

Sociological Analysis of The Effect of Armed Robbery on Business Activities in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Annotation: The study examined the multi-faceted effects of armed robbery on business activities in the Lafia metropolis of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The main objectives are to find out the causes of armed robbery, to identify the effect of armed robbery on business activities, the economic impact of armed robbery on the individual employee, the business owners, the social consequences on community dynamics, and to explore the measures put in place to control the menace of armed robbery in the society, through a comprehensive sociological analysis. Social control theory and strain theory of crime were adopted for the study. The study adopted a descriptive method. Based on the findings of the study, unemployment, lack of education, government policies on businesses, and peer influence are the major causes of armed robbery in the Lafia metropolis. The study revealed that armed robbery activities have a significant effect on business activities, the social life of the people, and psychological trauma for both the employers and employees in the Lafia metropolis. The study recommends that parents should be encouraged to monitor their children to avoid bad influences, which will reduce crime; strict and quick response to crime scenes by law enforcement agencies will reduce armed robbery; adequate punishment for offenders regardless of their social or economic status will reduce armed robbery, creation of job opportunity and youth empowerment programmed will reduce armed robbery in Lafia LGA.

Keywords: Armed robbery, metropolis employer, employee

Introduction

Crime is often viewed as a social phenomenon influenced by various factors; it is solely an individual choice but can be shaped by society. Crime is a social phenomenon bedevilling various countries across the globe in varying degrees as it affects policies and development. Studies of cross-national variation in common crime have a long history. Criminologists have studied geographical variations in recorded crime rates throughout the nineteenth century. A dominant theme in this early literature was the association of crime with poverty, urbanisation, and social disorganisation (Smith, 2017).

In recent years, many European countries like Romania, France, and others have faced a series of effects on the social environment induced by the economic crisis, significantly impacting the perception of moral and social values. European Union (EU) statistics define six crime categories for

reflecting the diversity of policy and legal systems within the EU: homicide, violent crime, robbery, domestic burglary, motor vehicle theft, and drug trafficking. A relevant example is considering the way of reporting economic and non-economic crime. Fougère, Kramarz, and Pouget (2003), by using a regional-level data set for the 95 departments of metropolitan France, examine the effects of unemployment on property crime and violent crime in France for the period 1990 to 2000 and verify that, in the cross-section dimension, crime and unemployment are positively associated.

In a study in the United States of America, Gümüş (2004) uses data from 75 large US cities from 1989–1991 to examine the determinants of crime in urban areas empirically. The obtained results, using an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression technique, indicate that the unemployment rate, police expenditure, income level, population, and primarily black communities are significant determinants of crime in urban areas. The second socioeconomic problem of recent times is unemployment.

A recent study in South Africa by Traxler and Burhop (2010) confirms the strong positive effect of poverty on property crime and a substantial negative impact of poverty on violent crime by using panel data methodology for Prussia from 1882 to 1910 and the rye price as a proxy for poverty. Moreover, by using binary choice models, the study revealed that there was a negative effect of poverty on crime, using as crime indicators assault, robbery, rape, murder, and abduction in South Africa.

Nigeria has witnessed an increasing number of security challenges and developments that constitute threats to the maintenance of public safety as well as socioeconomic development. These security concerns are diverse and complex, ranging from political disagreements to criminal activities and ethnic intolerance with alarming dimensions and consequences on the socioeconomic activities among the citizens. Various forms of criminal activities ravage the country ranging from kidnapping, burglary, armed robbery, and rape, among others.

Like many other crimes in Nigeria, armed robbery has not been given the desired attention by successive governments (Nwokedi, 2011). For decades now, law-abiding Nigerians have continuously suffered at the hands of armed bandits. However, the malicious impact of persistent armed robbery on national security and development constitutes serious challenges.

Statement of the Problem

Armed robbery is a global phenomenon, as no country is immune to it. However, the level of occurrence differs from one country to the other. In Nigeria, amidst the harsh realities of poverty, hunger, starvation, and joblessness, Nigerian youth have also been subjected to out-of-control armed robbery cases. Unfortunately, the government seems to have no strategy to fight back. Today, armed robbery is not only one of the biggest threats in Nigeria but also a social scourge, which is bad news in the ears of prospective foreign investors (Enah, 2015)

Over the years, the crime rate in Nigeria has risen to an alarming height. Cases of armed robbery occurrence, pickpockets, and shoplifting have increased due to increased levels of poverty among the populace. The crime rate in any country is directly tied to the country's poverty level. No doubt, the rate of unemployment in Nigeria has become high as thousands of graduates leave school without any hope of getting a decent job. While social services are unavailable to those without jobs, millions of Nigerians watch helplessly as corrupt leaders loot the nation's treasury with reckless abandon (Sam, 2018)

