Covid-19: The Nexus Between Community Lockdown and Upsurge in Crime in Nigeria

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Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has been responsible for the current phase of social existence which is characterized with the need for lockdown, social distancing, regular washing of hands and ensuring proper hygiene. Globally, social lives have been adjusted and various measures have been enacted to curb the spread of the virus. Nigeria is not an exception; governments at various levels have put in place measures to avert the spread of the COVID 19 virus. Some of these measures are apparent in the community lockdown and stay at home order instituted. The intention has been to control the spread of the virus and to support the health practitioners in their fight against the spread of the coronavirus pandemic and importantly, to ensure a proper social order. However, Criminals have been exploring the period of the community lockdown to exhibit their latest modus of operandi, thereby engaging in various criminal activities. The instituted community lockdown, which is geared towards containing the spread of the virus, seems to have been hijacked by the criminals and turned into an opportunity to cause civil unrest. Nigeria as a nation has witnessed an increase in the reports of rape cases; kidnapping; armed banditry as well as other security challenges during the lockdown. The increase in the rate of crime and social vices seems to have subverted the fundamental intentions of the government. This paper demonstrates the nexus between community lockdown and upsurge in crimes. Crimes, which should have declined during the lockdown, took another dimension.

The lockdown was primarily geared toward reducing criminal activities, however, the mode only changed but the crime did not only continue but increases.

Keywords: COVID-19, Pandemic, Community lockdown, Rape, Kidnapping, Banditry

Introduction

The apparent insecurity that pervades Nigeria as a nation, particularly the northern part, has established it as a country under distress (Orhero, 2019). The country's woes are also evident in the torrential spate of criminality in various parts of the country (Okoli and Ugwu, 2019). Taking a closer look at the entire Northern geo-political zone revealed that, North eastern Nigeria is strongly under the Boko Haram menaces; the north-central area has been afflicted by herdsmen militancy which has plunged the region into a dire humanitarian crisis and the North western region has been enmeshed in the rapid upsurge of banditry along its international frontiers as well as the forested interior (Okoli, 2017 and Okoli & Ogayi, 2018). Amidst these insecurity challenges confronting the nation, evolved a disease outbreak known as COVID-19. COVID-19 is a global pandemic which started in China (specifically in Wuhan) in 2019. Some of its symptoms include: severe acute respiratory syndrome, dry cough, sneezing and feeling feverish (Abd El-Aziz, & Stockand, 2020). Nigeria had the first index case on 27th of February, 2020 from an Italian citizen who arrived via air to Lagos with some of the symptoms (Ikwe, 2020). The index case was tested and confirmed positive for the virus. Subsequently, a second case of the virus was reported on 9th of March 2020, in Ewekoro, Ogun State, involving a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen (Elikwu, & Walker, 2020). Ever since then, cases of the virus have been on the increase daily.

There is no doubt that the outbreak of Covid-19 has drastically changed the lives of people globally (Global Initiative, 2020). In Nigeria, it has dramatically altered the activities of individuals, shaping the behaviour of law-abiding citizens and criminals alike (Tanielian, 2020). The community lockdown was a measure put in place by Nigerian governments to curtail the spread of the virus (Adefisoye, & Adefisoye, 2020). The lockdown was served with several guidelines including total restrictions of people, goods and services except those defined essential and exempted from the restrictions list (Mwangi, 2020). People were compelled to stay at home, following the recommendations of health experts. The majority believed that the community lockdown would drastically reduce crimes, make it harder for crooks to find people to beat and rob (Cooper, and Aitchison, 2020). Criminal activities were expected to decline in the country due to community lockdown which restricted the movement of people and forced them to stay at home (Piquero, Riddell, Bishopp, Narvey, Reid & Piquero, 2020). However, the reverse was the case in some countries, including Nigeria.

