultural deviance theories, with emphasis on the emerging forms of crime environment. In the past two decades, Nigeria has been going through painful socio-cultural transformation on not so successful industrial take-off, nascent fragile democracy, terrorism, militancy, separatist agitations, herdsmen/farmers clashes, armed robberies, kidnapping, unemployment, rampaging assassins, high level of official corruption and general discontents. Under the above situations, the Nigerian society is apparently suffering from an atmosphere of social disorganization and all the attendant consequences. The theory provides an insight into this peculiar sector of criminality about this study following the present state of disharmony, anxiety, tension, and frustration within the Nigeria society. Given what is obtainable in the present day Nigerian social environment, previous authors argued that the explanations are applicable to social disorganization theory (Ugwuoke, 2014; Burke, 2009; Igbo, 2007; Reid, 2000; Comte, 1976; Oputa, 1975).

Methodology

The study was a nation-wide survey, carried out in four of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. The geo-political zones surveyed were the South-East, South-South, North-West and North-Central zones, respectively. The North-East was left out because of the on-going decade old war on terrorism in the area, while South-West was left out to create equal balance between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria, with two geo-political zones each. The survey was conducted during the last quarter of 2018. Questionnaire was the only instrument used through accidental random sampling technique. Ethical clearance on the research instrument administered was sought and obtained from University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku-Ozalla, Enugu. The IRB approval number is: *NHREC/05/01/2008B-FWA00002458-IRB00002323*. The instrument was deployed in residential houses, offices, streets, markets, motor parks and schools, to locate the 819 respondents in the course of the survey. The data generated through the questionnaire were analyzed by the use of tables, bar-charts and simple percentages.

Literature

Armed robbery is an important subject that has been studied widely by criminologists across the world (Nwalozie, 2011:12). The importance of robbery studies resides in its economics, its frequency, its resistance to investigative efforts, the fear it creates and the potential for violence that accompanies it (Swanson, Chamelin & Territo, 2003). Scholars have noted that because of the face-to-face confrontation between the perpetrator and victim, the potential for violence is always present in a robbery. The major target in most robberies is money (Lyman, 2011; Siegel, 2005; Inciardi, 2002). This is because armed robbery is a common feature of a capitalist economy due to the volume of money in circulation in physical cash. Robbery usually takes place within the streets, along the highways and banking facilities (Onyejiuwa, 2017b; Umahi, 2007; Usman, 2015; Ogara, 2009; Siegel, 2005; Machado & Levenstein, 2004).

Siegel (2005) noted that one type of robbery may focus on people they know, a phenomenon referred to as acquaintance robbery. In acquaintance robbery, the robbers

target fellow criminals who are not likely to involve the police because of their criminal record, hence the victims may be reluctant to report the crime. Another type of acquaintance robbery is *street justice*. The perpetrator has a grievance against the victim and the dispute has to be settled in the street. The *street justice* robbery is motivated by retribution and revenge rather than material gains. Again, robbers may target the person they know personally to be carrying a large amount of cash or being in possession of a valuable material. Another is that when robbers are in desperate need of cash they may target people in their close proximity simply because they are convenient targets. In acquaintance robbery, victims are more likely to be injured than in stranger robberies while robberies of family members are more likely to yield a bigger pay-off than stranger robberies (Felson, Baumer & Messner, 2000).

Lyman (2011) observed that commercial robbery usually occurs at the end of a workweek and during the evening and very early morning hours. The author noted that typical targets of the commercial robber are stores and businesses located close to major thoroughfares, such as main streets, highways and interstates. He explained that residential robbery is one of the most terrifying types of robberies because an armed intruder breaks into a home and holds residents at gun or knifepoint. The most common type of robbery is the one committed on public streets and alleyways with a weapon typically a handgun and usually takes place at night and both the robber and victim are usually on foot-and the suspects are usually teenagers or young men (Lyman, 2011).

Bank robberies represent a much higher property loss than other types of robbery but account for only an estimated 2 percent of all robberies (Lyman, 2011). In Nigeria, bank robbery is common with attendant human losses during the numerous violent operations (Onyejiuwa, 2017b; Usman, 2015; Ogara, 2011; Nnadozie, Edike & Agbo, 2009, Ogara, 2009). Bank robberies constitute a nightmare to bank staff and customers in Nigeria and even passersby's due to the nature of violence associated with the operations. Such robberies are characterized by the deployment of intensive firepower which include explosives, thereby making banks high risk zones. The complexion of bank robbery has changed in recent years due to an increase in the number of banks, which tend to be located in such a way as to be highly vulnerable to robbers (Lyman, 2001).

