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## Case Essay

A comparative study of urban crime between Malaysia and Nigeria<sup>☆</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Urbanization has created numerous social problems, among which is crime that became a common phenomenon to all urban areas in both developed and developing nations. Recent unimaginable levels of the world urbanization coincides with rise in urban crimes in many parts of the world, as the rate of unemployment had been on the increase and coupled with increased poverty among the urban poor. Nature of crime is not uniform but varies from one geographical region to another. In some areas, property crime is more common while in others, crime on person (violent) is prevalent. Crime is not being plagued by a singular factor anywhere it occurred, there are variant factors that influence criminal activities. However, key factors that persuade criminal behaviours of potential offenders includes: unemployment, poverty, bad governance and weaknesses in law enforcement or crime-control agencies. These four key factors were discussed in this paper with hope of bringing out nature of urban crimes that bedevilled properties and people safety for taking management and prevention measures.

## 1. Introduction

Urbanization is a process whereby towns grow naturally or through migration and their societies become urban. Urbanization happens as the result of people migrating into urban areas seeking economic opportunities and improving their living conditions, especially in the developing countries. This is because urban areas have most of the facilities and employment corridors provided to make life more comfortable. This phenomenon developed rapidly, particularly in Africa and Asian sub-regions where people from neglected rural areas migrate to the urban areas expecting employment and better living conditions. Heyer (1981), Knight and Gunatilaka (2007) stated that a migrant takes into account the probability of obtaining a desired urban employment at any time. In another study, Soh (2012) supported the idea that it is in urban areas where all the facilities are well built to make human life more comfortable, and the main attraction of urban is easy access to wealth. Harris and Todaro (1970) described it as “proceeds in response to urban-rural differences in expected earning”. Although, in certain cases, many urban immigrants assumed they will secure employment, when usually it is not the case. Instead, they meet a cost of living that is much higher or rather difficult than that of their experience back in rural areas.

Impulsive crime also takes place in areas where there are high population densities, swift changes in social environments and poor living conditions. For instance, many immigrants in urban areas experience new urban life where relationship is based on momentary, superficial and impersonal interactions. This then produce anonymity among urban dwellers, diabolical socio-economic, high cost of living and socially disorganized, thereby turning some to steal, rob, become drunkards, drug pushers and

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prostitutes to make ends meet. This idea is supported by [Soh \(2012\)](#), who states that “secondary relations eventually lead to family breakup, alcoholism, crime, and other negative aspects of urban life”. Although he further clarified that, ‘urban life does not automatically lead to social disorganization, but it does increase the opportunities to be exposed to deviance and negative effects on one’s behaviour as there are many promoters of such acts, or else when the condition warrants it. Therefore some other factors cause urban crimes in all its ramifications other than urbanization.

Urban areas are regarded as centres of opportunities that have become engines for economic growth, centres of diversity and changes. In urban areas the residents live, work and interact within their confined physical environment, matching up with criminal prospects rendered themselves within these same confined environments which instilled fear into the minds of many. Criminal activities have no respect and barrier to people’s socio-economic status and at all stages of civilization. In recent decades crime has become a universal phenomenon in its varying forms in all cultures. Prevalent of crime in urban areas make it seen as a space of geographical fear for many and the fear is not restricted to one’s age, class, gender or race. Urban stability and sustainability has been connected to safety of securing and policing of urban areas. Issues of personal safety and security became linked with urban ‘liveability’ and ‘quality of life’ and addressing crime has become a significant benchmark for a city’s quality of life ([England & Simon, 2010](#); [Tretter, 2013](#); [Ahmed & Salihu, 2013](#)).

## 2. Literature review

The perception of the term crime varied greatly across geographical areas, socio-cultural and economic differences of societies as well as time lag. This kind of variations makes it difficult to universally define crime across regions of the world. What may be regarded as a crime in one region may not be a crime in another and changes over time. For instant, prostitution and homosexuality are crimes in many regions especially where religion dictates, while in many others, they are acts of promotion. A few decades ago, dumping toxic waste has not been classified as a crime but presently it is a serious crime and violation of laws in country like Nigeria ([Dambazau, 2007](#); [Usman, Yakubu, & Bello 2012](#); [Tenibiaje, 2010](#)). Therefore, the perception of an act to be a crime varies with time and location. Similarly, criminal behaviour is a common phenomenon anywhere and in every society, but certain societies have higher criminal activities than others and variation can be found in the same society (urban areas), where criminal activities are prevalent in some locations over others. Within the same city, criminal activities tend to be higher in the city centres than in the suburbs ([Soh, 2012](#)). This may be connected with the intensities of activities and potentialities for offenders to commit crime in the city centre. This goes in line with what [Ajibola \(1990\)](#) reported, where crime and criminal activities are constantly performing and growing in a sporadic facet (cited by [Tenibiaje, 2010](#)).

However, in trying to understand crime, it is good to bring ideas presented by many scholars in their respective perspectives on the subject matter. This is because many scholars have defined crime in different views. For instance, [Habibullah, Baharom, and Tan \(2013\)](#) defined crime as violation of ‘property rights’ where the focus was prioritized on crime against property. This will not give a comprehensive understanding on crime; hence there are many other areas where crimes are committed. For instance, crimes can be established in corruption, rape, terrorist criminal activities, kidnapping, human trafficking, assault, vagrancy and failure to pay public tax, utility bills or transport, drugs and narcotics abuse, wanton environmental destruction and unauthorised dumping of toxic substances ([Tenibiaje, 2010](#); [Tretter, 2013](#)). On socio-cultural ethical perspectives, crime is viewed as violation of societal norms and values. [Tenibiaje \(2010\)](#) explained that crime is a ‘deviant behaviour that violates prevailing norms, which may be cultural, social, political, psychological and economic conditions’. [Louis and others in 1981 \(cited by Usman et al., \(2012\)\)](#), described crime as a deviant act that is threatening moral behaviours and injurious to society. Moral decadence afflicts the personality of individual, his property and lessens trust among members of the society which may result to threat and fear.

