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**APPLICATION OF THE CRIME PATTERN THEORY TO NIGERIA'S (IN)  
SECURITY CHALLENGES.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Nigeria is currently one of the most insecure countries in the world. Security is deteriorating day by day, and the government, which oversees securing people and property appears to be struggling. The recent horrors of banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, farmer-pastoralist clashes, and ritual killings have placed yet another layer on Nigeria's horrific state of insecurity, evoking images of Hobbes' state of nature, where life is brief, hard, and brutish. Since gaining its independence, Nigeria has been contending with crises that include military coups, intra and inter-tribal fighting, and ethnic agitations. These historical elements are constant and essential variables in Nigerian society today. The country's position in the world has been solidified by the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, the armed bandits and kidnapping for ransom in the North-West, the Farmers and Herders clashes in the North-Central, collaboration for rituals in the South-West, kidnapping for ransom and political killings in the South-East and South-South, the threat of the Niger-Delta militancy in the South-South, etc. This paper seeks to analyse Nigeria's security challenges and how they adversely affect the socioeconomic and politico-technological development of the nation within the framework of crime pattern theory. Finally, note that Nigeria's security situation is profoundly depressing and urge coordinated efforts toward proactive policing to reverse the ugly trend.

**Keywords:** Application, Challenges, Nigeria's Insecurity, Security, Theory.

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## Introduction

An unstable environment is not conducive to development. According to Chandler (2007), there is a nuanced but significant link between political violence and socioeconomic advancement since the end of the cold war. He has also drawn a connection between security and development and asserted that no country can experience development if there have been conflicts, crises, or wars. Therefore, the security climate of a country affects everything about it. It serves as a benchmark for determining a nation's viability. No nation at war can boast of having a healthy population or developing a good, viable, and sustainable economy for its citizens; rather, such a nation sees its existing socio-economic and politico-technological infrastructure destroyed. No investor domestic or foreign, can be persuaded to invest in a risky and unstable environment. Investors in the globalised world seek a haven for their money in addition to higher returns. As a result, Nigeria's economy is less appealing to foreign investors, which has hampered economic growth and development (Adebayo, 2013).

Violence, revolution, and conflict are all arguably essential to the nature of a humane society. The threat of insecurity, tribal unrest, the partisan and irrational struggle for dominance, and corruption in various positions of trust in Nigeria have inspired Nigerian scholars from diverse disciplines to seek a practical solution to reduce these occurrences and, if possible, bring them to the bare minimum. "Every society, to the extent that it is a humane society, is marked by crises; however, the phenomenon represents a constant possibility that only man can control. Though some philosophers argue that insecurity in Nigeria remains a human-orchestrated phenomenon that can be controlled by man. It may be valid, for instance, in Nigeria, crimes like militancy, kidnapping, armed robbery, other violent crimes, irrational tribal agitations, etc. are caused by people and can be curbed by Nigerians by enforcing the proper standards. The solitary person who can control human-caused corruption and poor management remains the individual. These phenomena necessitate humane solutions because they manifest through human institutions (Okoli, 2019).

Apart from the fact that these crises provoke physical and psychological violence, Nigerians are not unfamiliar with them because they have historically experienced them. History has shown that while men are responsible for producing society, they are equally responsible for wrecking it. Man's ability to bring back order and stability in society is also debatable. The basis for this is that man has represented a significant role in the destruction of the societies he founded. In this fashion, one could conclude that insecurity in Nigeria is "real," necessitating the need to confront the real with some real measures.

The crime pattern theory is used in this paper to explain Nigeria's security challenges. The study used content analysis as its methodology, which involved reviewing earlier studies on crime and security to determine what they had discovered regarding the challenges of crime and security, particularly in Nigeria. It was determined that among the issues affecting security in Nigeria were poor welfare programmes and incentives for security agencies, insufficient support from the government, and a lack of national support. The government is urged to adequately support security personnel in their recruitment, training, and retraining, as well as in enhancing the welfare of officers and men and combating corruption by being accountable for and transparent about all resources allotted to various sectors.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

**Application:** the practical conclusion or lesson to be derived from crime pattern theory on Nigeria's insecurity challenges.

**Challenges:** the insecurity situation in Nigeria has continued to defy solutions over the years; Boko Haram, Banditry, secessionist agitation etc.

**Security:** The concept of security is all-encompassing. It involves a wide range of life. Security could take different forms (human security and national security).

