

Armed Robbery and Armed Robbers in Contemporary Nigeria: The social learning and model visited

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Abstract

This present study aligns with the age-long calls for the study of criminal behaviour in different societies as both distinct and the consequence of rapid socio-culture, political, and economic changes blowing over these societies (Clifford 1965; Bennett 1980; Brown, Esbensen and Geis 1991). It succinctly highlights, the ubiquity of armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria, and noting some of its unique characteristics in contemporary Nigeria, the paper holds that both the offence and offenders combine characteristic elements of the western archetype and local (Nigerian) traits. Drawing 86 samples of armed robbers from three selected prisons in the southeastern states of Nigeria, the paper developed a model referred to as “emulation” which offers a far reaching explanation of current robbery in Nigeria. Using the Chi-square statistical test, sources of learning about robbery (independent variable) were weighted against some salient features of the offence such as planning operation, role played by gang members, and reasons for involvement (dependent variables). Analyses of data provide findings which corroborate our constructed model. For instance, results suggest that offenders who learnt about robbery through reading and watching from the screens are more likely to carry weapons, plan operation, share roles, and have unemployment as their major reason for involvement in robbery.

Introduction

In terms of numbers, “the crime problem” in contemporary Nigeria is primarily a problem of armed robbery. Going by media reports on crime situation in Nigeria and the public outcries, armed type is a common phenomenon; it is a daily occurrence in Nigeria, and remains among the top three most serious crimes reported to the Nigerian police (see Annual Report of the Nigeria Police Force for 2006, 2007 and 2008). Several Nigerian authors (see Iwarimie-Jaja 1993 and 1999b; Ekpeyong, 1989; Marenin, 1987; Shopeju, 1999; Odey, 2001; Ajisebutu, 2003) support the view of the pervasiveness and dreadfulness of armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria when they asserted that armed robbery has

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become a common phenomenon which continues to instil fear among the citizens and the eventual lack of confidence on the police. Public concerns over the menace of armed robbery have led some section of the military juntas to use it as excuse to topple both democratically elected and incumbent military governments¹.

According to the Nigeria Police Force Annual Report for the years 2006, 2007 and 2008, armed robbery constitutes one of the three most serious crimes in Nigeria, coming only closely behind perjury and escape from lawful custody. According to these Reports, the figure of the offence in 2005 was 2,704, 2, 863 in 2006, 2,327 in 2007 and 2, 340 in 2008. Kano, Ogun, Oyo, Delta, and Cross River states were also reported to be top on the list on this offence among the 36 states of the federation.

Reflecting on the endemic of armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria, *The Observer* newspaper in a report on November 25 1984 stated that more than 80 condemned armed robbers had, by then, been executed following the coup of December 1983, and that over 800 more people were awaiting execution on armed robbery related offences. During same period, *The Guardian* and *Sunday Vanguard* newspapers of March 19 1986 and November 21 1986, while reporting about crimes in Lagos, stated that the police in 1985 reported a total of 1,194 armed robbery cases, with an estimated loss of about 350 million Naira worth of property.

A decade and half ago, *Tell magazine* Dec. 25 2000 while reflecting on the state of the nation with regard to the trend and incidence of armed robbery reported that between August 15 2000 and November 21 2000, a total of 563 armed robbery cases were reported in Nigeria. The number of victims killed and injured was 113 and 275 respectively, while 271 armed robbers killed was, and 763 arrested. Two hundred and nine (209) weapons were recovered, while 29 policemen's weapons were lost. Also, 81 policemen were injured and 24 killed.

Similar report is provided in *Thisday Sunday Newspaper* of October 29 2000. The paper estimated that by December 2000, about 1,350 people would have been shot and killed by armed robbers in Nigeria during the year under review; another 2,564 would have been maimed, while another 3,064 armed robbery operations would have been accomplished. The paper (2000: 11) concluded by saying that this data was not exhaustive and went ahead to depict the gory scenario of armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria as:

Every day, at least three people somewhere in the country will be killed, and as readers go through the paper, a head is being blown away, a stomach is being ripped open and limb is being shattered by bullets whizzing out of the barrel of an armed robbers' gang... From Lagos to Abuja, Kaduna to Bida, Onitsha to Yola, armed hoodlums, showing neither mercy nor pity, have unleashed a reign of terror on Nigerians. They are all over in towns and villages, in ghettos and GRAs. No one is safe, no place is sacred, and no security is inviolable. The armed hoodlums are just daring; they are ruthless. They steal, they maim, they rape, and they kill...