While it has been reported by United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2020), that the community lockdown has had a positive impact on the reduction of crimes in some countries, it has also increased the rate of crimes in others. McKelvey (2020), observed that violence has gone down in South Africa by comparing the period of COVID-19 to early last year, the number of murders had dropped from 326 to 94. Brown (2020) revealed that the figures given by Metropolitan Police showed that the community lockdown strategy put in place during the pandemic period had greatly reduced the activities of criminals in London. The report revealed that criminal offences in the city had reduced to 35% comparing 74,886 offences at the end of April 2019 to 48,104 offences at the end of April 2020. The restriction placed on movement of people as well as economic activity and international trade have been described as steps that stem organized criminal activity. However, it has been noted that this is a short-term impact because criminals rapidly reorganize and reconstitute to meet contemporary market demands (Mohler, Bertozzi, Carter, Short, Sledge, Tita and Brantingham, 2020).

In Nigeria, several reports (Akinwotu, 2020; Asimi, 2020; Shamusudeen, 2020) have shown that some arrests have been made by the police concerning infractions and other criminal activities during the lock down. It was reported that dozens of schools had been burgled; villagers had been disorganised and displaced; there was increase in vandalism and cable theft as well as disruption of power supply. Amidst the pandemic, several crimes have been rising up. Asimi (2020) reported that the Nigerian National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) affirmed that drug trafficking was in operation despite the lockdown and series of arrests had been made. The information on the increasing operation of drug traffickers was known through the efforts of the police and other security agents who consistently manned checkpoints. Asimi (2020) also noted that cybercrime has also been perpetrated through online sales of fake products. This implied that COVID-19 has direct and indirect implications on billions of people across the globe.

While the Nigerian government was struggling to contain the spread of the virus, a series of attacks were coming in from the bandits, armed robbers and other criminal activities on the other hand (Herbert and Gallien, 2020). Frustration became consequence of the restrictions that were placed on people and situation worsened when many could not afford to feed themselves any longer (Fehintola and Fehintola, 2020). Armed ruffians utilized the community lockdown directive to attack innocent members of the public and strip them of their valuables belonging. In the period of the lockdown, the nation also witnessed a spike in the crime rate where various armed robbery and rapes were recorded. This prompted individual to resort to defend themselves and their neighbourhoods in the absence of the police. It was also apparent in places like Katsina, Kaduna and Zamfara that villagers were dislodged by the ravaging activities of armed bandits in the event of community lockdown (Agbese, 2020). Boko Haram insurgents also persist in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are various arguments pointing that the virus might be an opportunity to seek for stabilizations as well as seek for lasting solutions to the menaces of the crimes and insurgencies. However, the suspension of the livelihood and overstretching of the security forces have recorded nothing much but increase in crime; rise in insecurity and prevalent social inequality. These have largely affected the confidence which the populace repose on the security agencies and the governments. It is against this backdrop that the paper became necessary to establish the nexus between community lockdown and crime during the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper is organised to include, concept clarification; nexus between community lockdown and rape; nexus between community lockdown and armed robbery; nexus between community lockdown and kidnapping and nexus between community lockdown and cybercrime. The paper seeks to provide explanation to the patterns of crimes. It navigates the governments and policymakers to make informed decisions on how to curtail the spate of insecurity ravaging the country, particularly during disease outbreak that requires community lockdown.

Conceptual Clarification
Crime

The term 'crime' originated from the Latin word called 'krimos' and it means 'to accuse'. It implies any act that goes against the social order and therefore requires condemnation in the society. Crime has been defined differently by scholars; the legalistic definition of crime sees it as the violation of

established laws (Czarnetzky and Rychlak, 2003). However, there are some questions that came up from this definition, which are: If violation of established laws qualifies one to have committed a crime, does that mean certain actions of individuals and governments that caused serious harm are crimes? Also, does the violation of basic human rights by the governments mean they are engaging in criminal behaviour? These questions imply that the legalistic definition shows that a particular jurisdiction may designate an action to be crime while it may not be so in another. Similarly, Tappan (1953) defines crime as "an intentional act or justification penalized by the law as either felony or misdemeanour". In another definition by Kenny (1966) crime has been described as "wrongs whose sanctions are punitive and are in no way remissible by any private person but is remissible by the crown alone if remissible at all". Wilson and Richard (1985) conceptualised crime as an act of committing or omitting of in a public law or public rights. In another definition by Cross and Jones (2008) crime has been defined as a "legal wrong, the remedy for which is a punishment of the offenders at the instance of the state". Crime may therefore be seen as an act that affects the public as well as the state. It has negative consequences. This is because it is a practical use of coercion with the intention of inflicting pain on an individual or group members of the society. The consequence is the disruption of social order.