National security implies the appropriation and deployment of state apparatus of coercive force to protect life and property or to deal with the situation of crisis, nationally or internationally. While, human security involves protecting the citizenry from

hunger, disease, poverty, unemployment, and natural disasters (Osawe, 2013).

Security entails improvement in the socio-economic, health, environmental and physical conditions of the people; protecting the dominant values, ideology, and way of life of the state from threats and forestalling any form of socioeconomic, political, or religious assault on the individual, group, state, or nation. According to Anyadike (2013), "Security has been seen as a situation where a person or thing is unexposed to any form of danger or risk of physical or moral aggression, accident, theft, or deterioration" (Anyadike, 2013). It can be comprehended here that security involves improvement in the socio-economic, health, environmental and physical conditions of the people; protecting the dominant values, ideology, and way of life of the state from threats and forestalling any form of socioeconomic, political, or religious assault on the individual, group, state, or nation. Security is unavoidably political; that is, it plays a vital role in deciding who gets what, when and how in world politics (Lasswell 1936) cited in Paul D. Williams (2008).

Security has to do with freedom from danger, fear, anxiety, or uncertainty. It is a condition of being protected from, or not being exposed to, danger. "A secure state is therefore one that is reasonably free from, or not being exposed to, external aggression or internal sabotage" (Imobighe, 2019). Security does not only affect the satisfaction of the needs of the inhabitants but also their very survival. Without security, people cannot develop and direct their human and material resources towards greater production.

**Concept of Insecurity:** this involves the feeling of fear, anxiety, uncertainty, unemployment, poverty, injustice, and civil unrest in the polity. Abdullahi and Ismail (2021) argued that insecurity implies the presence of fear, harm, and destruction as a result of criminal activities. In other words, insecurity is the absence of protection from endangerment or other situations. It is the pervasiveness of threats to human well-being, and physical and emotional abuses inflicted upon non-combatant individuals including children, the aged, and women in an environment of armed conflicts.

**Nigeria's Insecurity:** Crime, and consequently insecurity, represent a significant issue that plagues people and governments all over the world. No humane society is free from at least one criminal issue. Although it coexists with man, its patterns, trends, and effects in modern Nigeria are grave and alarming. Despite efforts at various levels to reduce it, insecurity and crime unintentionally rise. Studies, such as those by Grote & Neubacher (2016); Ladan (2019), and Arisukwu et al (2020); individually demonstrated that crimes related to insecurity are disproportionately more common in developing nations, including Nigeria. The arguments are supported by the concentration of severe crime and insecurity in these nations. Nigeria faces crime and insecurity on many various fronts. Insurgency, kidnapping, banditry, farmer-herders' conflicts, rape, intimate partner homicide, and other such crimes are common in the north. Armed robbery, kidnapping, assassination, fraud, cultism, and vandalism occur frequently in the southern region (Ewetan and Urhie, 2014). On a regional or community level, the rate, type, causes, and effects are, however, highly variable.

Correspondingly, cybercrimes continue to exert negative effects on Nigeria's socioeconomic activities. The nation loses about USD 80 million to software piracy each year. According to reports, scammers in Lagos alone caused losses of over N252 billion (Saulawa & Abubakar, 2014). Yahoo-Boys, a group of cyber terrorists, continue to threaten the Nigerian economy with their nefarious activities (Adeniran, 2008). Ehimen and Bola (2009) stated the case that Nigerian law enforcement organisations are sufficiently unequipped to prevent and manage cybercrimes. Most of them lack computer and Internet literacy. In the same way, few Nigerian internet users are aware of cyber security precautions, which leaves openings for cybercriminals to exploit. Cybercrimes pose a constant threat to national security, economic progress, political stability, and the upholding of fundamental human rights (Ndubueze, 2017).

**Theory:** a supposition or system of ideas that is intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained. Theories serve as reflectors for recognising the nature and traits of social phenomena like crime and insecurity. Additionally, theories point users in the appropriate direction and direct

them toward identifying the causes of crime issues, while some theories offer solutions to insecurity or crime issues.

### **Methodology**

The methods adopted by this paper represent a content analysis, where work on crime and security was reviewed with the view of identifying what they have discovered in terms of security challenges and practises in Nigeria. The literature was sourced from libraries (journals and books), the internet and some from individuals. Themes and patterns were identified from the available literature based on the fundamental aim of the paper, sorted out, and presented to provide a proper understanding of what the researchers have found from the review.