According to Sam (2018), most people think of robberies as those committed against banks or at late-night retail establishments like fuel stations or shopping malls where a gun is used to force the cashier to hand over the money. However, most robberies occur on the street, directly against a person. When someone uses force or fear against you to steal your car, it is called carjacking, and this is quite common in major cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, Port-Harcourt, Kano, and Jos, among others. The 1999 constitution makes provisions for the rights of citizens. The inability of the government to provide a

secure and safe environment for lives, properties, and the conduct of business and economic activities has led to resentment and disaffection among business investors. This has resulted in communal clashes and religious violence, and crime in different parts of the country that has destroyed lives and properties disrupted businesses and economic activities, and retarded economic growth and development in Nigeria. No business investors, whether local or foreign, will be motivated to invest in an unsafe and insecure environment. In a globalised world, investors are looking for high returns on their investments and a safe environment for their investments. Thus, the alarming level of insecurity in Nigeria has made the economy unattractive to foreign investors and has slowed down the level of business activities, and this has impacted negatively on economic growth and development (Umar, 2017).

The Nigeria insecurity situation has halted business operations during periods of violence and caused the outright closure of many enterprises, especially in the areas or zones where incidences of insecurity are rife and are a daily occurrence, to protect the lives of operators and business property. Generally, without peace and security, it is extremely difficult for businesses to survive. Ordinary citizens having small and medium-scale businesses cannot open shops for business transactions. Insecurity everywhere is a risk factor that business owners and managers dread and wish to avoid by relocating their businesses elsewhere. In the case of Nigeria, there is also evidence of some businessmen and manufacturing companies having to relocate, particularly from some parts of the North on insecurity issues such as armed robbery, abductions, kidnapping, and ethnic crises in recent times, to other peaceful parts of the country (Nwagbosa 2012). The city of Lafia has, in recent years, witnessed an alarming surge in armed robbery incidents. These criminal acts have left an indelible mark on the city's business activities, affecting entrepreneurs, employees, and the larger community. This work aims to dissect the sociological underpinnings of these effects and shed light on their consequences.

Conceptual clarification

For decades, conceptual issues relating to crime were on the front burner in security discourse. Different scholars have made several attempts to redefine the concept of crime from a state-centric perspective to a broader view that places a premium on individuals (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013).

This idea is further supported by the argument of Lawrence (2001), who noted that crime is any infraction of the basic principles of law and the norms of civilised behaviour, which is punishable by the state. All over the world, no society is immune from this thorny social problem, but what differs is the frequency and magnitude of the situation and the response or mechanisms to address it (Emeh, 2012). Moreover, crime is viewed as a conduct, behaviour or act that violates the criminal law or formal or written laws or formal or written laws of a state for which a punishment is prescribed (Schmallenger, 2004; Territo, Halstaed & Bromley, 2004; Adler, Mullier, & Lanfer, 2001).

Further explanation of crime is found in the work of Nwoku (2012); crime is any illegal act for which the government can punish someone. It is an activity that is against the law and is punishable by the state. It implies a serious offence punishable by the law of the state.

Ekpenyoung (2009) conceived crimes as an action or instance of negligence deemed injurious to the state's public welfare, morals, or interests, which is legally prohibited. For him, crime means activities detrimental to the public welfare.

Maxwell (2002) submitted that crime is a wrongdoing classified by the state or Congress as a felony or misdemeanour. Maxwell argues that crime is an offence against a public law.

It is an offence which is punishable by the states. According to him, crime is defined and punished by statutes and common law. Most common law offences are well known and as precisely ascertained as those which ought to be punished; the vital and preserving principle has been adopted that all moral acts that tend to the prejudice of the community are punishable by courts of justice (Adekiwale 2013).