Community Lockdown

Community lockdown is a phrasal concept used to refer to measures instituted by governments as a means to arrest the spread of diseases and other challenges. Becker (2020) defines community lockdown as an exigency mechanism in which people are constricted from certain places for the purpose of containing the spread of a disease. For example, COVID-19 requires individuals to stay at home. Several guidelines and measures have been put in place by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Presidential Task Force (PTF) on COVID-19 in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Health, to prevent the escalation of the virus and to protect the health of Nigerians. One of these includes an initial community lockdown of non-essential activities in some parts of the country and subsequent ban on domestic and international flights. Community lockdown was declared on March 30 for 14 days in Abuja, Lagos, and Ogun by the federal government of Nigeria. The purpose of the community lockdown was to ensure that businesses were closed and movements restricted, except for essential services, to prevent community spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

Security agencies were given the mandate to enforce the community lockdown and apparently every activity came to a standstill. In Lagos for example, there was an absence of the city's usual traffic jams (Campbell& McCaslin, 2020). The community lockdown required that businesses were closed and people stayed indoors, except for essential journeys. Markets were permitted to operate for limited hours for people to purchase food and other important necessities. The community lockdown later extended to other states of the federation and it has reflected in all daily activities of people. Campbell and McCaslin (2020) were of the view that some of the impacts of the community lockdown caused by coronavirus outbreak are the obvious empty streets. Community lockdown instituted by governments led to shut down of schools; banof public gatherings including religious congregations and employees working at home. However, it has been reported by Asimi (2020) that several people were found to be facing untold hardship as a result of the lockdown. This is because a larger percentage of Nigerians live on daily wages and certainly the lockdown affected their chances of getting their daily income. This was responsible for lack of strict adherence to the community

lockdown (Akinwotu, 2020).

Community Lockdown and the Rise of Rape

There is no doubt that several crimes affect communities and their inhabitants. Some of such crimes are rape and other sexual related assaults. Rape has been described as a form of social problem which affects public health worldwide (Akinwotu, 2020). It is an act that contravenes the rights of individuals (victims) without regard to gender however it's mostly committed against women and girls. Rape involves the use of violence such as the use of coercion or intimidation against the victim, to achieve sexual desires considered unwanted and non-consensual. Rape is world widely condemned because it is a violation of the right of the person. Statistics have shown that there are increases in the rate of rape all over the world and Nigeria is not an exception to the increasing cases of rape.

Rape involves having some type of penetration with the victim; it may be oral, anal or vagina. It is mostly without the consent of the victim. It has been reported that a larger percentage of rape cases are committed by close relatives while less than 20 percent of rapes are committed by strangers. Rape may also be carried out among married couples and in this case the perpetrator is the spouse to the victim (this is otherwise referred to as marital rape).

The lockdown in many parts of Nigeria which was a measure to contain community transmission of the dreaded coronavirus pandemic triggered the rising cases of rape. There are various cases that were recorded, for example two minors were reportedly abused by their neighbours in some parts of Lagos. In another of the cases, a man raped a nine-year-old daughter of his neighbour in the Ikorodu area of Lagos State. In another related case, operatives from Okokomaiko Police Station arrested a 52-year-old man in Lagos for having sexual intercourse with a 13-year-old girl. Similarly, Mutua (2020) reported that the Nigerian police recorded 717 rape cases between January and May, 2020. The increase in the cases of rape and other gender-based violence seem to have come to the public knowledge as a result of the lock down orchestrated by the COVID-19. The issue of rape and other sexual assaults have therefore become a major concern during the community lockdown. The multiple incidences of rape during the lowdown have raised eyebrows. Within the period of the lockdown, the raping and killing of a 22-year-old microbiology student of the University of Benin was reported. It has also worrisomely been reported that fathers raped their daughters more during the lockdown. In some of the cases, fathers who rape their daughters intimidate to kill them if they should report. However, the challenge is that, there are no comprehensive statistics for rape incidents that exist in Nigeria, because many cases are known to go unreported to authorities for many reasons including the fear of stigmatisation, extortion by law enforcement officers and a lack of trust in the criminal justice system. These are the reasons both the dark and grey figures of crimes keep increasing in the country.

