COVID-19 Pandemic and Street Crimes in Nigeria: Hindrances to Sustainable Development

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Abstract
Every emergency has its security implications, coronavirus 2019 is not an exception. This health emergency with its policy implications like lockdown of social and economic activities has implications for national security. One of the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic is street crime. The health emergency resulted in street crimes like theft, snatching of bags, phones, jewellery and other valuables, robbery, burglary, street fighting and assaults and battery. These led to loss of lives and properties. Hence, this paper addresses the significant relationship between COVID-19 emergency and street crimes in Nigeria. The study applies qualitative and quantitative research methods. Data were sourced secondarily through the content analysis of edited textbooks, peer-reviewed journals and credible online resources. Findings showed that COVID-19 emergency and its policy measures like total lockdown of the economy and social activities, movement restriction and consequential loss of means of livelihood instigated street crimes. The paper recommends equitable distribution of palliatives, effective social safety net and adequate preparation for health emergency and increased human capacity building. This study will be useful to individuals, governments at all levels, National Centre for Disease Control, World Health Organization, non-governmental organizations and researchers in social and health sciences.

Keywords: COVID-19, emergency, crimes, development, security
Introduction
As the human beings interacts with one another on daily basis, human beings face various challenges. One of those challenges in human interactions as opined by Zhou, Yang, Wang, Hu, Zhang, Zhang et al. (2020) are emergencies. Emergencies of different categories plunge human beings into dilemma. One of those emergencies is the ongoing health emergency otherwise called COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic disrupts the social and economic entities across the globe. Corona virus is health emergency that broke out in China in late 2019. It spreads to other parts of the world, in the early 2020 to present. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2021) over 2 million lives have been lost to the health emergency. There are a number of measures put in place to curb COVID-19 pandemic. These measures include lockdown, social distancing, use of face masks and other nonpharmaceutical measures to stem the spread the spread of pandemic.

As a policy measure to curtail COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown was imposed to achieve restriction of movement. This action plunged artisans, self-employers and players in the informal sector into serious economic constraints. As noted by Li, Si, Zhu, Yang, Anderson, Shi s et al. (2020) sited in Azhar, Madani, Ntoumi, Kock, Dar et al. (2019), this group of people depends on daily activities as source of income. Imposing curfew on the social activities is tantamount to putting barricade between them and source of income. The economic constraints were worsened by unavailability of palliatives measures or unequal distribution of existing ones. As noted by Ohia Barkarey and Ahmed (2020) harsh economic conditions are fertile grounds for crimes. The COVID-19 resulted in street crimes due to breakdown of law and order (Agostini, Andres, Sims, Graham, Sheahan, Lu et al., 2018). The breakdown of law and order is productive harsh economic conditions. Street crimes as noted by Akers (1990) are the infractions of formal rules and regulations in the open places. Examples of street crimes are armed robbery, assault and battery, theft, arson, vandalism and other forms of causing public disorder. Street crimes are sources of insecurity fuelled by extreme economic hardship induced by COVID-19 pandemic.

Aside idleness of participants in the informal sectors, the organized private sectors like banks, insurance companies, oil companies, telecommunication, education and manufacturing companies were compelled to disengage staff. This action aggravated congested labour market. idleness as noted by Hochstetler (2001) results in criminal activities. COVID-19 pandemic lead to lockdown which kept people at home (Asomah, 2020). Street crimes create insecurity like loss of lives, properties, and general state of widespread fear in the system. This study gathers information from different sources to address the shortage of literature on COVID-19 pandemic and street crime. It will also identify the knowledge gaps. The study will also be useful to policymakers and researchers in the field of social and health sciences. Ohia, Barkely and Ahmed (2020), investigated, COVID-19 and Nigeria; putting reality into context. In the same vain, Azhar, Madani and Ntoumi, Kock and Dar et al. (2019)
assessed the continuing 2019-nCoV epidemic threat of novel coronavirus to global health. The latest 2019 novel coronal virus outbreak in Wuhan, China. In another work conducted through Li, Si, Zhu, Yang, Anderson and Shi (2020), on discovery of Bat Coronaviruses through surveillance and probe capture-based next-generation sequence. Hence, from the best knowledge of the authors, no study has been conducted on COVID-19 emergency and street crimes in Nigeria. This study is necessary to fill the knowledge gap. The specific objectives are to; assess effects of COVID-19 pandemic; evaluate various street crimes committed during COVID-19 pandemic; ascertain solutions to the street crimes during COVID-19 emergency.