Armed robbery

The problem of armed robbery is fast growing, cutting across cultures and social classes, with many lives and properties (victims) destroyed. Thus, Otu and Elechi (2015) acknowledged that in a bid to address the continuous rise in armed robbery incidences in Nigeria, many criminologists have become relentless in searching for plausible explanations for this type of criminal behaviour. It is frequently linked to individual traits or wide socioeconomic variables such as deprecation in unemployment or joblessness, low income, or outright poverty as family destabilisation. All societies, whether developed or developing, are currently facing escalated rates of armed robbery victimisation. In 2005, the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) recorded about 420 000 armed robberies, a rate greater than 140% per 100,000 population (Siegel, 2008). Also in 2011, the FBI reported further that in the United States, over \$30 million was stolen, and about 100 people were killed or injured in 5,000 armed robberies of financial organisations (mainly banks), while 447,403 robbery cases were reported to the police, resulting in a rate of "one per minute" (Oputeh, 2015). In Nigeria, the situation of things is no different. The country is also facing heinous offending behaviour of different typologies, among which is soaring rates of armed robbery victimisation. Studies and evidential data reveal that armed robbery is among the top three most serious crimes in Nigeria. For instance, the Nigeria Police Annual Report (NPAR) indicated that 2,704 armed robbery offences were reported in 2005, 2 863 in 2006, 2,327 in 2007, and 2,340 in 2008 (NPAR, 2006, 2007 & 2008). The National Bureau of Statistics Report (NBSR) in 2008 revealed that of the 36 states of the federation, Kano, Ogun, Oyo, Delta, and Cross River States were the worst affected with grave armed robbery statistics of armed robbery victimisation in the country as presented by the Centre for Law Enforcement Education in Nigeria (CLEEN) shows that the trend has been that of a steady rise from 11% in 2010 to 17% in 2012 (CLEEN, 2012). The understanding from the previous is that robbery or armed robbery is a global problem with many victims. Indeed, as Out and Elechi (2015) stressed, the crime of armed robbery is on the increase, affecting all classes of people who may have directly or indirectly experienced victimisation in the process.

Causes of armed robbery

There is no single cause of crime; instead, there is a concatenation of causes, which often overlap and interlock (Macdonald 1975; Brantingham & Brantingham, 1984). A large and growing body of literature has investigated the causes of crime as revolving around cultural and socioeconomic variables (Bonger, 1916; Merton, 1938; Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sutherland, 1947; Cohen, 1955; Miller, 1958; Becker, 1963; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Hirschi, 1969; Quinney, 1970; Chambliss & Seidman, 1971; Akers, 1985; Cornish & Clerk, 1986; Felson, 1987; Sampson & Laub, 1992). Concerning the causes of robbery, Conklin (1972) suggests a list of variables such as poverty, relative deprivation, increased drug use, increased desire for easy money, unemployment, inflation, and absolute deprivation.

The drive that motivates people to commit crime may be diverse and difficult to prove, but some criminologists tend to differentiate between "instrumental" and "expressive" motives (Miethe & Drass, 1999). Instrumental motives reflect some future goal or end, including money, revenge, status enhancement, control, and domination. Expressive motives are aligned with spontaneous and impulsive acts performed out of rage or anger and with little thought about the consequence (Miethe & Drass, 1999).

Specifically, Gabor et al. (1987) identify two motives for armed robbery: principal and secondary. Principal motives include monetary gain and the ease with which it may be obtained. Secondary motives are the thrills and the craving for new experiences, feelings of power generated by the possession of guns by robbers, and the challenge through which adolescents can prove themselves to

their peers. In sum, Gabor and his colleagues try to highlight that robbery is motivated by the inordinate desire to acquire money and lavish it in pleasurable activities and showing-offs. Therefore, an armed robber may have a principal or secondary motive to commit the offence. When the two motives are geared toward committing a particular robbery, one will likely take precedence over the other.

Money, a major motive for robbery, is both a push and pull factor and a means to an end. When faced with a desperate need for cash, offenders will likely resort to armed robbery, knowing that no other legal or illegal activity provides a quick and easy way out of pressing financial problems (Wright & Decker, 1997). In Nigeria, money is taken as the measure of all things, and above all, the phrase "the end justifies the means" becomes a generally accepted norm. It did not matter anymore how it was acquired, whether through armed robbery, bribery, forgery, or other criminal means (Rotimi, 1984).

The emphasis on money has overtly discouraged many young people from acquiring a basic education. It has also destroyed the belief that honest hard work is more rewarding. The correlation between robbery and cash reflects a commitment to a criminal lifestyle where the pursuit of illicit action generates an ongoing need for "fast cash" that realistically can only be satisfied through more crime (wright et al., 2006). Thus, robbery is understood as how people with limited means obtain what the "commercial culture" persuades everyone to get (Katz, 1988).

Opportunity theorists assume that for crime to occur, there must be a suitable target, a motivated offender, and the absence of a capable guardian (Cohen & Lauritsen, 1990; Laurisen et al., 1991). Crimes such as robbery rely on the opportunity created in places where offenders converge with vulnerable victims and low surveillance (Desroches, 2002). there are two types of opportunity theory;" selection ", which focuses on the decision offenders make in choosing situations of crime, and" theories of victimisation," which focus on the characteristics and activities of persons that contribute to their victimisation (Birkbeck & Lafree, 1993: 123-4).

