

**NATIONAL SECURITY AND CRIME IN ERA OF COVID-19 IN NIGERIAN  
MAJOR CITIES: BEYOND A LOCKDOWN**

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**Abstract**

*Security is the responsibility of every citizen of every country but security agencies are established by law to handle the security affairs of the country. Security becomes a problem and very precarious if an unplanned and unexpected threat occurs when there are no laid down laws to tackle them. When such events occur in a country like Nigeria without adequate procedures put in place to checkmate it, the nation suffers from different criminal activities which pose serious security issues. Nigeria is a nation populated with over 200 million residents with different multi-religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds affected by the ongoing global pandemic known as the coronavirus. COVID-19 as abbreviated by World Health Organization (WHO) is a highly infectious disease with a high mortality rate ravaging the population of the country of which the government-mandated a lockdown in the country to slow the spread of the disease. The pandemic and forced dependence on nothing due to the lockdown further exacerbated people's already fragile egos and pushed them into an abyss of despair. Analysis of secondary data on the effect of the virus due to forced lockdown by the government showed that there was a considerable spike in crimes committed by both citizens and security operatives within major cities. The increase in such crimes like armed robbery, extrajudicial killings, and kidnapping, was propelled by a lack of governmental intervention to the plight of the majority of citizens of the country. The resultant effect was that it created a strain on the national security of the country. This work recommended for increased governmental intervention both for citizens and security*

*operatives in the country. Also to implement relevant policies geared towards the future occurrence of a pandemic and checkmate the activities of security personnel.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, crime, security, government, strain.

## **Introduction**

A society ill-prepared and ill-equipped for unforeseen and unprecedented attacks both from man-made and natural sources suffers devastating effects through such debilitating consequences as crime and crime-related activities. The effects are devastating especially as it leads to such consequences as criminal activities which affect national security of a country. Crime becomes synonymous with national security and citizens of a country live in fear of their lives and properties. Nigeria is a country that has witnessed a lot of instabilities starting from its independence in 1960 to the present pandemic. The country has been besieged by different political, economic, social, and religious uprisings both planned and unplanned. These insecurities have been caused by the different and unstable political and economic systems found within the country. One factor remains constant within all these and that is the prevalence of crime which instead of abating with new political power always increases. The present political administration in Nigeria has been besieged by different criminal activities ranging from the nefarious activities of the Boko Haram sect to Fulani herdsmen, kidnapping, armed robbery, rape, arson, pedophilia which are undertaken by the criminally minded in the society. The activities have been caused by corruption, unstable economy, illiteracy, failure of the government to provide basic amenities for its citizens. Crime has now become the order of the day in Nigeria.

In modern times, crime is socially and legally constructed but for this paper, the legal construction will be used. In modern criminal law, the term crime does not have any simple or universally accepted definition because different societies view crime from different perspectives. For certain purposes, the statutory definition of crime is used which has both social and legal meaning. Crime is viewed as an intentional act or omission that is committed by an individual with no justification or defense which violates the criminal statutes of a given state, characterized as either a felony or misdemeanor and punishment ascribed for the act. Crime is viewed as a socio-political-economic act that is subject to the society that it is found in whether modern or ancient. So invariably crime is a byproduct of civilization because according to Emile Durkheim (1938) a little bit of crime is good for the advancement of society. The punishment which is adopted for crime

is seen as a form of social response that has economic and political implications that is subjective to how developed or underdeveloped that society is. This is attributed to the wealth and impact of a nation because the wealthier the society, the higher the crime rates and vice versa, and the level of sophistication attributed to the crime and criminals. Crime is one of the sole contributors to the national insecurity of any country because it is a major security threat in whatever form it manifests.