¹ It has become customary of military adventurers to cite insecurity among others as the main reason why they had to take over the reign of the government in Nigeria. Though security could, and do take the pattern of political thuggery, they are also often associated with high crime rates notably, armed robbery.

Otu (2004:78) while responding to the pervasiveness, sophistry and dreadfulness of the offence stated *inter alia*:

No place is inviolable, no one is sacred—peasants and presidents; robbers are levellers of sort. They are in charge! From banks to barracks, home to hospitals, and from roads to religious places. Anywhere they set their dark feet on, they loot, they kill, they maim, they even rape...

Generally, contemporary armed robbery in Nigeria has, though, taken the outlook of a western archetype robbery and going scientific as it were, it appears to have retained (perhaps) added some of the Nigeria's traditional way of life and traits. For examples, the offence and offenders in contemporary Nigeria are being identified with incredible dexterity, carrying of sophisticated weaponries and gadgets such as sub-machine guns, Ak 47, radio transistors, and mobile phones. Offenders now dare the police in a fire-for-fire show of superiority, while displaying rare ingenuity in concealing their identity and motive. The *Vanguard newspaper* of June 12, 2003 reported that eight armed robbers dressed in corporate suits with corporate bags which appeared to be stacked with money, stormed a bank in Lagos while posing as tycoon customers only to draw out guns to rob the bank of undisclosed large sum of money. Astute planning, execution and disposal of stolen items and robbery accoutrements are done with precision by armed robbers in contemporary Nigeria.

Furthermore, this new look of robbery and robbers in contemporary Nigeria include storming residences, commercial buildings, public and private establishments, religions places, and police stations in a blitz manner; violent killing and maiming both potential and innocent victims with some level of psychopathic tendencies; going into operation mobilizing all-needed tools such as power generator, sledge hammers, sawing tools, concentric acids to rip-off stubborn locks and with skilled professionals of all trades (welders, mechanics, technicians, carpenters) to help achieve a precise and successful robbery operation(see Patriot Newspapers September 6-13 2008). A significant new trend is the use of African magic (charms) and direct involvement of female members in active field operations.

Notwithstanding this clear observation common with the Nigerian version of robbery and robbers, reviews of several studies and write-ups by most Nigerian authors reveal the tendency to explain both the offence and the offenders wholly and solely from the point of view of conventional western theories and approaches in criminology (see Marenin, 1987; Ekpeyong, 1989; Olurode, 1991; Clinard and Abbot, 1975; Iwarimie-Jaja, 1987). Rarely do these studies take into cognisance, the source of this criminal behaviour and some of the flairs and twists which has become the hallmarks of the Nigerian version of this criminal behaviour. Not towing this path has tended to undermine the obvious uniqueness and peculiarities of these armed robbers and robbery of Nigeria extraction, thus, running counter to the age-long calls by leading authorities in the field of criminology and criminal justice for the study of crime and criminals in specific social context (see Bennett, 1980; Brown, Esbensen and Geis, 1991).

Against the backdrop of this preceding observation, this present study sets out to address the gap in the study of armed robbery and armed robbers in contemporary Nigeria. Its central aim, therefore, is to develop an exploratory model deem helpful in providing a

nuanced perspective to understanding the criminal behaviour of armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria. Clearly therefore, the provocative argument of the present paper is that armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria is no more or less a learned western behaviour which has gone some level of embellishment in tune to the learner's prevailing social environment for a successful robbery career.

