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**DEPARTMENT OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING**  
**SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY**  
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, MINNA



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## **URBAN SECURITY PROFILE: A STUDY OF THE DIMENSIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CRIME IN MINNA, NIGER STATE.**

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### **Abstract**

*Human settlements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century face a lot of security challenges that threaten their liveability and sustainability. Thus, issues of security of lives and properties, most especially in the urban centre are at the centre stage of global development concerns. This study examines the profile of crime in Minna with respects to the major types of crime and their variation in time and space. Among others, it was found out that the types of crime in the town include armed robbery, assault, attempt to commit crime, cheating, theft, rape and, intimidation. Analysis of crime dynamics over the eight year period shows fluctuations in the number or rate of crime committed between year 2000 and 2008. The age bracket of those involved in criminal activities is between 18 and 45 (adolescents and adults) and the mean age of criminals is 28.96. It was also found out that relatively higher incidence of crime were recorded in low quality neighbourhoods where most of the low income people reside. The study thus recommends programmes of gainful employment, poverty alleviation and urban renewal in order to stem the tide of crime in the town.*

**Keywords:** Crime, Security, Characteristics and Variations

### **Introduction**

The security of lives and properties in human settlements is of great importance to the socio-economic, health and the general wellbeing of people worldwide. Adequate security brings about safety and ensures social, economic and political order which enables the city to function well and which allows the citizen to prosper. On the other hand, insecurity has serious negative social, economic and political implications. It creates a situation of fear and anxiety which affects the peoples' psyche and the level of their productivity. Thus, urban security is an issue of global importance which concerns governments and stakeholders across the world.

Urban security is concerned with a wide range of issues such as human safety, urban livability and environmental sustainability. Security issues cover areas of security of lives and properties, safety in buildings, food security, economic security, health security, protection from natural and

man-made disasters etc. However, within the context of human settlement, urban safety and/or security is placed within a wider perspective of human security and it focuses on the security of people and their properties.

Urban security remains one of the main areas of concern to city planners. This is because; inadequate security or lack of it portends great danger to the city's orderly development and is capable of eroding the gains of sustainable development and good urban governance. In view of the importance of adequate security to sustainable urban development, this study examines the security profile of Minna. It focuses on human security with emphasis on crime committed in Minna, Niger State. The intention is to dimension the characteristics of crime in the town with respect to the amount of crime recorded between year 2000 and 2008 as well as their fluctuation in time and space.

#### **Review of Urban Security Issues and Problems**

Throughout human history, man depended on the city for their livelihoods and safety (Hardwick, 1994). The city structures provide shelter for man and security is provided through security institutions. In the past these security functions were guaranteed and provided by the ancient cities like Rome and Greece. However, as human settlements grew in spatial extent and in functional complexity, these sacred functions of the city are seriously threatened in modern times.

As it were, the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed an unprecedented level of population growth, migration and urbanization. This brings about urban security problem. According to UN Habitat (2007), the threat to urban security stems from the process of urban growth and interaction of social, economic and institutional behaviours within the city. Thus there is a positive correlation between criminality and the level of urbanization (Nicolau, 1994).

Global statistics on urban violence and crime show scaring figures that indicate that our towns and cities are under security threats. For instance, there was an increase in crime per 100,000 persons from 2,300 in 1980 to 3,000 in year 2000. The rate of crime per 100,000 persons increased from 6.0 in 1990 to 8.8 in year 2000 and 60% of urban dwellers in developing

countries have been victims of crime with victimization rate reaching 70% in Latin America and Africa (UN Habitat, 2007).

In Africa, cities like Lagos, Cape Town and Nairobi account for sizable proportion of crime in their countries. The growing amount of crime in these and other large settlements has brought about security problems in many nations. In Nigeria, for instance, urban security threats have increased over the years. Among others, NISER (2005) identified the categories of crime committed in Nigeria to include cross border criminality, violent crime e.g. armed robbery and car snatching, ethnic and religious riots, cyber crime as well as economic crime and corruption.

The different crimes committed are found to have serious negative impacts on the urban residents and the nation as a whole. The negative impacts of crime include injury and death, loss of valuable properties, anxiety and psychological stress, living in perpetual fear, reduced productivity, impediment to foreign investment and capital flight, migration and brain drain, and stigmatization of neighbourhoods or sections of the city.

The different impacts of urban security problems have some implications for the urban economy as well as the functioning and sustainability of cities. It is important to check the increasing crime rate in the urban centers in order to ensure the proper functioning of our cities. In order to effectively control crime, however, the nature and character of crime must be understood and well dimensioned. This is the main preoccupation of this paper.

### **The Research Context**

The study is focused on Minna, the administrative capital of Niger State. Minna lies on latitude 9°33' north and longitude 6°33' east on a geographical bed of in differentiated based complex (see figure 1). From an initial small Gbagyi (Gwari) village, the town grew steadily with the construction of railway line from Baro through Minna in 1911.

Minna became the administrative headquarters of Niger State in 1976. With migration of people and businesses into the capital town, it has grown from its initial small population of 12,810 in 1953 to 189,200 in 1991, and to 209,951 in year 2006 (National Population Commission, 2006).