In ideological perspective particularly in criminal law, crime is regarded as an act or omission forbidden by law on pain of punishment or else is a violation of law ([Usman et al., 2012](#)). Similarly, [Tenibiaje \(2010\)](#) expresses crime as an act that violates the law of the society or serious offence against the law of the society for which there is a severe punishment by law. In other words, crime is any culpable action or omission prohibited by law and punishable by the state. In these views, crime is a violation of any law of a given society and offenders are punishable in accordance to the set of that law. These laws can either be criminal laws or societal unwritten laws, norms and values, any offender or violator of such laws is culpable to punishment.

In the literature there are variant views of crime but all converged at common understanding word ‘violation’ of societal norms and values or laws. In this context, crime refers to violation of state laws or deviant act prohibited by state laws that is subjected to punishment in accordance to the set of the laws. These include all types of deviant acts or offences against lawful authority, against local act, against person and against property. This definition is more appropriate in this paper as it takes nation states studies which have their respective apparatus for managing or converting crimes that are guided by state laws as the case may be to any nation. Accordingly, urban crime is considered as ‘violations of laws or deviant acts’ performed in ‘urban areas’ that are prohibited by state laws and are punishable in accordance to the set of the state laws. Therefore, urban crime should not be viewed as violating urban development laws only, but crimes committed in urban areas.

In any circumstances, crime is a convergence of criminal, element for crime act (property/ victim) and place to perform crime activity. This is what [Tabangin, Flores, and Emperador \(2008\)](#) opined, where crime is not only about offenders and attractor may also be about ‘places’. Urban areas as places offer opportunities for various socio-economic activities, as well as potentialities for criminal behaviours and multiple crime spots (points) for those with criminal tendencies to hit a target. Frequent occurrences of crimes in urban areas can instil fear into the public of being victims of crime instead of seeing urban area as a place of economic opportunities, safe living and offered quality of life to the residents ([Soh, 2012](#); [Sewuese, 2014](#)).

In trying to classify what crime is, some scholars classified it into violent and property crimes ([Habibullah, et al., 2013](#); [Kien,](#)

2015; Sewuese, 2014; Usman et al., 2012; Ajaegbu, 2012; Amin, Rahim, & Ayu, 2014; Dambazau, 2007a, b; Okafor, 2011; Soh, 2012). This classification is on the basis of entity on which crime is committed. Violent crime is normally related to crimes committed on human beings and the brute manner in which it has done usually cause harm to a person, his personality or damage property. Habibullah et al. (2013) defined violent crime as a criminal activity that is clearly an act of brute force engaged in taking of property or a person's life. Similarly Dambazau (2007a) in his explanation on violent crime said that it is an act of forcible taking of property from a victim and may cause injury or loss of life. Likewise Ajaegbu (2012) notes that violent crime is the most 'inhumane' crime that continue to plague the societies that have taken the centre stage leading to bloodshed and economic setbacks. Furthermore, Soh (2012) explained, violent crime generally is a crime of violence sufficiently regular and significant in causing hurt. To this end, the types of violent crimes include robbery; rape; kidnapping; aggravated assault, thuggery, terrorism; grievous hurt and wounding, murder and homicide (manslaughter) (Dambazau, 2007a; Ajaegbu, 2012; Usman et al., 2012; Soh, 2012; Song, Spicer, Brantingham, & Frank, 2013; Habibullah et al., 2013).

On the other hand, property crimes are those offences committed on properties more or less without force in taking or stealing property. In line with this, Soh (2012) defined property crimes as those offences involving the loss of property during which there is no use of violence by the perpetrators. Differently, some scholars asserted that property crime are offences on property with or without violence, those with violent include robbery, snatch theft, pilfering, pick-pocketing, vandalization and others, while property crime without violence includes burglary, arson, larceny, theft, wreck, pilfering, stealing, house and store breaking, and vehicle theft (Habibullah et al., 2013; Dambazau, 2007; Prashyanusorn, Kaviya, & Yupapin 2010; Usman et al., 2012; Soh, 2012; Song et al., 2013; Ajaegbu, 2012).

Even though these classifications of crimes make it easy to understand, however they did not clearly distinct between violence and property crimes which make it cloudy. This is because violent crimes are also property crimes to which when established, is defined as the manner or process in which brutal force is applied on the property owners or guardians in taking away properties. On the basis of manner or process in which crime is committed the classification should be 'violence and non-violence' and on the other hand it can be 'property and person' rather than "violence and property".

Dambazau in 1997 (cited by Usman et al., 2012) classified crime into four categories:- crimes against person, crimes against property, crimes against lawful authority and crimes against local act. Thus explained; crimes against person: include murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, suicide, grievous harm or wounding, assault, child stealing, slave dealing, rape, assault, kidnapping, unnatural offences and others. Crimes against property: armed robbery, theft or stealing, burglary, arson and others. Crimes against lawful authority: forgery of currency notes, gambling, breach of peace, perjury, bribery and corruption, escape from custody and other crimes. Crimes against local act include: traffic offences, township offences, liquor offences, narcotics abuses and other crimes. Indeed this classification makes it explicitly clear on crimes against persons, properties and authorities regardless of the manner in which the crime is performed.

In the last two decades, the world urban population have been surging to an unimaginable level of urbanization and rural population is decreasing steeply (United Nations [UN], 2014 & UN-Habitat, 2014). According to Population Reference Bureau (PRB) (2014 & 2015), the world population of 2015 stands at 7.3 billion and 53% of it are living in urban areas; estimated 9.8 billion world population in 2050 out of which 69% will be urban. The nature of precipitous urbanization, give rise to some social problems, among which is a high level urban crime in many parts of the world. As Soh (2012) reported, increase in crime is correlated with rapid urbanization. In urban areas where there are unemployed youth, the situation may be considered as pathetic, because young people can be easily involved in negative acts to make ends meet or as a stress reliever. Increasing level of urban criminal activities contributes to the anxiety and fear among residents of the urban areas, this is because crime resulted in misery and to some extent loss of lives.