It seems rape has become an order of the day in Nigeria during the community lockdown. In a related incident, Adebayo (2020) reported a rape case involving an 18-year-old student of the Federal College of Animal Health and Production, Ibadan. She was raped and stabbed to death by yet to be identified rapists in Akinyele area of Ibadan. Similarly, Adebayo (2020) also reported that

a 32-year-old person was arrested in Dangora town of Kano state on June, 10. He was alleged to have raped more than 40 women for the past one year and his victims include girls; married women and 80-year-old woman. The arrest of the man was instituted when he was caught raping a minor during the period of community lockdown.

Nigeria's community lockdown as a measure to avert the spread of COVID-19, has provoked the reportage of rape cases and other sexual violence in the country. In response to the increased rates of rape cases, several Nigerians have marched in major cities (Benin, Ibadan as well as online platforms) in June to demand justice for victims of rape. The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), through its members have also protested against the raping and killing of students. The case of 18-year-old teenager (named Barakat Bello) who was raped and killed in Ibadan, Oyo State was one of the triggering incidents. The incessant rapes of minors as well as rape with murder are the latest in a string of sexual crimes that have gained national prominence. These cases have kicked up a social media storm, penetrated the highest corridors of power and gained even the attention of and reaction from the president of the country, Muhammadu Buhari.

Community Lockdown and the Rise of Armed Banditry

The increasing armed banditry has become a threat to human security in Nigeria particularly in the North-West region, (namely Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto and Zamfara state). The negative consequences of the armed banditry have called the attention of both individuals and governments to collaboratively design effective mechanisms in mitigating the threats associated with the multifaceted layers of criminality in the affected States and to restore peace and security. Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) consider banditry as armed robbery or allied violent crimes, involving the use of force, threat or intimidation to raid villages or markets, rustle cattle, rape, kill or kidnap a person or group of persons. According to them, banditry is economically motivated when material accumulation remains the topmost interest and politically motivated when it is driven by the quest to rob, to assault or to liquidate a person or a group of persons based on political or ideological considerations.

Banditry also contributed to the sudden uptick in fatalities per attempt especially in Zamfara and Katsina states, as well as in Kaduna and Niger states. It was observed by Agbese (2020) that the bandits were also involved in kidnapping apart from attacking villagers and travellers. Based on the casualties caused and the negative impacts created by the attacks of the bandits, one can conclude that both kidnaping and banditry were simultaneously carried out. However, while kidnappers consciously and optimally try to avoid the death of their victims who are usually specific persons, the bandits often deliberately destroy their victims and their property. It is apparent that Nigeria is becoming less safe each year and most especially in the heat of the coronavirus pandemic.

The world generally is bleeding under the devastating pangs of COVID-19 pandemic. The level of insecurity in Nigeria is also devastating and in bold red, evident from the ongoing kidnapping, banditry, and killings that have escalated amid weak security responses. It is no doubt that the attention of governments and security agencies at all levels, focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic, has given room for armed bandits to turn the country to where lives of thousands of people are cut short by the obvious insecurity. Before the pandemic, the country had been experiencing Boko

Haram insurgency; kidnapping; banditry; farmers and herdsmen conflict and other violence that have claimed not less than 2,771 lives in Nigeria as of January 2020 (Campbell& McCaslin, 2020). Statistics showed that about 320 people had been killed in January; 597 in February, 754 in March, 825 in April and no fewer than 975 people had been massacred as of May 15, 2020. The number of killings for April and May affirms the increase in crime through the killings of people during the community lockdown. While the confirmed cases of coronavirus keep steadily rising every day, the situation becomes precarious and the insecurity could hamper Nigeria's response to fighting the pandemIn a related report, Mwangi (2020) pointed that about twenty people were killed in another attack in Katsina in June. Some groups of bandits on motorcycles went to the village of Kadisau, in Katsina and killed several people after they opened fire on locals who resisted their attempts to loot. Other attacks took place in several villages in Katsina State between May 30 and 31 (Mwangi, 2020). The bandits made off with many livestock, presumably cattle, and killed villagers. In May, the United Nations reported that about 23,000 refugees were forced out of their households to cross the border into Niger as a result of banditry attacks. There was also a report of simultaneous attacks in the village of Danmusa, Dutsenma, as well as Safana by the armed bandits (Maishanu, 2020). These attacks led to the dispatching of security agencies to help curb the deadly attacks by the bandits.

