

Crime Wave and Human Rights Violations in Lagos Cityscape in Selected Nigerian Short Stories

Solomon Olusayo Olaniyan

Author: Solomon Olusayo Olaniyan, Department of English and Literary Studies, Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. **Email:** dvenolasolomon@gmail.com

Published date: Dec 04, 2022



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

How to cite the article: Solomon Olusayo Olaniyan, "Crime Wave and Human Rights Violations in Lagos Cityscape in Selected Nigerian Short Stories," *Ahyu: A Journal of Language and Literature* 5 (2022): 1-13.

DOI: 10.56666/ahyu.v5i.113

Abstract

Contemporary Nigerian short story writers are committed to representing issues bordering on city life such as criminality and abuse of human rights. However, most of these short stories have not gained much scholarly attention they deserve. This study, therefore, investigates the normality of crimes and human rights violations in the selected short stories of Jude Dibia, Chika Unigwe and Nnedi Okorafor as representatives of 21st century Nigerian short stories that thematise criminality and desecration of human rights. Specifically, the paper explores various crimes such as armed robbery, hooliganism, bribery, extortion, murder, security agents' connivance with criminal elements and the resultant human rights violations. Deploying postcolonial urban theory as its launching pad to interrogate the postcolonial realities within Lagos spatiality, with particular emphasis on crime wave, the paper shows that the police play a major role in the escalation of crimes and perpetuation of human rights abuses through collusion with armed robbers and engaging in bribery and corruption, conspiracy, brutality, concealment of crimes and criminals and extrajudicial killings. Considering its cosmopolitan nature, Lagos is metaphorised as the microcosm of the nation; thus, realities within Lagos cityscape expose happenings in the nation at large. The socio-economic anomic situations depicted in the stories justify their post-independence disillusionment and jeremiad.

Keywords: *Lagos city, crime and human rights violations, Nigerian short stories, Lagos noir, Postcolonial urban theory.*

Introduction

The subject of the city has been a major trope in African literary production. Apart from 21st century writers who engage their literary works in narrating the nature of life and living conditions in the city, other renowned African writers have portrayed city

as a topicality in their works, including Cyprian Ekwensi's *People of the City* (1954); *Jagua Nana* (1961) and *Iska* (1981); Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *A Man of the People* (1966); Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (1970); Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* (1976); Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979); Maik Nwosu's *Invisible Chapters* (2001) and *Alpha Song* (2001); Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*

(2005) and *Swallow* (2008). The aforementioned and other African fictional narratives have shown the complexity of city life and people's responses to such complexities. Apart from the novel genre that has focused on the representations of the city, contemporary short story writers have also depicted the socio-economic and political realities in the city. Examples of Nigerian short story writers who have fictionalised Lagos city are Chris Abani, Nnedi Okorafor, Jude Dibia, Adebola Rayo, Leye Adenle, Pemi Aguda, Uche Okonkwo, Igoni Barrett and Chika Unigwe. These and other short story writers reveal Lagos city as an urban centre laden with bewildering amalgam of wealth, poverty, corruption, criminality, rights violations, bravery and other tragic life experiences. However, most of these 21st century Nigerian short story writers' works have not been given the critical attention that they deserve in view of their graphic reflections of contemporary metropolitan Lagos. It is against this backdrop, therefore, that this study examines representations of crime waves and human rights violations in Lagos metropolitan city in Jude Dibia's "What They Did that Night", Chika Unigwe's "Heaven's Gate" and Nnedi Okorafor's "Showlogo".

Nigerian Short Story and Representations of the City

The Nigerian short story genre has been popularised by both established and burgeoning writers. Speaking in defence of short story in Nigerian literary landscape, Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (206) maintain that the genre demonstrates the same stylistic and thematic sensibilities and preoccupations with its counterpart of the longer category. In other words, both the novel and the short story focus on the same socio-economic realities as they are both socially committed. The major difference between the two narrative forms lies in their length and robust or introverted representations of stylistic and thematic

issues. While the novel has no limitation in terms of length to engage in character development, movement of actions, exploration of themes and so on, the short story does not have that luxury of space; hence, characters, actions and themes are not allowed to develop.

Lagos city has been given attention by Nigerian writers as they either deploy the city as the setting of their works or depict the characters of *Lagosians* in those texts. Lagos as a cosmopolitan city is characterised by different socio-political and economic realities which have been subject-matters of Lagos-set literary works. Osundare's explication of Lagos cityscape clearly encapsulates various issues for which Lagos has become notorious:

Lagos! The word as well as its referent sounded like a death sentence. Lagos: that combination of poetry and peril, of possibilities and pain; that city of dust and daring, of plenteous scarcity and famished excess. An unplanned odyssey to Lagos so early in the year, the torture of its traffic snarl, the menace of its muggers, its Rambo-like robbers armed with an arsenal which puts the police to flight, the battered, potholed Ibadan-Lagos Express Road and its bedlam of churches and mosques... Ah Lagos! (Osundare 370)

Representations of the city in Nigerian literature have attracted the attention of critics. For instance, Akande examines the transformation of the image of the city as a place of limitless opportunities and uninhibited enjoyment of life in the Nigerian novels of the 1950s and 1960s; to the more recent period – from the end of the 1990s to the present – where it is privileged as a metaphor for cultural rootlessness. Her study concludes that early and recent Nigerian novelists portray the city differently in terms of communal, socio-political, economic and ideological orientations. Thus, while most characters in the early Nigerian novels are committed to primordial ethnic loyalty, those

in the recent ones are engaged in new forms of communalism which globalise their identity. Kehinde explores the depiction of African city from the diasporic lens in the works of Ben Okri and Chika Unigwe (231–246). The study basically investigates the inevitable trilogy of social, economic and political structure of African cities, as well as the vital cultural and architectural aspects. In the same manner, Adeoti examines the politics and the urban experience in contemporary Nigerian literature (1-16). Similarly, Uyieh's study entitled, "Eko Gb'ole o Gbole': a historical study of youth and tout culture in Shomolu local government area, Lagos, 1976–2015", describes and analyses the activities and cultural expressions of the area boys, and submits that while economic, psychological and environmental factors are major causes of gangsterism and crime, whether a youth becomes a thug and criminal or not is also based on rationality and choice (323-338).

