



Pattern of Urban Crimes in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract. Urban crime is becoming more widespread and chronic in many of the world's largest growing cities in Latin America, Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. This study examined the pattern of urban crimes committed in Lagos State, Nigeria. The theory of routine activities was used as the anchor for the study. Secondary data on crimes committed and reported to Lagos State Police Command from 2012 to 2017 were used as the basis for analysis. Most of the offences committed were against properties (37.3%), offences committed against persons (33.8%), other crimes not against persons and properties (18.0%), false pretenses and cheating (9.5%) and local act (1.3%). The means of crimes committed by male and female were 39,285.67 (84.1%) and 7,418.5 (15.9%) respectively. The results of a paired sample t-test (5.135) were significant even at 0.01 level. More than 95% (96.5%) of all the crimes were committed by adults (18 years and above), adolescents (14 -17 years) (2.7%) and juveniles (under 14 years) (0.8%). In reducing crime, the creation of enabling social, economic and physical environments that discourage criminal tendency and activities will be of great value.

Keywords: Pattern of Urban crimes, Offences committed, Gender-based crime.

1. Introduction

Philip (2002) opined that the challenges of urban crimes have become increasingly complex especially now that the world is experiencing dynamic transformation and population growth couple with the risk of violence and instability. The way many large urban regions are currently developing has destructive consequences for societal stability. Ineffective governance, exclusion and segregation lead to inequality, poverty and violence. Cities are becoming havens for international terrorist and criminal networks.

Miller (2009) observed that urban crime exacts a high cost on global development. He further expressed that in sixty countries, over the last ten years, violence, crime, incessant bombing and terrorism have significant and directly reduced economic growth, hampered poverty reduction efforts and limited progress towards the actualization of Millennium Development Goals. Robert (2011) noted that a considerable number of middle and lower-income cities exhibit above-average rate of urban crime. He stated further that urban crime is becoming more widespread and chronic in many of the world's largest-growing cities particularly in Latin America, the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa and South and Central Asia. This is affecting all socio-economic groups in myriad, direct and indirect ways, while the burden of urban crime is heavy on the urban poor.

According to Oduwaye and Lawanson (2007), Lagos State is faced with a plethora of urban insecurity issues ranging from the high prevalence of miscreants popularly called 'area boys', urban crime, juvenile delinquency, to ethnic clashes and political violence. The assertion of the authors on the increasing rate of criminal activities in Lagos State was further buttressed by Oshodi (2010) that the rate of crime occurrence in the urban areas of Lagos has grown to near epidemic proportions mainly due to population explosion, economic inequality and deprivation, social disorganization, poor governance and law enforcement incapacity. Against this background, the study examined pattern of urban crimes committed in Lagos State, Nigeria.

2. Theoretical Framework and Related Literature

Theory of routine activities was used as anchor for this study while relevant literature was reviewed. Clarke and Felson (1993) opined that in practice, the Situational Crime Prevention draws heavily from the theoretical constructs of Routine Activities Theory. The main objective of the Routine Activities Theory

is to provide a macro perspective on crime as it predicts how changes in social and economic conditions influence the overall crime and victimization rate. Cohen and Felson (1979) asserted that in the routine activities approach, three essential elements must interact for a crime to occur: a motivated offender, suitable target and a time/ place lacking capable guardian.

The convergence of these three elements referred to as the crime triangle, increases the opportunity for crime to transpire. Hence the removal of any of these conditions should prevent crime. Initially, the Routine Activities approach concentrated on how decreased guardianship made targets more vulnerable. Cohen and Felson (1979) suggested that motivated offenders and suitable targets have always been around; the supplies of these are persistent and many. What explains the increase in crime rates is the variable decrease of capable guardians because of changes in patterns of activity in society and technological advances. Conversely, from this perspective, the way to prevent crime is to adequately guard the target when faced with a likely offender. Eck (1995) builds on this new aspect of Routine Activities Theory by stating that a third group of individuals can also inhibit crime - those who manage places, or place managers. He further opined that places with weak and negligent management provide more suitable opportunities for crime than places where management is strong and vigilant.