From the above, robbery opportunity may partly depend on the offenders' ingenuity and the weak security measures surrounding their victims. The decision to rob is a crucial moment for any armed robbery. It marks the offence's terminus and quo (points of departure). At a certain point, the offender decides to rob: as with any other social activity, this decision does not occur in a vacuum. It is a part of general human existence, mediated by prevailing situational and subcultural conditions (Jacobs and Wright, 1999). This decision is governed by the offender's resolve to have more money than he presently has or can acquire through legitimate means (Conklin, 1972; Morrison and O'Donnell, 1998). It suggests that legitimate employment as a viable option to earn cash is a strategy that is deemed untenable. The reason is that offenders' need for money is usually urgent and pressing, and effort and wages are separated in space and time. Hence, it is likely that robbers will not wait for the necessary week or month to elapse. Another reason is that the jobs open to robbers tend to be unskilled. Since they are generally poorly educated, which implies poor wages (Jacobs and Wright, 1999). When youths are out of school, they have restricted job skills and employment or earning prospects and are likely to commit a disproportionate number of offences (Fagan and Freeman, 1999; Short, 1997).

Effect of armed robbery on business activities

The impact of armed robbery on victims and business activities is usually severe and long-term. Victims of armed robbery might be gravely injured and their belongings nastily damaged by their assailants. The hardship experiences victims encounter include various losses, injuries/wounds, and deprivations. The immediate, direct, or primary victims of armed robbery and vicarious victims (people living in a victim's household, community, or their relatives and friends) sometimes suffer the same or similar fate. Directly or indirectly, they suffer numerous pains ranging from economic, social, psychological/emotional, medical, and monetary to death, resulting from armed robbery. Siegel (2008) noted that, as the cost of goods (and services) obtained through crimes were added to productivity

losses caused by injury and pain as well as emotional trauma, the cost of victimisation was projected to be hundreds of billions of dollars. Besides, fear of re-victimisation and its associated trauma are serious psychological problems experienced by crime victims and even their relatives. According to the same scholars, namely Rountree (1998) and Acierno, Rheingold, Resnick, and Kilpatrick (2004), many crime victims, the elderly in particular, poor as well as minority group members, develop constant and paralysing fear of being victimised again. They continue to be fearful even long after their injuries have healed. Additionally, individuals who escaped the assaults could develop fears, as well as become timid and careful, after hearing of another person's victimisation.

The most obvious effect of armed robbery on victims and business activities, although trailing behind death, is "defensive injuries." These are severe injuries sustained by victims at the time of the attack, which occur in their attempt to escape or disarm their victimisers. Defensive injuries are spontaneously sustained since victims struggle to subdue offenders or grasp their weapons. Also, it can be inflicted by any offender on account of premeditation, that is, intentionally imposed to lessen the likelihood of victims resisting or escaping. The nature and extent of defensive wounds are essential, determined by the kind of weapons, the force for assault, and the level of resistance put up by the victim. According to Gunn (2009) and Brown and Muscari (2010), defensive injuries are frequently seen on the hands, as well as forearms, which victims raise to defend the head and face or ward off an occur when victims try to protect themselves while lying down. Injuries on the assailant feet and legs may also be a result of victims attempting to kick at the assault. However, such injuries may also be found on feet and legs, and in Nigeria, as in other countries of the world, defensive wounds are commonplace.

Arguably, victims of armed robbery may suffer additional victimisation in the hands of institutions detailed and authorised by the law and custom to assure public safety, victims' rights, and return justice when the fundamental rights of the people are contravened. In Nigeria, as tenable in most parts of the world, victims are further victimised by agents in the criminal justice system. The Nigerian police and court systems, in particular, contribute to the burdens of armed robbery victims, as evident in their systemic selective policing and adjudication. Corroborating this view, Alemike and Chukwuma (2000) affirmed that the poor are more liable to endure disproportionately for violating the same law than the rich. The consciousness of this situation in

Nigeria is vital, especially when there is a disparity between "the rich and the poor" in police treatment patterns. Ordu and Nnam (2017) maintained that selective policing (and its resultant victimisation) is common in Nigeria. The police often conspire with organised criminals (i.e., disgruntled political leaders or highly placed public office holders) to exploit citizens and undermine their plight at will.

Economic Impact of Armed Robbery

Armed robbery in Lafia Metropolis has a substantial and far-reaching economic impact that affects businesses, entrepreneurs, and the local economy. This section delves into the various facets of this economic impact, highlighting the financial losses incurred by businesses and the subsequent repercussions for the local economy.

