Mitigating Insecurity in Nigeria through Social and Institutional Interventions

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Abstract
Insecurity stemming from varying acts of violence by men against their fellow humans has been on a steady rise in Nigeria. Most of these violent crimes are perpetrated by youth who constitute one of the vulnerable groups in society and are those on whom our posterity is expected to depend. Sadly, some of the fodder on which this violence thrives is provided by the failures on the part of stakeholders like the family, civil society, lawmakers and the government or its law enforcement agencies to undertake measures to effectively stem the tide. The paper attempts to provide a framework for analyzing and tackling youth engagement in violence and criminal activities. The framework derives from an overview of the prevalent types of violence within the Nigerian society and the mechanisms for nipping them in the bud based on the postulations of the violence prevention perspectives. Data for this paper were derived from primary and secondary sources. Furthermore, the paper proffered recommendations such as public-private partnerships, youth empowerment and human and material capacity building for law enforcement agencies and social and psychological care givers. These are aimed at engendering human security by encouraging the responsibility, involvement and innovativeness of the government and relevant civil society groups.
Keywords: Human Security, Insecurity, Violence, Stakeholders, Innovation**.**

BACKGROUND

Human Security espouses the notion of all-round security of the individual from the personal through to the community, political, economic, and so on (Tadjbakhsh, 2007). It entails a focus on the well-being of people and is therefore an objective of development (Stewart, 2004). It seeks to provide clarification of conflict based on its latent causes and the long-term effects. The individual is the primary focus of this concept and the roles of poverty and inequality (Alkire, 2003) in fundamentally threatening the attainment of human security especially in developing countries cannot be over-emphasized.

Violence is defined as the intentional use of force or power, threatened or actual, against a person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (Krug et. al., 2002). It takes the lives of more than 1.5 million people annually: just over 50% due to suicide, some 35% due to homicide, and just over 12% as a direct result of war or some other form of conflict (WHO, 2008). Furthermore, violence has lifelong consequences for its victims' physical and mental health and social functioning and can slow economic and social development (WHO, 2010).

These analyses portend grave consequences for human security and national development especially for a developing country like Nigeria where processes of investigation, documentation, reportage, etc. are not up to par in terms of levels of sophistication and globally accepted minimum standards. Acts of violence and insecurity in Nigeria have been on a steady rise in recent times. They occur in varying dimensions ranging from assaults to acts of terrorism. These acts are perpetrated by individuals that fall within the age range of 10-32 who can easily be classified as youth since the age speculations determined by the World Health Organization (WHO) places the age range of individuals engaged in youth violence as between 10-29 (Mercy et. al, 2002).

Media reports and personal observations have shown that many of those arrested by the law enforcement agents claim to have been lured into criminal activities by the desire to meet a need or the other. They confess to having been engaged in criminal activities for periods ranging from 6 months to 8 years. This places them within the WHO time lines. Some attest to enticements into criminal activities by the life-styles of acquaintances that appear to have gone beyond the shackles of poverty in which they are still embroiled. Others confess to the use of drugs, their low income neighbourhoods and so on, as contributors to their lives of crime.

These indices are comparable with the top ten causes of youth violence as determined by interviews with youth in the US most violent neighbourhoods (www.adherents.com). The findings showed that the media, substance abuse, gangs, unemployment, weapons, poverty, peer pressure, broken homes, poor family environment/bad neighbourhoods, intolerance/ignorance in that order are the top ten factors responsible for youth violence.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bandura's **Social Learning Theory** postulates that people learn within a social context and this learning is

facilitated by concepts like modelling and observational learning though not all things learned result in changes in behaviour (Henry and Charles, 1982; www.ehow.com). Edwin Sutherland's **Differential-Association Theory of Deviance** provides an insight to understanding the Social Learning Theory in relation to criminology. It applies to many acts of deviant behaviour and addresses the issue of how individuals learn deviance which can either be criminal or non-criminal (www.cliffnotes.com). Specifically, people within particular reference groups provide norms of conformity and deviance, and heavily influence the way other people look at and react to the world. People also learn norms from various socializing agents—parents, teachers, ministers, family, friends, co-workers, and the media and in the same way, they learn criminal behaviour, like other behaviours, from interactions with others, especially in intimate groups. Juvenile gangs provide an environment in which young people learn to become criminals as they embrace and conform to their gang's norms. These gangs define themselves as countercultural and glorify violence, retaliation, and crime as means to achieving social status (www.cliffnotes.com).

