
The Causes and Consequences of *Yan Shila* Street Robbery in Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The Yan Shila gangs in Adamawa State are the group of youth that engages into street robbery. The group most dangerous activities include; snatching of items such as phones, handbags, purses, money among other. This paper examines the causes and consequences of Yan Shila street robbery. The method used in data collection is in-depth interview directed at respondents through multi-stage sampling techniques. It was found that unemployment, peers influence, desire for hedonistic party lifestyle and phone owners' negligence are the major causes of the criminality. The major consequences as reveals includes; trauma, grudges, pains, loss of valuable items, bad reputation to the state among others. Promotion of skill acquisition programme among youths and provision of rehabilitation and reformation programme to both convicts and victims, are the possible solution to the crime. Couple with effective collaboration between police and the host community for the purpose of solving community problems.*

Keywords: *Consequences, Causes, Street Robbery, Yan Shila, Youth.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Crime is often a global phenomenon, and it occurs in many forms. Just about everyone in the world has been exposed to some forms of crime or another in their lifetime, even if they did not commit the crimes themselves (Balogun, 2018). The Nigerian daily newspaper reports, television news headlines, and radio announcements have shown that the activities of robbers are increasing at an alarming rate; both the rich and the poor are always in a perpetual state of fear because nobody really knows where and when they will strike. In describing the incidence of robbery, Lumun et al, (2013), argues that it took place on every seventy-five seconds, and half of the robberies known to the police are committed on the street. A clear example is that of *Yan Shila* in Adamawa state. This group according to Gumel (2016), represent a gang of youths who engage in the snatching of varieties of items on the street such as; cell phones, palmtops, tablets phones, laptops, handbags, wallets, money, and other valuable items but small in size that can be easily moved. Thus, the act itself is an infringement of the fundamental human right of people in such places. Shalakwan (2016), discerns that *Yan Shila's* street robbery has led to the falling standard of Adamawa state reputation in the eyes of many, as each day passes, the state witness more and more alarming cases of street robbery. The strain of this crime now imposes on state and federal government of Nigeria, which failed to provide substantial opportunity for youths to reduce their deprivation through legitimate means. Since this kind of crime is linked to some significant imbalances in the existing social system of society. Certainly, until certain measures are drastically taken, the problem will not only continue to permeate the society but its dire consequences may be catastrophic to peace, unity, and development.

2. CONCEPT OF ROBBERY

One of the difficulties in the explanation of robbery is it diversities of views by different scholars and jurisdictions. Thus, a universally accepted definition of robbery is underprovided. However, some element repeatedly appeared in the major views of robbery. For instance, Wright & Decker (2002), see robbery as the use or threat of force to take someone property. In England and Wales the Office for National Statistics (2017), perceives robbery as the stealing or attempting to steal from someone with the use of force or threat of force. While, Warner (2007), posits robbery as the taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of threat or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear. Thus, the paper concludes that the taking of property of another, with the intent to permanently deprive the person access to the property, by

means of force or fear is robbery. For the purpose of clarification, robbery has been classified into various classes, such as armed robbery, bank robbery, and commercialist robbery. Furthermore, urbanization which led to street layout in many (if not all) cities of the world, ease the stress of moving from one place to another and becomes the foundation of street robbery as a new form of robbery (Ukwayi, et al 2013).

Street robbery is described as theft with the use of (or the threat of using) violence (Piotrowski, 2011). To Tompson (2015), this use of force or threat of force is mainly to steal property from a person in public spaces. Such as; public squares, religious or ceremonial gatherings, parks, public libraries etc. In this manner, street robbery concentrates at specific times, in particular places, and happens to certain types of people. Jacob & Wright (1999), observe that street robbery mostly occurs in the late afternoon and evening hours. The evening hour can bring people who have consumed alcohol and illegal substances into contact with the street robbers. The afternoon peak in the week is often attributed to the end of the school day while hours of darkness may encourage more robberies. Street robbery has the following five characteristics as described by Monk, Heinonen & Eck (2010), they include; (a) the offender targets a victim; (b) the victim is a pedestrian, stranger or a person in an isolated area; (c) the offender attempts or completes a theft of cash or property; (d) the offender uses force or the threat of force against the victim; and (e) the offense occurs in a public or semi-public place, such as street, in an alley, in a parking garage, in a public park, in or near public transportation, or in a shared apartment hallway.