The movement of the Federal capital of Nigeria to Abuja further influenced the growth of Minna and the heterogeneity of its population. The population growth experienced over the years is matched with physical expansion of the town and Minna is gradually assuming the status of a big city with high potentials of urban security problem.

### **Data Method and Analysis**

The study utilizes secondary data on crime committed in Minna between January 2000 and April 2008. Information on the date, location, type of crime and age of criminals was collected from the police headquarters, Minna in April, 2008. A total of 665 crime cases were used in the analysis. The data was analyzed, using SPSS for Windows; version 13 and the results were presented in simple frequency tables and charts.

### **Security Profile in Minna: Some Key findings**

Research findings on the dimensions of crime in Minna show that a wide range of crime, totaling 655 were recorded between year 2000 and 2008. Amongst others, the major ones include armed robbery (2.4%), assault (5.8%), attempt to commit crime (3.2%), cheating (6.4%), house breaking and theft (7.9%), inflicting injury (8.5%), rape (2.3%), intimidation (3.4%) and theft (29.8%). The analysis indicated that theft related cases are the common crime in the study area.

With reference to crime dynamics over the eight year period, figure 2 shows fluctuations in the number or rate of crime committed between year 2000 and 2008. The trend shows spectacular rise in crime in the two election years – 2003 and 2007. The reason for this trend is partly explained by the tuggery and drug abuse associated with election periods in Nigeria.



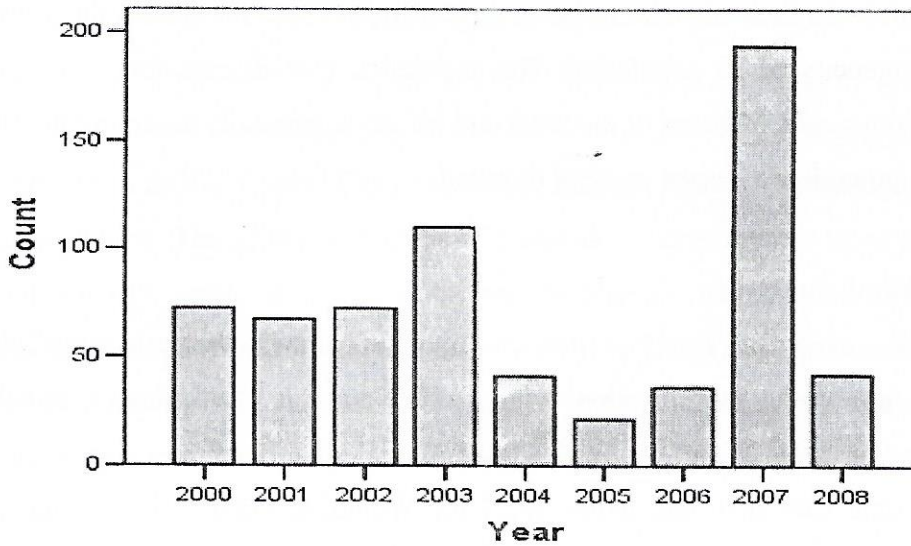


Figure 2: Variations in Crime Rate between Year 2000 and 2008

Figures 3 and 4 show the age bracket of criminals in the town. Figure 3 shows that people aged between 18 and 45 (adolescents and adults) committed more crime than the children and the aged. As shown in figure 4, the mean age of criminals is 28.96. This shows that people in the productive age bracket engaged more in crime. Further investigation reveals that unemployment and poverty are partly responsible for the situation.