The rapid urbanization has created numerous social problems, among which is crime that became a common phenomenon in urban areas in both developed and developing nations. Ultimately rapid growth in urbanization had a direct relationship with the increase in crime as the rate of unemployment had been on the increase, high cost of living coupled with housing problem (homelessness) and these in turn led to all sorts of urban problems crime inclusive (Okafor, 2011; Ajaegbu, 2012; Soh, 2012; Usman et al., 2012; Amin et al., 2014). Urban areas are highly heterogeneous in all its socio-cultural and economic ramifications where various good and deviances can be found. Soh (2012) opines that all 'forms of deviance flourish within urban environments because there are more individuals who support this subculture'. These sub-cultures led to committing various crimes in urban areas and continuous increase in crime in such areas are correlated with the rapid development in urbanism. Many are of the opinion that the increase in crimes is associated with the increase in urbanization process and conclude that rapid urbanization is one of the major contributors of crimes, hence it provides all the crime opportunity elements: offender, attractor/victims and the places where crime activities are performed and criminals escape or hide.

However, in literatures it has not been established that 'urbanization causes crime'. It does not automatically lead to urban crimes, only linked with crimes because it harboured many people among which some are with criminal tendencies where Soh (2012) described them as supporters of a deviant "subculture". Many studies have linked urban crimes to factors such as unemployment, poverty, poor living condition, economic deprivation, inequality in the society, and others rather than urbanization. Such studies include that of Katsina (2013) who believed crippled economy, high levels of urban poverty, unemployment and inequality are the causal factors of urban crimes. This is to say that there is a closely interwoven linkage between economic situations in any given society or a country with unemployment and crimes. Likewise Ajaegbu (2012) opined that unemployment and economic hardship have pushed many 'jobless youths, some of whom are graduates, into various deadly crimes'. Katsina (2013) found unemployment is the main causes for 'eruption and escalation of crimes in urban areas across the breadth of Nigeria'. Soh (2012) posits 'unemployment is closely linked to crime' no matter the region of the World. He also argued that urban crimes are influenced

by poverty, unstable jobs, the high cost of living and financial difficulties, limited educational opportunities, inadequate health and sanitation, and inadequate housing. Further explained, weaknesses in law enforcement or crime-control bodies encourage more criminal groups to take advantages to commit crimes. Ajaegbu (2012) believed unemployment, poverty, poor governance and lack of policy initiatives and implementation to some extent encouraged criminal groups to thrive and appears to be the root cause of urban crimes. Therefore, urbanization does not have an exclusive hold on urban crime causes but, Soh (2012) concludes that it does increase the opportunities to be exposed to criminal activities. The link of urbanization to crime is that, chances of crimes to take place are high when there are high population densities in a given place, rapid changes in social environments and poor living conditions.

### 3. Methodology

As have been presented in many literatures, there are basically two approaches of data collection in research: primary data collection (fieldwork) and secondary data collection (desk study). Methodology used in this paper is more qualitative than quantitative in nature. The present study used available data from previous studies of Sidhu (2005); Tenibiaje (2010); Marzbali, Abdullah, Abd Razak and Tilaki (2011); Okafor (2011); Ajaegbu (2012); Soh (2012); Usman et al. (2012); Badiora and Afon (2013); Habibullah et al. (2013); Katsina (2013); Amin et al. (2014); Sewuese (2014); Song et al. (2013); United Nation (2014); UN-Habitat (2014); Kien (2015), among others. This is in line with the opinion of Marzbali et al. (2011) who suggested, if a situation seems to be difficult to make a comprehensive interpretation of comparative study by means of fieldwork, therefore, the study should take advantage of existing data.

Therefore, methodology adopted is basically 'desktop' study, in other word, 'document analyses' as the case of qualitative research method where the data collected are from documents (secondary data) for the purpose of describing and discussing urban crimes. On this subject matter, the researcher consider secondary data easier to be retrieved and use this type of study as recommended by Berg (2001); Naoum (2007); Creswell (2014) and Ritchie (2013) whom noted that 'document analysis' may be necessitated when circumstances or proceedings 'cannot be investigated by direct observation or questioning' (fieldwork). The most significant advantages of the secondary data are related to time and cost, as reiterated by Naoum (2007) that it is generally much less expensive to use secondary data than it is to conduct a primary research investigation. In support of the idea, Berg (2001) opined that this category of secondary data collection relies on availability of data and convenience that are close at hand or easily accessible. Therefore, the study employs a desktop study method in the sense that relevant secondary data were used to compare urban crimes between Malaysia and Nigeria.

The author was motivated by a student's question 'why crimes are more prevalent in urban areas?' which led to writing this case study paper to discuss and explain further. The choice of study areas of both Malaysia and Nigeria aroused as a result of the author's little experience in Malaysia which seems to be more law abiding citizens than that of Nigeria but still urban crimes are prevalent as in Nigeria. Furthermore, both countries have higher ratio of police population above recommended United Nations standards of 1:250 which is inadequate. The paper starts by introducing the subject matter, highlights the nature of urban crimes then discusses urban crime in Malaysia and Nigeria and finally draws conclusion.

### 4. Highlight of urban crime

It is believed that criminal behaviours or activities are not evenly distributed among societies or across geographical entities. Even within a particular society some hotspot areas have higher occurrences of crimes than cold spot areas. This is because of the differences in geographical areas in terms of socio-economic, political and demographic characteristics. In light of this, crime has become one of the serious social problems and burning issues to all societies because it affects the public safety and quality of life among the people, as it affects all, irrespective of race, religion, gender and income levels.