Martin (2009) noted that causes of the crimes could be summarized into four major categories. They are psychological, biological, economic and sociological. For the psychological causes, he stated that an individual's personality and pre-dispositions induces one to commit crimes. One relates the occurrence that happens in the surroundings to his traits and predispositions and reacts which if there is an imbalance in an individual's ego and super-ego, it could result into disorderly behaviour. White, Haines and Asquith (2017) stressed that while superego influences good behavior, a predominance of identity over super-ego propels one to commit crimes regardless of the consequences. Furthermore, biological causes are governed by genetics and neurological make up of an individual. Genetically speaking, an individual is predisposed to commit crime if one's parents have a criminal past. Agnew (2005) opined that neurologically, abnormalities and chemical imbalances in brain are reasons for an individual to behave criminally.

The economical cause which emphasizes more on poverty and deprivation makes an individual to commit crime (Martin, 2009). Poverty leads to

frustration and anger which provokes criminal activities as crimes are committed on the assumption that they will end one's deprivation. However, it is not only poverty and wants that lead to crimes; greediness is also a big contributor to criminal acts (Reiman and Leighton, 2015). Martin (2009) stressed that the sociological causes revolve around the ever-changing lifestyle of people in urban areas. The position of an individual in an urban society puts a limit on him and to adapt himself to the compelling limitations, an individual resort to crimes. An individual also needs to have chances to learn how to commit a crime for which the environment he lives in comes in handy (Verdier and Zenou, 2004).

Caldeira (2000) asserted that the causes of crime are of varying degree and scope throughout history as the rate, type, cause and effect on each society might be highly different. The author further stressed that among criminologist, there is a general consensus that urban areas have higher rates of crime than rural areas but of less certainty is why certain urban settings have higher crime rates than other urban settings with widespread variation in crime levels across urban spaces. Cullen and Levitt (1999) attributed this growing urban crime to a series of socio-economic factors such as unemployment rates, underemployment, rapid urbanization, low wages, social gap between the rich and the poor, educational levels, age composition and population growth rates. Cullen and Levitt (1999) further stressed that key determinants of crime in developing countries include an explosive combination of modernization and fast urbanization, together with high levels of social discrepancies, aggravated consumption levels and political freedom. Robert and David (2013) and U.S. Department of Justice (2010) argued that there are no differences in the types of offenses against property in both the developed and Third World countries.

UN Economic and Social Council (2007) further asserted that most other forms of transnational organized crime also take place largely in cities where organized criminal groups use the same infrastructure as legitimate commerce and use cities and their populations to conceal their activities. Okere (2012) added that in such cases, crime and its aftermath in the city are only part of a bigger picture raising the need to coordinate municipal countermeasures with those taken at the national and international levels. Urban environments may also have an effect on the ways in which the community reacts or responds to crime and how it is perceived by residents as this can be seen both institutionally in the presence of and roles played by law enforcement and the mass media in big cities and in some cases

directly as when riots or mass violence have been sparked by crime or law enforcement actions (Scull, 2014).

Crime against property can be described as crimes that affect another person's rights of ownership (or in some cases possession or control). Typical examples of main offenses against property include: theft, fraud, deception and making off without payment, criminal damage, arson, forgery and forcible entry. Thomson (2019) viewed property crimes as relating to theft or destruction of someone else's property. They can range from lower-level offenses such as shoplifting or vandalism to high-level felonies including armed robbery and arson. Some of such crimes do not require the offender to make off with stolen goods or even to harm a victim - such as burglary, which only requires unlawful entry with the intent to commit a crime.

Robert and David (2013) provided a broader view of crime against property by classifying it into man-made and natural. Natural hazards may include fire, tornado, flood, earthquake, blizzards and other acts of nature that could result in disruptions of damage to the organization such as to cause building collapse, equipment failure, accidents, safety hazards and other events which quite often man-made, intentionally or unintentionally. Moreover, man-made hazards may include crimes against the person (for example, robbery or rape) or crimes against property (theft and pilferage, fraud and embezzlement). Robert and David (2013) further expressed that man also creates problems through terrorism (domestic and international), espionage and sabotage, civil disturbances, bomb threats, fire, workplace violence and accidents. U.S. Department of Justice (2010) identified different types of property crimes and these include: burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft and arson.