The security threat to any nation or society comprises not only those conventional foes such as nation-states but is inclusive also of non-state actions, narcotics cartels, multinational corporations, and nongovernmental organizations; some authorities include natural disasters and events causing severe environmental decay (Fjader, 2014). These security threats can also include manmade disasters of which the coronavirus (COVID-19) belongs to. National security becomes imperative with these security threats in the country. National security is the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic power, diplomacy power projection, and political power (Fjader, 2014). Covid-19 as it is popularly known is a virus that originated from Wuhan, China in 2019 December with no known cure for now and imported into Nigeria by an unnamed Italian in March 2020 and after its inception into the country, the tide changed in so many ways in the country.

In the wake of the infectious deadly virus which had caused a pandemic in the whole world, individuals began responding contrastingly to it. The Nigerian society which was used to 'suffering and smiling' a popular adage by the late Fela Kuti became significantly affected negatively. The vivacious and energetic social orders in the nation albeit confronting a great deal of hardship due to the lingering of other financial and political factors found within the nation turned into a sad remnant of themselves. The situational changes became more poignant when the federal government mandated a lockdown in the whole country and limited social interaction by advocating for 'social distancing', 'stay home and stay safe' with no provision of palliatives for the majority of the country living below the poverty line. It amounted to a sense of obscure dread and trepidation in the populace because individuals who were characterized by daily interactions, visitation both at workplaces, market, and social avenues were now compelled to suffer in private their insecurities about the unknown. Resultantly, fear became exacerbated due to economic instability, job loss especially for a great number of the populace and those with menial jobs, and the worst of the

fear was that of contracting the dreaded deadly virus. The virus in its inception into the country created previously unthinkable levels of desperation, suffering, and panic (Charles & McKinley, 2020) and invariably contributed to the increase in criminal activities by both the governed and the governors.

### **Research Methods**

This research paper adopts different approaches which included analyzing the statute of law regarding pandemic in Nigerian society (of which there is none but in paper). The presence of such a case was looked at in trying to find ways of approaching it; unfortunately, Nigeria has not had similar cases of this magnitude before. Therefore, this work adopted secondary sources of data collection as a result of the risk of contracting COVID-19 and insecurity involved in seeking primary sources of data collection. Other rationales that necessitated the adoption of secondary sources were because of the high rate of crime and deviant behaviors associated with the lockdown in the country. These had led to the loss of lives and properties of the citizens without any hope of getting succor from the government. Sources of secondary data used include; Books, Unpublished books, Journals, Newspapers, Websites, Blogs, and Government Records.

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Crime**

Crime is a social problem, a social phenomenon that affects society in general. It varies according to the social milieu or context it is found in. It is a word that invokes trepidation and demands an expedited action whenever it is heard in society. The definition of crime varies in particular and different periods in society as well as in different countries of the world. "Crime is only assessed through criminal law, the fact that criminal law varies from country to country makes it known that crime is relative in nature" (Schur, 1969, p. 10). The reason stems from the fact that what one country posits to be a crime cannot be called so in another country. For example, having twins in Nigeria years ago was considered a crime while it was not so in England, also gays and lesbians are considered criminals in Nigeria in the 21st century while they are not in England. Accordingly, 'crime does not exist, only acts exist, acts often given different meanings within various social frameworks' (Christie, 2004)

Criminologists have a consensus agreement that, crime be viewed as what societies by its laws posits to be a conduct that breaches the norms, social

equilibrium, moral compass, of that society. In other to express censure, resentment, or criticism of the said act or conduct, the society exerts punishment on the offender and this is derived from the criminal laws guiding the society. Accordingly “crime is an intentional act in violation of the criminal code committed without defense or excuse and penalized by the state as a ‘felony or misdemeanor’ (more or less serious criminal acts)” (Tappan, 1947, p.100). In other words “the essential characteristics of crime is that it is behavior which is prohibited by the state as an injury to the state and against which the state may react at least as a last resort, by punishment” (Sutherland, 1949, p. 39).