The present study surveyed a sample of armed robbers in three prisons across the Southeastern states of Nigeria to examine quite a number of their features and help determine a better model and approach to Nigerian armed robbery. Thus, certain sociology-criminology characteristics (dependent variables) of the criminal behavior were cross-tabbed against the sources of learning about robbery (independent variable). The analysis of our findings led us to develop the hypothetical (exploratory) model of emulation as capable of adequately explaining armed robbery behaviour in contemporary Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Interest in crime has a long history and led to a plethora of theory, first in the field of sociology, and later in criminology, to account for its causes. These theories mirror the researchers' image of the phenomena in the real world (Riley, 1963: 7; Dubin, 1969). Although there appears to be a consensus among criminologists that no one form of crime is best accounted for by a single model, however, there is a general agreement that a particular criminal behaviour, on account of its nature, dimension and context, is best explained by one model than another. The proximate of one particular model to a criminal behaviour is, therefore, an enduring observation in criminology (see also Pyle *et al.* 1974: 9). According to these authors, consideration such as time and available resources which often preclude an investigation so comprehensive as may be desired is key in the choice of proximate theory.

One criminological perspective which offers a far promising illumination of the current robbery behaviour in Nigeria can be found in the grand learning theory (see Bandura, 1979). However, the specific proximate theory remains the differential association model by Edwin Sutherland (1939, 1974 and 1960) and its sister theory of previous criminal association (see Iwarimie-Jaja, 1993, 1999b). Focusing on individual level explanations, differential association model alludes that criminal behaviour, like non criminal behaviour, is learned in a process of interaction. Exposure to social network provides normative support for learning the techniques, rationalization and motivations for participation in crime.

At the heart of differential association theory is that criminality and/or deviance is as a result of association with someone who holds criminal or deviant ideas. Edwin Sutherland (1939, 1960) postulated nine significant principles guiding his differential association model, and explained that mere association with criminals and/or deviants by noncriminals did not provide enough ground for participation in the criminal act; the association must be quantumly high, and exceeds association with non-deviants and/or criminals, and that actors must complete a learning process before deviance can occur. Beyond this, the deviant/criminal must also learn and internalize all the techniques, specific

motives, drives, rationalizations and attitudes which are vital for the commission of the criminal act. The importance of this model in the explanation of crime is that it demonstrates the significance of group interaction and peer influence on behaviour.

Iwarimie-Jaja (1993, 1999b) following the path of Sutherland, detoured somewhat when he coined the phrase “previous criminal association or experience” to explain why some criminal activities are not a one-way flow activity. His work which focused specifically on armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria was concerned with demonstrating the links between juvenile delinquency and adult criminality. Thus the author explained that armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria was a product of learning by juvenile offenders through continuous association with criminal peers, and the more experienced adult criminals from whom they learn the techniques of how to commit such more serious crime.

Working from the premises of these two related models, we proposed at the onset, that contemporary armed robbery in Nigeria is but a learned and borrowed behaviour by potential and vulnerable Nigerian youths who maintain a close association with their senior and western counterparts but nevertheless have tinkered with what was learned for maximum gain. The tinkered behaviour, and the new values added, present themselves in the carrying and use of sophisticated weapons, planning of operation, sharing of roles, being utilitarian, and use of charms (Africa magic). We proposed that these features are measures of the new face of the offence and offenders in contemporary Nigeria. To substantiate this conception, we proposed four exploratory issues:

1) The null (H_0): There is no relationship between the source(s) by which armed robbers learned about the offence and the reason(s) for choosing to be involved in the offence.

The alternative (H_1): There is a relationship between the source(s) by which armed robbers learned about the offence and reason for choosing to be involved in the offence.

2) The null (H_0): Source(s) of learning about armed robbery by an armed robber has no association with the planning of the offence.

The alternative (H_1): There is a relationship or association between the source(s) of learning about armed robbery and planning the offence.

3) The Null (H_0): The role an armed robber plays in a robbery group or gang is unrelated to the source(s) of learning about the crime.

The alternative (H_1): There is a relationship between the role an armed robber plays in an armed robbery group or gang and the source(s) of learning about the crime.