Thomson (2019) stated that the term "crime against the person" refers to a broad array of criminal offenses which usually involve bodily harm, the threat of bodily harm or other actions committed against the will of an individual. Williams (2019) gives a clearer picture of crime against person, though, it consists of bodily harm or a threat of bodily harm, the actions are taken without the consent of the individual the crime is committed against, or the victim. Thomson (2019) further expatiated on crimes involving bodily harm (or the threat thereof) as include assault, battery, domestic violence, harassment, kidnapping and stalking.

Louise and Shelly (2001) opined that urban crime is universal, but research suggests that the patterns of urban crime are affected by the nature of cities, social, economic and geographical environments in which they exist. For example, property crime tends to be higher in cities in developed countries, while violent crime is higher in cities in the developing world (Heinemann and Verner, 2006). Regardless of social or economic development, the larger the population of a city, the greater the level of crime and victimization; a relationship often most clearly manifest in homicide rates (Braga, Hureau, and Papachristos 2011). Geographical location and crime patterns from outside the city also make a difference, as do differences in law culture or approaches to crime just as over time and across each city, specific crime patterns influence the general social climate and social reactions to crime, which have a longer-term influence: cultural developments may support lawlessness or the rule of law and social conformity, depending on circumstances (UN Economic and Social Council, 2007).

3. The Study Area

Lagos State in Nigeria has been the major focus of socio-economic, political and physical development since amalgamation in 1914 being the Federal Capital, until December 12, 1991 that the Federal Capital was shifted to Abuja. Lagos is one of the megacities in Africa, a single largest commercial centre, an outpost of the industrialized West in tropical Africa, the economic well-being and relatively affluence made Lagos State a focus of attraction for people within and outside the country to be flowing daily in search of better way of life. Sporadic growth of Lagos that is not well controlled/managed as resulted to various security challenges.

Lagos metropolis is located approximately on Longitude 2^o 42¹ and 3^o 40¹ East of the Greenwich Meridian and Latitude 6^o 23¹ and 6^o 40¹ North as the Equator. Lagos shares boundary with Ogun state in the northern and north-eastern part, Benin Republic in the western part and Atlantic Ocean in the southern part (see Figure 1). The vantage position of Lagos in terms of easy accessibility by air, water, and land transport, either from within the country or outside the country contributed to its sporadic growth and attendant security challenges. In 2016, the National Bureau of Statistics opined that Nigeria recorded 125,790 crimes across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The report with data gathered from Nigerian Police Force and validated by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) noted that Lagos

State has the highest percentage share of total cases reported with 45,385 cases. The state recorded 15,426 offences against persons; 22,885 offences against property; 6,768 offences against lawful authority and 306 offences against local acts despite all efforts to enhance security surveillance which includes the installation of nine hundred and six Closed Circuit Television Cameras in the strategic areas of Lagos State and other measures.

According to Oshodi (2010), population growth coupled with the influxes of international and national migrants, travelers and the resulting numbers

of people concentrated in Lagos State are creating increasingly complex challenges for governments and private stakeholders, among them is urban insecurity which affects the quality of life of residential neighbourhood dwellers in Lagos State. This made security to become a public goods managed by Lagos State government and private entities. In order to complement the formal security sector, citizens and communities in Lagos State involve informal and formal private sectors security providers to protect themselves against criminality and other forms of insecurity.