Crimes are defined by two components which are act (*actus reas*), are the acts itself and circumstances that prompted such acts) and criminal intent (*men's rea*), relates to the mental state of the person that commits the act). The crime involves criminal intent which is defined by elements of purpose, knowledge, negligence, and recklessness as well as being classified into two different ways. Acts committed by individuals commit are divided into two: those that are considered to be evil acts themselves (*mala in se*) and those acts that are wrong because they are prohibited by law (*mala prohibita*) or grouped according to the seriousness of the act committed, (felonies) or as a petty act (misdemeanors). Crimes then are those acts which ‘shocks the conscience collective’ of people living in the society (Durkheim, 1960). An act is deemed criminal when society condemns, determines, and labels it as so and makes its law as it pertains to that society.

### **Security**

“There will be no development without security and no security without development” (Annan, 1995). Security is viewed from the above statement as freedom for states to develop to full potential without having any activities both natural and man-made deterring from achieving the goal of freedom for all. This has led to the emergence of human security in the early 1990s brought about by the devastating effects of both natural and manmade disasters like HIV, Tsunami. Human security came to the limelight through the 1994 United Nations Development Project (UNDP) human development report which posits that ‘Security has been relocated more to a nation-state than the citizens and the legitimate concerns of ordinary people forgotten, for many of them, security symbolized protection, from the threat of diseases, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazard’ (UNDP Human Development Report 1994). This approach to security advocates for a shift from a state-centered approach to individualization of security in any

country. The reason for this shift is on the assumption that individuals who constitute the state are better equipped in knowing the nuances of security breaches and how best to tackle it.

The types of security in Nigeria are; environmental security which aims to protect people from ravages of natural disasters, food security aims to provide access to food both physically and economically to citizens, economic security ensures equal employability and wages to all citizens, personal security works at protecting people from both external and internal factors that endanger life's and properties, political security aims to protect the basic human rights and social justice of everybody living in the society and finally health security which involves maximum protection from pandemics and diseases. In a pandemic situation in Nigeria due to COVID-19, all these types of security are constantly violated.

Definition of a security warrants comprehensive analysis of the term especially as it relates to whom the security is meant for, how much security is needed, by what means is it to be achieved, what are the values aimed at, at what cost is it to the society and finally what is the time frame for achieving this security (Baldwin, 1997). Accordingly, a concept of security that fails to specify a 'referent object' such as 'the state' or 'the individual' does not suffice because there are many states and individuals and their security interdependent (Buzan, 1984). Specifically, a better understanding of security can be deduced from the different theoretical schools in security and the tenets found in them. The idealist approach of security adopts and advocates for democracy in dealing with issues relating to security. It is based on the fact that security is achievable through non-violent and non-coercive means and this guarantees world peace. Realist approach advocates for the use of force, control, or threat to achieve maximum security. The pluralist advocates for the discountenance of state self-interest policies that are capable of undermining international security but for states to come together as one and have uniform security. Marxist is of the view that the state should be in control of the economy whereby private ownership of the property abolished. The reason for state ownership relates to the fact that it limits the selfish pursuits of individuals which will undermine security. Social constructivism looks at the ways to overcome fears related to security threats.

Security means a system whereby the lives and properties of individuals in a given state are guaranteed by those in the helm of affairs. The security of any

state should advocate for order, protection, and stability as well as making provisions for a better society through effective policies geared towards the actual realization of such. This culminates in national security which is synonymous with the national interest, which emphasizes how the security policy subordinates any other interests to those of the nation (Wolfers, 1952). It then goes that the stability of both state and international security is hinged on the premise that in the maintenance of state security, citizens will be secured which invariably goes to maintain national security. It is understood that national security is shared freedom from fear and want, and the freedom to live in dignity (Prabhakaran, 2008). National security is best described as a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its self-determination or autonomy, prosperity, and wellbeing (Maier, 1990).