The incessant attacks by the bandits have led to scores of residents in Yangayya community, Jibia Local Government Area of Katsina State to block a highway to protest. The protest was influenced by the attacks in which many residents lost their valuables, got injured and some women were raped. The attacks were orchestrated during the month of Ramadan after iftar (break of fast) when Muslim residents were about to go for their night (Ishai) prayer in the mosque. The community was invaded by bandits who looted shops and carted away valuables. The bandits returned the following day, raped and physically assaulted many women, somewhere later hospitalised. The security agents sent to respond to the villager's distress calls were overpowered and overwhelmed by the bandits, who amassed thousands of stolen cattle (Agbese, 2020). The inability of the security agents to curtail the attacks before and during the community lockdown has got people frustrated. This makes it appear as if the security agencies and the governments have failed the citizenry. To this, the presidency was forced to announce that the commencement of a major military operation to sweep bandits and kidnappers out of the state was in progress. Banditry attacks were also experienced in communities of the southern part of Kaduna State during the community lockdown. The attacks infuriated the indigenes, under the umbrella of Southern Kaduna Peoples Union (SOKAPU) and they raised alarm over alleged coordinated attacks and killings by armed herdsmen in their communities. during the lockdown. These attacks and many other savageries on the communities in the trying times of COVID-19 pandemic increased fears among those communities that are vulnerable to attacks and to them the pandemic is less serious to the pervasive murderous acts of armed herdsmen. They not only kill in the most gruesome manner, but they also plunder, loot, carry out mass-scale arson and then kidnap their victims, despite the lockdown. Considering the numerous persons that had been killed and kidnapped in different areas, it is indicative that armed bandits staging themselves as herdsmen, have caused their victims cruelty and miseries.

Questions abound about the several attacks launched during the coronavirus pandemic lockdown. How did bandits mount such a large operation in the heat of pandemic associated with strict border

closure and restriction on interstate movement? The bandits might have taken the advantage of the unstable situation and the limited capacity of security forces to carry out attacks on villagers. This may lead to new waves of displacement. The displacement caused by the activities of the bandits is capable of increasing the number of Internally Displaced Persons in the country and possibly may lead to tension in IDP camps as well as between IDPs and host communities. These challenges are likely to be felt due to limited resources and assistance, as well as perceived (or actual) differences in the COVID-19 response between host communities and IDP camps.

Community Lockdown and the Upsurge of Armed Robbery

Nigeria has witnessed increase in armed robberies and other criminal activities particularly in Lagos State during the lockdown. As the world continues to battle the pandemic, Lagos State, the epicentre of COVID-19 in Nigeria with the highest toll of confirmed cases, was going through one of its toughest moments in decades and the worst of times amid the pandemic lockdown. The activities of armed robbers increased as they were found to be terrorising various neighbourhoods during the COVID-19 lockdown. It was reported by Benson (2020) that shops and stores were burgled and vandalised. Hence, businesses suffered, leading to a complete loss of means of livelihoods. Benson (2020) noted that in Lagos people living in residential areas were attacked in the middle of the night by suspected armed robbers who robbed them of valuable items.

Many Nigerians had foreseen the unfortunate incidents of robbery attacks given the rate at which daily income was lost due to the restriction placed by the lockdown. The nation continues to witness more robbery, particularly in the Southern part of the country (Shamusudeen, 2020). The theft cases or robbery incidents manifested in such a way that household food items were forcefully carted away. This might be attributed to the failure of the federal government to provide any form of palliative materials during the community lockdown.