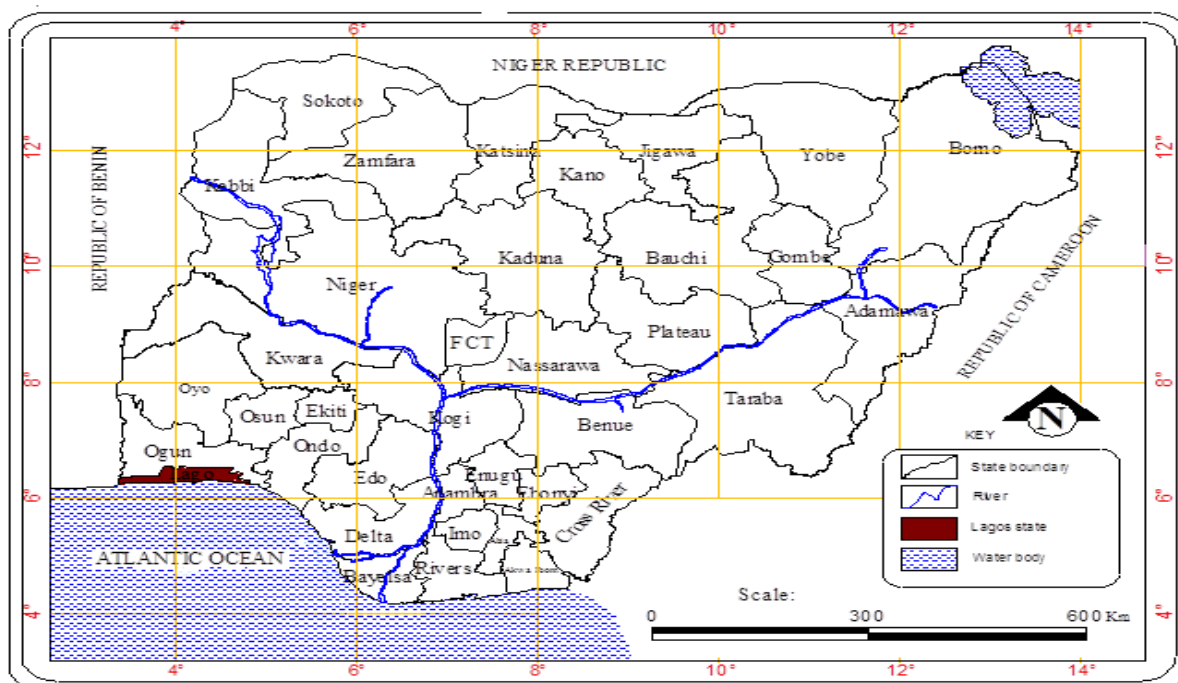


Figure 1: Lagos State within the Context of Nigeria

4. Methodology

The study is based on secondary data. The methodological approach used is meta-analysis whereby secondary materials and information on crimes committed and reported to Lagos State Police Command from 2012 to 2017 were systematically reviewed, assembled, critically appraised, synthesized and re-analysed. Thereafter, relevant findings and conclusions were drawn. Based on the secondary data collected, crimes committed and reported are categorized into four, which include: offences against persons (i.e. murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, suicide, attempted suicide, grievous harm and wounding, assaults, child stealing, slave dealing, rape and indecent assault, kidnapping, unnatural offenses and others); offences against

property (i.e. armed robbery, demanding with menaces, thefts and other stealing, burglary, house breaking, store breaking, false pretense, cheating, forgery, receiving stolen property, unlawful possession, arson and others); offences not against persons and properties (i.e. forgery of currency note, coining offences, gambling, breach of public peace, perjury, bribery and corruption, escaping from lawful custody, and others); and offences against local acts (i.e. non-compliance to traffic acts, township acts, liquor acts, Dog acts, fire arms acts, narcotics and other offences not in compliance with the local acts policy). Data on age and gender of the persons arrested or summoned were collected for further analysis. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and *t*-test at $p \leq 0.05$

5. Findings and Discussions

Information gathered from District Police Officers (DPOs) in Lagos State revealed that crimes against persons increased from 16,815 in 2012 to 21,332 in 2017, an increase of about 27%. Likewise, crimes against properties jumped from 18,187 in 2012 to 24,260 in 2017. The increase of about 33% was attributed to poverty, unemployment, political instability and weakness of the civil societies responsible for security in the state. With reference to false pretense and cheating, nothing was recorded for 2012 but in 2013, 4,450 cases (16.6%) were recorded, 2014 (7,179 cases), 2015 (5,034 cases), 2016 (5,198 cases) and 2017 (4858 cases). Reported cases of offences not against persons and properties which stood at 5296 in 2012 increased to 10,675 in 2013 but declined to 6593 in 2014 but rose again to 11,943 before it decreased to 8,068 and 7,991 in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Offences against local acts accounted for 9.5% in 2012 and 6.7% in 2017 respectively. It was highest in 2015 with 1,904 case (52.3%).