4) The Null (H_0): There is no relationship between the sources of learning about armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria and carrying of weapons during operation.

The alternative (H_1): There is a relationship between sources of learning about armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria and carrying of weapons at the time of operation.

Research Design

We designed the study using the cross-sectional survey approach. We chose this design because (i) we reasoned that our subjects were fairly large in the prisons so that we could not afford to interview all (ii) that our subjects were amenable to changes either by means of release or admission in the course of the study. (iii) we were basically interested in developing an a quick exploratory model of contemporary armed robbery in Nigeria.

Sample Frame, Size and Technique

We drew our sample from three prisons and cities (Abakaliki, Umuahia and Port Harcourt). These prisons were those in the Southeastern part of Nigeria where the inmates were willing to participate in the study. The samples were drawn from inmates who were either already convicted for armed robbery, or those who admitted participating in the offence and were awaiting trials.

Being guided by practical constraints e.g., the number of people we had access to, financial resources, time frame, administrative and bureaucratic hiccups (see also Durrheim 1999 in Terre Balance and Durrheim 1999: 45), we played to the technique of “sampling to redundancy”. This enabled us to continuously interviewed a number of subjects we had access to in the three selected prisons until we found that further respondents were incapable of providing any additional information relevant to the study.

A total of 86 robbers were selected to participate in the completion of the questionnaire section of the data collection processes. However, sixty-eight (68) duly completed questionnaires were used for analysis. A further eight (8) respondents were also selected for in-depth oral interview to complement information obtained from the questionnaire data. The robbers for both techniques of data collection were selected in proportion to the individual prisons’ population. Table 1 below depicts the composition of the sample of respondents drawn from all the three prisons that ultimately form the basis of analysis.

Table 1: Composition of Sample

Prison	Respondents initially included	Respondents after withdrawals	Respondents submitted useable questionnaires	Subjects interview
Port Harcourt (Rivers State)	35	30	27	4
Umuahia (Abia State)	24	20	18	2
Abakaliki (Ebonyi State)	27	25	23	2
TOTAL	86	75	68	8

Sampling Technique

A specific kind of non-probability sampling technique known as the “respondent-driven sampling” (snowball) was used. Erickson (1979) described the specific snowball sampling which focuses on hidden populations such as armed robbery as *chain-referral sampling*. We used this sampling technique because members of the target population in each of the prisons knew one another, and are densely interconnected. Haralambos & Holborn (1991) explained that with groups such as professional criminals, it is not easy to use other sampling techniques.

Instruments for Data Collection: questionnaire and in-depth oral interview

Our questionnaires were pre-tested on a dozen identified armed robbers in Abakaliki prison—the home state of the lead researcher. The final version of the questionnaire contained 86 items (herein referred to as variables or items of measurement), and was subdivided into two parts. The major variables in the first part of the questionnaire were armed robbers’ socio-demographic characteristics: family, age, sex, marital, education, religion, and occupation.

The second part of the questionnaire contained variables that sought for far-flung information about the offence and offenders. The specific sub-variables included the types of robbery, sources of learning, length of involvement, motives, networks, and patterns of involvement, the appurtenances for robbery (weapons, drugs, charms, masks, etc) from whereupon data for this present paper were extracted from. In specific term, in this second part of the questionnaire, we endeavoured to determine how contact and exposure to western ideas and life styles have influenced individual’s participation in robbery in contemporary Nigeria. And what additional values individual robbers have added to the learned behavior. The questionnaires were in some cases self-administered, and in others not, depending on respondent’s literacy level. It combined both the open-ended and the closed ended options.