Similarly, Otuh (2010) noted that by December 2000, some 1, 350 people would have been shot and killed by armed robbers in Nigeria during the year under review; another 2, 564 would have been mutilated, while another 3, 064 armed robbery operations would have been carried out. These data were not exhaustive and he went ahead to depict the gory scenario of armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria as:

Every day, at least three people in some places in the country will be killed, and while readers go through the paper, a head goes out, a stomach goes out and the limb is broken with bullets coming out of the barrel of armed robber's gang. From Lagos to Abuja, Kaduna to Bida, Onitsha to Yola, armed hoodlums, who show neither mercy nor compassion, have unleashed a reign of terror against the Nigerian. They are all over in cities and towns, in ghettos and GRAs. No one is safe, no place is sacred, and no security is inviolable. The armed hoodlums are just daring; they are ruthless. They steal, they maim they rape, and they kill (Otuh, 2010: 439).

In support of the foregoing, Ajayi (2011) noted that armed robbers appear to have surreptitiously moved the nation closer to what could be described as Hobbesian State of nature, where life could be short, nasty and brutish. The courage and tenacity often exhibited by armed robbers are baffling. They move around freely in thickly populated residential and commercial areas sometimes numbering up to fifty leaving deaths, rape, sorrow, tears and blood in their trail. It appears Nigerians are being held hostage by a generation of angry and frustrated youths who are prepared to take their pound of flesh from the Nigerian society. It is noteworthy that an individual motivated to commit robbery uses skills learnt from experience and the environments to locate victims and targets.

Illoani (2015) observed that going by the number of cases of armed robbery reported to the police in five years, Lagos, Anambra and Abia are the first three armed robbery flashpoints in Nigeria. Similarly, the National Bureau of Statistics (2012) noted that a total of 12, 026 instances of armed robbery were reported to the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) between 2007 and 2011. An analysis of the report showed that a total of 2, 506 armed robbery cases were reported to the police in 2007, and the number was reduced to 2,393 in 2008. In 2009, 2,147 of these cases reached the police, but the downward trend in cases of armed robbery was reversed in 2010 as cases reported to the police increased to 2,279. The total annual cases of armed robbery increased in 2011, with a total of 2,701, more than those recorded in 2007. The above robbery activities have depicted the grim picture of how armed robbers play their notorious game with terror, deceit, and threat to achieve their goals, thereby creating fear and panic among the citizens.

Oputeh (2015) observed that despite the advancement in technology, the frequency of armed robbery cases in Nigeria still calls for concern. Trends and patterns of armed robbery tend to become innovative in line with the innovative economic structure (Ezeh, 2018). Nigeria has witnessed innovations as regards cashless economy policy. Given such a policy, it would have been thought armed robbery would at least, be reduced to the barest minimum since the cashless policy discourages carrying of huge cash. But as Leadershipngr (2017) has noted incidents of armed bandits carrying Point of Sale (POS) machines in tri-cycles, taxis and remote streets etc, forcing victims to make transfers to certain bank account number(s) at gun point have become the order of the day. Armed robbers have also devised means of collecting Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) cards and pins at gun points, holding family or friends at gun point while giving orders for transfers to be made to certain account number(s), and holding individuals spellbound ordering them to make transfers through their mobile bank apps to certain bank account number(s), most victims have lost their lives or were seriously wounded while trying to resist or escape (Ogugbuaja, 2017). Nwankwo and James (2016) ranked armed robbery as a major cause of death in Nigeria. The foregoing seems to suggest a corresponding rise in armed robbery occasioned by innovations in technology rather than the envisaged decline. Oputeh (2015) observed that even in the United States, despite advancement in technology, old-fashioned bank robbery cases are still a cause for concern.

Adepoju and Alhassan (2010) noted that the most common pattern of armed robbery at ATM outlets is for the offender to rob the ATM user immediately after the victim has consummated a transaction. Other patterns include: the offender coercing the victim to go to an ATM stand to withdraw cash; the offender robs the victim of his or her ATM

card, forces the victim to reveal his/her Personal Identification Number (PIN), and then uses the card, the offender robs a victim standing at an ATM of other valuables (wallet, watch, jewelry), and/or the offender follows someone who has just withdrawn cash from an ATM and robs him or her away from the ATM (Adepoju & Alhassan, 2010).

