TREND ANALYSIS OF POVERTY AND URBAN CRIME IN NIGERIA SINCE 1999

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the impact of poverty on social crime in urban areas in Nigeria. It attempts to link the spread of urban crime to three important variables. These are bad governance, poverty, and inequality. The choice of Nigeria as the case study is informed by several considerations. The first and the most important is that it has been always assumed that democracy promotes good governance and social equality; the two components that are necessary for addressing urban crime. Nigeria's failure in this regard provides an interesting lesson through which the phenomenon of urban crime can be studied, its causes analyzed, and its effects revealed. The period covered is between 1999 when democracy was restored to the present. In the final analysis it is shown that bad governance, poverty, and social inequality are responsible for the spread of urban crime in the country over the last twelve years.

Keywords: Nigeria, Poverty, Crime, Inequality, Bad Governance, Democracy, Violence.

Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999 brought a number of expectations among the people (Maier, 2000). Years of military rule, political instability, policy reversals, weak economic growth, and endemic corruption have entrenched within the country alarming levels of poverty, inequality, and alienation among vast majority of its citizens. The return of democratic rule in the country, quite naturally, generated euphoria and great expectations, especially among those who felt alienated and disenfranchised. Looking at how many countries that were democratic were doing in terms of economic development, one would understand why millions of Nigerians had pinned their hopes for development and justice on democracy. Democracy, it is generally agreed, promotes stability and accountability in the political system (Yagboayaju, 2011). These two elements have been universally recognized as indispensable to economic development and by extension elimination of poverty and inequality in the political system (Ringen, 2004; Dellapiane-Avellaneda, 2009). Looking back twelve years after democratization in Nigeria, one would be tempted to wonder whether those expectations were after all misplaced. For indeed, twelve years into democratic rule, economic growth continue to be stunted, distribution of wealth remained uneven, and political stability elusive. In simple language, in the last twelve years, the levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality have steadily increased especially in the urban areas (Ucha, 2010).

Parallel to this development is the corresponding explosion in crime, especially its urban variant, which include prostitution, drug peddling, armed robbery, kidnappings, human trafficking, militancy, thuggery, hooliganism, youth violence, and even terrorism. While many of these social problems have been very much part of the Nigeria's socio political landscape, two important observations are in order at this point. The first observation is that some of these problems such as human trafficking and kidnappings are recent developments. The second observation to be made here is that even those problems that have for long been part of Nigeria's urban landscape such as prostitution, drug peddling and armed robbery; their intensity has multiplied many folds since 1999 when Nigeria democratized. What are the possible explanations for the rise of urban crime in Nigeria; what are the factors and or conditions that facilitate the rising level of urban crime in Nigerian cities?

These are the questions which this article explores. Specifically, this paper attempts to define the relationship between poverty, inequality, and employment and the corresponding rise in urban crime since 1999. In trying to find answers to these questions, this essay starts with a review of some of the dominant assumptions on poverty and its effect on urban society. From there, it proceeds with a survey

of the Nigeria's socio-political and economic conditions since 1999. The aim is to establish a relationship defined by poverty which escalated and is presently generating the conditions that sustain urban crime in the country. Some select cases from the most serious of these challenges are presented in order todemonstrate the dramatic relationship between poverty and urban crime in Nigeria since 1999.

2.   Poverty and crime: A theoretical clarification

One of the inevitable consequences of urbanization, especially in the third world countries, is the spread of urban poverty (Schweitzer, Kim, and Mackin, 1999). The phenomenon of urban congestion, stretching of social services, and the impossibility of having enough employment opportunities among the urban dwellers contributes in no small measure to the spread of poverty in the urban areas (Baker and Schuler, 2004). This almost always leads to the spread of urban crime and violence (Curley, 2005). In third world countries generally, and specifically in Africa, urban areas more or less represent vast swamps in which extreme affluence exists alongside extreme poverty. Studies however on these concepts differ in many respects. These differences range from the perspectives students prefer to conceptualized poverty and crime, to questions related to the tools of measuring poverty, and key indicators of poverty and urban crime (Baker, 2008). This is especially true for third world countries where socio-political and economic conditions are sharply different from those of the developed societies.