### **Theoretical Framework**

There are several theories as to why people take to violent crimes. Why do some people commit crimes, for example? remain perennial questions that criminology attempts to answer. Why do some people become victims more frequently than others? Why do some places have a high crime rate while other places have a low crime rate (Burke, 2009)? Wortley and Townsley (2017) asserted crimes didn't happen at random or consistently across time, space, or society. There are hotspots and coldspots, highly repeating offenders and highly repeating victims. The two groups are frequently connected; however, when, where, how, and what connects them? Researchers in the fields of sociology, criminology, and security studies, among other closely associated fields, employ theories to provide a scientific response to those questions. Consequently, the Crime Pattern theory is used in trying to provide answers to some of these questions and to further elucidate Nigeria's insecurity challenges.

### **The Crime Pattern Theory (CPT)**

In the past three decades, efforts to analyse the spatial distribution of crime culminated in the emergence of the Crime Pattern Theory (Newton and Felson, 2015). This facilitated the rise in popularity of environmental criminology, which focuses on investigating the spatial distribution of crime at various levels of aggregation, the "journey to crime," or the

methods by which potential offenders identify potential crime sites and unique opportunities, and the establishment and upkeep of criminally active neighbourhoods (Burke, 2009).

Accordingly, Brantingham and Brantingham formulated a theory known as Crime Pattern Theory that incorporates aspects of rational decision-making, everyday activities, and other spatial perspectives on crime, such as the geometry of crime and target choice selection (Miller, 2009). In essence, Brantingham and Brantingham (2012) developed the Crime Pattern Theory, which postulates that crime is the result of interactions between people; including offenders and potential victims and movement in the urban environment over time or space. Put differently, crimes don't happen randomly nor uniformly; alternatively, they depend on the meeting of willing criminals and suitable targets in a situation that is limited in both time and space. According to Newton and Felson (2015), time and space use by offenders and victims, whose activities are constrained by the need to eat, sleep, work, and engage in a recreational activity.

The movement of offenders and victims is not random; preferably, it is formulated and governed by the ordinary routines of offenders and victims, as well as the social and terrestrial environments in which they interact. Furthermore, these activities can only take place at a predictable number of locations and times. The locations of these activities, as well as the routes taken to reach these locations, will determine the patterning of crime across space because offenders come across their targets through overlapping or shared activity spaces; in other words, offenders come across their targets during their frequent activities (Miller, 2009).

According to the theory, most offenders, like most people, feel indeed more at ease in places they are reasonably familiar with (Maguire et al, 2012). In a similar vein, Burke (2009) argues that, given all other factors being equal, the Crime Pattern Theory predicts that offenders will commit crimes in their awareness spaces, either along a path, along an edge, or close to an activity node. This implies offenders will typically commit crimes in locales or terrain they are already familiar with from routine activities. And because they are unfamiliar with escape routes, the locations of desirable targets and the need to devote much time and attention to guardians' routines, criminals who commit crimes outside of their awareness spaces

run the risk of getting lost. The movement patterns of both potential victims and offenders are the three interrelated concepts that the crime pattern theory emphasises to explain the pattern of personal and property crimes (Wortley and Townsley, 2017). The following is an explanation of these ideas:

**Activity nodes:** represent areas with many activities where people (expend most of their time), like their homes, workplaces, schools, entertainment venues, and shopping malls.

**Pathways:** represent the paths that connect a person's activity nodes, like streets, pavements, sidewalks, and footpaths that can be used for walking, allowing public transportation, or driving a car. People who frequently use these paths from activity nodes come to recognise the paths and the constrained areas around them as familiar places.

**Edge:** represents a formidable barrier to crossing, which can be both physical and perceived (Burke, 2009). Rivers, forests, and bridges are examples of visible edges. Areas where people are apprehensive, like rival gang territory or places where there is a significant socioeconomic divide, are examples of perceptual edges.

Crime generators and crime attractors are terms used by Brantingham and Brantingham to describe areas with an excessive amount of criminal activity. *Crime generators* attend places or areas where many people flock for reasons unrelated to their potential for committing a crime or their level of criminal motivation. These areas or locations cause crime by establishing specific times and locations that offer suitable concentrations of people and other targets in environments that are favourable to specific types of criminal acts. An example would be the creation of new stations and routes for rapid transit, the opening of a new bar or retail space, etc. On the other hand, *Crime attractors* are specific locations, regions, communities, and districts that offer well-known criminal opportunities and are drawn to by strongly motivated individuals who intend to commit crimes due to the known opportunities for types of crime (Wortley and Townsley, 2017). Inner-city ghettos are among these locations or regions. The key distinction between the two ideas is that a *crime generator* constitutes a crime in an area where none existed before the establishment



of the place, while a *crime attractor* intensifies criminal activity already occurring in a specific area (Burke, 2009).