Table 1 contains information on crimes committed by types between 2012 and 2017. Between 2012 and 2017, 94,767 offences (33.8%) were committed against persons, crimes against properties stood at 104,606 (37.3%), false pretenses and cheating (9.5%), other crimes not against persons and

properties (18.0%) and local act (1.3%). On the average, 15,794.5 offences were committed against persons; crimes against properties (17,434.3), false pretense and cheating (4,453.2); other crimes not against persons and properties (8,416) and local acts (606.2). It is vivid from Table 4.1 that offences against persons was lowest in 2014. Most of the offences recorded between 2012 and 2017 were against properties as these accounted for 37.3%. This study, therefore, disagrees with the line of argument by Louise and Shelly (2001) opinion that in developing countries, violent crimes are more than property crimes in urban areas. However, it buttressed the argument of Ogundipe (2013) that 67% of Lagos residents have fear of becoming victims of property crimes and 23.0% have the fear of violent crime.

While crimes against properties have been reducing in the United State of America, it has been fluctuating in Lagos State. U.S. Department of Justice (2010) revealed a downward trend in property crime in the U.S by comparing 5-year trend from 2006 property crime data with that of 2010. According to this source, in 2010, the rate of property crime was 12.1% lower than the 2006 rate and 9.6% below the 2001 rate. In Lagos State, higher number of crimes against properties were recorded in 2015 (21.6%), 2016 (20.1%) and 2017 (23.2%) when compared to 2012 (17.4%) and 2013 (17.7%).

Table 1: Crimes Committed by Types and Years of Occurrence

| Year | Offences Against | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-------|------------|-------|------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | Persons | % | Properties | % | False Pretenses and Cheating | % | Others not Person and Property | % | Local Acts | % |
| 2012 | 16,815 | 17.7 | 18,187 | 17.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 5,296 | 10.5 | 344 | 9.5 |
| 2013 | 17,628 | 18.6 | 18,518 | 17.7 | 4,450 | 16.6 | 10,675 | 21.1 | 710 | 19.5 |
| 2014 | 5,632 | 5.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 7,179 | 26.9 | 6,593 | 13.1 | 157 | 4.3 |
| 2015 | 16,483 | 17.4 | 22,604 | 21.6 | 5,034 | 18.8 | 11,943 | 23.6 | 1,904 | 52.3 |
| 2016 | 16,877 | 17.8 | 21,037 | 20.1 | 5,198 | 19.4 | 8,068 | 16.0 | 279 | 7.7 |
| 2017 | 21,332 | 22.5 | 24,260 | 23.2 | 4,858 | 18.2 | 7,921 | 15.7 | 243 | 6.7 |
| Sub-total | 94,767 | 100.0 | 104,606 | 100.0 | 26,719 | 100.0 | 50,496 | 100.0 | 3,637 | 100.0 |
| Mean | 15,794.5 | | 17,434.3 | | 4,453.2 | | 8,416 | | 606.2 | |
| Prop. by Total | 33.8 | | 37.3 | | 9.5 | | 18.0 | | 1.3 | |

Source: Lagos State Police Command (2018)

A gender analysis of crime committed between 2012 and 2017 shows that more male (84.1%) committed crimes when compared to their female counterparts (15.9%). In 2012, 77.2% males committed crimes. This percentage increased to 75.7% in 2013, increased further to 76.6% and rose astronomically to 95.2% and 96.8% in 2016 and 2017 respectively. In other words, rates of crimes committed has been on the increase except between 2014 and 2015 when it reduced slightly from 76.6% to 76.3%. There was no year that female committed crimes that was up to one-quarter (25%) of total crimes committed. In 2012, only 22.8% crimes were committed by female, 2013 (24.3%), 2014 (23.4%), 2015 (23.7%), 2016 (4.8%) and 2017 (3.2%). During the last two years, the percentages of crimes committed by female were less than 5%. See Table 2.

There was a significant difference in the number of crimes committed by male and female. The means of crimes committed by male and female were 39,285.67 and 7,418.5 respectively. The results of a paired sample *t*-test carried out (as shown in Table 3) show that there was a significant difference in the number of crimes committed by gender. The student *t*-value was 5.135 with 29 degree of freedom. The *p*-value was 0.000 and this is less than the threshold of 0.05.