In the last two decades, the nature and frequencies of urban crimes in many parts of the world have increased precipitously as it has been observed by Usman et al., (2012) that the entire world is experiencing high crime rate. The high level of urban crime activities has become more alarming and contributed to decline in the socio-economic and quality of life (Badiora & Afon, 2013; Marzbali et al., 2011).

Many studies reported urban crime activities are not uniformly performed across urban areas, indeed crime can crop up anywhere, but certain areas will experience higher crime proportion (hotspots) than others (cold-spots) based on its density and location (Ahmed & Salihu, 2013; Badiora & Afon, 2013; Kumar & Chandrasekar, 2011; Sewuese, 2014; Tabangin et al., 2008; Song et al., 2013). This is because the nature of a crime varies from one geographical region to another and what most researchers found in their various studies are alarming because all types of crimes are committed in urban areas contemporarily. This is connected to the opportunities offered by 'crime attractors' in such areas which turn them to be seen as 'hotspots' (Tabangin et al., 2008). Song et al. (2013) opined that these opportunities are related to the location, movement patterns of offenders and potential targets. Crime is generally influenced by the criminal behaviour of offenders, the existence of attractive targets in an area and absence of a capable guardian. Therefore, in any circumstances for a crime to be committed, there must be a motivated offender, a suitable target (attractor) and the absence of a capable guardian. In reality these 'criminal behaviours' and potentialities for criminal activities in places are inherent in human society. Usman et al. (2012) asserted that crime is an 'inescapable reality in human life, therefore, no national characteristics, no political regime, and no system of law, police or judiciary have rendered a country free from crime'.

It is clear that all types of crimes (crimes against person, property, lawful authority and local acts) are committed in urban areas

in different parts of the world and in different scales. In their study in some cities in the United States of America [Varano, Schafer, Cancino, Decker, and Greene \(2010\)](#) reported a significant increase in several forms of serious crimes in Houston, Phoenix and San Antonio. For instance, there were significant increases in homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, auto theft, and burglary crimes in Houston and San Antonio. Whereas Houston experienced significant increases in murder, robbery and auto-theft crimes. Phoenix meanwhile experienced significant increases in robbery and aggravated assault; San Antonio experienced significant increases in robbery and auto theft. However, there was a significant decrease in burglary in Phoenix and rape in San Antonio. These nature and types of crimes are justifying the fact that there are variations in criminal activities in different places where some types of crimes are more prevalent in a particular location than another which has social and space dimensions.

Crime hotspots tend to be at peak in highly intensive activity centres in urban areas. In fact, Central Business District (CBD) is claimed to have higher crime rates due to higher population density, particularly in commercial areas. Places like city centres, regional shopping centres and large market areas, major transportation nodes and places where drugs and alcohol are sold or used shown higher crime rates ([Song et al., 2013](#)). In their study [Tabangin et al. \(2008\)](#) also conceded that in urban areas, most often the crimes of theft, snatch, pickpocketing, pilfering, burglary, robbery and physical injuries were committed within the CBD. Verily it is in these high activity passageways that tend to harbour a large number of offenders and target victims for property and violent crimes as well as terrorism. Similarly in both Malaysia and Nigeria as reported, crime targets are habitually chosen near these intensive activity nodes when there are virtuous targets and decent opportunities for operation and escape ([Song et al., 2013](#); [Kien, 2015](#); [Sewuese, 2014](#); [Badiora & Afon, 2013](#)) or else in secluded places.

There is no singular factor that can be the cause of crimes or criminal behaviour because of the divergent and complexity of human behaviours. Different types of crimes are being committed by different types of people, at different times, in different places and under different circumstances ([Dambazau, 2007](#)). However, many researchers opined that unemployment and poverty are the root causes of criminal behaviours ([Usman et al., 2012](#); [Ajaegbu, 2012](#); [Katsina, 2013](#); [Song et al., 2013](#); [Kien, 2015](#); [Sewuese, 2014](#); [Badiora and Afon, 2013](#)). In conformity with this, [Ajaegbu \(2012\)](#) in a study in Nigeria reported, the problem of crimes in Nigeria has been exacerbated by the high rate of 'unemployment and economic hardship which has pushed many jobless youths, some of whom are graduates, into various deadly crimes'. While in a contrasting argument, [Soh \(2012\)](#) explained that criminal behaviour can be found in all types of people; even people who wallow in wealth can commit crimes.

#### 4.1. Nature of urban crimes in MALAYSIA

Urban crimes in Malaysia are similar to urban crimes in many parts of the world in their forms and types which cut across gender, socio-economic status and locations. Different types of crimes are committed at different locations and in varying degrees which is a social menace to the society. In Malaysia, there is a high level of property crimes, including daylight burglary, night burglary, lorry-van theft, car theft, motorcycle theft, bicycle theft and snatch theft. While crimes on person (violent) includes murder, attempted murder, armed robbery, robbery without armed, gang robbery with firearms, gang robbery without firearms, rape and aggravated assault were also committed ([Song et al., 2013](#); [Kien, 2015](#); [Habibullah et al., 2013](#); [Soh, 2012](#); [Tabangin et al., 2008](#)). In Malaysia, as reported by [Soh \(2012\)](#), 'car theft, house breaking, and motorcycle theft accounted for 56%, general theft 19%, snatch theft 4%, lorry theft 3% and violent crime 18% of the overall 211,645 reported crimes in 2008'. In a separate study, [Amin et al. \(2014\)](#) reported, in 2009 there were total of 314,675 crimes cases reported and property theft constituted 272,310 (87%) which shows an increase. Furthermore, [Shamsuddin and Hussin \(2013\)](#) reported a significant rise in crime rates and becomes critical in 2009 when reported the sum of 588 murder cases and 3177 rape cases and concluded that the crime rate in Malaysia has worsened more than 300% since 1991.