### **Strength of the Theory**

Crime mapping and analyses, which have become increasingly important to the work of the police and other law enforcement agencies over the past 30 years, have been significantly influenced by the concepts of *Crime Pattern Theory*. Put differently, it directs the police as to where regularised policing should occur due to the presence of specific criminogenic characteristics. Geographical information systems (GIS) have been one of the more invaluable tools for exploring the spatial distribution of crime (Newton & Felson, 2015).

### **Weakness of the Theory**

Critics have criticised crime pattern theory for not being empirically tested (Maguire et al, 2012). The focus of the *Crime Pattern Theory*, according to Miller, (2009), is on offenders physically encountering their targets. But sometimes there is "crime at a distance." For instance, mail bombers do not approach their targets. Anyone in the world can become a victim of cybercrime. The theory of routine activities either needs to be revised or is incorrectly limited to place-based crimes.

### **Application of Crime Pattern Theory to Nigeria's Insecurity**

The epicentre of this paper is the application of crime pattern theory to Nigeria's security challenges. The Theory can be implemented to analyse the security situation in Nigeria in terms of the tactics used by various criminal, insurgent, and terrorist organisations. The distribution of attacks and heinous crimes, target selection, restrictions, or lax attitudes of government and security apparatuses to carry out the war against the men of the underworld. First off, as opposed to earlier, Boko Haram insurgents now focus their attacks on the states of Borno and Yobe, respectively. Why do they exclusively operate in these states? Since these are their awareness areas, they can instantly identify escape routes and retreat after siege attacks. In other words, they are familiar with their targets because they grew up in these areas for the most part. More importantly, the axes on

these borders (from Bakassi in Bayelsa state up to Baga in Borno state) were severed from Nigeria by a court judgement in the Hague in 2007 during the Obasanjo Administration, which is why the regions where Boko Haram operates are bordered by Francophone nations (Niger, Chad, and Cameroun). One might be compelled to inquire as to whether it was merely a coincidence or an intentional act.

Secondly, the pathways can be used to explain the actions of bandits and kidnappers in North-western Nigeria. According to the theory, criminals target their victims while travelling to or from their places of activity on the road (school, office, market, recreation centres, and the like). This explains the numerous kidnapping incidents that have occurred on the Kaduna-Abuja expressway and other roads. Thirdly, when both actors congregate in one area, a situation of conflict between farmers and herders results (farmlands). Conflict, clash, or violence between the two parties would have been less likely if they hadn't shared the same object. According to the theory, the government of Nigeria can prevent farmers-herders' conflicts by capping the herders' freedom of movement through ranching. The theory also clarifies how attacks against innocent civilians can be made possible by a lack of capable guardianship (security or law enforcement personnel). Inferring from the claims made by this theory, it follows that the level of insecurity in Nigeria can be reduced by increasing the visibility and effectiveness of security agencies in local areas, on roads, and at borders.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the security situation in Nigeria is profoundly depressing; to name a few, the nation is plagued by numerous crime issues, violent secessionism, ethnic tensions, and conflicts between farmers and herders. Attacks by insurgent groups in the Northeast, including the Boko Haram sect and the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP), have resumed in Borno and Yobe state areas, most recently in the Federal Capital Territory. Additionally, Cyberspace insecurity is also a result of fraudsters' online activities in Nigeria. The amount of money lost to pirates, online advance fee scammers, hackers, and similar bad actors is enormous.

The crime pattern theory was found to be useful in advancing a more proper understanding of this unpleasant situation. It has shown how armed rebels, robbers, and kidnappers manage the forests as a haven for their heinous deeds. It also clarifies how kidnappers encounter their victims while driving or in other public settings.

### Recommendations

Considering the above, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government should emphasize proactively policing rather than reactive.
2. There is a need for constant training and re-training of both members of the Nigerian armed forces and the Police to enhance their efficiency in crime prevention and control.
3. Moreover, law enforcement officials must be strengthened to handle and contain contemporary security challenges in the country.
4. Community members should communicate timely and reliable information to law enforcement agencies.
5. Government should be capable to recruit more security personnel from the armed forces, the police, and other para-military, which are grossly understaffed.
6. Security studies should be introduced across all of Nigeria's tertiary institutions so that students can study and analyse security concepts.
7. There is a need to ensure accountability in the management of resources allocated to various sectors of civic and private organisations to ensure transparency and judicious utilisation of funds.

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