Table 2: Crime Committed by Gender

| Year | Number of Crimes Committed By | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|------|---------|------|
| | Male | % | Female | % |
| 2012 | 31,391 | 77.2 | 9,251 | 22.8 |
| 2013 | 39,361 | 75.7 | 12,620 | 24.3 |
| 2014 | 14,986 | 76.6 | 4,575 | 23.4 |
| 2015 | 44,251 | 76.3 | 13,717 | 23.7 |
| 2016 | 49,002 | 95.2 | 2,457 | 4.8 |
| 2017 | 56,723 | 96.8 | 1,891 | 3.2 |
| Sub-Total | 235,714 | | 44,511 | |
| Mean | 39,285.67 | | 7,418.5 | |
| Prop. by Total | 84.1 | | 15.9 | |

Source: Lagos State Police Command (2018)

Table 3: Paired Samples T Test: Crime Committed by Male and Female (2012-2017)

| Pair 1 | Male - Female involved in crimes (2012-2017) | Paired Differences | | | | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | |
|--------|--|--------------------|----------------|------------|---|----------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | | Lower | | | | Upper |
| | | 6373.433 | 6798.392 | 1241.211 | 3834.872 | 8911.994 | 5.135 | 29 | .000 |

Source: Author's Construct (2018)

While 96.5% of the total number of crimes committed were linked to adults (18 years and above), 2.7% were linked to adolescents (14 -17 years). The remaining 0.8% crimes committed were linked to juveniles (under 14 years). It is, thus, evident from Table 4 that adults commit criminal offences more than any other age group (See Table 4).

Table 4: Crime Committed by Age

| Year | Age (Years) of Criminals | | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-----|-----------|-----|----------|------|
| | Under 14 | % | 14 – 17 | % | Adult | % |
| 2012 | 307 | 0.8 | 1,722 | 4.2 | 38,613 | 95 |
| 2013 | 269 | 0.5 | 2,258 | 4.3 | 49,454 | 95.1 |
| 2014 | 87 | 0.4 | 475 | 2.4 | 18,999 | 97.1 |
| 2015 | 1,506 | 2.6 | 2,096 | 3.6 | 54,366 | 93.8 |
| 2016 | 10 | 0 | 516 | 1 | 50,933 | 99 |
| 2017 | 2 | 0 | 482 | 0.8 | 58,130 | 99.2 |
| Sub-Total | 2,181 | | 7,549 | | 270,495 | |
| Mean | 363.5 | | 1,258.167 | | 45,082.5 | |
| Prop. by Total | 0.8 | | 2.7 | | 96.5 | |

Source: Lagos State Police Command (2018)

In considering the criminal offences committed between 2012 and 2017, there was no significant difference in the crime rate over a period of 6 years against the grand total. This is the sum of all the crimes confirmed to be true cases over the years. The lowest was in 2012 (98.3%) while the highest was in 2017 (99.5%). There was irregular movement in the rate of crime but the trend showed increase in crimes over the years. Moreover, the rate of crime is in an upward trend of 98.3% in 2012, 99.2% in 2013, 99.4% in 2014, 99.4% in 2016 and 99.5% in 2017. See Figure 2. This implies that crime rate is at upsurge in Lagos State and it is threatening to lives and properties. This validated the assertions of Oduwaye and Lawanson (2017), and Oshodi (2007) that Lagos State is faced with plethora of urban

crimes and it has grown to near epidemic. Figure 3 shows that societal unrest (breach of public peace) was higher than any other crime from 2012 to 2017. It was highest in 2016 (13%) and lowest in 2015 (7%). Burglary was next, highest in 2016 (3%) and lowest in 2014 (2%). CLEEN Foundation (2013) opined that the Lagos State is the second most vulnerable site for kidnapping (4.0%), fourth in theft of mobile phones (55.0%) and third in car theft (5.0%) in Nigeria. The increasing rate of crime and the inability of the police in providing adequate protection for the residents has made individuals, communities and business owners to adopt different private security approaches as alternative framework in ensuring safety of lives and properties which validated the assertion of Ogboi and Eze (2013).