The crimes record has exhibited variations in the distribution across states in Malaysia, where the highest number of violent crime cases was recorded in Selangor (91,962), followed by Kuala Lumpur (59,050) and Johor (49,105). On other hand the least violent crime cases were recorded in Perlis (1240), Terengganu (3869), and Kelantan (6821) ([Amin et al., 2014](#)). This confirmed other studies that shown variations in crimes in different places, like that of [Tabangin et al. \(2008\)](#); [Varano et al. \(2010\)](#); [Ahmed and Salihu \(2013\)](#); [Badiora and Afon \(2013\)](#); [Song et al. \(2013\)](#) and [Sewuese \(2014\)](#). With these trends of crime activities, one will conveniently conclude that property crimes are on the lead over crime on persons (violent) and criminal activities are on the rise in Malaysia.

#### 4.2. Nature of urban crimes in NIGERIA

Urban crime is a universal phenomenon and Nigeria is not spared. All sorts of crimes are committed in Nigeria like any other parts of the world, although the magnitude and nature varies. In some areas, property crimes are more prominent while violent crimes are highly experienced in another part of the country. Similarly in a particular urban area there are these variations between 'hotspots and cold spots' locations. Hotspot locations are those areas where the frequency of crimes is high because of the presence of high crime attractors while on the other hand, cold spot locations are areas with low crime (low crime attractors).

In Nigeria, as many scholars reported, criminal activities are committed on all four categories of crimes: - crime on persons, property, laws and acts. Crimes committed include:- burglary, house and store breakings, auto theft, theft/stealing, pickpockets, pilfering, snatch theft, shoplifting, vandalism, arson, arm robbery, grievous hurt and wounding, murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, rape, sexual harassment, aggravated assault, fraudulent acts (419), kidnappings, child abduction, human trafficking, militancy, thuggery, hooliganism, political mayhem, human abduction, assassinations, organized (gang) armed robbery, ritual activities, brigandage, bullying, terrorism, suicide and bomb attacks, amongst others. Others are forgery of currency notes, coining

**Table 1**

Nigeria crime data.

Source: Nigeria Police Watch 2009.

Types of crime	2008	2009
Property Crimes	90,156	98,378
Crimes on persons	35,109	38,955
Crimes against Lawful Authority	5938	7878
Crimes against Local Acts	57,626	74,286

offences, gambling, breach of peace, perjury, bribery and corruption, prison break, escape from custody, financial crimes, impersonation, economic sabotage, drug peddling, militancy, receiving stolen property, unlawful possession of firearms and hard drugs; traffic offences, tax fraud, false pretences cheating, child abandonment, women trafficking, drug abuse and pushing, cultism, prostitution, liquor offences, firearms dealing, possession or selling narcotics, and public peace breach.

According to Nigeria Police Watch, crimes reported in 2008 and 2009 has shown significant increase, where property crime is on the lead, followed by crime against local acts, persons and then crime against lawful authority. Similarly, this justified all types of crimes are committed in urban areas in Nigeria as shown in [Table 1](#) below.

All these crimes are committed in many urban areas in Nigeria, although at varying magnitudes. In 1970s and 1980s, violent crimes such as arm robbery, human trafficking, militancy and hooliganism, human abduction, assassinations, organized (gang) armed robbery, ritual activities and murder are more prevalent in the southern part while, property crimes are more prevalent in the urban northern Nigeria. It has been observed that some of these crimes such as human trafficking, kidnappings, abduction, terrorism, bomb attacks and suicide attacks are recent developments especially in the north-eastern region where insurgency ravaged the area. Some studies reported both property and violent crimes have shown an upward trend in the past few decades in all parts of the country and the criminal activities are being carried out with more sophistication. Most of these crimes against persons that are characterized with violence includes human abduction, kidnappings, assassinations, organized (gang) armed robbery, ritual activities, gang cultism, murder, militancy and hooliganism, terrorism, bomb attacks and suicide attacks are the most inhumane crimes that continue to plague and have taken the core scaffold leading to bloodshed and economic retardations in Nigeria especially in the last two decades.

## 5. Discussions

### 5.1. Comparing urban crime between Malaysia and Nigeria

Urban crime has become a global phenomenon; criminal activities are becoming increasingly proliferated in many urban areas neither homes nor are markets and schools places safe because of frequent occurrence of crime incidents. This strengthens the proposition that population increase (urbanization) with it attended problems might be a factor for high level of crimes in urban areas and it is also hypothesised that both property and violent crimes will crop up in densely populated urban areas. In recent years there has been significant population growth and a global rapid urbanization advances visa-vie it attended problems among which, [Marzbali et al. \(2011\)](#) concludes that crime has become one of the most 'serious social' problems of urbanization.

From [Tables 2](#) and [3](#) above, it is clear that the sum total of crimes reported are steadily increasing with similar trends in both the actual property and violent crimes but with marginal stability in crime index in Malaysia. While that of Nigeria shown a sharp decrease of total crimes reported of 52% between 2007 and 2008 with relatively stable figures between 2009 and 2011. Similarly it has shown a decline in the trend of property crimes and a rise in violent crimes in 2008 and 2009 then decreases in 2010 and 2011.

Another dimension of crimes is gang violent crime where it is reported to be on the increase. [Soh \(2012\)](#) reported in Malaysia that there are a total of 285 registered gangs which may increase the tendencies of crime levels especially in urban areas. In another study, [Amin et al. \(2014\)](#) reported violent crimes recorded, gang robbery with or without firearm accounted 68.9% of all violent crimes reported between 2004 and 2013 in Malaysia. Equally [Kien \(2015\)](#) reported gang robbery and robbery without firearm are committed in the city of Johor Bahru accounted for about 76% of all violence crimes in the area in 2013. Although, in contrast the same study of [Kien \(2015\)](#) has shown significant decrease in the total gang robbery crimes reported from 2009 to 2013 with the figures 649; 364; 235; 200 and 184 respectively. This may not be unconnected to the security measures taken in the city which

**Table 2**

Malaysia crime statistics.