The **Insecurity theory** postulates that higher levels of insecurity are associated with increasing religiosity. Religiosity is higher among people with insecure job positions, people whose parents are unemployed or have lower status job positions, people who have experienced wars in their own country, who have lost their partners and who reside in a country with a lower social welfare spending and a higher unemployment rate (Immerzeel and van Tubergen, 2011).

Furthermore, the **Attachment Theory** with its Insecure Attachment components (Ambivalent and Disorganized), explains how gaps at the early developmental stages in life can result in maladjustments and personality disorders in an individual's adolescent and adult life. Also, that the emotional and social behaviour in adolescence and adulthood mirror the patterns developed with first carers and determine whether attachments are secure or insecure (Jacqueline, 2012).

Most of these indices are characteristic of the social patterns of individuals who are engaged in one criminal act or the other. The theories are also relevant in giving an insight to the inducements to crime and evaluating the membership of criminal gangs like the Boko Haram group that is largely responsible for Islamic fundamentalism and targeted acts of violence and terrorism in Nigeria. The interrelationship between the postulations of these theories further provides a basis for canvassing violence prevention as a more dependable means of mitigating insecurity in Nigeria.

INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

The number of victims of criminal activities is on the increase. They abound within every social class but mainly among the middle and lower strata of the society. Law enforcement is faced with more cases than they can effectively handle and most cases usually end up cold and unresolved. Citizens are daily faced with the grim realities of being individually or collectively responsible for their own security. The relevance of and urgency with which the manifestations of insecurity and violence in different trends that include youth, collective and targeted violence against individuals, groups and state institutions (Vossekuil et al, 2001) in Nigeria should be tackled to check their escalation cannot be over-emphasized.

There have been rampant cases of molestations, assaults, rape, armed robbery, car theft, unsolved murders, attacks and forms of ethnic cleansing by Islamic fundamentalists perpetrated by youth and mature adults that threaten peace, stability and human security in Nigeria. Several reasons have been touted for these patterns of insecurity including disenfranchisement resulting in social and economic inequality, high rates of youth unemployment and virtually all of the reasons that made the US top ten above.

The responsibility for checkmating insecurity in Nigeria has always laid with the law enforcement agencies with little or no input from individuals or the civil society except where investigations are made by commissions of inquiry into the remote and immediate causes of ethno-religious conflagrations in the society. Though this form of insecurity is not the most prevalent in Nigeria, the more prevalent forms of violence have continued to gain grounds as a consequence of the dearth of the requisite attention needed to quell or significantly reduce the upsurge.

COMPLICITY OF STAKEHOLDERS
The Family
It is the first agent of socialization for most individuals. Family values have been eroded and have deteriorated to the extent that families are no longer in control of their offspring. Other groups and especially the peer groups do most of the work of socializing the adolescent or youth into social vices. Sometimes, many parents especially in low income neighbourhoods barely have the flimsiest ideas of the whereabouts of their kids or wards and cannot vouch for their credibility in certain respects yet not much is done in terms of measures to curtail the excesses of these youth.
Civil Society
They are the larger group that are both victims and cover for the criminals. It plays a major role in determining

which norms people learn to violate. Unfortunately, rather than uphold high moral and societal values, they unwittingly provide the environment for the deviants to violate the norms. They complicate issues for other stakeholders when criminals are not exposed to the relevant authorities sometimes for fear of the repercussions of such actions.