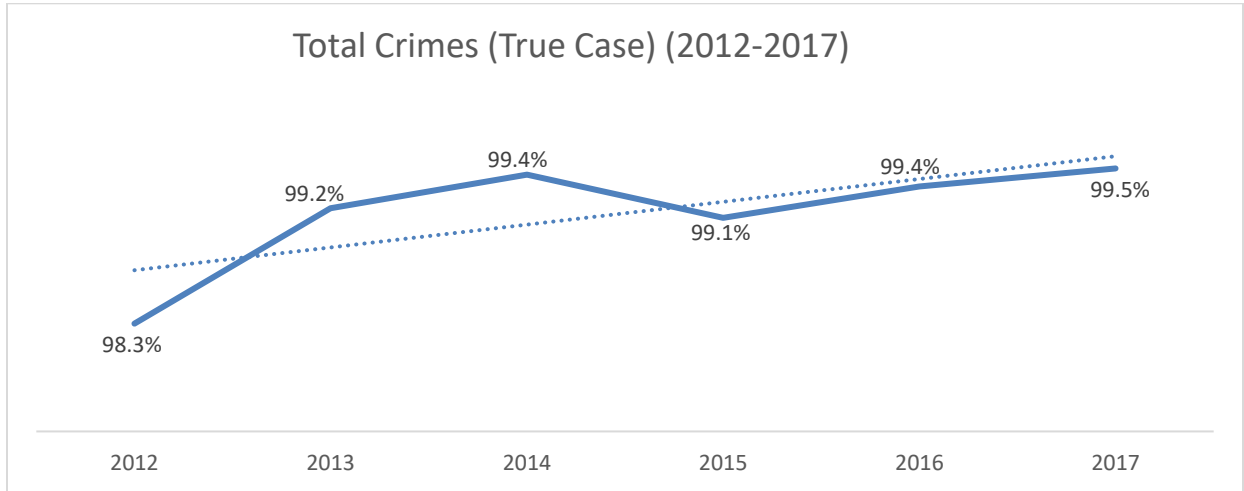


Figure 2: Total Crimes, 2012 - 2017

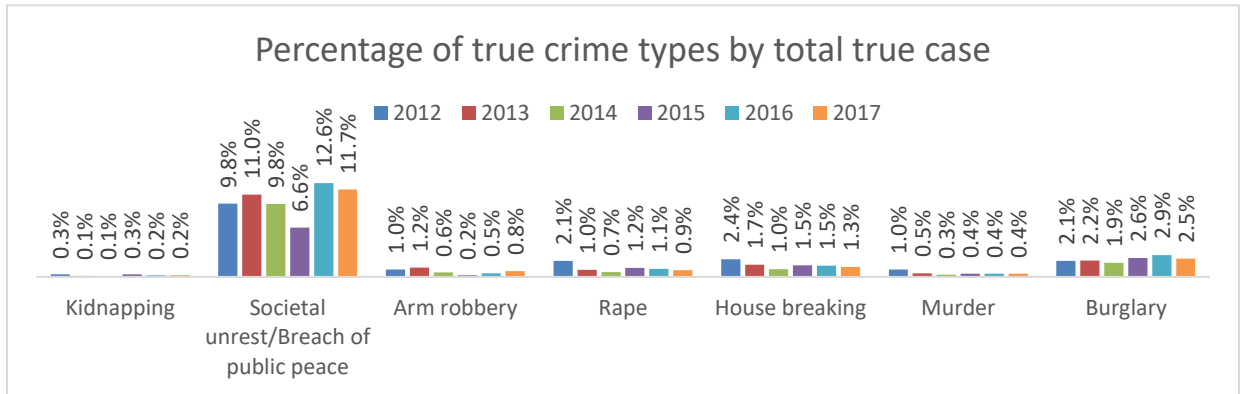


Figure 3: Percentage of True Crime Type by Total True Case

6. Recommendations and Conclusion

Crime has been increasing in Lagos state and government intervention is paramount in reducing the phenomenon. Creation of enabling social, economic and physical environments that discourage criminal tendency and activities will be of great value. Typical examples of these include: installation of Close Circuit Television (CCTV); provision of infrastructural facilities such as good roads with functioning street lights; introduction of youth empowerment programmes with a view to reducing poverty and unemployment; and partnership of state and non-state actors involved in urban security

governance. Moreover, there is a need to provide modern and post-modern offices and field operational equipment for the Nigeria Police Force. This will enable the Force to have quick access to information and swift reach to the crime scene. Examples of these equipment include: strong internet based operational facilities, crime spot detector drones, digitized maps, etc. Community policing that strengthens quality and quantity of contacts between Lagos communities and police should be improved upon. All these recommendations would contribute to the positive reformation in the security architecture of the State.