Sources: [Soh, \(2012\)](#) Crime and Urbanization: Revisited Malaysian Case.

Crimes	2006	2007	2008
Total crime	196,780	209,582	211,645
Crime index	746	767	721
Property	163,372	174,423	173,828
Violent	33,408	35,159	37, 817

**Table 3**

Nigeria crime statistics.

Sources: Nigeria annual abstract 2012.

Crimes	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total Crimes	172,326	90,370	100,303	107,820	108,245
Crime Index	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Property Crime	122,424	18,948		41,839	48,023
Violent Crime	49,902	71,422	75,310	65,981	60,222

include installation of electronic alarm system, Close-Circuit Television (CCTV), security guards and GIS crime mapping. [Kien \(2015\)](#) explained when Johor Bahru City Council had implemented some crime prevention strategies in the city, crime then moves to another side. In support of this assertion, [Amin et al. \(2014\)](#) found that the public safety sub-index of Malaysia has significantly improved by 10.8 points in 2010, due to the reduction in the number of crimes per 1000 populations. Similarly, the crime rate decreased by 12.0% from 712 crimes cases per 100,000 people to 628 cases in 2011, partly due to the continuous efforts taken to reduce crime rates.

In Nigeria the situation seems to be similar, although there is paucity of recent crime data, but some studies reported there is general growing number of robberies in the 1990s up to late 2000s. In the late 1980s and 1990s serious crime grew to nearly epidemic proportions, particularly in Lagos and other urbanized areas ([Usman et al., 2012](#)). The frequency of arm robbery was prevalently high which [Ajaegbu \(2012\)](#) described the period as ‘neither homes, nor markets are safe’ in Nigeria because of the frequent occurrence of armed robbery incidents and it is highly unsafe to travel to any parts of the country especially at night.

On the other hand, in the late 2000s, generally the crime data continued to decline, the rates of violent crimes slightly declined to 8% between 2005 and 2006 ([Usman et al., 2012](#)). However it was observed and reported that a new dimension of crimes emerged, such as human trafficking, kidnappings, abduction, drug peddling, thuggery and terrorism are recent developments and their intensity has multiplied since 2000 when Nigeria democratized ([Ajaegbu, 2012; Usman et al., 2012; Katsina, 2013](#)).

## 5.2. Causes of urban crimes

Crime is not being plagued by a singular factor anywhere it occurred. In any societies there are variant factors that influence criminal activities as crimes manifolds there are various offenders of different types of crimes. Criminal behaviours are motivated by various circumstances of potential criminals. However, many scholars have identified some key factors that persuaded or influenced criminal behaviours of potential offenders. These factors include: poverty, unemployment, failure of leadership or bad governance and weaknesses in law enforcement or crime-control bodies. Others (secondary) are corruption, social inequality, moral decadence, urbanisation, greed and disintegration of family ties ([Ajaegbu, 2012; Usman et al., 2012; Soh, 2012; Katsina, 2013; Gulumbe et al., 2012; Hills, 2011](#)).

### 5.2.1. Unemployment

Unemployment is a plague that bedeviling many countries especially developing nations and is very closely interlinked with urban crimes. Psychologically, unemployed persons sometimes tend to violate laws or commit crimes in order to meet up their essential needs and resulted to be involved in criminal activities. Due to the economic conditions and destitution, some unemployed people are compelled to involve themselves in crimes in order to meet up their basic needs. This is to say there is a close interwoven linkage between economic situations in any given society or country with unemployment and crimes. Many studies have related rising unemployment corresponding to the increase in crimes in different communities. Generally, the levels of unemployment and inequality have steadily increased especially in the urban areas; consequently, when large youth population are not employed, what [Ajaegbu \(2012\)](#) described as ‘army of idle hands’, are more likely to be perpetrators of crime activities, hence when there is a feeling that their expectation cannot be met, they easily involve themselves in crimes.

In Nigeria, particularly in the last two decades, the ‘army of idle hands’ are found to be potentials and available for easy recruitment by both politicians and religious groups to be used in political thuggery and/or religious hardliners activities, or else they find easy employment in ‘petty criminal’ activities. In recent years the army of idle hands engaged in kidnappings for ransom and human trafficking as an easy ‘criminal’ employment, which are on the increase across Nigeria and the criminals view the kidnapping and human trafficking as lucrative business. Kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking, abduction, terrorism and suicide attacks are taking centre stage in the criminal offences in Nigeria. People are killed daily and their properties taken from their homes, places of works or on the highways so much so that schools, markets, motor parks, religious places and other public places are no longer safe as they are targets for terrorists.

In Malaysia, during the economy crisis of 1997 the unemployment rates increased from 2.5% in 1996 to 2.6% in 1997 and to 3.2% in 1998. During this crisis, crime index increased from 40.9% in 1996 to 46.4% in 1997 ([Soh, 2012](#)). As reported by Asian Development Bank, about 66% of the population aged 15 years and above is employed in Malaysia. On the other hand, the National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria reported about 54% of unemployed youth in 2012 and Central Bank of Nigeria reported 80% of Nigerian youth are not employed by early 2016. Similarly, a total of 116 million Nigerians are unemployed by the middle of 2016. Although the level of unemployment in both countries is increasing, Malaysia's level is obviously low especially if compared with that of

Nigeria which stand at 46.5% in 2011 and 63.7% in 2016 and it is expected to increase if current status quo is maintained. Furthermore, [Ajaegbu \(2012\)](#) hypothesised that a country that have been producing thousands of college and university graduates every year without corresponding employment opportunities to absorb them, may be creating a fertile ground for crime riddle in the country. In addition to this [Ukwai, Ogaboh and Michael \(2013\)](#) observed that the prevalence of economic crises and the unhealthy structural adjustment policies introduced in Nigeria manifested in the drastic loss of job and mass retrenchment which aggravated the problem of unemployment and the urban poor among others vis-a-vis urban crime.