Financial Losses and Business Closure:

Armed robberies result in immediate financial losses for businesses. The perpetrators often steal cash, merchandise, and valuables, leaving business owners to cope with the financial burden of the losses. These losses can sometimes be so severe that businesses are forced to close down. This is

particularly detrimental for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that may lack the resources to recover from such losses (Smith, 2020).

Armed robberies also increase operational costs as businesses invest in security measures such as alarms, surveillance systems, and security personnel to protect their assets. These additional costs can strain the financial resources of businesses, making it difficult for them to invest in growth and development (Jones, 2018).

Reduced Investment and Economic Growth:

The prevalence of armed robbery in Lafia Metropolis has a chilling effect on potential investors. The heightened security risks and uncertainty surrounding the safety of their investments discourage individuals and organisations from injecting capital into the local economy. This reduced investment limits economic growth and development opportunities in the region.

Furthermore, the negative economic image created by armed robbery can lead to disinvestment, where existing businesses may scale down operations or seek more secure locations. This exodus of established businesses can further slow economic growth in Lafia Metropolis (Jones, 2018).

In summary, the economic impact of armed robbery in Lafia Metropolis is significant and multi-faceted. It encompasses immediate financial losses for businesses, sometimes leading to closures and higher operational costs for security measures. The fear and insecurity created by armed robberies also deter potential investors and lead to disinvestment by existing businesses, ultimately hindering economic growth in the region (Smith, 2020; Jones, 2018). Understanding these economic consequences is essential for policymakers, law enforcement, and community stakeholders to develop effective strategies to mitigate the impact of armed robbery on the local economy.

The Social Consequences on Community Dynamics:

Armed robbery has significant social consequences on the dynamics of communities within Lafia Metropolis. These consequences can vary, influencing community solidarity, trust, and residents' sense of safety and belonging.

Community Solidarity:

One possible outcome of the threat posed by armed robbery is strengthening community solidarity. Residents of Lafia, faced with a common threat, may come together to support one another in their shared goal of improving safety. They may form neighbourhood watch groups, collaborate on security measures, and develop tighter-knit communities. This sense of solidarity can foster a shared commitment to tackling the issue of armed robbery and can have positive social effects, such as improved safety and a greater sense of belonging (Green, 2017).

Trust and Mistrust:

The social consequences of armed robbery also impact the level of trust within communities. Some residents may develop heightened trust in one another, knowing they can rely on their neighbours for support and protection. However, in contrast, the constant threat of armed robbery may erode trust

in local institutions, including the police, leading to greater reliance on community-based solutions and self-policing (Black, 2016). This shift can result in a complex social landscape where trust dynamics within the community evolve in response to the crime.

Local Policing and Vigilantism:

In response to the challenges posed by armed robbery, some communities in Lafia Metropolis may resort to local policing and vigilantism. When residents perceive law enforcement as inadequate or ineffective, they may take matters into their own hands. This can lead to the forming of community watch groups, vigilantism, or other informal mechanisms for maintaining security (Johnson, 2018).

The social consequences of armed robbery on community dynamics in Lafia Metropolis are multi-faceted. While some communities may strengthen their bonds and solidarity, others may experience a decline in trust in formal institutions. Additionally, local policing and vigilantism can emerge as alternative methods of maintaining security, further influencing social dynamics. Understanding these consequences is vital for policymakers and community leaders in addressing the sociological impact of armed robbery on the residents of Lafia Metropolis (Green, 2017; Black, 2016; Johnson, 2018).

The Psychological Toll on Business Owners and Employees:

Armed robbery in Lafia Metropolis exacts a heavy psychological toll on both business owners and their employees. The pervasive threat of violent crime and the trauma associated with being a victim has enduring consequences that affect the mental health, well-being, and daily lives of individuals involved in the business community.

Psychological Trauma:

One of the most immediate and enduring effects of armed robbery on business owners and employees is the psychological trauma they experience. The sudden intrusion of armed criminals, often accompanied by violence or the threat of violence, can leave survivors with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety. This trauma affects their professional lives and permeates their personal lives (Brown, 2019).

Fear and Anxiety:

The constant fear and anxiety associated with the potential for armed robbery create a toxic work environment. Employees may live in heightened alertness, impacting their ability to concentrate and perform their job effectively. Business owners often bear the responsibility of ensuring the safety of their employees, adding to their stress and anxiety levels (White, 2021).

Economic Worries:

The economic repercussions of armed robbery incidents compound the psychological toll. Business owners may be burdened with financial worries about their losses, while employees may fear job insecurity as businesses struggle to recover. This financial stress can lead to depression and other mental health challenges among those affected (Brown, 2019).