The rampaging activities of the armed robbers have deprived Lagos residents sleep. They have resorted to providing security for themselves through the night watch to counter any form of attacks that might come from the hoodlums. The night watch provided by the resident may be regarded as a pointer that the Nigeria security agencies have been overwhelmed by the unforeseen COVID 19 pandemic situation. In a related situation, Shamusudeen (2020) observed that many residents in the part of the Agege area of Lagos have resorted to provide security for themselves and they were seen using weapons such as gun and machetes. This implies that the lockdown has exposed the nation's poverty level as well as the pervasive rate of insecurity which the armed robbers are taking advantage of.

Increase in armed robbery during the lockdown was also reported by Maishanu (2020) who observed that hoodlums dispossessed victims of cash, food, and other valuables. He noted that many of the suspects are from Niger Republic which shows that amid the lockdown armed robbers still navigated their ways to robbing unsuspected victims. Similarly, Toromade (2020), reported a robbery case in Yagba East Local Government Area of Kogi State during the coronavirus pandemic lockdown. The robbery attack was carried out in the month of June, where five armed robbers killed about eight police officers and proceeded to rob a bank in the community. The robbers invaded the premises of the bank and detonated dynamite in the security doors and shot sporadically into the air to scare away workers and customers. A lady was killed and several others were injured in the

uninterrupted attack by the robbers.

During the lockdown, many Nigerians were confronted with either the fear of moving around freely and possibly contracting the deadly virus or the fear of staying indoor and possibly be attacked by the deadly armed robbers. These became major challenges for many Nigerians who were striven to adhere to the directives of government to stay at home in a bid to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Safety and protection of Nigerians life became unassured based on the apparent ineffectiveness display by the security agencies in curtailing incessant armed attacks from the various evil machinations. Several robbery attacks experienced in the country during the lockdown revealed that armed robbers explore the inefficacy of the Nigeria security agencies

Community Lockdown and Kidnapping

One of the major problems afflicting contemporary Nigeria is the issue of kidnapping. Kidnapping has been regarded as one of the social problems affecting all other institutions and structure of the nation (Fritz & Altheide, 1987). Asuquo (2009) was of the view that kidnapping may be seen as forcible seizure, taking away of a person without his or her will. It is a form of restricting someone's liberty and it goes contrary to the provision of freedom of movement as stipulated in the supreme constitution of Nigeria. Similarly, Nwaorah (2009) regarded kidnapping as an act that is directed towards keeping individual as hostage and subsequently dispossessing his or her people of their valuable items through exchange with financial and other value items. This implies that a kidnapped person is expected to be released from the kidnap den after payment of particular amount of money or valuable items. In a related issue Ogabido (2009) was of the view that kidnapping is an act of abduction, capturing, carrying off, removing or stealing away a person or people. Kidnapping has been described as a criminal act because it involved denying someone's freedom as well as requesting ransoms in exchange for the person's freedom.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 has been found to suppress abduction rates globally (Dazio et al., 2020). This is associated with the community lockdown, in which people's movements are restricted and limited and the potential victim pool for kidnappers are reduced. Zenn (2018) asserted that victims of kidnapping groups are often abducted on the streets rather than their homes. This may go with the fact that people are more vulnerable on the street than homes for criminals to target. Also, the pandemic has greatly hit the incomes of many households across the socio-economic spectrum. Therefore, ransom amounts payable to the kidnappers may be drastically reduced. Decline in the rate of kidnapping during the pandemic era does not amount to its total stoppage. What has been observed is just a change of tactics and reduction in the ransom and the number of victims which has reduced. Many families may find it difficult to pay high ransoms due to the impact of the COVID-19 and community lockdown on their socioeconomic lives. It has been observed that as a result of the lock down, in Venezuela for example kidnappers and other suspected criminals have diverted to other criminal act such as extortion and cybercrime (Knowles, 2020).

