

An Appraisal of House Security Measures in Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract Against the background of increasing crimes in the society, this paper appraises the different House Security Measures being used by People in Nigeria towards the prevention of Housing insecurity. It uses Amuwo- Odofin local government area as a case study and makes use of both primary and secondary data. Two methods of data collection were adopted for this study. These are stratified sampling technique that was used to stratify the Local Government Area into wards while random sampling technique was used to select two hundred and twenty five respondents from the stratified areas for the study. The data obtained were analyzed using frequency counts and percentage. The study showed that in order to combat Housing insecurity, everybody had to put up one security measure or the other. The various House protective measures used by people range from conventional to non-conventional methods; and despite these, some people still feel unsafe and would need other forms of security which ranges from Nigerian Police Force, Odua Peoples' Congress to Vigilante groups. The study concludes by providing sustainable solutions towards curbing the problem in our society.

Keywords Crime, Housing Insecurity, Security Measures

1. Introduction

Throughout the world, across the continents, a uniform battle is fought, the task of curbing crime. According to Zone Reality television in 2008, at least every ten years, 83.3% of those living in the cities with 900,000 or more inhabitants are victims of one form of crime or the other. This is true, not only in areas that are highly urbanized such as in Europe, North America, Asia, South America but also in Africa, where the urban population is low when compared to the rural population[1]. These crimes which sometimes differ from place to place are mostly found in the cities. The structural spatial inequalities often found in the cities and the growth of urban slums and underemployed subculture provide the environment for the proliferation of violence, particularly against the existence of relatively high levels of opulence.

Unfortunately, in Nigeria, violence and criminal activities are assuming dangerous tendencies as they threaten lives, properties, the national sense of well being, peace, security, and social order and are eventually reducing the citizens' quality of life.[2]. Segregation often found in the cities residential neighborhoods caused by difference in income, employment and education standard often lead to criminal tendencies, majorly of which are petty theft, rape,

prostitution, murder, grievous wounding, burglary and so on. Coupled with this is the issue of Boko-Haram which at present is threatening the security of the Country. Increase in modernization in the country in the use of the internet among young school leavers have also, greatly accentuated the wave of crime in recent times.

The implication of all these is that crime has spatial and temporal distribution and whatever the distribution is in the city, the immediate response of people to this social malaise is fear. This is shown in the relative manner of securing their houses by constructing high fence wall, using special doors and locks, hiring private security outfits and agencies. Government, corporate bodies and individuals do divert resources that could have been put to more productive use in order to stop crime.

Crime in Nigeria, for example, rose in the mid- 1990s as a result of unemployment, economic decline and social inequality and brings about disorder in the environment. More than half of the offences are thefts, burglaries and break-ins, although, armed robberies are rampant. The alarming increase in the rate of crime in the Country has therefore, brought threat to lives and properties. The abundant development of some areas coupled with high number of unemployment and increase in poverty level are practically the major causes of crime and all sorts of abnormal behavior[3].

Thus, in Nigeria today, people sleep with one eye opened and tend to live one day at a time with great doubt as hazardously armed bandits rampage houses with reckless abandon. The problem of crime one of the negative

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consequences of urbanization cannot be overlooked as it is a worldwide problem. Because job opportunities in cities have not kept pace with population growth, the rates of unemployment in urban areas often exceed 50 percent, and most jobless people are young and uneducated male. These people earn incomes from informal occupations such as selling newspapers and magazine, shining shoes, running errands, cleaning and collecting trash. Begging, prostitution and theft are also common ways of making a living. The alarming increase in the rate of crime in Nigeria therefore has not only brought about disorder but threat to lives and properties, housing inclusive.