Law Makers

They are ineffective and non-committal to the adequate formulation and institution of the legislation and modalities that reduce risk factors. Some of these criminal acts are perpetrated by individuals who see vilence and crimes as media to lash out against the government and vent their frustrations. This fact has been buttressed by series of videos, messages and attacks directed at the Nigerian government and her institutions especially by the insurgent Boko Haram group. Law makers also have a responsibility to ensure that criminals, criminal acts and cases do not die out without logical conclusions. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies are not well backed by effective legislation and adequate funding to ensure that they render the services for which they are instituted.

State Responses

What has been done overtime to check the upsurge in violence and insecurity in Nigeria has largely revolved around the Human Rights and Criminal Justice approaches which constitute the traditional approach to ensuring security. The Human Rights approach looks at violence from the perspective of the erosion of the rights of individuals to life, liberty, autonomy and security of persons, freedom from torture, inhuman degrading treatment or punishment, and rights to the highest attainable standard of health, and so on. Responses to drugs, crime and terrorism must be based on the rule of law and incorporate human rights laws and principles. In essence, the promotion and protection of human rights should be both integrated into national policies and mainstreamed by member states of the United Nations (UNODC, 2010).

The Criminal Justice Approach on the other hand, beyond justice and punishment, has traditionally emphasized interventions aimed at those who have already been involved in violence, either as victims or as perpetrators. Interventions include deterrence (threatening potential offenders with criminal sanctions if they commit crimes), incapacitation (physically preventing offenders from committing further crimes by locking them up) and rehabilitation (using time spent under state supervision to develop skills or change one's psychological make-up to reduce the likelihood of future offences) (Prothrow-Stith, 2004).

These approaches though effective if properly implemented, have not achieved much due to inhibitions presented by some of the lapses inherent in our criminal justice and law enforcement systems. To begin with, many times, police response which is a determinant factor in the progress of events is weak and so people think they can get away with more (Wolchover, 2011).

There is also a problem of lack of logistics (superior weapons, vans, petrol, communication gadgets, and so on) to facilitate prompt response thus frustrating work efforts, willingness and ability to carry out the goals of their organizations (Peter et al., 2010) as law enforcement agencies. This dearth of logistics has been further proven and exposed by the refusal and disobedience of orders of deployments by many military personnel to Nigeria's North-East region which has been severely ravaged by the dreaded Islamic fundamentalist group, Boko Haram (Adamu, 2015). Sadly also, within the civil society, the complicity of police officers within the immediate area with the criminals allows them turn a blind eye to give the perpetrators time to carry out their heinous activities.

Victims rights are further eroded by the very agencies instituted to protect them resulting in a high level of apathy and lack of confidence in the possibility of getting justice for the crimes. These are evidenced by recurrent factors like lack of thorough investigations, culprits escaping or disappearing under inexplicable circumstances, victims being further ripped off in that they have to give 'tips' to get the police to work, cases dragging for years before justice is done, culprits not being properly rehabilitated for lack of well defined structures for ensuring this and the consequent return to their cycle and lives of crime, and so on.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE NON-MITIGATION OF VIOLENCE AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

- Uncertainty of human posterity in Nigeria especially as the acts of violence are perpetrated by youth on whom the future of the country is expected to lie;
- Threats to environmental sustainability as several villages and large territories are ravaged by arson and other terrorist activities. These prevent farmers access to farmland, people are driven away from habitable areas and these land mass are left fallow;
- Increase in the number of people that constitute displaced and refugee groups and are exposed to death by hunger and other weather-related causes. Social vices will also see a phenomenal rise especially with the inability of the government to effectively contain the escalating refugee situation;
- Non-improvement of life expectancy in Nigeria which as a result of several negative intervening variables (insecurity inclusive), is presently the lowest in West Africa (data.worldbank.org);

- Dire implications for national socio-economic growth and development as some of the victims and other citizens constitute the human and material resources that the country boasts of. Instead, they are lost through death, maiming or migration to other countries that hold the promise of better life;
- A tendency for society to degenerate to all out anarchy in response to the failures of the government to provide adequate security of lives and property if individuals and communities surreptitiously arm themselves in a bid to ensure their safety. These arms can get into the wrong hands and be used for the wrong purposes thereby further promoting the cycle of violence and insecurity.