As a social concept, poverty is often defined in relative terms (Ajakaiye andAdeyeye, n.d.). This is because it is a situational problem in which needs varies from one society to another, or even within the same society over a specific period. This creates a serious problem of conceptualization as to which condition is exactly the condition of poverty, who is a poor person and what are the basic indices of measuring poverty in any given society? Gopinath (2008,p. 103) seespoverty as the absence of healthy food, clothing, and shelter. This definition does not shed much light on a comprehensive meaning of poverty.Aigbakhon (2008,p. 13) defines poverty "as a state of long-term deprivation of well-being, a situation considered inadequate for decent living". The problem with this definition is in determining what is considered as a decent living for an average person. Even without much of an emphasis, it is certainly obvious that the idea of decent living has significantly different connotations to an average African from an average American. It is for this reason that we narrow down our scope on poverty to those necessities of life that are applicable in all modern societies. These are access to universal and

qualitative education, safe drinking water, affordable health care facilities, sanitary facilities, nutrition, shelter and clothing. Taking these as indices of poverty is however not adequate for while in some societies, poor persons have access to all these and therefore take them for granted, in other societies, these are luxuries that are obtained by a handful. Nevertheless, we consider poverty in its broadest form to mean a situation where majority members of a country lack access to these indices that make their life distinguishable from that of animals. Adelman (1986, p. 49) argues that abject poverty is a level "so severe that it stunts the attainment of human potential". It is therefore the view of this essay that the realization of these indices leads to the attainment of human potentials. Conversely, their absence among a great number of persons affects their ability to realize their human potentials (Marx, 2006).

In any case, what is important here is to determine how poverty impact on social crime in urban areas. Conceptualizing social crime in urban centers is not as easy as it appears. For one, there is problem of categorization (Baker and Schuler, 2004). That is to say should those daily and mundane occurrencessuch as theft be considered as social crime leaving much more serious cases such as terrorists' attacks and suicide bombings as national security matters, or should they be included within a broad-view of what is urban crime. An interesting perspective on this question is provided by Baker and Schuler (2004). They point that urban social crime includes slums, environmental hazards, social fragmentation, and crime.Consequently, any form of social deviance from the accepted norms should be considered as a form of urban crime. Other studies have all linked urban crime to crippling levels of urban poverty in the society (Curley, 2005; Bobo, 2009). Adopting this as the framework of our analysis, we cannot but proceed with care when identifying those variables that we considerlinked and which ultimately create the conditions that nurture and sustain urban crime in Nigeria. Before this analysis however, we starts with a background review of Nigeria since 1999. The objective is to highlight those economic and socio-political conditions that prevail in the country since democracy was restored in the country on May 1999.

3.   Nigeria: A background review

A study of Nigeria from whatever angle one approached it, always reveals a number of striking paradoxes. The first of these is that the country is one of the richly endowed in terms of human and natural resources not only in Africa, but in the whole world. With a large population that places it in the list of the top ten most populous countries in the world, Nigeria has the human potential necessary to

build and sustain strong economic and industrial enterprises. And with its vast natural resources that range from crude oil, which makes it among the top ten oil producers in the world, to other mineral resources including gas, this ordinarily should not be a problem. In terms of agricultural productivity, it could be said that the whole of Nigerian economy was at a point in time entirely dependent on revenues generated from the agricultural sector. Even today, when this sector contributes a very marginal portion of the GDP and national income, vast number of people, especially in the rural areas completely depends on it for their livelihood and sustenance (CIA World Book, 2011).

A combination of many forces, most notable among them being corrupt and inefficient political leadership at both national and local level contrived and destroyed Nigeria's economy over the decades (Meredith, 2006, p. 580). This is related to the second paradox of the Nigerian socio-political and economic development. The paradox here is that those saddled with the responsibility of maintaining law, order, and of formulating and implementing policies and programs that would improve the welfare of the people are the ones at the forefront of violating these laws. Two typical features of successive national and local governments in Nigeria at least since the mid-eighties are the level of endemic corruption that permeates all levels of government and sectors of public life.The second feature is the tradition of policy reversals and disruption between succeeding administrations which has overtime been elevated to a fundamental public policy in its own right. Today, the havoc which corruptionwrought in the public life of the country could only be imagined. Suffice it to point that over the last twelve years of democracy in Nigeria, corruption has become severely entrenched in all levels of governance so much that the question now centers onwho are the less corrupt among public officials. The issue of policy reversals on the other hand leads always to the disruption of policies started by previous administrations by succeeding administrations no matter the credibility of those policies. Often, these decisions are informed by political expediencies and less by considerations for public interests, accountability, or probity. The danger of this to the progress and development of the country manifests itself in the kind of incoherence, confusion, and discontinuity that characterizes nearly all kinds of public policies and projects. Today in the country, it is practically impossible for anyone to outline any ten projects conceived and started either at local or national levels and are maintained by successive administrations over the span of two decades.