According to Ade (2010), street robbery is traceable to the formation of groups by individuals who have related interests with the aim of having a strong network. Additionally, during their activities, the street robbers tend to take certain items such as; cash, purses, wallets, credit cards, mobile phones, MP3 players, jewelry, clothing, and other small electronic devices like; cameras, palmtops, laptop computers among others (Roman & Chalfin, 2007).

2.1 Causes of Street Robbery in the Society

This section deals with studies that have been taken on causal factors of street robbery in different settings. Some of those studies as will be indicated below shows individual rational thinking and search for hedonism as the causal factors, while findings of other studies indicates environmental factors such as slum area influence, drugs, and peers influence among others.

Ihedigbo, Ilesanmi & Ali (2013), observe that slums are still visible in Jimeta-Yola (Jambutu, Luggere, Nassarawo and Rumde Wards) part of the main city in Adamawa State. They also argue that such places represent home for quack patient medicine sellers thrives in the illicit sale of stimulants, sedatives, hallucinogens etc. A safe place for black marketers of petroleum products, and the hideout of the notorious *Maitasine* Riot perpetrators in Adamawa state during the early 1980s. Their study indicates that *Yan Shila* Street Robbers originated from those slum areas of Yola North Local Government as it indicates petty theft as the highest crime perpetrated among youth in these areas. Sometimes slum along cannot spur criminality but when illiteracy affect the youths of such setting the possibility of youths' engagement into unlawful activities will be exalted. In the same vein, Yusuf (2016), argues that illiteracy has won the battle against awareness and morality among some youths who have already become an army reserve of recruits for street criminalities since education is under attack in the entire state.

Unemployment plays a key role in influencing street robbery. In other words, survival-by-any-means is inevitable when scarcity is dominating, similarly, Umar (as cited in Usman, 2015), indicates unemployment as the waver of crime among Nigerian youths. Job and wealth creations are the antidote to poverty, which means an empowered youth is a fortified youth. In contrast street crimes and other criminalities such as; the *Aguleri-Umuleri* war in Anambra State; the low intensity war in the Niger-Delta; *Ife-Modakeke* dispute; the post-election crisis and the asymmetric war with *Boko Haram* going on in large part of the Northern region of Nigeria that threaten national security have been ascribed to youth unemployment (Osakwe, 2013).

Many of the street robbery sample in Shover & Honaker (as cited in Wright, Brookman & Bennett, 2006), show that the crime was committed not to sustain the offenders' lives, but rather to maintain a particular sort of hedonistic lifestyle that rejects 'rationality and long-range planning in favour of enjoying the moment. Smith (2003), conduct a study of personal robbery on over 2,000 crime reports and witness statements in seven police force areas in England and Wales. He concludes that the main motive for robbery was accumulation of financial gain from the side of the suspect. However, when the robbery is committed by groups of young offenders, he found out that it

serves as a means of enhancing personal reputation and status. Another study in the United Kingdom acknowledged the influence of cultural and instrumental factors such as; the need for money for everyday expenditures, status objects, designer clothes, drugs fun and excitement as the spur for street crimes (FitzGerald et al. as cited in Wright, Brookman & Bennett, 2006).

2.2 The Consequences of Street Robbery on Security

The most frequent consequence of street robbery is fear-inducement, because of the context in which it is likely to occur during the course of someone's routine activities. When this fear becomes more psychological intensifies, Williams (1999), says the victims can have trouble sleeping and difficulty in concentrating at work, during shopping, and during school attendants. They may even withdraw themselves from participating in activities they once enjoyed. And when the psychological problems persist, DeValve (2005), argues that the reactions may lead to resentment, anger against the offender(s) and Criminal Justice System. In unison, Ekpenyong (2006), believes that psychological distress can result to victims' inability to cope with the world around them and if severe enough, it can lead to a psychological disorder such as depression and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). While in some victims, the symptoms of depression, anxiety, hostility, and fear will manifest for several months following the victimization (Uyi as cited in Ukwai, 2013).