### **Concept of COVID-19**

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a novel strain infectious disease which is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-COV-2) (Han & Yang, 2019). It first manifested in Wuhan China in December 2019 and has since spread globally, resulting in the ongoing 2019-2020 coronavirus pandemic disease (Chen, 2019). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) 2019, the virus initially spread through bats to humans through consumption and later spread between people through close contact often via droplets produced by coughing, sneezing, or talking.

The standard method of diagnosis according to WHO 2020, is by real-time reverse transcription polymerase reaction (RT-PCR) from a nasopharyngeal swab. Also, Chest CT imaging may be used for diagnosis in individuals where there is a high suspicion of infection based on symptoms and risk factors; however, it is not recommended for routine screening. The common symptoms include fever, cough, tiredness, aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea, and experience shortness of breath. The time from exposure to onset of symptoms is typically around five days but may range from two to fourteen days. Some people become infected but do not develop symptoms, the majority of the cases progress from mild to viral pneumonia and multi-organ failure though 80% of sufferers recover from the disease without needing special treatment (WHO, 2020). The WHO declared the 2019-2020 coronavirus outbreaks a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020. More than

2.5million are suffering from the coronavirus with over 160 million deaths in many countries across the six WHO regions of the world. As of the time of writing this paper Nigeria had tested 214,228, out of which 37,225 were confirmed positive, while the active cases were 21,091. However, on Tuesday 21st of July, 2020 NCDC recorded the number of discharged cases is 15,333 with 801 deaths.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In criminology, different theories can be used to understand crime and the contributing factors to high levels of crime in society. These theories are classified by their level of analysis. Some theories operate on micro levels-biological and psychological theories, while others on macro levels-sociological theories of crime. Conflict theory posits that due to the conflict found in the society due to class inequality, crime is bound to be used by those who feel that they have been marginalized by the elites of the society (Sellin, 1938). In Nigeria, this theory holds because the underclass feels that the government does not care about them especially in this COVID-19 by not providing adequate amenities to look after their welfare resorts to crime to achieve their aim.

Social disorganization theory is based on the belief that a society with decaying social structure has the highest likelihood of high crime levels especially if it has poor schools, vacant and vandalized buildings, high unemployment, and a mixture of commercial and residential buildings (Shaw & McKay, 1942). The individuals residing in such an environment when they look at the affluent sections of the society, they feel marginalized and thereby resort to crime to equalize. The COVID-19 has brought this to the forefront, because the wealthy made provisions before the lockdown of which the lower classes were not able to do so, and this creates fracas in the society.

### **Strain Theory**

This paper used strain theory to understand the high levels of crime during the pandemic (COVID-19). It does not only describe the behaviors of those involved in the criminal activities of the present but can be used to analyze certain criminal behaviors in other aspects of life. It can also be utilized for better It explains better especially in detail the reasons why individuals who commit a crime in the pandemic resort to so doing. This theory is attributed to Robert K. Merton in his 1938 article 'Social Structure and Anomie'. The argument was that

anomie manifests when individuals have faulty relationships between their cultural goals and the legitimate means of acquiring or achieving it.

It is also used to examine group differences in crime rates as it relates to inequality and 'relative deprivation'. The suggestion of this is that social and economic as well as political inequality has a direct link to societal crime rates. This is noticeable in the crime rates found in different communities in this pandemic era in Nigeria. The level of criminal activities found in Lagos does not tally with the neighboring community of Ogun or Delta or Anambra communities. One of the major reasons stems from the fact that Lagos is very populated with different ethnic groups and cultures residing there with different perspectives, upbringing, educational qualifications, religious beliefs, and outlook in life. The Nigerian society fosters an 'anything goes' mentality (Messner and Rosenfield, 2007) when individuals are pursuing the goals and aspirations. For these individuals, failure to achieve success is deemed unacceptable as well as failure to be meaningful and represented in life and this has led them to crime.