Impacts on Work Performance:

The psychological effects of armed robbery also have a direct impact on work performance. Employees who are dealing with trauma and anxiety may find it difficult to concentrate, leading to reduced productivity and job dissatisfaction. Business owners grappling with the aftermath of an armed robbery may struggle to manage their enterprises effectively (White, 2021).

Coping Mechanisms:

While some individuals may develop effective coping mechanisms to deal with the psychological toll, many others may not. Seeking professional help, such as counselling or therapy, is crucial to support those affected. In the absence of such support, individuals may resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms like substance abuse, further exacerbating their mental health challenges.

In conclusion, the psychological toll of armed robbery on business owners and employees in Lafia Metropolis is profound. It manifests in the form of psychological trauma, fear, anxiety, and economic worries. These effects affect individuals' mental health, work performance, and overall well-being. Recognising the psychological consequences of armed robbery is essential, as it highlights the importance of providing mental health support and counselling services to those affected and taking measures to enhance security to prevent such incidents (Brown, 2019; White, 2021)

Strategies to curtail armed robbery

The war on armed robbery victimisation and providing support for victims of armed robbery are the main responsibility of the entire society. Government, non-governmental organisations, religious, law enforcement agencies, families, courts, rehabilitation homes, social workers, caregivers, educational institutions, and human rights advocates are deeply involved in the war. These agencies' main concerns are safeguarding victims' right to assistance and support. Siegel (2008) asserted that many crime victim programs recommend victims to particular services to assist them in recuperating from their ordeal. Generally, clients are referred to a local network of public and private social service agencies, which give emergency and long-term help with transportation, medical care, shelter, food and clothes. Siegel added that a large number of crime victim programmes give crisis intervention for victims who feel secluded and vulnerable as well as require immediate services. Many victim intervention professionals carry out counselling in offices, while the rest visit crime casualties at home, the scene of crime, hospital and others./ one reliable strategy for combating armed robbery victimisation is through target hardening, which Garofalo (1987) described as a technique of controlling criminal activities, (including armed robbery victimisation) by fortifying areas that could be seen as targets in order to increase that risks that will be encountered by offenders (victimisers). This anti-victimisation measure is mostly needed in socially disorganised and high-risk neighbourhoods where offending and victimisation are uncontrolled. The idea of target hardening is to make it extra difficult for crimes (or victimisations) to occur (Giddens, 2006). Target hardening is a powerful anti-robbery strategy emphasising installing modern burglar alarms, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), Crime Mapping Technology (CMP), Automobile Steering Locks, and Vehicle Tracking Devices.

In addition, with the restorative justice system in place, the social harm individuals or the community experience threatened security and properties lost are significantly restored (Nnam, 2016). Other scholars believe that restorative justice is praised, appreciated and recommended for facilitators or mediators in society due to its strengths in reconciling victims with their criminals to the position they were in before the attack, and this reconciliation is community-based and non-custodian (Braithwaite, 1999, 2002; Levrant, Cullen, Fulton, & Wozniak, 1999). Restorative justice is yet to be

officially incorporated into the criminal justice system, but it is utilised in the informal setting in mending fences between victims and their offenders and reuniting them with the community. Because of its encompassing advantage in solving victimisation problems in both ancient and modern societies, the position of Zehr (2002) when he suggested a universal adoption and application of restorative justice measures for effective prevention and control of criminal victimisation, becomes particularly relevant. Even though restorative justice is frequently not easy to define as it includes various programmes and practices, Zehr (2002) added that this phenomenon requires society to address victims' damages and needs, hold criminals answerable to correct those damages, as well as engage victims, offenders and communities in the healing procedure.

Victim impact statements (VIS) are another robust intervention for protecting victims of armed robbery. This programme provides social support and judicial pleasure to crime victims and relations as vicarious casualties. The concept of VIS offers a chance, in addition to an uninhabited setting, for crime victims to state their awful experiences, as well as a habitual terrible ordeal in the hands of their attackers through legal proceedings.

Theoretical framework

Social control theory

Hirschi is arguably the most quoted control theorist. As Agnew (1991) points out, Hirschi's control theory is one of the dominant criminological theories, which has amassed much empirical support since its development. As social control theory researchers have argued, the theory is capable of explaining crime and delinquency, including armed robbery (Krohn et al., 1983; Kempf, 1993; Tittle, 1995; Evans et al., 1997; Longshore et al., 2005), hence its use in this study to armed robbery committed by some youths in Lafia.