The in-depth oral interviews were interactive in nature, and in some cases, took the form of “word association” and/or “sentence completion” where and when upon statements were made halfway and the interviewees allowed to respond to or complete it. This was done mostly on occasions when the respondents appeared to have no idea of what was being sought after, or reluctant to bear mind on the issue raised. Interviews were conducted with an interview guide which contained items/variables not already covered in the questionnaire, or that were in the questionnaire but needed further information. For instance, one of the items focused on the *modus operandi* being employed by armed robbery gangs. Another asked the robbers to disclose how they dispose off items used in a robbery operation.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data presentation and analysis started as the first step, the conceptualization of armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria as a borrowed behavior, however, tinkered with and

embellished upon for maximum gain so that its distinct and unique form becomes apparent. The second step was to construct the concept of “emulation”, as representing this tinkered and embellished behavior. Third, we operationally identified the various indices for measuring or determining this emulation. To this last step, categorical features of contemporary armed robbery in Nigeria (earlier identified above) were created and used as variables for measuring our constructed emulation model.

To test the drawn exploratory issues, we basically focused on our quantitatively generated data, employing the chi-square statistical tool. We cross-tabbed the questions (tables) representing the key dependent variables/constructs (planning operation, use of weapons, role performances, reasons for robbery) against the sources of learning about armed robbery (independent variable). In the process of our analysis, we bore in mind the “missing data”, that is, the number of our robbers who did not answer the question or variable appropriate to them. We analyzed our qualitative-generated data by means of grounded theory, content analysis, and discourse analysis and incorporated them in our general discussions of findings.

Testing the Exploratory Issues

- 1) The null (H_0): There is no relationship between the source(s) by which armed robbers learned about the offence and the reason(s) for choosing to be involved in the offence ($H_0: P < \mathbf{0.05}$).

The alternative (H_i): There is a relationship between the source(s) by which armed robbers learned about the offence and reason for choosing to be involved in the offence ($H_i: P > \mathbf{0.05}$).

Statistics for Table (Question) of B8 by B11

Table 2: Sources and reasons for armed robbery

p=0.0051

	Frequency	REASONS FOR ARMED ROBBERY								Total
		Dislike of government	Easy money	Unemployment	Friends involvement	To help others	To imitate and act like others	Easy guns	Weak law and others	
SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE	Through friends	0	0	9	1	2	1	0	5	18
	Through family members	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
	Reading & watching	3	1	4	1	1	0	1	2	13
	Owens' idea	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	4
	Any other	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	11	13
	Total	3	1	17	3	5	2	1	18	50

Warning: 95% of the cells have expected counts less than 5. Chi-square may not be a valid test.

Effective sample size = 50

Frequency Missing = 18

Warning: 26% of the data are missing.

The chi-square result is **0.0051**, meaning that the significance level against which the two variables were cross-tabled is less or equal to **0.05**, and statistically, high. This implied that there is an association between the sources of learning about armed robbery and the motives behind it. Here the null (H_0) hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative (H_i) hypothesis which holds that there is a relationship accepted.

2) The Null (H_0): Source(s) of learning about armed robbery by an armed robber has no association with the planning of the offence ($H_0: P < 0.05$).

The alternative (H_i): There is a relationship or association between the source(s) of learning about armed robbery and planning of offence ($H_i: P > 0.05$).

Statistics for Table (Question) of B8 by B16

Table 3: Sources of learning and robbery planning

	Frequency	PLANNING OPERATION		
		Yes	No	Total
SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE OF ROBBER	Through friends	17	3	20
	Through family members	1	1	2
	Reading & watching	8	4	12
	Owens' idea	3	1	4
	Any other	1	8	9
	Total	30	17	47

p=0.0044

Warning: 60% of the cells have expected counts less than 5. Chi-square may not be a valid test.

Effective sample size = 47

Frequency Missing = 21

Warning: 31% of the data are missing.

Results from the table show that most (85%) of the respondents are those whose sources of knowledge of the contemporary armed robbery are more likely to have direct relationships with planning an armed robbery operation in contemporary Nigeria. For example, from the figure above, the fraction of the respondents that are likely to plan robbery operation by learning from friends is $\frac{17}{20}$. Therefore, the null-hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis which states, there is a relationship accepted. The chi-square result is **0.0044**, meaning that the significance level against which the two variables were cross-tabled is less or equal to **0.05**, and so, statistically, high. This implied that there is an association between the sources of learning about armed robbery and planning operation. Here the null (H_0) hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative (H_i) hypothesis which holds that there is a relationship accepted.