Otuh (2010) observed that even though contemporary armed robbery in Nigeria has taken the outlook of a western archetypical robbery and going scientific as it were, it nonetheless, appears to have retained (perhaps) added some of Nigeria’s traditional way of life and traits. For instance, the offence and offenders in contemporary Nigeria are being identified with incredible dexterity, carrying of sophisticated weaponries and gadgets such as sub-machine guns, Ak47, radio transistors, and mobile phones. Offenders now dare the police in a fire-for-fire show of superiority, while displaying rare ingenuity in concealing their identity and motive (Otuh, 2010).

Findings

Table 1. Number of armed robbery victims and the number of times they were victimized

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Have been attacked by robbers	325	39.7%
Have not been attacked by robbers	494	60.3%
Total	819	100.0%
Have been attacked only once	204	24.9%
Have been attacked at least twice	121	14.7%
Have never been attacked	494	60.3%
Total	819	100.0%

Source: Researchers’ field work, 2018

Table 1 indicates that 39.7% of the respondents had been attacked by armed robbers while 60.3% had never experienced robbery attack. It also showed that among those who have been attacked by robbers, 24.9% were attacked once but 14.7% had been attacked at least twice by armed robbers. The implications are that nearly 40% of Nigerians have experienced agonizing armed robbery traumas. This high rate of armed robbery victims portends serious security challenges for the country. The findings equally aligned with previous literature on the rising armed robbery cases in Nigeria (Bello, 2017; Usman, 2015; Ugwuoke, 2014; Ogara, 2009). With 39.7% of robbery victims alive, the number of the victims will be potentially higher given the additional victims who did not survive the robbery attacks to tell their stories. This study aptly portrays a true picture of the level of insecurity in Nigeria with specific reference to armed robbery alone.

Table 2. Knowledge of people killed by armed robbers by the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
I know person(s) killed by robbers	463	56.5%
I don't know any person killed by robbers	356	43.5%
Total	819	100.0%
I know one person killed by robbers	196	23.9%
I know two persons killed by robbers	107	13.1%
I know at least three persons killed by robbers	160	19.5%
I don't know any person killed by robbers	356	43.5%
Total	819	100.0%

Source: Researchers' field work, 2018

Table 2 showed that 56.5% of the respondents have personal knowledge of somebody who was killed by armed robbers, while a lesser number of 43.5% do not know any dead robbery victim. This implied that majority of the Nigerian population can recollect at least one person who was killed in a robbery attack. Of this number, 23.9% knew only one person killed by robbers, 13.1% knew only two persons killed by robbers while 19.5% knew at least three people who were killed by armed robbers. This indicates a high level of victim mortality arising from robbery attacks. The data from this study cohere with prevailing literature on regular victim's mortality by armed robbery attacks in Nigeria (Folaranmi, 2017; Onyejiuwa, 2017a; Ogara, 2011; Nanadozie, Edike & Agbo, 2009). This showed that the armed robbery issue is a recurrent phenomenon in Nigeria dating back to the end of the Nigeria/Biafra war in 1970. Given the high level of human casualties resulting from armed robbery attacks evident in the foregoing data, it can be rightly argued that the Nigerian society has been in a long drawn war with armed robbers.

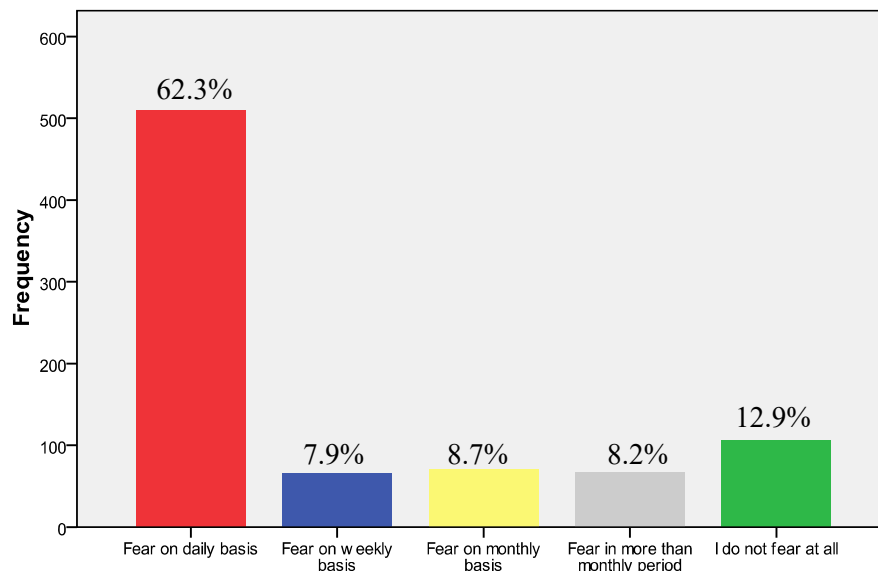


Figure 1. The prevalence of fear of armed robbery attacks

Figure 1 showed that 62.3% entertained fear of armed robbery attack on daily basis, while 12.9% do not have any fear throughout the year. The data attest to the high level of prevalence of armed robbery activities in the country. This supports previous study which indicated that fear of violent crime including armed robbery is high on daily basis (Ugwuoke, 2014). The issue here is that if 62.3% have reason to exercise daily fear of armed robbery attacks, it is therefore apparent that most people in Nigeria are suffering from perpetual psychological or emotional trauma due to armed robbery epidemics in the country.