**Methodology**

The study applied qualitative research method which relies on secondary data collected from peer reviewed journals, edited books and credible online resources. The literature was reviewed on the meanings of COVID-19, the effects of COVID-19 and street crimes in Nigeria. The study applied traditional literature review. The newness of the independent variable that is COVID-19 pandemic calls for review of literature that are between 2020 and 2021. And literature on street crimes between 2014 and 2021 were reviewed. The content analysis on various themes were selected and digested for expression of various authors ideas and proper citation of the authors. The descriptive statistics was used to process data collected through secondary sources. Frequency distribution table and percentages were used to described the variables. The topic was of interest due to the increase in street crimes as a result of lockdown introduced as policy measure. The research is a work in progress and in no distant future, empirical research will be conducted on the topic. Also, due financial constraint hindered the conduct of empirical study on the topic.

**Literature review**

**Meanings of COVID-19 pandemic**

This is health emergency which broke out in Wuhan, China in the late 2019. It spreads to other parts of the world from the early 2020 through physical contact with infected people. The health emergency causes terrible disquiet in social and economic relations in the world. (Gralinski and Menachery, 2020). It led to serious national, regional and international paradigm shift in policy to cope with its consequences. The international agencies like World Health Organisation, UNICEF were overwhelmed by the gravity of the disease. (Corman, Ithete, Richards, Schoeman, Preiser, Drosten et al. 2014; Holshue, DeBolt, Lindquist, Lofy, Wiesman, Bruce et al., 2020). The inability of the various health agencies to provide solutions in terms of clinically- tested and acceptable medicine to the disease was a daunting global challenge. The whole world was thrown into dilemma (Xu, Chen, Wang, Feng, Zhou, Li et al., 2020). As stated by the World Health Organisation, 2,000,000 people have died of COVID-19. While more than 23,000,000 cases recorded globally, in
Nigeria, over 10,000 cases were recorded and COVID-19 related deaths exceeded 2,000. The effects of COVID-19 in the early 2020 compelled government to impose total lockdown on the economy (Corman, Ithete, Richards, Schoeman, Preiser, Drosten et al., 2014).

Street crimes
These are the criminal activities that are committed in open places. These criminal activities portend great damage to lives and properties in a social structure. As noted by Ohia, Barkarey, Ahmed (2020) and supported by Bennett and Brookman (2008), the following are the examples of street crimes.

Theft: This is a criminal offence that is involved taking the belongings of others without his or her consent. This is prevalent crimes whereby portable items are removed from where they are fixed without the approval of the legitimate owners of the involved items. Items like food stuffs such as rice, beans, cassava flour, bread and other edibles. Electronics like television, transistor radios, electric cables and other equipment are the targets of thieves (Muhammad, Suliman, Abeer, Nadia and Rabeea, 2020).

Armed robbery: This is violent crimes whereby criminals forcefully take the passion of what does not belong to them at gunpoint. Armed robbers attack their victims with other dangerous weapons like cutlasses, sharp bottles and other life-threatening devices. Armed robbers target their victims to dispose them of their valuables (DS, Azhar, Madani, Ntoumi, Kock, Dar et al., 2020).

Assault and battery: This is a form of intimation of victims, either verbally or with dangerous objects. This crime may lead to psychological and physical harm. In most African countries. Youths on cities and some urban centres perpetrate this criminal activity.

Burglary: This offence involves breaking into apartment in a bid to steal items. The burglars may harm victims for opposing dastardly mission. This group of offender’s target shops, houses, factories and warehouses (Hochstetler, 2001).

Causes of street crimes
Lack of regulation on behaviour: One of the circumstances for street crimes is lack of regulation on behaviour. The control on behaviour during crisis, like war, civil unrest and general apprehension in a social structure (De Haan and Vos, 2003).

Drug abuse: Misuse of hard drugs among youths is another factor that is responsible for street crime. The prevalence of hard drugs like cocaine, heroin, Indian helm, codeine and are capable of instigating their consumers to anti-social behaviour like street crimes.
Inconsistent security presence: Security patrol scares aware criminals in any social structure. Lack of security patrols inhibit criminal activities (Wang, Cao, Zhang, Yang, Liu, Xu et al., 2019).

Youth unemployment: Joblessness has been identified as a substantive determinant of street crimes. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2021), unemployment has been identified the cause of criminal activities. Lack of jobs creates opportunity for evil thoughts, especially when there is no palliative measure.

Widespread illicit small arms and ammunition: Proliferation of light and small weapons have been attributed to street crimes. War conflicts, humanitarian crisis and weak border control have been attributed to widespread illicit control of arms and ammunition in the country. The street criminals take the advantage of widespread weapons to commit crimes.