3) The Null (H_0): The role an armed robber plays in a robbery group or gang is unrelated to the source(s) of learning about the crime ($H_0: P \leq 0.05$).

The alternative (H_i): There is a relationship between the role an armed robber plays in an armed robbery group or gang and the source(s) of learning about the crime ($H_i: P > 0.05$).

Statistics for Table (Question) of B8 by B35

Table 4: Sources of knowledge and role performances

	Frequency	ROLE PERFORMANCES					
		Leader/ Commander	Wheelman/ Driver	Hitman/ Watchman	Actual robbing/Inspector/ O.C/Corporal	Any other	Total
SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE OF ARMED ROBBERY	Through friends	0	2	6	4	4	16
	Through family members	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Reading & watching	1	2	6	0	3	12
	Owens' idea	1	1	1	0	0	3
	Any other	0	0	2	0	9	11
	Total	3	5	15	4	16	43

p=0.0018

Warning: 92% of the cells have expected counts less than 5. Chi-square may not be a valid test.

Effective sample size = 43

Frequency Missing = 25

Warning: 37% of the data are missing.

Findings show that the level of confidence at which the lack of association between the variables in the columns and rows could be accepted is significance enough at **0.05**. The chi-square result is $p=0.0018$ which is far less than 1. The Null hypothesis, which states that both variables are independent, not related, is therefore, rejected, while the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a relationship is accepted. The frequencies in the cells indicate for instance, that respondents who learned of the crime through “watching screens and reading” are more probable to play violent role such as “hit-man and mopol”.

4) The Null (H_0): There is no relationship between the sources of learning about armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria and carrying of weapons during operation ($H_0: P < 0.05$)

The alternative (H_1): There is a relationship between sources of learning about armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria and carrying of weapons at the time of operation. ($H_1: P > 0.05$).

Statistics for Table (Question) of B8 by B21

Table 5: Sources of knowledge and the use of weapons in robbery

	Frequency	ARMED (WEAPONS) DURING ROBBERY		
		Yes	No	Total
SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE OF ARMED ROBBERY	Through friends	16	2	18
	Through family members	1	0	1
	Reading & watching	9	3	12
	Owns' idea	2	2	4
	Any other	3	6	9
	Total	31	13	44

$p=0.0366$

Warning: 60% of the cells have expected counts less than 5. Chi-square may not be a valid test.

Effective sample size = 44

Frequency Missing = 24

Warning: 35% of the data are missing.

The finding ($P=0.0366$) show that the result of the computing measure of association between the rows and columns for the sample is significant, and thus, makes it possible to reject the null hypothesis. It is clear from the table that most respondents' sources of knowledge of armed robbery are more probable to determine whether or not they use weapons during a robbery operation.

Discussion of Findings and Emulation Model Explained

One basic principle of social learning theory, especially Sutherland's version, is that criminal behaviour is learned, and from an intimate person or source. Learning includes both the justification, motives and all the unique characteristics and techniques of engaging in the behavior, including the terminologies of the behaviour (see Sutherland, 1939; 1960).

A key finding in the present study is that the two major sources of knowledge of current armed robbery in Nigeria are: (1) learning through the impersonal agencies such as television, newspapers, and videos, (2) reading of novels and learning from friends. It, therefore, follows that learning contemporary armed robbery behavior follows all the principles of traditional learning behavior (see Sutherland, 1939).

However, a subset of learning theory deemed "emulation", and favoured in this present study, stresses the importance of marrying together what is learned, with other important and unique factors about the learner and his social context. Since armed robbery occurs in specific spatial contexts, it is important that spatial models of these contexts should augment the explanation of this crime (see also Smith, *et al*, 2000:489). This is the key point of departure of emulation which promises a far reaching explanation of contemporary armed robbery in Nigeria. In our present study, these spatial models come in the form of poor road designs, corrupt police officers, African belief system and individual skills and ingenuities.