The cultural goals which individuals aspire to are numerous and widespread but the problem of actualizing them depends on the social structure of the society. The social structure to those who belong to the underclass "restricts or eliminates access to approved modes of acquiring these symbols" (Merton, 1968 p. 680). This leads to what he called 'structural impediments or obstacles' which for him exists to make it virtually impossible to achieve legitimate means of wealth for those middle and underclasses which invariably makes it possible to achieve the wealth illegitimately through crime though it was sought for before legitimately. This is conversant with the middle-class and underclass who share the same cultural goals with the upper class for success but lack or have limited means of attaining them due to poverty, lack of education, inequality, bias, religious bigotry, and political subjugation. This creates what Merton called strain in the society towards creating anomie which is a state of 'normlessness' or chaos which translates to crime.

Strain theory uses five principles of adaptation of which three relates to the present situation found in Nigeria with the pandemic. The key to the manifestation relates to acceptance or rejection of cultural goals of success which is wealth through legitimate means. People who are committing these crimes during the pandemic in Nigeria are mostly the middle-class and the underclass

who are trying to achieve wealth through illegitimate means because though they have accepted the cultural goal of success, but have no legitimate means of acquiring it. They can be classified as innovators because they are looking for new ways to acquire wealth and these are the armed robbers, thieves, drug dealers, and financial criminals. Some of the criminals found in these cities are those Merton sees as being the true aliens (because they have rejected the cultural goals and the legitimate means of obtaining wealth (Merton, 1968, p. 153). They are the homeless and the serious drug dealers found in every street corner in Nigeria. Also inclusive are the rebellious groups who are the political deviants trying to change the society to their liking. They adopt whatever means necessary to reach their chosen goal and they are the terrorist groups (Bokoharam and Fulani herdsmen) who use violence in an attempt to achieve their political goal.

Individuals who are committing these heinous crimes in the pandemic do so because they have been denied the legitimate means of acquiring wealth especially through the imposition of the lockdown by the federal government. Other factors that contributed to them resorting to crime and the break down in law and order are massive corruption in the society, poverty, bias, religious bigotry, favoritism, ethnicity, political thuggery, and most important COVID-19 which brought about a host of uncertainties for the underclass. Their current criminal behavior stems from the government's inability to cater to their basic needs despite administering lockdown in the whole society. The resultant effect which is a crime and crime-related activities shows how the middle-class and underclass who are denied the legitimate means of acquiring wealth daily resort to criminal activities to survive. For the present study, strain theory has been adopted because it is the best suited as well as having the relevant perspectives required for the paper.

### **Problem Formulation**

There were already existing social problems witnessed in the country due to the economic deprivation situation but these were exacerbated by the COVID-19 anomaly. The social problems created by COVID\_19 relate to the magnitude of the crime and crime-related activities that were manifested in different cities across the country which had become commonplace. The federal government did not and was unable to put factors in place to checkmate the excesses of certain groups of people in society. Measures like palliatives ranging from relief materials like food, shelter, and other basic amenities were not put in place for

those people who had no other means of survival due to their daily living existence.

The fear of contracting the disease further moved for individuals to become limited around the country for the fact that the virus had no cure presently. This brought about the rising, unprecedented, and brazen attacks by criminals of different guise who were determined to succeed by all means. Armed robbers with bold attitudes began to post messages to households and cities 'advertising' the day, time and manner of their visitations and what was required of the citizens to produce in other to make life easier for the two parties involved (1 million gangs). Other crime incidences like police brutality, extrajudicial killings, rape, kidnapping, insurgency, communal clashes increased, and made citizens of different communities begin to live in fear and trepidation.

### **Findings**

Nigeria is one of the most populated countries in the world with an estimated population of 200 million. The figure consists of citizens with diverse cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and religious upbringings. Major cities like Lagos, Ogun, Anambra, Abuja, Delta, Edo, and Borno witnessed unprecedented criminal activities during the lockdown caused by the pandemic COVID-19. The pandemic had wreaked untold havoc on the fragile state of Nigeria and this triggered a lot of unrest and conflict in the country and the resultant effect was the increase in crime rates.