Apart from the psychological trauma associated with such encounter, studies indicate that such criminality led to loss of lives and properties, sustenance of injuries for several months and years. Victimized pedestrians and passengers suffer loss of economic man-hours; attacks at the Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) with intention to forcefully collect withdrawn cash, seizure and snatch of cell phones, laptops, among others. These set a benchmark for collapse or backdrop of so many businesses. Students are affected financially and academically as their means of connection and communication are taken away. The amount of time spent by victims, offenders, their families, and juries during court trials also take away from community productivity (Aborisade, 2010; Okafor, 2011; Ogbekor, 2012; Osakwe, 2013).

3. METHODOLOGY

The study area was Yola North, also known as Jimeta is a local government area in Adamawa State with administrative headquarters in the city of Jimeta. Yola North local government area is in Adamawa Central Senatorial district alongside Gombi, Girei, Hong, Fufure, Song and Yola South local government areas. The area also forms a federal constituency alongside Girei and Yola South local government areas. Its area is bounded to the north by Girei local government area, and to the east, south, and west by Yola South local government area. It also has an area of 113 km², making it the smallest local government area by landmass in Adamawa State (Tukool, 2018). With 224,233 projected population in 2010 ([National Bureau of Statistics, 2013](#)).

Multi-Stage sampling was used to select respondents for the study. The procedure began with the purposive selection of Yola North Local Government Area of Adamawa State, meanwhile, the area witnesses frequent incidence of the criminality. Due to financial and time constraints, the second stage involved the selection of five (5) wards out of the eleven (11) wards in Yola North, using the simple random techniques. The selected wards include; Jambutu, Karewa, Nassarawo, Luggere, and Rumde. The third stage involved the selection of two (2) enumeration areas each from the five wards, using the simple random sampling method, this makes a total of ten (10) enumeration areas. From the enumeration areas, thirty (30) interviewers were chosen each purposively as the final respondents. That is, three (3) respondents each were purposively chosen from each enumeration area selected. Out of the thirty (30) sample size selected for the study six (6) each from households, commercial tricyclists, victims of the *Yan Shila*, students, drug dealers and officers of the Nigeria Police Force were purposively chosen and interviewed. The instrument used for the collection of data in the study is an in-depth interview. The instrument is unstructured, open-ended and discovery-oriented which generate significance information to the topic under study and the interview was designed in such a way that allows for the realization of the objective of the study.

4. RESULT

4.1 Causes of *Yan Shila* Street Robbery in Adamawa State

This section deals with respondents' view on the motivational factors of *Yan Shila* street robbery in Adamawa state. An interview with a drug dealer reveals that:

When you ask one of the members of *Yan Shila* why he is carrying out their activities, he will tell you is as a result of lack of job or work to do. We in Jimeta majority of our youth do not have a job or work to do. The only work to do is this snatching of items and selling of marijuana. Some hide under drug dealing to take care of their needs, while others engage in snatching activities. (IDI with drugs dealer in Rumde, 2018).

In the same direction, an interview with a police officer reveals:

Almost all the *Yan Shila* members we arrested or apprehended only depend on street robbery as their source of income. When we ask them what they normally do before joining the gangs, some said they were working as labourers in site works, while others said they have no occupation and they do not specialize in any manual labour (IDI with Police Officer, 2018).

Thus, unemployment plays a vital role in influencing *Yan Shila* in Adamawa state. Additionally, peers also influence their fellow ones to engage in this wrongdoing. An interview with a commercial tricyclist drug dealer reveals that:

Some of the youths are involved in this *Yan Shila* group, not because they lack employment, some good number of those youths are tricycle riders (*Keke Napep*). They are influenced by bad peers who do not have work. If one did not influence you, the other friend will successfully influence you by saying, I will pay for your *Keke Napep* balance today. We will go to so-so-so, and I will work there. If you use to earn three to four thousand and he says, he will pay ₦10, 000 or ₦5, 000. You may end-up saying let's go. (IDI with commercial tricyclist, 2018).