Although, both armed robbery and armed robbers in contemporary Nigeria share some semblance with those of their western counterparts, some level of embellishment have been added so that some differences can be identified. For instance, our findings reveal that armed robbers in contemporary Nigeria have learnt to rob with sophisticated weapons, dare the police in a fire-for-fire combat, robbing while dressed in corporate outfit, plan operations and carry out rehearsals, share roles, have female members in their groups while gang members take responsibility for their action (see also Einstadter, 1975; Conklin, 1972; Jatz, 1996). However, in a contrast manner, findings and reviews of other studies reveal that most robberies in contemporary Nigeria take place on the highways and in the wee night hours because of what may be described as the cash-economy nature and poor lighting in Nigeria. Robbers also come in large numbers, are made up of members of different skill in welding, electrical, carpentry, fortify and equip themselves with local charms (African insurance) by visiting spiritualists for blessing and protection. They also make use of motor bike popularly known as "okada" in Nigeria for easy operation, and often tap on the psyche of inept and ill-motivated police force. Exotic cars, buses, cell phones, axes and cutlasses (traditional to the Nigeria society) and dynamite have become common features amongst contemporary armed robbers so much so that they simply

epitomize what McLynn (1989:27) described as “escapologists of genius”. Nigerian armed robbers have learned to wear bullet-proof vests, to kidnap, to torture, and to stage their crime scene—features that are in stark contrast to their archetype western counterparts. They invent new techniques, vocabularies and system of etiquette, which are considered relevant to the commission of the crime. The resultant behavior is emulation (see Otu, 2004) so that armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria is not just a one way stop gap.

Therefore, emulation as a subset of learning model posits that contemporary armed robbery in Nigeria is an imitated, learned and borrowed behaviour, embellished by the learners within the constraints imposed by the socio-milieu of Nigeria. So current armed robbers in Nigeria are not just helpless agents of some inexorable external social forces; they are products of both their external learning and internal adjustments in a process of social reinventing. This model, therefore, is in line with the age-long widely held view among Sociologists and Anthropologists which explains that cultural traits or complexes once borrowed are modified by the borrowers to fit into the trend of their culture (Landis, 1958).

Reflecting on armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria from the stand point of emulation model, Aina and Usongbu reported in the Daily Times of March 20, 1999 explained that robbers in Nigeria have simply gone *scientific*, embracing the western style of robbery with local flair. These two authors described armed robbers in contemporary Nigeria as gangs that operate in all kinds of theories and imbued with the expertise in demobilising guard dogs with western concocted types of chemicals (anaesthesia) using adhesive to tape their victims, and have imbibed the psychology of “shoot first, the dead is the looser” attitude.

The innovation and embellishment which go with robbery in Nigeria is bore out of necessity (Landis, 1958). The author explained that need enters into the inventive process especially in terms of crisis when men are made aware of the impending danger that some new approaches to situations must be found (1958:59). Thus, fully aware of the risk and dangers associated with robbery profession in Nigeria, which include official strict punishment (execution) and unofficial sanctions such as mob attack and lynching, armed robbers in contemporary Nigeria now appreciate the need to complement what they learned from their western counterparts with some local antics and intrigues (see similar argument in Wright and Rossi, 1986:139).

Policy Implications and Conclusion

The broad learning process has been hailed as a powerful model in providing an explanation for all categories of criminal behavior (see Sutherland, 1939). A cursory observation of armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria made us to align with the grand learning theory to explain the current behaviour. However, we also observed that contemporary robbers in Nigeria do not just remain content with what they have learned, having added some uniqueness to this learned behavior in response to the peculiarity of the social context in which they operate.

We developed parameters to measure this resultant model to include sources of knowledge of the behaviour, reasons for involvement, planning of robbery, sharing of roles and knowledge and access to weapons. We set out to empirically find the collaboration between these characteristic variables and the sources of learning about armed robbery. The sources of learning about armed robbery served as the independent variable, and the reasons for going into armed robbery, planning of robbery, possession of lethal weapons, and role played by gang members represented our dependent variables. Significantly, a major source of learning about the current pattern of armed robbery remains watching it on the screens such as television cinemas, reading related books, and through friends in schools, clubs and social gatherings. When the source(s) of learning about armed robbery was cross-tabbed against the dependent variables, we found a relative degree of associations existing among the cross-tabbed variables.