The third paradox manifests itself in the nature of the Nigerian democracy. Elsewhere, democracy proves to be a vehicle of sustainable economic growth, strong political institutions, political

leadership that is accountable, and a disciplined, informed and patriotic citizenry. Nigeria's case is profoundly different in every respect. Democracy has so far failed to either engineer the kind of economic development necessary for the improvement of the people's welfare, or to ensure efficient, accountable, and informed leadership that is capable of transforming the country. In fact, for many people, democracy is a bad idea altogether.And it is nearly impossible to fault the logic of their argument when one considers the fact that there has not been any visible transformation in the conditions of living for majority of the citizens in the last twelve years. In fact, the contrary seems to be the case. Besides spiraling level of poverty which is daily ravaging the nation, alarming levels of inequality, and unemployment, the most noticeable feature of democracy so far has remained the number of urban violence everyday practically in all parts of the country (El-Rufa'I, 2011). Actually, democracy to date succeeded in creating what could most appropriately be called as two "Nigerias": the Nigeria of the rich, the powerful and their minions, which is a very small enclave completely impervious to the sufferings, wants, and frustrations around them; and the Nigeria of the vast majority of the other citizens. This is populated by both the rural and urban poor, who are alienated, hungry, and daily wallowed in misery (Osinubi, 2003).

Nowhere does this picture become more revealing thanin the numerous urban areas across the country. Here, one encounters affluence alongside deprivation, want, and poverty (Ucha, 2010). While the rich and the powerful, often public officials and other elected representatives, are ensconced in their private mansions in secluded areas, the millions others inhabit slums and shanties devoid of even the basic necessities of life. Growing level of crime in urban areas could therefore be described as the last and definitely the most striking paradox about Nigeria as a developing country. For indeed democracy ought to facilitate the conditions in which crime under whatever name we chose to call it is reduced to the barest minimum. In Nigeriathe reverse is however the case.Since 1999 the country witnesses growing level in crime as well as the sophistication with which it is being committed daily. Perhaps, the most appalling part of this paradox is that the government together with its security agencies seems incapable of containing or tackling it.In what follows, we attempt a trend analysis of the relationship between poverty and urban crime more closely.

4.   Poverty and urban crime in Nigeria: Trend analysis

An analysis of the impact of poverty on urban crime in Nigeria must necessarily involve an examination of at least three important indicators (Ucha, 2010; Ogunleye-Adetona, 2010). These are failure of leadership, which we term bad governance. The rest are level of unemployment and inequality in urban centers of Nigeria. Elsewhere we have noted how most of the vast literature on the study of poverty relies on money-metric measures such as level of consumption and household income for measuring and evaluating poverty (Baker, 2008). It is important to note that while those indicators are quite important, they are of little use for the kind of analysis we have in mind here. What we choose to do here is to focus on understanding these three indicators and how they, over the short and long-term, affect the rise of urban crime in many Nigerian cities. In effect, we argue that failure of leadership or bad governance is wholly responsible for poor economic development planning, and entrenching inequitable mechanisms for the distribution of societal wealth. These conditions generate unemployment and social inequality in the cities. Unemployment and social inequality as we show are the main causes for eruption and escalation of social crime and violence in urban areas across the breadth of Nigeria over the last twelve years.