In portraying peers influence as part of the reasons for *Yan Shila* criminalities. A male staff of Central Bank of Nigeria, Yola Branch. Who participated in this survey, also reveals that:

Some of *Yan Shila* members are *Keke Napep* riders, they have friends who are not members of the group and they are not employed. And when those unemployed friends see their friends buying things and changing clothes of which they could not afford because of their starvation, they therefore felt the need to belong, join the group for the purpose of wearing the same things their *Yan Shila* friends are wearing and solving other personal needs (IDI with victim a staff of CBN, 2018).

Sometimes the victim's act can precipitate the *Yan Shila* to snatch their property, because of their negligence. An interview with a commercial tricyclist in Rumde reveals that:

Yes, there is phone owner's negligence, you will see someone in the night at the street layout removing expensive phone. A kind of phone that if any one of us sees it, he will be able to get up to ten, twenty or thirty thousand when he snatches and sell the phone. You see even if I am not a member of *Yan Shila*, I will not live it. (IDI, with a commercial tricyclist, 2018).

4.2 Effect of *Yan Shila* Street Robbery in Adamawa State

This section deals with respondents view on the consequence that *Yan Shila* street robbery has to humanity. A head of household in Nassarawo in an interview, observes that:

The money or bag they collected from the victims sometimes might not belong to them, as such the victims will bitterly lament on the act. More so, when your parent bought a phone for you to come and use it in the school and they snatched it from use, it will be of great pain to you. (IDI with a head of household, 2018).

Words directly from the mouth of a student who was a victim of the *Yan Shila* Attacks, reveals that:

Yan Shila attacked me when I was coming out from my usual night reading at computer science lecture room. They pointed a knife at me and told me to give them

my phone and everything in my pocket. Because of fear of been injured I gave them all items at my possession, including my phone. That was how I lost my parents and friends contacts as well as quick access to the internet to source additional material for my studies with my phone; I spend almost three weeks in a constant state of fear not to be attacked again (An IDI, with student Victim from Adamawa State Polytechnic, 2018).

Another female student of Adamawa State Polytechnic Yola Main Branch, describe the *Yan Shila* street activities as:

People like to enter *Keke Napep* in the evening, at the most instant, this is the time of *Yan Shila* operation. If you accidentally enter *Keke Napep* that belongs to them, they will use force on you and throw you out while riding after they might have successfully collected your items. Such victims can have a problem with their legs and sometimes scratches in other parts of their bodies. They attack one female staff who is working in the National Orientation Agency at Federal Secretariat where I did my Industrial Training. They pushed her out of the *Keke Napep*, on her way to Karewa extension, after they have succeeded in taking her bag and laptop. She suffered a lot of crushes, leg dislocation, pains and she could not be able to come to the office for a week (IDI with a female student, from Adamawa State Polytechnic 2018).

The most frequent effect of *Yan Shila* street robbery is the fear-inducement, because of the context in which it is likely to occur during the course of someone's routine activities. Police personnel who also participate in the survey reveal that:

The way the victims usually talk when they are reporting their attack incidents, we normally feel in us that such persons lost valuable things, most especially when they start mentioning things like phones, ATM and money which was taking away from them. Most of them are affected psychologically when their items are not recovered (IDI, with A Police Personnel, 2018).

Not only the victims suffered the negative effect of *Yan Shila* activities, but the state also suffers bad reputation from others who are outside the state or wishes to come to the state. A participant in the survey from Nassarawo Borehole reveals that:

We use to chat with others and they use to say, Kai Adamawa Kam, we don't think we can come. When I asked why, they mostly replied that is because of *Yan Shila*, who will not even allow you to hold your phone and use it. They will do all they could to snatch it away from you (IDI, with a male respondent from Nassarawo Borehole, 2018).