After the initial furor of the pandemic in the Nigerian cities, the rate of criminal activities declined due to the fear of the unknown but the lockdown contributed to the increase in criminal activities despite the fear of contracting the virus. The major reason for the lockdown was because the World Health Organization advocated for social distancing in other to minimize the transmission of the coronavirus. The pandemic brought about the closure of almost all infrastructure and businesses in society except for essential services like hospitals, pharmacies, and basic food markets. When people did eventually venture into the not-so-free world, it was solely for basic survival essentials like food and medicine and exercise (Marra, 2020).

The pandemic which COVID-19 is referred to became classified as a national security risk and was given the highest priority in the country. The problem with making the pandemic a top priority in Nigeria was that not enough resources

were allocated to it in order to help the citizens. Subsequently, the minimal resources available were overstretched which led to crime agencies' inability to handle the unprecedented surge in the crime rates. Most of the agencies under the aegis of crime control like the police, army, navy, and corrections found it difficult to train and equip their staff for such emergencies. This brought a paradigm shift in the way the different criminal cases were brought and handled by the police.

The level of criminal activities had increased because poverty which is the main social milieu that prompts people to commit the crime had been exacerbated by the lockdown. Although violent crimes such as shootings, armed robbery, and kidnapping had been occurring at a slower rate, they still drove the waves of social dysfunction during the pandemic crisis (Martha, 2020). There were palpable increases in such nefarious activities as:

### **Armed Robbery**

In the wake of the pandemic, after the lockdown began in the country, armed robbery instances became a daily occurrence in so many major cities in Nigeria. Armed robbers became a menace to the citizens of the country in their different homes and those in the streets for essential services. Densely overpopulated Lagos was the highest hit with daily news filtering the airwaves of the fear and problems created by the dissidents. 'One million Gang' as they were popularly called were one of those gangs terrorizing the residents and they achieved this by creating fear with the posters of visitation and their numbers in carrying out the attacks. Different headline news related to increasing criminal activities in the country. For example Vanguard news of 12 April 2020, 'COVID-19 lockdown: Armed robbers, miscreants on the rampage in the suburbs' draws the vivid picture of the mayhem caused by the criminals around the country during the lockdown.

### **Cybercrime**

According to the BBC news report of 7 April 2020, cybercriminals were taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to reap citizens off their hard-earned currency. The cybercriminals steal sensitive materials from individuals through their mobile devices or computers to perpetrate the act. They use different methods like phishing campaigns, relief packages, and impersonation of the victim's friend or family. They send messages through social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or emails whereby the victim is required to register, claim to be calling from their bank to for irregularities in their account or

by them telling them to download an app to make transactions easier in the comfort of the homes. Sometimes they send messages to the victim claiming to be from WHO or Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and once the victim clicks on any of the links sent, they will steal the person's money or identity to further their nefarious activities.

### **Kidnapping**

Kidnapping is described as a forceful abduction of an individual by another or a group for the ransom which can vary depending on the aim or for death purposes. The rate of kidnapping increased in the wake of the pandemic according to reports from different news agencies in Nigeria. According to Punch news of 2 May 2020, kidnappers of three UNIPORT students apprehended. The three university students were kidnapped on 7 April 2020 but were later killed by their abductors. The kidnappers who were later apprehended led the police to the burial site of the kidnapped victims after the families had already paid their ransom. The female kidnapped victim was gang-raped by the assailants before being killed with the other two and buried in a shallow grave. In another news, in Cross River state, Mrs. Ekanem, a staff, and wife of one of the doctors of the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital in the state was kidnapped on March 10 2020 at the hospital's car park. Also in the news, two Nigerian professional football players EkundayoOjo and Benjamin Iluyomade of Abia Comets club were kidnapped for ransom on 22 March 2020 and were later released with the help of the Nigerian police (BBC news 25 March 2020). These and many more reported and unreported news of kidnapping has littered the airwaves.