### 5.2.2. Poverty

Poverty has no respect to geographical boundary, race and gender, same goes with crime which affects all irrespective of race, religion, gender or income levels. Poverty is a serious socio-economic problem of many developing nations which synonymously induce criminal behaviours that influence crimes. Many scholars of criminology tied poverty to be the major cause of crime in many societies hence poverty stricken society is being plagued with financial difficulties, high cost of living, poor or inadequate access to health and sanitation, inadequate housing and above all difficulty to get three minimum rations (meals) a day, the tendency for crime in such a society will be high. Therefore, the state of poverty in a country is closely linked to crime where the financial hardships experienced for making living appear to be the actual causes of criminal activities. It has been observed in many areas, crime frequency increases due to increased poverty among people. [Soh \(2012\)](#) hypothesised that 'crime rate appears to be notably higher in poorer neighbourhoods' because of the economic hardship, deprivation and deteriorated living conditions, which forced many into crime to meet up their basic needs. All these poverty concomitants derive many people to involve in crime in order to make a living.

In Malaysia there is an improvement in closing the poverty gap which stand at barely 1.7% as of 2014 and Asian Development Bank reported only 0.6% of Malaysia population live below national poverty line in 2016, whereas Nigeria is improving sluggishly; from 15.9% to 15.0% in 2009 and 2010 respectively. UNDP Human Development Report recorded 64% Nigerians live below poverty line. This is an indication that poverty level in Nigeria is higher than Malaysia and the tendency for higher crime rate in poorer neighbourhoods, as what [Soh \(2012\)](#) hypothesised previously.

Indeed, poverty can be regarded as a major cause of crime which forced many urban poor as they are faced with issues such as high cost of living, unstable jobs, limited opportunities and deprivations. Conversely, reduction in poverty level may result in the declining rate of crimes. Reduction in poverty level can be achieved through vigorously pursuing and implementing various economic programmes such as Poverty Alleviation Programme, Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurial programmes.

### 5.2.3. Political factors

Political or institutional factors may include deliberate government policies, failure of leadership or bad governance, weak law enforcement and criminal justice systems. All these may lead to disenfranchisement of certain sections of society. This is more directly influencing urban crimes in different ways. For instance, bad governance or failure of leadership, in many aspects, is responsible for poor economic development planning and entrenching inequitable mechanisms for the distribution of national resources or wealth, and in turn generate unemployment and social inequality in the society or nation. This is another major contributor to the causes of urban crimes. In Nigeria, in spite of democracy, leadership failure exacerbated the problems of economic development and social fragmentation among the vast number of Nigerians and indeed resulted in systematic growth of unemployment, poverty and institutionalized social inequality ([Usman et al., 2012](#)). Equally bribery, corruption, poor governance and lack of policy initiatives and implementation to some extent encouraged and exacerbated criminal groups and activities to thrive across Nigeria. These put together, gave birth to the current wave of urban crime in all its ramifications and demonstrations in Nigeria. In Malaysia, there is low public outcry on the issue of bribery and corruption. However, in recent years there are allegations of corruption among top government officials. This will invariably encourage crimes among members of the society.

Virtuous of good government policies, initiatives and implementation of economic and developmental programmes will inevitably result in strong economy that will provide employment opportunities where youths will be employed in an economy that is strong enough to guarantee them a lifestyle beyond mere existence of poverty riddled society. This will certainly curtail crime level in any given society.

### 5.2.4. Weaknesses of law enforcement or crime-control BODIES

Any nation or society where weaknesses in law enforcement or crime-control bodies manifested, obviously the situation will encourage proliferation of more criminals, gangs and organized criminal groups to take advantages. In fact, some scholars hypothesised that weaknesses in crime-control agencies will provide potential ground for manifestation of criminals and criminal activities that will be prevalent at all times.

Malaysia, with an estimated population of 30.6 million, has around a total of 100,000 police with a ratio of 1:306 police-populations. Similarly, Nigeria with a population of over 182 million has a total number of 354,189 police with an average ratio of 514 people per police. This ratio is abysmally far from adequate compared to United Nations standards of 1:250. This has shown grossly inadequate number of police as crime-control body to effectively control crime. There is a general belief that the Nigerian Police has been with a strength of personnel that is far below the capacity required to police the estimated Nigerian population, considering the minimum United Nations standard. In addition to this, Nigerian Police were staved with shortage of vehicles, modern automated information system (GIS crime-mapping), communications equipment, using out dated and unsophisticated instruments and are overstretched, which impacts on operational efficiency. According to [Ajaegbu \(2012\)](#) Nigerian Police were not properly equipped and left with out-dated instruments that are unmatched to the modern sophisticated weapons used by criminals and the crimes are being carried out with sophistication. The problem of urban crimes in Nigeria has been exacerbated partly as the



result of weaknesses and incapacitation of the Nigerian Police.

Incapacitation of the Nigerian Police has led many to blame them for the increase in crime rates, as well as the failure of Nigeria's security agencies that practices bribery and corruption, to effectively detect, prevent and control crimes. On the other side of the coin, many have negative perception on the police as public 'apathy towards crime'. These grounds necessitated many urban neighbourhoods to establish their volunteer security outfit popularly known as 'Vigilante Groups'. These groups are popular and legitimate security organizations that supplement the police's work, to combat crimes (protect lives and properties) in their neighbourhoods. Indeed the level of crime control effectiveness of the police in any country depends mainly on the level of police manpower and equipment provided in combating crimes. Certainly, no nation can achieve growth and development in an atmosphere of prevailing crimes.

### 5.3. Management

Population growth and rapid urbanization advances all over the world, especially in the last two to three decades, coincide with high crime level that became one of the serious social hitch bedevilling urban communities. Criminal activities and terrorism have become an epidemic, more frightening and it is a major source of social quandary in urban centres in both the developed and developing nations. Lives and property are no longer safe anywhere in the urban areas and this is not peculiar to a particular socio-economic or cultural group and the whole society appears to be helpless in the elevation of urban crime.