In Nigeria, the rates of kidnapping have fallen but attacks have been carried during the pandemic. A report shows that the sum of $18.34 million was paid as ransom to kidnappers in Nigeria between June 2011 and the end of March 2020 (Knowles, 2020). The huge amount of ransom paid to kidnappers indicates that kidnapping is becoming a lucrative business that needs to be nip in the

bud. This implies that insecurity is increasingly becoming a profitable venture for its merchants which looks set to rival the illegal arms running businesses. However, most apparent challenge during the pandemic is the fact that security forces are mostly draw away from providing security for the populace towards ensuring compliance with the government directive of stay at home order. This has been seen as creating a short and long-term security vacuums that increases the rate of kidnapping. It implies that as evidently observed in Nigeria it may be difficult for countries with high levels of insecurity to enforce lockdowns or curfews effectively as well as control kidnapping simultaneously.

Kidnapping has been regarded as one of the most challenging security problems Nigeria is confronted with. Southern part of the country (particularly, Southeast and South-south regions) was prominent with kidnapping, however, in the past five to six years the northern part of the Nigeria has completely taken over from the southern Nigeria. For example, Abuja/Kaduna expressway has recently been riddled with incessant kidnappings. Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara states have been well recognized with the high rate of kidnapping. Kidnapping has been regarded as lucrative business by the Nigeria youth. During the pandemic lock down, various kidnapping took place all over the nation. For example, on the March, 23, 2020, two professional footballers were kidnapped on the Benin to Owo express road (Damora, 2020). The incessant kidnapping in various part of Nigeria, therefore, forced the government to deploy security agencies to every state of the federation including FCT. The expectation was that the incessant kidnappings and killings in the country would decline during the period of COVID-19 pandemic lockdown basically because of the fear of contracting the COVID-19. However, the kidnappers seem not deterred with getting infected as the business continues as usual. Prior to the outbreak of the virus, Abuja-Kaduna expressway was not safe for commuters as it witnessed several kidnappings and killings. Aside from civilians being kidnapped and some killed, a huge number of security agencies have also been killed along these routes (Shamusudeen, 2020). The incessant killing and kidnapping continues as Damora (2020) reported that a total of 34 people have been kidnapped, while five persons lost their lives, between 7th to 14th April 2020. This implies that kidnappers have taken advantage of the coronavirus pandemic lockdown and curfews to further their nefarious activities.

Community Lockdown and Cybercrime
Cybercrime has been described as a form of criminal act where computer or computers are employed for criminal activities. It has also been seen as traditional crimes or illicit activities committed via the use of computers or networks. Cybercrime is prohibited by law and it is a punishable offence upon conviction. It is a criminal activity that directly targets illegally accessing another person's database to steal stored or on-line information. Das and Nayak (2013) assert that cybercrime is is capable of halting railway; misguiding the aeroplanes through wrong signals; to steal as well as sell information; halt media and bring to an end a system within a seconds.
The lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 has been responsible for people's confinement to a particular place. As a result, people spend more hours online each day and they increasingly rely on the internet for various activities and services. Radoini (2020) was of the notion that cybercrime is not new; however, there are increases in the number of those who are connected to the internet now. People spent more time on internet to keep abreast with information about COVID-19 pandemic as well as the community lockdown. This provided an opportunity for cybercriminals to hack

accounts, sell fake products and information as well as create fake friendships. Various methods were employed to defraud people, for example through phishing (which is an act of sending email). This has been described as a fraudulent practice of inducing people to reveal their personal information, such as credit card numbers and passwords. John (2020) revealed that Google registered about 149 thousand active phishing websites in January, 293 thousand in February and 522 thousand in March 2020. These statistics shows that phishing is a form of cybercrime and it has greatly increased during the pandemic. This implies that lockdown during the corona virus pandemic has further enhanced cybercrime.

The criminals whose activities have been shut down due to community lockdown have resulted to defrauding unsuspecting Nigerians via the Internet. This is done through stealing of sensitive and vital information from individuals which enables the fraudsters to gain access to computers or mobile devices with different technical deceptive tactics. The trend is not peculiar to Nigeria but the world generally (John, 2020). During the period of COVID-19 lockdown, the internet fraudsters were observed to be sending out emails to Nigerians with the claims that such emanated from the Nigeria Centre of Disease Control (NCDC) or the World Health Organisation (WHO) (Radoini, 2020). The emails are usually sent along with links expected to be clicked by the receiver. Where these links are clicked, login information or any other secret information from the clickers' computers or mobile devices are easily stolen for defrauding.