Table 3. Places and Time of more Risk of Armed Robbery Attacks

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
At home/workplace	237	28.9%
Streets/Highways	582	71.1%
Total	819	100.0%
During the day	93	11.4%
During the night	726	88.6%
Total	819	100.0

Source: Researcher's field work, 2018

Table 3 showed that 71.1% of the respondents claimed that highways are the most dangerous hotspots for the risk of armed robbery attacks while 28.9% said they feel more at risk at home. This implies that Nigerian highways are high risk armed robbery terrains. The findings attest to the high vulnerability of people plying the highways in Nigeria. The data aligned with previous literature that depicts Nigerian highways as death traps in the hands of criminals who besieged such highways (Umahi, 2017; Opara, 2015; Ugwuoke, 2014; Otuh, 2010). This indicates a serious security lapse on the part of the police. With regards to the period considered safe, the data indicate that 88.6% felt that night period is more dangerous as against 11.4%, who said they felt more at risk during the day. The differences may be dependent on the individual routine activities and the peculiarity of the surrounding environment. The finding which indicates that the night period is more prone to armed robbery victimization tallies with a previous study by Ugwuoke (2014), which noted that less economic activities due to fear of violent crime at night affect the volume of economic output in Nigeria.

Discussion

The escalating wave of armed robberies in Nigeria, prompted many state governments to ban motor-bike transportation in some major urban towns or restricting their operational time to the day time only. Many markets also regulated their business hours from 7am to 6pm. There is a general increase in *target hardening* both at residential and business premises and this enhanced the business of people who market or construct iron materials for security prevention. It has further created extra burdens by increasing the cost of doing business or affected the cost of living as security precaution takes toll on people's income. In most cases, wooden doors have given way to steel fabricated doors specifically for *target hardening*.

This has subsequently undermined, general economic output, since ever rising robbery activities have curtailed the number of hours put into economic activities from trading to transportation. It also impacted negatively on public health as many people have refrained from regular fitness exercises in order to minimize exposure to victimization in addition to frequent anxieties which strained people's emotional stability. Social harmony has been equally undermined as most people deliberately stayed away from social events on security grounds in a way of *avoidance mechanism*.

Given the unabated wave of violent crimes especially robberies, governments and communities came up with a number of measures to check the tide of this peculiar sector of criminality. The Police have created a number of combat units specifically devoted to fighting armed robberies and recently, kidnapping, a newly emerging sector of criminality. To this effect, state police commands across Nigeria have special units known as the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). These SARS go with different code names in some states. There is another unit known as the Federal Highway Patrol which operates independently of the State Police Command. Part of the novelty is a crack unit, operating from the office of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), code named 'IGP-Intelligence Response Team' which is also independent of the control of state police commands.

However, in spite of all these special anti-robbery units and the heavy investments by both federal and state governments in terms of motorizing and equipment, the escalating wave of armed robberies have remained unabated. What is more, the Police in Nigeria are rocked by robbery scandals as its personnel over the years have been caught in armed robberies with some known police anti-robbery squad members engaging in armed robberies (Osauzo, 2013; Abdulwahab, 2007; Ganagana, Anosike & Fanawopo, 2005). In many instances, robbers operate in police uniform and this has made it difficult for the public to distinguish the police from ordinary robbers just as increasing wave of armed robbery cases involving policemen and soldiers raise fresh concerns about safety in Nigeria (Folarin, 2018; Fasua, 2006). Ironically, the public perceive the police as major security risk. This much was observed in a related study which noted that:

...people fear the police in the same way they fear criminals. The problems have come to the point where people now make monetary provisions to purchase the safety of their lives or freedom from police patrol teams... one could become a premeditated criminal or crime victim for his or her failure to make monetary offer to anti-crime police patrol teams within the streets or on the highways (Ugwuoke, 2005: 4).