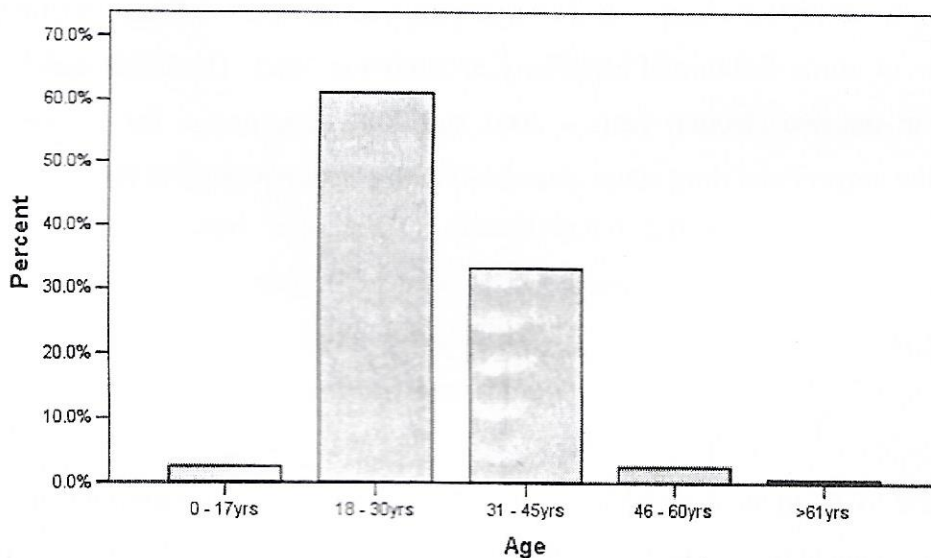


Figure 3: Age Distribution of Criminals in Minna

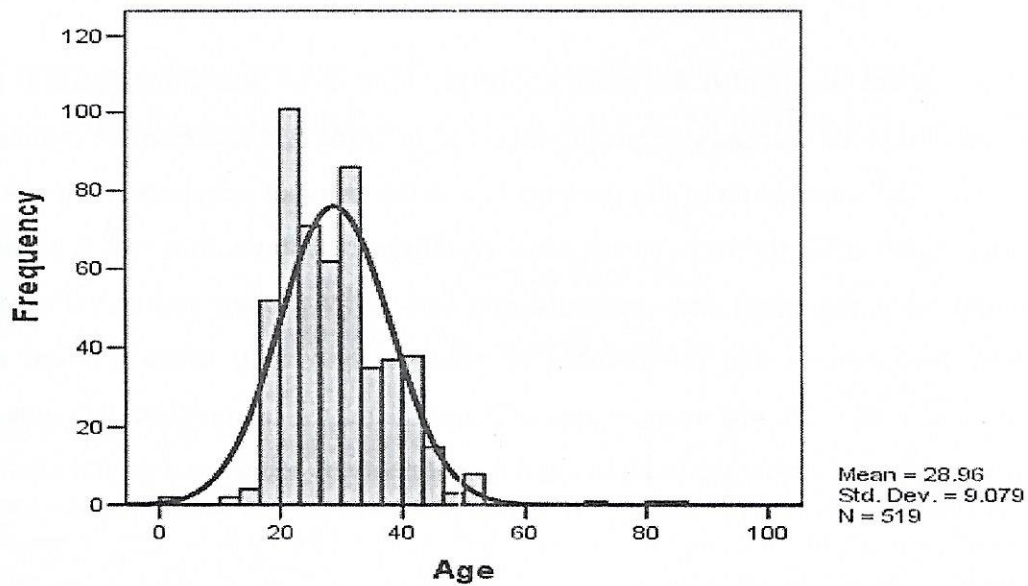


Figure 4: Mean Age of Criminals in Minna

The research results also indicated a kind of spatial variation in the occurrence of crime in Minna. It is observed that Bosso, Maikunkele, Maitunbi, Minna south and Tudun wada north recorded higher incidence of crime (figure 5). These wards correspond with areas of low environmental quality which are predominantly habited by the low income group. This finding further confirms the assertion that slum areas are characterized by high incidence of crime.

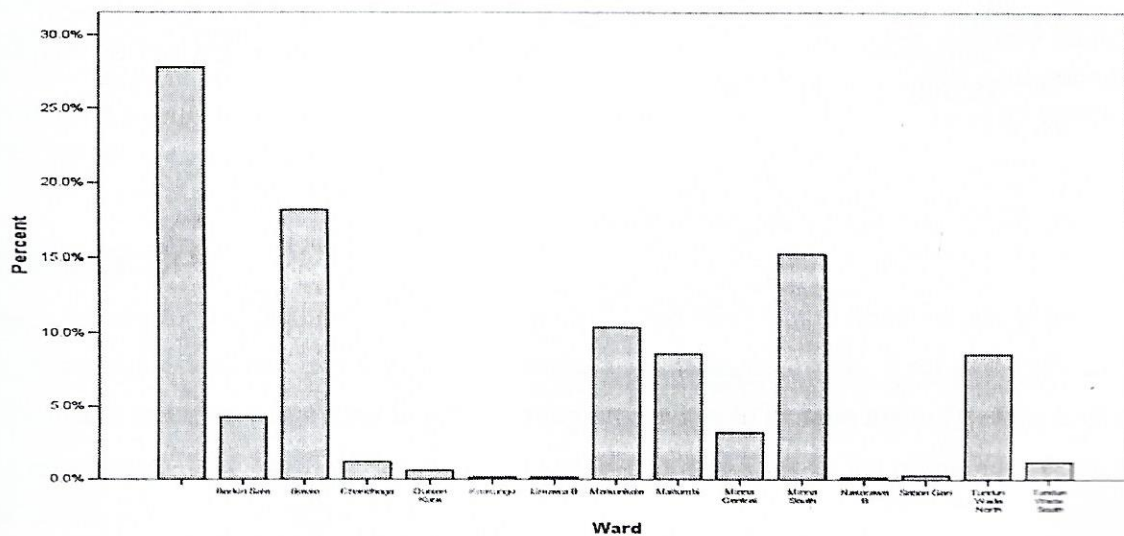


Figure 5: Crime Distribution by Wards in Minna

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has highlighted the urban security profile of Minna with respect to the types of crime committed, the category of people involved in crime and areas where crimes are mainly committed. The implication of the findings is that the criminal activities create the problem of insecurity which affect the serviceability and livability of the town. Since most of the crimes are committed by young adults who predominantly live in low income residential neighbourhoods, the study recommends that programmes of youth employment, urban renewal and poverty alleviation be targeted to low income areas of Minna. This will help reduce the crime rate in these neighbourhoods and ensure the livability and functionality of Minna as a capital town.

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