It has also been reported that suspected cybercriminals have sent out messages to people through social media and emails by informing them of palliatives or relief package. The emails or messages are packaged in such a way that receivers feel they are coming from the right channels such as organisations or governmental agencies. Several organisations might have come up with different forms of palliatives to help alleviate the effects of COVID-19 on households and their members during the lockdown. However, cyber fraudsters have hijacked this generous strategy in defrauding unsuspected individuals through sending and clicking of links asking the receivers to click for registration to qualify for a relief package. Clicking the links lead further to asking of login information as well as directing people to a website different from the genuine site of the NCDC or WHO. These emails are termed malicious, emanating from scammers but appear to come from the WHO. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2020) reports that malicious emails are sent to potential victims to steal their information, such as their user names, passwords or directing them to links for malicious attachments. People have been advised to disregard all such deceptive instructions and directives.

In a related discovery by Global Initiative (2020), it has been reported that the lockdown has also exposed several persons including children to online crimes. Children become more vulnerable to online attacks due to the lockdown that has made them spend more time on online activities for services such as schooling. Undoubtedly, criminals utilized the pandemic opportunity which has changed our pattern of living to their favour through the Internet. By emphasis, students become vulnerable to cybercrime in the course of benefiting from electronic schooling or online learning. For instance, they may be exposed to threats possibly coming from the internet such as internet abuse and bad content. It is also implicational for children who out of ignorance, maybe groomed for sexual violence/immorality through pornographic viewing. Where there is failure to curtail the

excesses, children may get exploited, indulged in drug abuse, and trafficked. The Global Initiative (2020) also observed that the lockdown has restricted the movement of the elderly and contributed to their exposure to cybercrime through online shopping which was previously offline before the pandemic.

Conclusion and Recommendation

i. It is worthwhile to conclude that COVID-19 pandemic seems to be tipping the world into a new phase of existence. Federal and State governments have put several measures to avert the spread of the COVID 19 virus through setting up of Petroleum Task Force (PTF) and other committees. These efforts are aimed at supporting the public health systems, safeguarding the economy and ensuring social order. Criminals have explored the period of the community lockdown to exhibit their latest modus of operandi and thereby engaging in various criminal activities. The community lockdown instituted as a measure to combat the spread of COVID-19, has been responsible for the stay at home and subsequently on the increased reliance on the utilization of the internet. The instituted community lockdown, which was expected to contain the spread of the virus, seems to have been hijacked by the criminals and turn into opportunity to cause civil unrest and violence. The country has witnessed various reports of rape cases, kidnapping and armed banditry as well as other security challenges during the lockdown. This paper has demonstrated the nexus between community lockdown and upsurge in crimes. Crimes, which should have declined during the lockdown, took another dimension. Limitations to public life are assumed to make some criminal activities less visible, but apparently, the mode only change but the crime continues. It is in line with the conclusion that the following recommendations were givenInternet users should be conscious of phishing emails and malicious websites. People should use only trusted wi-fi networks, and practice good cyber hygiene. There is also need to find out through sending of a WhatsApp message, an SMS, to identify the relationship of the sender.

ii. Appropriate measures should be taken by authorities, who are sufficiently capable to protect the country residents from attacks by armed groups and of addressing violence within the community. Law and order should be enforced in anon-discriminatory manner while protecting the fundamental human rights of all persons.

iii. Every other instrument of the law, from the law-making aspect right through to the judicial process should be refined in a way that every victim gets justice without having to first become the centre of national attention.

iv. Security measures should be provided for people to curb the menace of incessant attack in various places. The operations of the security agencies most especially the police should be reformed to boost the confidence of the citizens in them. Both the federal and state governments should work closely in restoring peace in affected areas in the country.

v. Governments, at all levels, should provide sufficient palliatives to the people who have been really affected by the staying at home COVID-19 in the period of community lockdown.

vi. With an increasing number of COVID-19 cases and countries encouraging citizens to stay, learn or work from home, it is recommended that residents obey all guidelines to avoid the spread of the virus and swiftly reported any suspicious movements to the law enforcement agencies.

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