4.1 Badgovernance

The impact of bad governance on social development, peace and stability is always best understood from the angle of good governance in modern societies (Zhang and Peterson, 2007). Those societies that have achieved a substantial level of political development have strong institutions that ensure social justice, public accountability, probity, efficiency, effectiveness, and service delivery in all public sectors. Conversely, a poorly governed society could only have weak political and administrative institutions that are incapable of translating the aspirations, hopes, and yearnings of its people into concrete material benefits. Additionally, corruption, embezzlement, lack of political accountability, and abuse of power always characterizes this kind of society. The important thing here is that just as good governance is about internalizing some important values and norms, so is bad governance. Often when discussions are about good and bad governance in modern states, distinctions are usually made based on regime type, level of economic development, and even geographical location of a country concerned. Thus for instance, the general tendency is to see developed democracies with a certain level of percapita as coming under the good governance label. Equally, most countries that are geographically speaking located in the northern hemisphere are seen as societies with good political leaderships. This is not however an iron law of good or bad leadership neither is it an indicator of either of the two. In fact, even

among the developing economies and non-democratic countries there are exceptional cases that could, using other indicators of good governance, come under the label. The important point here is to understand that good leadership promotes development, ensures justice, and protects the poor.

Nigeria is one of those countries that have been exceptionally blessed in terms of human and natural resources. It is however possible to add that it is also exceptionally cursed in terms of good leadership in its five decades of existence as a sovereign entity. It is true that there have been few cases of strong, committed, and patriotic leadership in the last fifty years, but those have been far in between for them to leave any meaningful impact on its socio-political trajectory. As a result, the country suffered in the last fifty years especially in the areas that concerned economic growth and development, designing and sustaining strong political institutions, and evolving people-centered policies, programs, and initiatives that could transform their living conditions.

In terms of political accountability and probity, not much of a difference can be made between the military dictators that have rule Nigeria for better part of its existence, and the democratic leaders that have ruled the country since 1999. In fact, there is a growing consensus among many notable Nigerian political scientists that in terms of economic growth and development, as well as the general living conditions of the people and their security, the military regimes were better. Today, this level of bad governance that permeates all tiers of government in the country manifests itself in the levels of corruption, and increase in general level of poverty despite huge revenue earnings these last twelve years.

4.2   Unemployment

This failure to transform the economy in spite of huge oil earnings in the last twelve years manifests itself in the rising level of unemployment in the country. Figures from both official and unofficial sources on the number of unemployment especially among the youths who constitute the greatest percentage of all productive labor in the country are quite disturbing (Aigbakhon, 2008; El-Rufa'I, 2011). Most disturbing however is the failure of government, at federal and state levels, to transform the economy so as to create the enabling environment that is capable of promoting gainful employment opportunities among all segments of the society.Repeatedly, government at all levels in the federation has shown its lack of readiness or unwillingness to facilitate the conditions that would promote the inflow of foreign direct investment in to the economy. Necessary social infrastructure and facilities that

are a precondition for sustained investment and economic growth especially security, electricity, and road networks have all collapsed or are non-existent. Even those administrative regimes and institutions especially accountability which is necessary for economic development is not enforced.

Probing deeper into the employment crisis in Nigeria would reveal one striking dimension. Here, we are referring to the fact that a considerable percentage among the unemployed number in the country is practically unemployable. By unemployable we mean those people who owing to the lack of the necessary skills, technical or otherwise, simply cannot be employed in gainful jobs. This problem is most noticeable in the cities. Because of the attractions which cities hold anywhere in the world, we find people trooping daily to the cities in search of better life. A greater portion of those migrants to cities lack necessary technical skills with which to find good jobs and afford comfortable life style. And even where they succeeded in doing so, problems associated with weak purchasing power of the Naira, inflation, and acute housing shortages make them live with no significant differences with those that are not employed at all.

In any case, a deeper understanding of the problem of unemployment in Nigeria will warrant a deeper study than what we have here. It is alright however if we try to make few deductions from this situation.One, conditions associated with unemployment generate desperation among the unemployed especially in the urban areas where this desperation often pushed them to crime and other related activities in order to survive. While not excusing criminal behavior in all its forms, there is still logic in trying to understand that in many occasions wants and deprivation are the main causes of crime in urban areas. Two, unemployed members of the society, notably youths, are always a veritable reservoir from which militant gangs, and even terrorists draw a vast number of their recruits. A deeper study of unemployment, we are confident will reveal how many of the militant gangs including terrorists organizations draw from this pool of the unemployed youths in the country. Three, any effort towards addressing the challenges of urban crime in Nigeria must necessarily starts with addressing the problem of urban unemployment.