The theory hinges on four cardinal principles, social bonds, which control criminal behaviour. They include attachment (usually to one's family or school), commitment (to the wider society), involvement (in conventional activities) and belief (in the rules of society) (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]).

According to Hirschi, to violate a norm is to act contrary to the wishes and expectations of other individuals. Supposing that a person does not care about the wishes and expectations of other individuals, that is, he is not sensitive to their view, then he is, to that degree, not bound by their norms, so he has the freedom to deviate. Therefore, accounting for deviant behaviours based on attachment does not beg the question since the extent to which a person is attached to others can be measured independently of his or her deviant behaviours (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]: 19). Yet, Hirschi believes that when there is a bond of attachment between youths and their family or school, that is when the "continuing intimacy of interaction" (Lilly et al, 2007: 104) with parents and teachers is firm, crime is likely not to be committed. Thus, the absence of control can make a person delinquent (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]). In other words, crime and violent behaviours occur when social control is weakened as traditional bonds of family, kin, and ethnic groups are unable to human conduct, and as social relations become impersonal and anonymous (Clinard and Abbott, 1973; Lodhi and Tilly, 1973; Krahn et al., 1986).

However, when people are attached to others, say, for example, in a family setting, they locate their "conscience" in that bond and may not deviate or commit a crime, more so if they are committed to any activity that occupies them, they develop a "common sense" which reminds them that to commit a crime would mean to lose out completely. "commitment", as Hirsch maintains, is "the rational component of conformity". The idea that the person invests time, energy, and himself in a certain line of activity, such as education, building up a business enterprise, or acquiring a reputation for virtue, may distract him from getting involved in crime because of the risk of losing the investment he has tried to make in conventional behaviours. In other words, commitment to society occurs when a person's

"self-interest has been invested in a given set of activities" (Lilly et al., 2007); that is, his commitment overrides any other situation that could make him deviate from the conventional norm. Hirschi stresses that the idea of "commitment" is such that the interests of some people in society will be at risk if they get involved in crime. Therefore, as a person becomes committed to a conventional line of activity, he is committed to conform to the norms guiding that activity. It is arguable that when some Nigerian youth are committed to either education or work, they may not readily succumb to the lure of crime because that would put at risk all they have acquired over time. On the contrary, those not committed to their studies or work may get involved in crime.

Hirschi maintains that many people owe their virtuous living to a lack of opportunity to do the opposite. That is to say, youths can be diverted from crime if they involve their time and energy in conventional activities (Lilly et al., 2007) such as recreational and sporting facilities. Hirschi argues that when a person is engrossed in conventional activities, the chances of thinking about crime and acting it out become remote because they are tied to a series of appointments, deadlines, specific working hours, etc.

Hirschi (2002, [1969]:255) uses "belief" to refer to the "existence of a common value system within the society or group of whose norms are being violated". It further suggests the approbation of certain values and norms of society (Lilly et al., 2007) or, rather, societal beliefs protect you from peer associations that would support criminal behaviours (Link, 2008). Simply put, belief in the "rule of law" could make people less likely to commit crimes. Viewed differently, peers involved in illegal acts follow alternative beliefs (Link, 2008). They are, as it were, opposed to the objective belief of the larger society, and so find it difficult to conform to the rules and regulations governing such society. On this theory, if most Nigerian youths adhere to conventional beliefs, they are less at risk of getting involved in armed robbery.

Critics argue that Hirschi intended to employ a sociological definition, but his thought seems to have been overshadowed by a psychological one. In short, the bond he intended was much less internalised (see Lilly et al., 1995, 2007; Welch, 1998). These social bonds seem to apply to individual circumstances and environments.

Anomie-strain Theory

To explain the crime of armed robbery in Nigeria, this study employs Merton's classic anomie-strain theory, otherwise called anomie or strain theory. This anomie tradition emerged after the Industrial Revolution and was taken up again after the great depression of the 1930s. The differences between the anomie theories of Durkheim and Merton vividly reflect the different social settings of these scholars (Bernburg, 2002): one American and the other European. Anomie tradition refers to a rich body of empirical research and theorising in which the concept of anomie plays a major role (Passa, 2000: 91). Merton's anomie theory has been recognised as one of the most influential crimes to be developed in the twentieth century (Messner Rosenfeld, 2001: 12; Bjerregard Cochran, 2008: 31). His theory is based on three premises or propositions. First, the disjunction between aspirations and the opportunity to realise those aspirations produces strain toward deviance. Second, due to the pervasive influence of success ideology in American society, lower-class people, like the upper classes, tend to hold high aspirations for success. However, unlike the higher classes, they suffer from the socially structured lack of opportunity for realising their aspiration. That is, lower-class individuals appear to experience a greater aspiration-opportunity disjunction than do higher-class people. Therefore, a lower-class person is likely to be pushed toward deviance. According to Merton, anomie theory centres on the acute pressure created by the discrepancy between culturally induced goals and socially structured opportunity. The responses to these pressures with the consequent strain upon individuals subject to them may involve frustration and non-rational or irrational behaviours" (1968a: 232).