Sustainable development
This is referred to as in movement in the social and economic improvement of people lives without jeopardizing their future. The following are some aspects of sustainable development. Economic development, increase in productivity, reduction in inflation, security of lives and properties (Tibbetts and Gibson, 2002). There are many areas of sustainable development that COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected. The first one is education, the outbreak of COVID-19 led to the abrupt suspension of education at all levels. This created untold hardship on both parents and teachers. Most schools were not adequately equipped for online teachings. Students were on the streets idly and some joined bad groups. The standard of education was serious battered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The health sector lost most of its human resources to COVID-19. There is no adequate protection for frontline workers in the COVID-19. The health personnel contacted the disease and lost their lives in the process. The medical personnel are human beings like every other person in the social system.

Theoretical framework
In order to shed more light on COVID-19 emergency and street crimes, social control theory by Travis Hirsh and strain theory by Emile Durkheim. According Travis Hirsch, deviant behaviour occurs when there is presence of the following attributes are attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. Attachment is the level of connection with norms, values and ideals of social structure. Those who are poorly attached to social norms and values are likely to commit crimes. While, high level of attachment to norms and values of society discourages people from committing deviance. Commitment is another variable propounded by Travis Hirsch, sound commitment to norms and values discourages deviance. However, strong commitment to norms and values prevents deviance. Involvement is positive activities that are within legal
framework prevents deviance. In addition to that, belief in positive activities like legitimate actions. But, lack of involvement in legal activities prompts people to commit crime. Another factor is belief, strong belief in norms and values of society prevents criminal activities. To apply social control theory to corona virus emergency and street crimes. Lack of attachment, commitment, involvement and belief compelled people to street crimes. The street criminals who are mostly youths are not attached to values and norms. They are not committed to ideals of social structure. They are not involved in legitimate activities like salaried jobs. Another theory is routine activity theory by Marcus Felson states that criminal activities are caused by availability of three distinct factors.

These are the motivated offenders, targets and availability of guidance. Motivated offenders are those who have the criminal motive to steal, harm or engage in activities that undermine peace and stability in a social structure. The targets are the properties or persons that suspected criminals. The two theories that were used in explaining COVID-19 and street crimes are crucial for explanation of COVID-19 breakdown and the prevalence of street crimes in Nigeria. The theory on stain theory was introduced to fill the gap in social control theory by Tavis Hirsch because it dwells on the inability of the social structure to provide opportunities for the people in a particular social system to thrive. These opportunities like profitable employment, critical infrastructural facilities. These critical motorable roads, regular electricity supply, security of life and property for micro and macro business to succeed. If these critical infrastructures are in place other social control variables like attachment to norms and values is possible when there is low level of poverty. This failure of some constituted authorities to distribute palliatives and embedded penury and instigated street crimes.
Figure 1: Conceptual framework: the link between COVID-19 pandemic, and street crimes and outcome of sustainable development

COVID-19 Pandemic
- Lockdown
- Statutory staying indoor

Closing Down of Economy
- Businesses were shutdown
- Movement were restricted

Family tensions
- Domestic Violence
- More responsibilities on Parents

Social Control Theory
- Low attachment to values
- Low commitment to normal life activities
- Involvement in deviance
- Weak belief in current social order

Social Strain Theory
- Lack of job opportunities
- Poor social security
- Low level of palliatives
- Poo
- Poor social adjustment

Hunger worsens
- Zero or no palliatives
- Peer pressure by significant others

Street Crimes
- Armed robbery
- Snatching of bags and mobile phones
- Burglary

Illegal access to small and light weapons.

Low presence of security forces. Police number are inadequate to protect the citizens

Negative Effects on Sustainable Development.
- Crimes discourages investors
- Lack of investment worsens insecurity
- Widens gap between the rich and the poor

Results
Source: Adopted from Tibbetts and Gibson (2002)

Table 1: The global COVID-19 cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Recovery</th>
<th>Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>193,701,849</td>
<td>175,919,022</td>
<td>4,155,111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/ on Friday, 23 July 2021, 6:20 pm

From Table 1, the total number of COVID-19 cases was 193,701,849. In the meantime, 90.82% were treated and discharged. While 2.15% of the COVID-
19 patients lost their lives. The number of deaths which was put at 4,155,111 was a global disaster. It cuts across different strata of the social system. The safety precautions like imposition of lockdown reduces the mortality from the illness.