### **Terrorism**

Terrorism is the use of threats and violence to destabilize and create fear in the populace to achieve political gains. Boko Haram is one of the terrorist groups found in the world and residents in the Nigerian borders. According to the Global Terrorism Index, it had named the group as the world's deadliest terror group in 2013 and was designated a terrorist group by the United States of America in the same year. The group has been terrorizing the whole country since its inception in 2012, more so now that the pandemic has been ravaging the country. According to Aljazeera news of 10, June 2020, at least 81 people were killed at the Felo herding village in Borno state likewise on the 13th of June (three days later) 20 soldiers, and 40 civilians were equally killed in the same Borno

state. These are some of the reported cases through group had become more daring because of the lockdown in the country.

### **Extrajudicial killings**

An extrajudicial killing is viewed as an unauthorized and legal killing of people by government authorities. The police through the constitution of Nigerian has the responsibility of protecting lives and property. Their duties are the exact opposite of that proscribed by the law. The Nigerian police commits all levels of atrocities like bribery, extortion, brutality, in their bid to carry out their duties. Extrajudicial violence and killings with total disregard for the sanctity of lives are now synonymous with the Nigerian police. They summarily execute and torture people at random or those accused of committing a crime albeit more so in the era of the pandemic lockdown in the country. According to Vanguard news of 11 March 2020, Lagos state accounts for 38% of extrajudicial killings in Nigeria. During the curfew enforcement, according to the BBC news report of 24 April 2020, 'Security forces in the country had killed more Nigerians than the COVID-19'. The killings started with the murder of Joseph Pessu in Warri, Delta state which was because he flouted a stop and search order during the lockdown. The trend has become worrisome with different news highlighting the level of atrocious behaviors and inhumane treatment perpetrated daily by the police. In different cities of Nigeria, victims of police brutality recount their ordeals which ranged from flogging with hard objects to rape, sodomy, and molestation.

Other crimes like domestic violence, banditry, rape, and pedophilia were on the increase and became daily occurrences on the news during the lockdown. The high rise in crime rates witnessed by different communities put a strain on the maintenance of law and order in the country. Police stations became overcrowded and cases piled up with the stations most often refusing to handle new cases. In the wake of these problems, police brutality increased indiscriminately which made residents take up arms against those who had the duty of taking care of their safety. Police and civilian confrontation became almost a daily occurrence with incidents reported from cities like Onitsha, Lagos, Warri, and the rest of the cities clustered around the country.

The high rise in such crimes can be attributed to people confined in the same place for long periods with no escape and no means of acquiring the necessities to make life worthwhile. Individuals dwelling in the different cities and suburbs of the nation whose daily survival was not guaranteed became unduly

constrained and lacked survival instincts. The government of the country whose duty was to sustain the populace failed in carrying out their duties diligently. Consequently, the resultant effect was that some people took laws into their own hands to survive.

Mass delinquency of the citizens can become a trigger towards the higher level of crime witnessed during the pandemic. Mass delinquency triggers an inclination to aggressive behavior when the individuals assemble. The assembly of these individuals in the pandemic in anger and with entitlement mentality pushes for a revolutionary change in the affairs of their lives. They lose their sense of individuality in their bid for self-righteous acts in what is called 'deindividuation' (Zimbardo, 1969). These people, who have lost their individuality, commit crime at random and at will in the sense that they are trying to assuage their sensibility of righteousness against the atrocities committed against them by the ruling elite. They feel invisible because of the presence of crowds while they are committing crimes and they work as an entity. This is what makes them successful especially in the pandemic in carrying out successfully their nefarious activities.