On the other hand, communities with the approval of the security agencies in many urban areas and villages erect iron barriers across the streets and village roads and restrict movements during the night. This is in addition to the establishment of Vigilante and Neighborhood Watch outfits in urban and rural areas, as part of efforts to combat the menace of armed robbers. Such interventions have often hindered smooth movements in many communities and create untold hardship to travelers, some of whom are molested from time to time, as victims of anti-robbery sentiments by the public. All of these findings constitute strong justification for this study from which the data showed that over 60% of the respondents have fear of armed robbery attack on daily basis, over 56% knew

at least one person killed by armed robbers and more than 39% having been attacked by robbers at least once. The figure of robbery victims could be definitely higher because of dead victims that could not participate in the study.

However, the present and past police authorities have seriously frowned and demonstrated clear intentions to rid the force of bad eggs. Severally, the police have over time, embarked on a series of dismissals and the prosecution of erring personnel who were indicted of criminal acts and even gone far enough to burst police robbery gangs (Francis, 2018; Fasua, 2006). The police have equally suffered massive loss of policemen in action against robbers. This is as a result of lamentations by past police chiefs, such that in 2011, robbers and Boko Haram killed 602 policemen in 5 months, 435 policemen killed in 2015 in six months and random killing of policemen on duty across the country over the year by bandits (Adeyi, 2015; Usman, 2015; Amechi, 2014; Oji, 2013; Ganagana, 2011; Adegbamigbe, 2008). Subsequently, the fatality rate suffered by the police in the serial war against robbers may have resulted in police phobia against the public.

Conclusion

In this study of armed robbery attacks and everyday life in Nigeria, the authors examined the prevalence and severity of robbery activities and the impact they have on the socio-economic and overall security of the nation. Literature evidence showed that the rising robbery activities in Nigeria have defied successive Nigerian governments' security interventions. See (Folarin, 2018; Umahi, 2017; Bello, 2017; Ajayi, 2011; Ganagana, 2011; Otuh, 2010; Fasua, 2006). The study revealed high regularity in occurrence and rate of victim mortality. This is further compounded by the fact that some police and military personnel engage in robberies under the cover of the uniform. This raises the issue of public confidence and co-operation with security agencies. The crisis of confidence between the public and the police further militates against any result oriented synergy aimed at nipping the scourge of armed robbery in the bud.

The position of the paper is that spate of armed robbery in Nigeria is frightening as it has not only resulted in human and material losses but has also led to a considerable decline of night life and economic activities. What is more, the self imposed restrictions and frequent state of anxieties constitute problems that can seriously challenge public health programmes. What is apparent is that Nigerians are under constant state of fear of armed robbers and the police, seen by the public as criminally infested. The material and man-hour losses due to efforts to mitigate exposure to robbery attack and the high extra cost on security burden on the part of the people just to be safe from robbery menace is alarming with severe economic, political and social implications.

Given the above social conditions in Nigeria it may not be enough to blame armed robbery on merely on unemployment. This is because many of the robbers who were caught had gainful employment as tradesmen like cab-drivers, mechanics, tailors, electricians, traders, motorbike operators, herdsmen and other categories of occupation or students. While others were policemen, soldiers, companies and banks insider informants. For the group of graduate robbers, their case should be very close to a case of *rotten apple hypothesis*: the apple was already bad before it got to the market.

Therefore, this paper is of the view that the menacing activities of armed robbers in Nigeria should not be viewed as the issue of unemployment since many robbers were

actually employed or have trade or business of their own. The issue could be more fundamental to the problem of security structures especially the organization of policing in general, a method that alienated the community in the process and the societal value system in particular. A system whereby the sections of the country are being policed by agent personnel who are complete strangers with no knowledge of the terrains of the areas of their duty cannot achieve integrated relationship between the police and the people. Such a situation creates apathy between the police and the public which usually undermine security in general. Policing here is not just about the Police Force per se, but the participation of the community in the policing process. So, for proper understanding of the problems of armed robbery in Nigeria, there is the need for a paradigm shift away from the so-called unempirical street philosophy of heaping the blame on unemployment.

Recommendation

This paper is of the view that there is the need to reform the command structure of the Nigerian police force as it is presently organized. The current police structure in Nigeria is centralized which alienated members of the public in the policing process. Nigeria is a large country of more than two hundred and fifty ethnic nationalities, with a current estimated population of over one hundred and seventy million people with a flourishing ethnic prejudice which officers bring to bear in their area of assignment. These tend to hamper effective policing. A reform which places emphasis on community policing where police personnel will be recruited to police the areas they are familiar with, and have similar cultural background with the people is pertinent. Decentralization of police in Nigeria will go a long way to improve security with regard to prevalence of armed robbery attacks in Nigeria.

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