Our findings raise a potential fear on the expansiveness and resoluteness of armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria; they also have a number of important substantive policy implications, especially when the major sources of learning about this crime—learning from friends, reading about it in the media and watching screens on armed robbery—are wholly integrated together.

First, more youths are more likely to be attracted leading to an increase in the incidence of the crime since access to television among contemporary Nigeria youths has upsurge.

Second, our findings show that unemployment accounts for the most singular reason why our respondents got involved in armed robbery. The percentage stands at 26.5%, trailing only behind “others” as a variable. Box (1996:269) while responding to contentious issue of unemployment versus crime argued that the issue of excuse should be thrust aside and the real issue of causation—why should economic unemployment (deprivation) leads to more crimes and violence?—is considered. Whether or not a cause of a crime is regarded as an excuse is certainly a political decision and a different issue of discourse altogether, and to declare it unacceptable as an excuse is not simultaneously to effectively deny its probable contribution to the causes. Toeing this path, we think, amounts to a great injustice to the numerous offenders, majority who are barely surviving at the razor edge of the society, and are often at the receiving end of the criminal justice system. As same Box (1996) have also noted, it is highly probable that many of us finding ourselves in similar deprived situation might be compelled to choose similar course of action that we are denying. It must be seen as a most threatening factor, which motivates the drive for armed robbery in Nigeria today. Lack of employment causes a traumatic depression to individuals and groups and seems acute amongst the active young ones. It breeds instant hatred, jealousy, and inferiority complex – as it leads to the disruption of relationships – within the family and at peer level.

Third, significant measure must be taken to discourage the overbearing influence of the western values and ways of life on the youths in particular. The media—television, radio, comets, magazines, journals, and books—which promote false life and leads to crime should be targeted and discouraged to the barest minimum, especially among the youths who are most vulnerable to their influence. “Seeing is believing” so that corruption of the

mind starts with what the eyes see and transmit to the brain for interpretation. Children have the amazing power to imitate, learn and even emulate what they observe, and cognitively store such in the memories.

Fourth, youths should be guarded at all times against bad friends, peer groups, close associates, and relations whose behaviours are questionable, and criminally prone. Gangs and other criminal groups furnish alternative sources of support in place of family unit (Clinard and Abbott, 1973:259). Seeing ostentatious display of riches by armed brigands and corrupt officials being eulogized as “arrivals”, “achievers”, “have-made it”, “fast guys”, with added encomium, makes most youths believe that it is worth taking dare-daring risk ventures such as robbery to succeed.

There are numerous armed robbery control and preventive measures, but the success of any one of these measures depends on a number of factors within the social milieu where this criminal behaviour is taking place. Armed robbery in contemporary Nigeria is a polymorphous; that is, it is a phenomenon that involves many progressive processes and stages. It is, therefore, not a one way simple misconduct predicated on a monolithic factor. The application of one control measure or the other may likely not bring about the expected result. Multiple and holistic interventions are thus, required because as (Howell 1997d:168) observed, multiple direct and indirect path to crime exist.

Conclusively, it is important to state that this study, in its present form, has some obvious theoretical and methodological limitations. Most notably, is the emulation model proposed and advanced here which needs to be further developed to a level of general acceptability. There is also the fact that data for the present study derives from a nonprobability sample and, therefore, lacks rigorous scientific application. This generally restricts the statistical generalizability to all armed robbers in our study areas, and less to armed robbery and armed robbers across the entire nation. What is more, the chi-square test model that was employed may not have been sophisticated enough, and is certainly unable to help us determine the degrees of these associations between the dependent and independent variables. In addition, we made some assumptions that are troubling. For instance, to assume that armed robbers play the same role all the time, is fraught with risk, it is apparently too axiomatic. Future studies that take pain to address these anomalies will obviously make significant contribution to our understanding of armed robbery and armed robbers in Nigeria which takes cognizance of the uniqueness of this crime and criminals across borders.

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