MAINSTREAMING HUMAN SECURITY THROUGH SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION STRATEGIES

It is only in the last 30 years that public health has begun to address violence, and only in the last fifteen has it done so at the global level. The Public Health Approach to violence prevention is three-fold: primary prevention-these approaches attempt to prevent violence before it occurs; secondary prevention- these are approaches that focus on the more immediate responses to acts of violence such as pre-medical care, emergency services and so on; and tertiary prevention- these are approaches that focus on long term care in the wake of violence such as rehabilitation, reintegration and attempts to lessen trauma or reduce long-term disability associated with acts of violence (Dahlberg and Mercy, 2009).

However, the focus and recommendations of this paper are on violence prevention mechanisms based on the adoption of primary interventions that entail preventing violence before it occurs. This is more so because with Nigeria's status as a developing country and the fact that most of her essential social services are either comatose or in dire straits, the primary prevention strategies may just be the best and logical way out of the insecurity quagmire. These strategies may therefore encompass:

- A reorientation and commitment of our incumbent and successive leaders and governments to checkmating issues that portray leadership failures;
- Engendering trust in government through good governance, cooperation and making government facilities and agencies work through adequate funding and oversight functions;
- Failures, laxities and misdemeanours of all sorts, irrespective of the social standing of the culprits must be punished and not swept under the carpet. Accusations of complicity, with regard to insurgency in Nigeria, have been levelled against some individuals, top-notch politicians and serving senators like Ali-Modu Sheriff, Mohammed Ali Ndume, amongst others, yet nothing tangible has been done to investigate and verify or refute the claims.
- Partnerships with civil society groups to inculcate violence prevention in their scheme of operations as well as assist in keeping closer tabs on citizens within the society;
- Poverty alleviation and youth socio-economic empowerment through education and vocational/life skill acquisition;
- Eradication of slums and decayed urban spaces that can serve as havens for criminals and their nefarious activities;
- Establishment of accessible counselling and rehabilitation centres manned by professional psychologists to curb the stress and pressures that are likely to result in drug and alcohol use and deviant behaviour;
- Re-professionalization of the security and law enforcement agencies through the acquisition of modern gadgets like CCTV and the provision of modern assault weapons. These will further boost the confidence of law enforcement in the commitment of the government to actually safeguarding the lives and property of their citizens and protecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- The institution of psychological and professional tests and evaluations, retraining and so on, to weed out substandard, incapable and unprofessional bad eggs;
- Ensuring that backlogs of cases are properly investigated and brought to logical conclusions to prevent the delay and denial of justice;
- Proper documentation of criminal profiles and the institution of stiffer penalties to discourage further criminal behaviour.
- State, community and neighbourhood policing and crime monitoring by indigenes, civil society and community-based groups that are familiar with the terrains to check illegal arms manufacturing, smuggling, insurgent groupings, incursions and killings.
- The institution of witness protection programs that guarantee the safety of civil society members who divulge vital information that can help rid the society of criminals and terrorist

groups.

SUMMARY

The basic point of violence preventive efforts is to reduce and hopefully eliminate the need for intervention altogether. The Ottawa International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) 'Responsibility to Protect' report, sees prevention as the best solution to understanding the deeper social issues that constitute root causes of humanitarian crises (e.g. economic, political and social instability) (ICISS, 2001).

Failure to accurately locate the cause of a social problem often leads to the treatment of its symptoms and consequently, an inability to find lasting solutions (Noguera, 2011). Therefore, the adoption of the suggested violence prevention mechanism and the greater involvement and commitment of stakeholders at all levels in checkmating the upsurge of insecurity in Nigeria should expectedly fill the gaps created by the inability of the traditional institutions of justice and law enforcement to checkmate violence and criminal activities.

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