4.3   Inequality

The impacts of bad governance and unemployment in third world countries always result in the social segregation of some segments of the society, and its consequent fragmentation into different social classes (Masika, de Haan and Baden, 1997). One clear trend in most studies on social inequality is to

isolate its causes from the general socio-economic and political structure and processes of a country. The resultant effect of this is that students are provided with a skewed picture of social inequality in which its main indicators are assumed to be income, consumption, and employment disparity among the various segments of the society. A proper and more comprehensive analysis of social inequality ought to take into consideration the impact of socio-economic and political processes of the country. It also ought to include such indicators as social exclusion and political alienation of smaller groups especially in heterogeneous societies. This broader understanding would show that among the resultant effects of inequality in developing societies is crime and violence which are fuel by the feelings of alienation and resentment.

In Nigeria, the issue of social inequality and alienation has never been more pronounced than in this decade after democratization (Oyeshola, 2005, p. 123). As hard as it may sounds to comprehend, but the fact remains thatdemocracy has failed to bridge the wide gap between the different groups that suffered from social exclusion as a result of their disadvantaged position on the economic and political ladders of the country. If anything is worth noting then that would be how democracy easily accentuates these cleavages by promoting and securing the hold of one class in the society over the rest. For instance, from 1999 when democracy was inaugurated to date, while the salaries of all elected political office holders in the country has multiplied several times over, the net income of an average Nigerian saw no significant increase. Actually, taking into consideration the increasing cost of living in major cities, the crippling inflation, and the declining value of the Naira, we can say that cumulatively his status deteriorated these past twelve years.

Other instances such as spatial segregation and politics of exclusion, so rampant in nearly all major cities, could also be used as further evidence concerning the entrenched levels of inequality in the country (Oyeshola, 2005, p. 123; Ogunleye-Adetona, 2010). In its major cities such as Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna, and Port Harcourt there is today a sharp spatial segregation in which the urban poor lives in decrepit slums without even the basic necessities of life while the other class, consisting of the rich and higher officials of government, lives in the other section of these cities locally known as GRAs.An appropriate question here is what is the connection between this higher level of inequality and social crime in urban areas? Muller and Seligson (1987) argue that a high level of income inequality in a country increases the possibility of violence against the state for at least two reasons. The number of alienated persons in the society that can easily mobilize is great. And two, it is possible for the groups

that emerge out of this frustration to establish alliances with other groups that feel the same. At the present in Nigeria, the result of this is the emergence of many militant anti-state groups such as Boko-Haram and MEND. We shall now focus on how these three variables discussed above coalesced and led to the emergence of some of the most pernicious forms of urban crime in Nigeria since 1999. In trying to discuss these forms of urban crime, we restrict our analysis to those forms of crime which we consider as the most disturbing either because of their level of violence, the number of innocent people affected, or by both.

4.4   Armedrobbery

Armed robbery in Nigeria is not a recent phenomenon.First indications of this criminal activity began in the late 1970s in the southern parts of the country. At that time armed robbery was limited to very few cities notably Lagos and Bendel. Its spread to other parts of the country followed democracy during the second republic. And even at that period it was not as rampant as it is today. Two prominent observations can be made concerning the beginning of armed robbery in the country in the last 1970s. The first relate to the fact that this was the period when the civil war had ended and many of the refugees and others displaced by the war were trooping to the cities in search of jobs and greener posture. The second is that at that period Nigeria had entered the oil boom era. This was the period when the country's earnings from oil exports multiplied many times over giving the country new wealth and creating the first elements of what was to become the petro-dollar political elites. These two factors were no doubt responsible for creating the first elements of armed robbery gangs in the southern parts of the country where most of the oil wealth was concentrated.