When one talks of housing, it is no more secured which is contrary to the definition of the term". According to [4], housing is more than shelter, the mere physical dwelling while the United Nations Ad – Hoc group of experts on Housing and Urban Development defined it "as the physical environment in which a family, the basic unit in the society must develop. They further contended that housing is not shelter or household facilities alone, it comprises a number of facilities, services and utilities which link individuals and his family to the community in which it evolves. Hence, from the above, one could discern that housing is not just a community it could be described as a bundle of goods and services that facilitate and enhance good living. It is also a key to neighborhood quality and preservation. Consequently, environmental amenities such as waste disposal, water supply, neighborhood roads and locational services implied by the special links between necessary economic and social infrastructure (such as education, health and recreation) are all parts of the package of services designated as housing.

Thus, housing insecurity in cities calls for concern as crime the main cause is a social problem which threatens lives and property and eventually, reduces quality of life. Crime is not only a social problem but also, the most serious of all social problems. Crimes also, are compound, organized and could be summarized in three main categories; these are economic factors/ poverty, social environment and family structure and the resultant effect is that people devised means of protecting themselves through different means among which is prevention through Design and Strategies.

It is against this background therefore, that the paper evaluates the effects of using House Security measures by people in Nigeria towards the prevention of Housing insecurity. It uses Amuwo – Odofin local government area of Lagos State as a case study and at the end, proffers sustainable solutions that are targeted at solving insecurity in the different houses as well as reducing crime for the progress of the country.

1.1. Theoretical Framework of the Research

The main theoretical frameworks used for the research are Routine Activity Theory (RAT) which gives an insight into the causes of crime and Rational Choice Theory which gives the reason why crimes are being committed.

1.1.1. Routine Activity Theory (RAT)

Routine Activity Theory (RAT) is one of the main theories of "Environmental Criminology" developed by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson who worked for many years on Crime Prevention Theory. The theory states that, for crime to occur, three elements must be present:

- ❖ An existing and suitable target;
- ❖ A likely motivated offenders and
- ❖ Lack of a capable guardian or authority figure to prevent the crime from happening.

The theory also incorporates the crime triangle, sometimes referred to as the Problem Analysis Triangle (PAT). RAT also provides a simple and powerful insight into the causes of crime problems. At its heart is the idea that in the absence of effective controls, offenders will prey upon attractive targets. To have a crime, an aggravate offender must come to the same place as an attractive target. For property crimes, the target is a thing or object; for personal crimes, the target is a person. If an attractive target is never seen at the same place as a motivated offender, the target will not be taken, damaged, or assaulted. Also, there are guardians whose presence can prevent crime. If the guardians are absent, or present but powerless, crime is possible.

1.1.2. Rational Choice Theory

Through Rational Choice Theory, crime is described as an event that occurs when an offender decides to risk breaching the law after considering his or her own need for money, personal values or learning experiences and how well a target is protected, how affluent the neighborhood is or how efficient the local police are. Before committing a crime, the reasoning criminal weighs the chances of getting caught, the severity of the expected penalty, the value to be gained by committing the act, and his or her immediate need for that value.

The intention is to increase the perceived effort; necessary to commit a crime, or increase the perceived risks of apprehension, or reduce the anticipated rewards of a crime, or remove the excuses to compliance with the law. The intention would be to design out crime, i.e. to make the disincentives to the commission of crime consistently outweigh the potential benefits. This would involve concerted efforts by the manufacturers of standard equipment prone to theft, to design in better security systems so that stolen goods cannot be used without a PIN or can be tracked. It also involves the adoption of surveillance technology to tag goods in stores electronically, install camera systems to monitor behavior, improve street lighting, have more police officers on patrol, assist householders to improve the home security, etc. A co-ordinated strategy would potentially prevent more crime and to be more cost – effective than imprisoning the few offenders that are currently apprehended.