The increase in crime is equally attributed to the attitudes of those imbued with keeping and maintaining the law, which are the security forces in the nation. Security agents became laws themselves and unleashed their menace on the unsuspecting populace. The reason can be attributed to unchecked corruptive practices practiced by them which amount to the commission of different atrocities ranging from brutality, bribery, extortion, intimidation as well as the harassment of members of the public. The Nigerian public had somewhat become adaptive and immune to these deficiencies of the security forces but the increase in their activities during the pandemic led to retaliation by the masses. In Ohafia, Abia state and Onitsha, Anambra state, for example, policemen who were drunk killed indigenes of the mentioned communities and the indigenes retaliated by pouring acid, burning of cars, and police station which belonged to the security forces. The result amounted to more brutality and deaths unleashed on the masses by the police.

When cases of injustices are reported, the perpetrators of the crime were let off due to bribery and corruption found in the environment and this makes the society angry and apprehensive especially being denied their rights in the society. These can be explained with strain theory because people who have

denied their rightful way of acquiring wealth and sustaining themselves during the pandemic, do so through illegitimate.

### **Summary**

In times of old, the government had the sole responsibility of sustaining individuals residing in different communities through the welfare system. Basic amenities like jobs, food, shelter, water were the sole responsibility of the government without the application of bias or ethnicities. The reverse is the case in modern times because corruption, tribalism, nepotism, had taken over the system to corrode it. Citizens of the country except the elites feel and bear the brunt of government's insensitivity to modern societal problems and some have become outcasts in their societies. This has led to an increase in criminal activities found in the country and has equally put a strain on the national security of the country. Initially, national security in Nigeria had greatly been affected by issues of Boko haram attacks, Fulani herdsmen, kidnapping, armed robbery, arson attacks on different sectors of human life, and the economy but 2020 brought another wakeup call in form of coronavirus (COVID-19). Over the years, in the country, there had been serious advocacy for the improvement of measures through policies to tackle both the foreseen and unforeseen actions of man and nature but nothing has been done about it. The pandemic had brought to the forefront that the country had failed in the basic needs of protection of the lives and property of citizens. The fact that there are no laid down policies and procedures to it, though it had been made a top priority in a paper, unfortunately, there is no concrete evidence to show the feasibility of it. All these issues had made it almost impossible for security operatives to be trained in ways of tackling the resultant issues of such an outbreak especially the increase in crime and criminals. It then calls for changes in the country on ways to handle such acts when they occur in the future to reduce the effects it imposes on citizens barely surviving due to bad economic situations.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations are that implementable policies be made which reflects on ways to tackle such outbreaks in the future. These policies should be reflective of the plight of masses in such cases to provide adequately for needs that will accrue in such situations. Religiosity and ethnicity should not be put into consideration in issues relating to the masses. There must be a humane face to those dealing with security in the country especially as regards their encounter with the masses. Dissemination of information relating to issues of such

magnitude should be public knowledge on the procedures to follow. The welfare state should be revived and brought back to alleviate the suffering of the masses. Mass delinquency should be eradicated through the provision of basic education for all. The psychological evaluation should be mandatory in the recruitment of officers in the force as well as to the criminals themselves in ascertaining the reasons behind their behaviors. The objectives of law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system should be in the rule of law not in bias and bigotry. Security should both the responsibility of the state and the people residing in the state to ensure. Security personnel should be trained adequately to tackle such situations and should be proactive and diligent in carrying out their duties both in and out of season. All these are achieved through the collective efforts of both the masses and the leaders.

A better understanding of all these can especially as it relates to crime and deviant behavior in the pandemic can lead to a better productive society fit for all and sundry. A better understanding of the masses and the political leaders who work together for the betterment of the society can bring crime to the minimal which will become tolerable to all. The safety of the masses should be a top priority both from the ravaging effects of the pandemic, the criminals, and the security agents. And finally, there is an urgent need for the strengthening of different institutions most importantly the criminal justice system and health care services to discourage foreign medical tourism.

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