By the dawn of this century, armed robbery has become one of the most serious urban crimes in all parts of the country. People are daily killed and their properties taken at home, places of work, or on the highways so much that it is no longer safe to travel long-distance journey to any part of the country during some hours of the night. To understand the connection between poverty and how it leads to this kind of activity one needs only to look back at the period before early 1970s. This was the period when Nigeria was totally unaware of the problem of robberies. One of the most likely explanations was that during this period urbanization, poverty, and social inequality were not as pronounced in the country as they are after the late 1970s. During that period problems associated with unemployment were

completely unknown in the country. As a result, youths were gainfully employed in an economy that was strong enough to guarantee them a lifestyle beyond mere existence.

4.5   Prostitution

Part of the immutable laws of prostitution anywhere in the world is that it almost always occurs in cities only. Two, wants and deprivation more than anything pushes prostitutes to their illicit trade. Ordinarily, prostitution should not make it to our list of those social crimes that we considered disturbing enough. But for the fact that at least since 1999, it has taken a new dimension which is quite dangerous to the health of the nation. The first of these dimensions is the booming traffic in young women in the country to other parts of the world most notably Italy and Spain. Today, there are big and quite powerful organizations whose specialty is trafficking young girls, mostly between the age of 15-22, to Europe and selling them into prostitution rackets. So serious is this activity that the federal government in collaboration with other concerned civil society groups instituted measures and regimes to halt this activity.

The second dimension is the fact that an increasing number of those who go into prostitution at least since 1999 are young girls mostly of school age. In fact, some of them drop out of school to go into prostitution in order to eke out living. The danger of this situation to the socio-economic development of the country can only be fathomed. Suffice it here to say that the fact that many among the young girls that are either trafficked to some foreign country or stayed back within the country and prostitute come from the productive segment of the population means that by acts of omission or commission, the country is mortgaging its future. It goes without saying that the fundamental cause of this problem is poverty notably for those living in the urban areas where the cost of living is prohibitively high.

4.6   Drugpeddling

Illicit drug dealing, including its trade and consumption is a feature as well as effect of urbanization (Bobo, 2009). One possible explanation for this is that urbanization facilitates the coming together of various social influences in one single place. The ensuing accommodation from this process of

urbanization never always transforms into positive outcomes for the society. In fact, at different times, it has been shown that negative influences that are capable of destroying the values, norms, and cultural fabric of the society are spread from urban areas. One of these nearly always is drug. Drug dealing is today a dangerous problem which practically all societies, developed and developing, are grappling with. But while most of the developed societies are able to institute measures that at least contained its spread through peddling and abuse, the same cannot be said of the developing countries. In many of the developing countries there is an evident failure to tackle this serious issue. In fact, in many of these kinds of societies especially in Africa, political leaders are known to be part of the drug business. We are, however, concerned with its cause and effect here.

First, it is not possible to attribute completely the cause of drug peddling and its abuse on poverty. This is unlike armed robbery or prostitution for instance which at their base, poverty provides the causal explanation. Secondly, its constituency always cuts across all social strata in the society. That is to say it is not unusual to find the higher and the lowly engaging in either its peddling or its abuse. Nevertheless, the propensity by many to resort to drugs can be informed by poverty and social exclusion (Bobo, 2009). In any case, a considerable portion of those who use drugs are found in the urban slum. Urban slums actually provide some of the most thriving markets for illicit drug activities. Nigeria's case is not any different in this regard. Most of those engaged in either illicit drug deals or abuse are the urban poor, and some of the flourishing markets for illicit drugs are in the urban slums.

4.7   BokoHaram

Boko Haram ordinarily ought to come under the youth violence and thuggery heading. We however chose to single it out and discuss it separately in order to underscore its peculiar nature, evolution, causes, and effects. Among all these forms of social crimes which we considered as the effects of poverty, bad governance, an inequality, and which we choose to discuss, Boko Haram is the most recent just as it is the most devastating. Originally, Boko Haram started around 2002 as an Islamic religious organization, albeit with a literalist strand of interpretation. By 2009, through series of provocation by government and its security agencies, the organization transformed into the most militant and violent organization threatening the existence of Nigeria's unity at least since the civil war ended in 1970 (Sani, 2011).