This theory is predicated on the assumption that humans have sets of hierarchically ordered preferences, or utilities. By reducing the opportunities for the commission of crimes and "target hardening", i.e. making it more difficult to break into houses or to steal from shops, and encouraging more

authority figures to assume responsibility, potential offenders will be deterred. There is some criticism that better protected area will simply displace crime into a less well protected area but the evidence is as yet equivocal on whether displacement does occur. However, the main problem is in re – ordering political priorities away from a penal – oriented strategy towards a crime prevention strategy. At present, many states have invested heavily in the former and see no immediate need to change their policies.

2. Methodology

2.1. Types and Sources of Data

Two major types of data are used for the study. These include primary and secondary data. Primary data is the data collected by the Researcher from the field and were collected in the area through reconnaissance survey, questionnaire survey and administration, direct field observation, oral interview as well as participant observation. Secondary data on the other hand includes data collected by other person other than the researcher and thus, not the original work of the researcher. These were collected from books and journals, magazines as well as the net for the purpose of carrying out the research.

2.2. Method of Data Collection

Amuwo – Odofin Local Government Area is one of the local government areas in Lagos State and it is very close to the border. It provides shelter for various backgrounds, races and ethnic cleavages and stand as a form of new town fully developed. The local government consists of 5 wards and residential estates fully developed into 3 housing density types that provide shelters and other forms of land use.

Thus, two types of sampling techniques were adopted in the collection of data for the research. These are stratified sampling and random sampling. Stratified sampling technique was adopted to identify the whole local government area into wards and knowing the population size of each ward in order to arrive at the sample size for the research.

Table 1. Population of Wards in Amuwo – Odofin Local Government Area of Lagos State

Political Ward	Population (No)	Percentage %	Number of Questionnaires administered
Amino/Odofin	64,011	0.1	64
Agboju	59,208	0.1	59
Satellite town	56,940	0.1	56
Ibasa	18,661	0.1	18
Ibeche	28,506	0.1	28
Total	225,326		225

Source: Authors' field survey (2013)

Random sampling on the other hand, involves selecting by random any sample in the stratified study areas to administer questionnaire and also carryout other primary source of data

collection including records taking. The wards in the local government and sample size are shown in Table 1.

Having stratified the local government therefore, random sampling techniques were used in selecting 225 respondents from the area for the purpose of the study and they all responded very well giving 100% returns. The data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentage.

2.3. Analysis

Table 2 below shows that out of the respondents interviewed, 124 are males accounting for 55.1% while the number of females is 101 (44.9%). The implication of this is that the two genders are well represented and thus, one could expect a high level of information dissemination in the process of carrying out the research relating to crimes and the effects of using Security measures. However, in terms of Occupational distribution, a larger percentage of the respondents falls under private sector organized jobs (27.6%). These include bankers, company workers and owners of large scale enterprises.

Table 2. Sex of Respondents Interviewed

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	124	55.1
Female	101	44.9
Total	225	100.0

Source: Authors' field survey (2013)

Following this group is the public service employees/servants (23.1%) and then, students with 19.6% with those involved in organized private sector and retiree being 8.9%, unemployed is 5.3% while farmers account for 4.9%. However, those without response are 1.8% as shown in Table 3

Table 3. Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Types of Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Unemployed	12	5.3
farming	11	4.9
private – sector organized	62	27.6
private – sector unorganized	20	8.9
retiree/pensioner	20	8.9
student	44	19.6
public service	52	23.1
no response	4	1.8
Total	225	100.0

Source: Authors' field survey (2013)

The House Security Measures used in the area were measured by Close circuit television, fence, security dogs, security guards, burglary proof, vigilante and traditional methods. Of all the respondents, 7 (3.1%) use special windows and locks as house protective measures while those with Close Circuit Television (CCTV) are only 2, accounting for 0.9% of the sampled respondents. This however may be due to the high cost of purchase of CCTV and the technology involved which makes the application to be low. Those with high fence wall, security dogs and security guards are 24 (10.7%) while those people using burglary proof and

vigilante are only 35 (15.6%). Burglary proof only constitutes 28 (12.4%) while traditional methods account for only 5 (2.2%). Those that have access to security dogs are only 9 (4.0%) while alarm system are 4 making 1.8% (Table 4). From the findings, one could see that there is no house without security measure. The implication is that crime is increasing at an alarming rate which makes the community to rise and safeguard against it.