Urban crime is inevitable in any society which is bedevilling against man's personality, property, lawful authority and to some extent a threat to the lives of mankind. It is believed that crime is one of the continuous problems that torment the socio-economic life of urban inhabitants. Therefore, managing urban crime has become a source of concern to all nations, where various controlling and preventive measures had been employed to reduce or combat the crime menace. Reducing crime and fear of crime can improve the quality of life, which is an indispensable issue in generating developments that are more sustainable.

In reality, the best approach to crime management is crime prevention that is to prevent crime before it happens. This means blocking all opportunities or avenues for crime to be committed, then criminals will be displaced and disorganized. This approach is one of the most appropriate ways to combat or rather eradicate criminal activities and crimes where possible. Apparently crime prevention involved any plan or strategy that aimed at reducing or eliminating the swelling level of criminal activities, risk of falling and fear of being a crime victim.

Malaysia is not an exception in making efforts of combating crimes, as well as various controlling and preventive measures taken are still being applied to reduce or combat crime. Among the strategies employed including the National Key Results Area (NKRA) under the Government Transformation Programme (GTP). The purpose of NKRA was to identify implementable initiatives that would reduce street and index crime, thereby creating a safer Malaysia for all by 2010. The NKRA produced positive results with 11.1% drop in crime index and a 39.7% drop in street crime (The Star/Asia News Network, 2012).

In addition to NKRA, the government also implemented Safe City Programme which facilitated and led to upgrading home security systems, installing multiple closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV), increasing the brightness of the street lightings, building speed breakers, extending the crime geographic information system (GIS crime-mapping) to the police stations and Omnipresence Programme. According to The Star/Asia News Network (2012), introduction of the sophisticated technology under the Safe City Monitoring System like GIS crime-mapping, police were leveraged and able to act with speed in responding, taking action and identifying the exact location of crime.

Furthermore, with the introduction of the Omnipresence Programme and mobile police stations at certain hotspots have helped in combating crimes and reduces the fear of crime among urban dwellers, where people are feeling a greater sense of security with the visible drop in crime. These initiatives leveraged people from fear of crime and feeling secured as crime rates has significantly reduced. Accordingly, the fifth edition of the Global Peace index released in May 2011 (The Star/Asia News Network, 2012), Malaysia was declared as the most peaceful country in South East Asia and the fourth safest in the Asia Pacific region behind New Zealand, Japan and Australia.

Nigeria's situation is markedly different, with inadequate police personnel, police are overstretched with no modern sophisticated equipment, therefore cannot perform effectively. On under equipping Nigerian police, one can conclude that police cannot perform their noble role effectively and efficiently except when provided with adequate and modern equipment. Modern and sophisticated technology for police to effectively carry operation for crime detection, control and prevention is still bedevilled by numerous complex problems. This makes it possible and easy for criminals to commit crimes and get away with it, like kidnapping for ransoms, gang robbery, terrorist attack and human trafficking. The use of modern scientific and technical methods in crime prevention and control, such as GIS Crime-mapping and installation of CCTV cameras are newly introduced in few places like Abuja and Lagos, while other places are under ways as the present administration vowed to adequately equip security agencies to fight crime and insurgencies. Similarly the present administration pledged to recruit more policemen to improve their capacity and capability to wage war against all forms of crimes in the country.

Another strategy employed is establishment of Nigerian Civil Defence which perform some policing role alongside the police and the formation of various vigilante groups to combat crimes at community levels which are recognised and supported by some state authorities. These have proven positive in reducing the magnitude of crimes in urban Nigeria especially from 2015 when the urban crime rates slightly declined. These efforts of communities establishing vigilante groups have proven effective in reducing crimes at a neighbourhood level. Vigilante groups keep on patrolling as the role of omnipresence, providing capable guardianship whose presence or proximity would either prevent or deter criminal acts.

Nevertheless, to reduce crime to the barest minimum and to ensure that the rules of law and fundamental rights of citizens are

adequately protected, security agencies should be sufficiently equipped with modern automated information system to the test of time and to vigorously pursuing community policing in the effective detection, prevention and controlling crime. Hence the introduction of sophisticated modern scientific and technical methods in crime prevention and control has proven to be effective (Gulumbe et al., 2012). The effectiveness of the police depends largely on the intensity of their strength and equipment provided for efficient surveillance, detection, prevention and control of crimes.

## 6. Conclusion

In actual fact, criminal activities in urban areas have become more terrifying in many parts of the world. The last three decades have shown an aggravated toll of urban crimes across the globe which is not peculiar to either developing or developed countries. Both suffer the same providence. In any given urban areas where crime is prevalent, it creates social predicament to the society such as safety of property, lives are threaten, people will be living in fear in their respective living environment and generate low quality of life due to the havoc it creates socially and economically.

As mentioned earlier, managing urban crime has become a basis of concern and various controlling and preventive measures have to be applied to combat crimes. The best approach to crime management is primarily prevention strategy rather than waging war against criminal activities.

Therefore, government, security and law enforcement agencies should be 'proactive' in crime prevention rather than to be 'reactive' to crimes. Among the strategies should also include the holistic strategy beyond police manpower and equipment, by eliminating the root causes of crimes such as reducing the aggregate level of unemployment and poverty among other things. When governments and other stake holders initiated and implement economic and developmental policies for building sound economy that will generate employments, no doubt, it naturally reduces poverty level to the barest minimum as well as crimes. Equally, if factors that created unemployment and poverty are addressed, youths will not engage in crimes. Governments should initiate and invigorate sound developmental economic policies that will create employment corridors and poverty eradication among the citizens along with improving law enforcement agencies vigorously in urban crimes prevention. Then Safer City Programme will be achieved and every individual will feel safe to live, work, shop and play in their cultural environment and the urban areas will no longer seen to be unsafe.

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