As people continue to live in fear as a result of persistent occurrences of street robbery. Social and economic activities may slow down and eventually cripple. Varieties of businesses are the profound condition for rapid economic growth and development of a society. With above, In line with the above, a male respondent from Rumde, observes that:

People of Adamawa who are having relatives outside the state, they usually inform their fellow ones about this dangerous group of youth, so that they will be watchful whenever they are coming to the State. This signal does not only discourage those people but also it discouraged those who want to come and invest, or make any business in the state (IDI, with a male respondent from Rumde, 2018).

4.3 Solution to *Yan Shila* Street Robbery in Adamawa State

Crime is like a disease that results to so many negativities. Like any disease with a specific prescription, so also a crime. In other words, the criminal activities of *Yan Shila* need a specific combating measures distinct from other crimes like insurgency, corruption, assassination among others. In the search for the solution to *Yan Shila* criminalities in Adamawa state. A female student who was a victim of the gangsters reveals that:

Students and other people should be very careful with their phones...ladies should watch over their bags especially in the evening around 6-8pm as they are moving on the street or in *Keke Napep*...the government should form a group that will be able to create awareness to the youth against involvement into the *Yan Shila* activities, through television and radio stations (An IDI, with student Victim from Adamawa State Polytechnic, 2018).

Another respondent from Down Luggere reveals that:

People should be very careful with the *Keke Napep* they enter. If you stop a Keke and you meet some people inside, then one of them come down and give you chance to enter, you should refuse. The best thing you should also do is to tell the *Keke Napep* rider to go. The state should assign the police and other security personnel to go to their basing area. They should make sure they arrest them all and put surveillance at such places. Lastly, the state should provide skill acquisition training center so that the convicted members will be able to learn a particular trade (IDI, with a male respondent from Down Luggere, 2018).

Police personnel who participated in the study reveals that:

Being the hotel and place manager you have to do the police job and any other security work at your base, if you see any of the *Yan Shila* because they look suspicious. Just inform one or two people that can help you to arrest them and take them to the police station or any nearby security agency....The *Yan Shila* know the police, so also a policeman needs to know them. Immediately you see someone looking suspicious, try to engage such person with the question, in order to clear your doubt. By doing so, one will be able to come across to a member of the group and successful apprehend the member (IDI, with A Police Personnel, 2018).

4.4 Discussion

In view of the above, the paper sees *Yan Shila*, as a group of youths who organized themselves sometimes with the aid of tricycles (*Keke Napep*), moving around streets of towns and cities confronting, blitzing, injuring and snatching valuable items small in size, with or without the use of knives, cutlasses and others similar proportionate objects which ease the commission of the act. Most importantly, the discussion of this study is based on three objectives designed by the researcher. These include; causes of *Yan Shila* street robbery in Adamawa State, consequences of *Yan Shila* street robbery in Adamawa State and the possible solution to *Yan Shila* street robbery in Adamawa State.

The drives that motivate *Yan Shila* youth to street robbery in the state was found to be complex changes in economic, social and cultural factors which led to unemployment, peers influence, desire for hedonistic party lifestyle, and expensive wears, phone owners' negligence, unemployment and lack of legitimate skill and unskilled labour among the young. Therefore, the findings of the study correspond with Usman (2015), that unemployment is the waver of crime among youths in Nigeria. Ukwai, et al. (2013), identifies the desire for material things such as cars, house, phones among others as the reasons for youths crime in some part of Nigeria. Also Jacob & Wright (1999), in their study "Stick-Up, Street Culture, and Offender Motivation" in the United State of America indicate hedonistic party lifestyle as one of the inducing factors of street culture. However, Ihedigbo et al (2013), study, is in contrast to the view of this paper as it indicates that slum areas are the predisposal factor of insecurity in the same area of study.