According to the respondents, this is necessary because, effective community policing has a positive impacts on reducing neighborhood crime, helps in reducing fear of crime and enhancing the quality of life. Since, the incidence of crime is very severe in the country, each of these security measures is a significant instrument in fortifying buildings most, especially the burglary proof. However, having done this, 50 respondents (22.2%) feel very safe while those that feel fairly safe are 123 (54.7%). Despite the enormous security measures put in place, 22 of them (9.8%) still feel there is no change as well as 28 (12.4%) having the feeling of not safe. Those that think they are very unsafe are only 2 (0.9%). It can then be deduced that, those that feel unsafe are afraid because of the level of insecurity in the country which arises majorly from poverty. Generally, insecurity from homes arises from urban poverty which also, in turn, arises from urbanization. Thus, 175 (77.77%) would need other forms of policing in the different homes in order to combat the effect.

Table 4. House Protective Measures of Respondents

House Protective Measures	Frequency	Percentage
Special windows & locks		
CCTV	7	3.1
High fence wall, security dogs & security guards	2	9
Burglary proof & vigilante	24	10.7
Vigilante, burglary proof, high fence & security guards	35	15.6
Burglary and vigilante	41	18.2
Burglary proof	4	1.8
High fence/wall	28	12.4
Vigilante group	18	8.0
Traditional methods	27	12.0
Security dogs	5	2.2
Security guards	9	4.0
Alarm system	20	8.9
	4	1.8
Total	225	100.0

Source: Authors' field survey (2013)

Table 5. Agency most preferred by the Respondents in addition to House security measures

Agency	Frequency	Percentage
Police	55	31.42%
Odua peoples' congress	110	62.85%
Vigilante group	9	5.16
Youth forum	1	0.57
Total	175	100

Source: Authors' field survey (2013)

According to the respondents, the Agency most preferred is the police (31.43%) while Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) is 110 (62.85%). Odua Peoples' Congress has the highest

frequency because the group is a private organization and is the most active responsible for safety in Nigeria these days; Vigilante group is 9 (5.14%) while Youth forum is 1 (0.57%) as shown in Table 5.

3. Conclusions

This paper has shown that crime is increasing in the cities of Nigeria daily and people are living in fear. It constitutes a serious problem which needs to be tackled and everybody should be involved. There is the need therefore, for planners and urban designers to be security conscious in the planning and design of residential neighborhoods while keeping the general health of inhabitants and accessibility in view. Thus, every house should be designed with total security gadgets such as burglary proof windows, doors etc in order to combat the effect of crime in the society.

However, Majority of the respondents believe that the provision of employment will stop crime. If people are able to secure employment or engaged in useful ventures, there is the tendency that the rate of crime will reduce in the country. Government should therefore, endeavor to provide more jobs. Also; government should try to look into how to solve the problem of Boko Haram and Jos crisis in the country. These two crises have caused a lot of loss for the country in terms of economic loss, lives and properties. Some hoodlums even used the opportunity to vandalize the properties of people and even break homes. A roundtable meeting should be held with the various factions and thus, a solution should be proffered based on the current high level of insecurity in the homes and the country in general.

Furthermore, government should direct the ways services are provided. For example, street lights should be provided at strategic points in order to reduce crime. Once hoodlums know that the environments of houses are not dark whenever there is no light and there is possibility of being seen by people, they would be afraid to break houses.

Though, some of the respondents desire to have Police protection in addition to House security measures, the influence of the police in reducing crime in the country is currently minimal. There is a need to provide them with more equipment, such as patrol vans, uniforms, arms and ammunition as well as increasing their salaries in order to aid their performance.

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