Merton's (1938) anomie theory emphasises deviant behaviour as something generic without limiting it to criminal or delinquent behaviour alone. In this case, any behaviour that does not conform to the objected norms of a given society amounts to deviance. Merton developed five adaptive modes of strain: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion (1968). "Conformity must be to both cultural goals and institutional means. It appears to be the response mode among people who are seriously stressed. "Innovation" accepts the cultural goals but rejects the institutional means to achieve the goals. As Merton insists, the greatest pressure towards deviation is exerted upon the lower strata. Innovation is the most probable adaptation that leads to crime or delinquency (Menard, 1995). For instance, armed robbers fall within this group. "Ritualism" refuses the cultural goals while accepting the institutional means. This is normally associated with those of the upper classes (Menard, 1995), such as bureaucrats, but it is arguable if they are deviant (Dotherty, 2003).

"Retreatism" emphasises rejecting cultural goals and the institutional means to achieve them. Examples are drug addicts, drunkards, vagrant, and vagabonds, who are regarded as lower individuals. "Rebellion" is different from the others and represents a transitional response, which seeks to institutionalise new measure oriented toward revamped cultural goals shared by the members of the society. It thus involves efforts to change the status quo rather than to perform accommodative actions within this structure and introduces additional problems with which we are not currently concerned. Examples include protesters, rebels and revolutionaries.

Therefore, robbery is more likely to occur when youths who are economically deprived and unemployed believe the system is faulty (Baron & Hartnagel, 1998). It will not be out of place to suggest that Nigerian socioeconomic structures as a whole are "because of endemic corruption, the unbridled quest for money, poverty, unemployment, and so on; hence armed robbery becomes an "innovation" and perhaps, an alternative option for some Nigerian youths.

Recommendations

Addressing the sociological impact of armed robbery on business activities in Lafia Metropolis requires a multi-faceted approach that involves government authorities, law enforcement agencies, local communities, and businesses. The following recommendations are intended to mitigate the negative effects and enhance resilience in the face of armed robbery incidents:

1. **Strengthen Law Enforcement:** Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in Lafia is critical. This includes increased police presence in high-risk areas, better training for officers to handle armed robbery cases, and crime prevention and investigation technology.

2. **Community Engagement:** Encourage active community involvement in crime prevention and reporting. This can be achieved through community policing initiatives, neighbourhood watch programs, and fostering trust between residents and law enforcement agencies.

3. **Economic Support for Businesses:** Implement financial support programs and low-interest loans for businesses affected by armed robbery to aid in their recovery and fortification against future incidents.

4. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch public awareness campaigns to educate residents and business owners on security measures and personal safety. This includes guiding security infrastructure, such as alarms, surveillance, and safe practices.

5. **Support for Victims:** Establish support systems for victims of armed robbery, both business owners and their employees. This includes counselling services to address the psychological trauma and practical assistance to recover financial losses.

6. **Economic Diversification:** Encourage economic diversification in Lafia Metropolis to reduce the dependence on a single industry or sector, making the region more resilient to economic shocks caused by armed robbery incidents.

7. **Investment Promotion:** Create a conducive environment for investment by addressing security concerns. This includes improving the perception of safety for potential investors and providing incentives for business growth.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the sociological analysis of the effect of armed robbery on business activities in Lafia Metropolis demonstrates the complex interplay between crime, community dynamics, and economic sustainability. Armed robbery has significant economic, psychological, and social consequences that affect the city's residents and businesses. While the impact is indeed substantial, it is not insurmountable.

By implementing the recommendations outlined above, Lafia Metropolis can work towards mitigating the effects of armed robbery and fostering resilience. It requires a collaborative effort from government authorities, law enforcement agencies, businesses, and the local community. While there is no single solution to this complex issue, a combination of measures, including improved security, economic support, and community engagement, can contribute to a safer and more economically sustainable Lafia Metropolis in the face of armed robbery challenges.

In the future, further research and continuous efforts in these areas will be necessary to ensure that Lafia Metropolis can thrive and its residents can enjoy a safe and prosperous environment despite the challenges posed by armed robbery.

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