It was found that the consequences of *Yan Shila* street robbery in the study area includes; loss of victims' valuable items (such as, money, bags, jewelries, etc.), denial of the means of communication (i.e. phones, laptops etc.), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, injury, grudges, dislocation and pains to victims; the would-be victims suffer threat; while investors and visitors are discourage from coming to the state. Thus, these result to bad reputation to the state and the populace. Although DeValve (2005), result, contradict this findings, which indicates victims' resentment to the Criminal Justice System (CJS) as the major consequence of such crime. Conversely, Petersen &

Walker (2003) believes that psychological distress can result to victims' inability to cope with the world around them and if severe enough, it can lead to a psychological disorder such as depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Findings show that individuals should be observant of the kind of tricycle they enter and also be capable guidance of their items; the place managers should quickly report any suspicious person to the appropriate authority. This corresponds to the new postulate of Routine Activity Theory (RAT) that for a crime to occur, an offender has to get loose from his handlers and then find a target unprotected by guardians in a place free from intrusive managers (Felson, 1995). Findings also reveals that the criminals have the ability of knowing security personnel, therefore, the personnel are expected to have the capacity and ability of detecting criminals; personnel should be assigned to the loops and holes where the criminals are likely to be found, while the government should promote skill acquisition programme to assist youths and convict to acquire trade skills. The findings agree with the recommendation of Balogun (2018), in his study on the nature and causes of *Yan Shila* in the same state.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this paper it is clear that *Yan Shila* street robbery has become a very popular crime in Adamawa State and remain a major security challenge aside from *Boko Haram* insurgency and herdsmen/ farmers the criminality continues to exist due to many causal factors which include: peers influence, desire for hedonistic party lifestyle, and expensive wears, phone owners' negligence, unemployment and lack of legitimate skill and unskilled labour among the youth. The paper also indicates some of the consequences of *Yan Shila* street robbery to the state which includes: threatens to safety and security of people, their property, their sense of wellbeing, and threat to social order; it also reduces people's quality of life, through physical injuries it serves as a means of discouragement among investors and visitors who desire to invest or come to the state. Thus, until certain measures are taking the activities of *Yan Shila* will not only continue in the state but will escalate to neighbourhood.

5.1 Recommendations

In view of the above, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

1. The government of Adamawa State should lunch awareness campaign in all the media stations, and placing of posters in public space which renounce the activities of *Yan Shila* Street Robbery and the punishment awaiting anyone found guilty of the act. They should also carry-out the campaign on social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn among others, because they are the platform for sharing ideas.
2. The Police should publish photos of known *Yan Shila* robbers, on Media, public space, and areas where the robbery frequently occur. This strategy may deter repeat offenders as well as potential offenders. And the posting photos can work best if those photos are published on robbery-specific "WANTED" posters rather than posters including various crime types.
3. The Nigerian Police should put more effort in disrupting stolen goods markets this can help in reducing street robbery in the state. Because the street robbers often take valuable non-cash items to such markets to exchange with money.
4. The pedestrians and strangers should avoid visiting unfamiliar, isolated, and places that are uncovered by street lights in the night. They should avoid openly and careless holding their items, so as to reduce motivating street robbery. While place managers should quickly report any suspicious person to the appropriate authority.
5. The government of Adamawa should provide poverty reduction programmes that will capture unemployed youth and also fund should be given to youths who acquired some skills so that they will be able to start-up a business firm.
6. There should be adequate rehabilitation programmes that will help in reforming those who are victimized and affected psychologically, there should also be adequate guidance and counsellors at various schools and institutions to awake the mind of youth on the dangers of engaging in street robbery and its implications to the offenders.

7. There is also a need for effective collaboration between the police and the host community for the purpose of solving community crime problems. These will firstly, enhance individuals to freely give information about the criminals and crimes perpetrated in the community. Secondly, the information given will serve as a lead, of preventing and controlling crimes by the police despite they are few in numbers.
8. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) should double their efforts in sensitizing people especially youths, on the implications of street robbery on the individuals (i.e. Yan Shila), their families and the society at large. This will help immensely in deterring youths who may wish to join the ungodly act of street robbery.

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