Several analysts see the group not as a manifestation of economic injustice and a reaction to social inequality but as a religious terror group pursuing its single-minded idea of Islamizing Nigeria at all cost. Very few among the students of Nigerian politics and history see Boko Haram for what it is truly: an urban uprising by unemployed youths against serial injustices being perpetrated by governments in Nigeria at all levels through their agents as well as the political elites. Jean Herskovits, one of the most renowned among students of Nigerian politics argues that the group could only be understood from within the larger landscape of the socio-political economy of Nigeria which makes it possible for a select few to become filthily rich at the expense of the vast majority of the citizens of the country(Herskovits, 2012).

Whatever the arguments for or against the group, there are some salient facts which cannot be dismissed away easily. The most important of these is that we have to admit that even if the group has its antecedents in theology, its swelling ranks is as a result of a huge reservoir of unemployed urban youths from many parts of the country. These youths who have completely become disenfranchised readily provides the group with its foot soldiers who commit all manner of atrocities including assassinations and suicide bombings in the name of religion. The second fact that needs stating here is that simple measures by the government beginning with gainful employment opportunities, reviving the economy, and addressing the lop-sided class structure in the country would go along away in addressing this menace.

4.8   Youthviolenceandthuggery

Under this heading we lumped together all violent youth activities in Nigeria. These activities range from militancy in the Niger-Delta, kidnappings in the South East, to political thuggery and touting in the South West and Northern Nigeria respectively. One remarkable commonality among the occupants of all these criminal groups is their age and employment status in their communities: they are all youths and unemployed (Oyeshola, 2005, p. 123). The most common form of youth violence and thuggery stems from their use by politicians during electioneering campaigns as hoodlums and thugs for the purpose of disrupting campaign activities of political rivals. Often, youths are mobilized into groups that provide services-for-hire to the highest bidders among the politicians. Their uses range from simple and pretty harmless disruptions during campaign rallies, to more violent uses including abetting electoral fraud by

stealing the electoral materials, intimidation of electoral officials, and rivals' party agents. In extreme cases, these youth's organizations are used by disgruntled politicians to commit arson and even murders (Aniekwe and Kushie, 2011).

The important thing here is to note the antecedents of these groups and the type of environment that ensures their survival for any extended period. Often, it is the case that poverty derives many of these youths to join these groups as thugs in order to make a living (Stern and Ojendal, 2010). Today in Nigeria, one can hardly venture into politics whether at national or local level without some command of violence at his disposal. The government is the major culprit in promoting this dangerous venture at least in two respects. First, most of the elected political leaders in the country ride to power through the services of these types of groups. Consequently, they are not pre-disposed to worktowards creating policies that would reduce if not eliminate the formation of these groups in the body polity. Most of the militant groups that later mutated into freedom fighters in the Niger-Delta had their antecedents in how politicians used them during elections, especially those of 1999 and 2003, and later abandoned them. In the Delta region, owing to the activities of these groups such as MEND, Nigeria nearly lost its entire oil production capacity from 2005 to 2009. Secondly, there is an absolute failure of governance to curtail all forms of criminal activities in the country. The effect of this failure is that criminal groups continue to emerge and blossom in the country without any hindrance from the government.

5.   Conclusion

The objective which this paper sought to achieve was stated in the introduction as examining the relationship between urban poverty and urban crime in Nigeria from 1999 when the country democratized. What emerged from this survey is a clear picture that shows a pattern of relationship between variables that are considered important for any constructive understanding of the linkage between poverty and urban crime. These variables that were examined were bad governance, inequality, and poverty in the country with emphasis on urban areas. The failure of leadership which led to bad governance in the country in spite of democracy confounded the problems of economic development and social fragmentation among the vast number of Nigerians. The resultant effects of this poor economy, and social fragmentation were systemic poverty, and institutionalized social inequality. These factors, we show, are responsible for the current wave of urban crime in all its manifestations in Nigeria.

The challenge therefore is not so much in allocating resources towards effective policing in urban areas, but in designing and evolving people-centered policies and strategies that would revive the economy, ensure equitable distribution of social wealth, and institutionalization of good governance, political accountability, and probity at all levels of governance in Nigeria. Anything short of these steps would have counterproductive impact on the level of crime in Nigeria's urban areas. For in failing to address the problems associated with urban poverty, authorities at all levels of government merely create the environment on which crimes are fostered and flourished in urban areas. In the final analysis, tackling crime level in urban areas boils down to addressing poverty, bad governance, and inequality among the people.

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