Table 2: The Nigeria COVID-19 cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Confirmed Cases</th>
<th>Active Cases</th>
<th>Discharge</th>
<th>Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Percentages</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 2, the Nigeria had a total of 170,306 confirmed cases of COVID-19. This represents 0.09% of the global cases. At the same time, 0.09% of the total COVID-19 patients have been treated and discharged. She has 0.05% of the global death that arose from COVID-19. This shows the strictness of COVID-19 control measures like lockdown of the economy.

Table 3: The COVID-19 by five most affected states in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Confirmed Cases</th>
<th>Recovery</th>
<th>Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ogun</td>
<td>2,103</td>
<td>1,994</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of national cases (%)</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>22,562</td>
<td>21,119</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of national cases (%)</td>
<td>13.25</td>
<td>12.82</td>
<td>10.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Oyo</td>
<td>6,919</td>
<td>6,749</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of national cases</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>6.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Federal Capital Territory</td>
<td>6,385</td>
<td>5,934</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of related national cases</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Edo</td>
<td>4,914</td>
<td>4,725</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of national cases</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>8.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 3, out the five states with high prevalence of COVID-19, Ogun State has 1.23% of the national confirmed cases, 1.21% and 1.46 of recovery and death respectively. Lagos State had the highest which was 13.25% of the confirmed cases, 12.82% and 10.33% of recovery and deaths respectively. Edo State had 2.85% of the confirmed cases. This shows the states have been managing the COVID-19 and its negative consequences on sustainable development. The states are characterized with high economic and social activities. The COVID-19 has brought untold hardship to the activities and worsened poverty level among the citizenry.
Table 4: The number of COVID-19 new cases (DELTA VARIANT) in 8 states in Nigeria as at 23 July 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>New Cases</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>67.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sokoto</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Federal Capital T.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oyo</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ekiti</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Plateau</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From Table 4, Lagos State had 67.39% of the national confirmed cases. The second in terms of COVID-19 cases is the Rivers State, it has 14.67% of the aggregate national COVID-19 pandemic. The least state in the COVID-19 variant is Plateau State which recorded 0.54% of the total new COVID-19 variant. This posts serious challenges for the affected states because the loss incurred as a result of COVID-19 is still biting harder. This limits the capacity of those states to achieve the desired sustainable development.

Table 5: Number of crimes in Nigeria in 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number of Crimes</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>50,975</td>
<td>59.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Abia</td>
<td>12,408</td>
<td>14.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>7,150</td>
<td>8.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kano</td>
<td>5,705</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FCT</td>
<td>5,382</td>
<td>6.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ebonyi</td>
<td>4,214</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ondo</td>
<td>3,713</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Oyo</td>
<td>2,969</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>2,661</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Plateau</td>
<td>2,607</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85,522</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From Table 5, Lagos had the highest number of crimes in the year 2020. In the same year, Abia State was second in the crime rate. Because of COVID-19 broke out in Nigeria in 2020, streets crimes were shrouded in the crimes displayed. These crimes debar sustainable development in the affected states.

Findings and discussion

From the results COVID-19 has global impacts most nations of the world. From Table one, it could be deduced that COVID-19 has claimed 4,155,111
lives globally. And 2,130 lives in Nigeria. This shows the gravity of damage done to Nigeria society by COVID-19 pandemic. The effects are being felt in the various fabrics Nigerian Society. The crimes rate during period increased astronomically. The shutting down of economy might have been responsible for high crime rates. Street crimes are embedded in the crime rates. Also, COVID-19 emergency is global issue that resulted in emergency actions globally. One of the actions is imposition of lockdown. Lockdown warranted restriction of movement. In Nigeria, workers in the informal sectors have substantial percentage of the national workforce. In this regard, keeping people at home without effective palliative measures instigated increase in street crimes. The street crimes such theft, thuggery, assault and battery are threats to sustainable development. The DELTA variant is very deadly and spreads widely than the previous variant of COVID-19 pandemic. From Table 4, 184 new variants of COVID-19 cases were confirmed in eight states in Nigeria. This calls for renewed efforts to check the spread on the virus.

Conclusion
This paper deals with COVID-19 emergency and street crimes in Nigeria. The implications of these on sustainable development. Covid-19 resulted in emergencies part of those emergencies are increase in street crimes. These crimes impacted negatively on social and economic development of the citizenry. This paper will be useful to individuals, government at various level, non-governmental organization, researchers in the field of social and health management sciences.

Recommendations
The paper recommends effective data collection to facilitate distribution of palliatives. Lack of effective palliative measures worsened extreme poverty during COVID-19 lockdown. Poverty instigated street crimes. Youths should be well engaged to minimize street crimes. The concerned authorities should not rest on their oars in the of preventive measures.

References