The above extant studies provide footing for this present study. Most of the existing studies especially in literary scholarship have not adequately interrogated the depiction of criminality and violations of human rights in Nigerian short story genre. It is against this backdrop, therefore, that this study investigates representations of crime waves and human rights violations in selected 21st century Nigerian short stories based on Lagos spatiality. Successive governments have introduced diverse crime control measures in order to contain growing rates and severity of criminality in Lagos city; however, those efforts have yielded no meaningful results (Alemika 72; Alemika and Chukwuma 9).

In essence, the study examines depiction of various shades of criminality, roguery and violations of people's fundamental human rights in Jude Dibia's "What They Did that Night", Chika Unigwe's "Heaven's Gate" and Nnedi Okorafor's "Showlogo". These writers

prove their patriotism to their nationality through the factual representations of ills in their nation. Even though they are physically far away from their motherland, their umbilical cord remains firmly attached to her. Whether they are born and raised in Lagos or not, Dibia, Unigwe and Okorafor are able to keenly mirror life-threatening scourges in their nation with special attention on Lagos realities. Through the depictions of social ills in their homeland, these writers and other Nigerian writers are able to offer their Creative Social Responsibility (CSR) to their cultural root.

Theoretical Framework

Considering the periodisation and localisation of this study and its focus on urban centres, the postcolonial urban theory is adopted as the theory that guides its exploration. The postcolonial urban theory is a theoretical postulation that interrogates representations of urban settings, postcoloniality as a historico-political status, and postcolonial criticism of urban portraiture. The postcolonial urban theory is built on postcolonial assumption from the 20th century that developed from a period of decolonial and anticolonial political struggles and is largely defined by key scholarship in the humanities. Specifically, the theory investigates the presentation of power relation and how identity is transmuted for a spatial analysis of urbanisation, urban development, and urban life (Ren 1).

According to Jazeel (65), recently, postcolonial engagements with the city have emerged within urban geography and urban studies. These engagements have also extended to cover cultural and historical geography, imperial history, architectural history and theory, and cultural studies. Particularly, the multiplicity of these intellectual engagements critically evaluates the relationships between the city, imperialism and colonialism. This is the aftermath of the discovery that "the city is ...

an important component in the spatiality of imperialism". (Jacobs 4)

Postcolonial urban theory reacts to the "traditional" urban theory. For instance, urban theory has been accused of parochial intellectualism. Besides, other limitations of the theory include its overwhelming rootedness in the Global North and unfounded claims to universality (Robinson, *The Ordinary City: between Modernity and Development*; Roy, "Urbanisms, Worlding Practices and the Theory of Planning"; Scott and Storper, "The Nature of Cities: The Scope and Limits of Urban Theory"). In order to address the identified weaknesses of urban theory, Roy and Ong in *Worlding Cities* propose a 'worlding' of cities, indicating an attempting at bringing more cities into analytical view and a recognition of the reflexive relations between the urban and the global.

It is against this backdrop that postcolonial approaches to urban studies foreground the work of earlier authors such as Abu-Lughod (429-457), King and Jacobs who describe postcolonial urbanism in a rather nonliteral way. To these postcolonialists, an urban condition is shaped by the experience of colonialism. Furthermore, postcolonial urban theorists posit that "in the postcolonial period, this earlier form of urban development then blends with or interacts with subsequent developmental experiences shaped by national and global politics and processes" (Scott and Storper 3). The postcolonial urban theory is, therefore, deployed to engage the interrogation of postcolonial indices that shape life and living condition in Lagos cityscape as depicted in the selected short stories.

Criminality and Human Rights Violations in Lagoscape

In recent time, there has been increase in crime rate and human rights violations in Lagos metropolis which has caught the

attention of such socially committed writers as Jude Dibia, Chika Unigwe and Nnedi Okorafor. Their short stories are purposively sampled for this study due to their in-depth representations of criminality and disrespect for human rights. Dibia's "What They Did that Night", Unigwe's "Heaven's Gate" and Okorafor's "Showlogo" thematically portray the ubiquity and preponderance of criminality and human rights violations in contemporary Lagos metropolis. The texts represent armed robbery, gangsterism, hooliganism, and the role the unprofessional conduct and connivance of the Nigeria police plays in the growth of these social vices.

The non-conducive living conditions in some parts of the country are shown to be responsible for the influx of people to Lagos city in Unigwe's "Heaven's Gate" where Ifeatu and Emeka leave Osumenyi and Enugu respectively in search of greener pasture in Lagos city. For instance, Emeka's denial of fatherhood due to the untimely death of his father and the wickedness of his father's relatives who claim everything his father leaves behind without any consideration for the survival of the wife and children of the deceased exposes him and the other family members to harsh economic realities. His education is severely affected. Thus, at 19, Emeka becomes an apprentice of motorcycle (popularly called *okada*) operation and after a short while, rides and makes money on his own. He is then able to supplement his mother's meagre earnings. The prevalence of motorcycle operators in major cities in Nigeria is not unconnected to high rate of unemployment which often births ubiquity of crimes. *Okada* has become the foremost means of transportation in most part of Nigeria and especially in the city. Meanwhile, the presence of many *okada* riders in a city like Lagos is a manifestation of lack of gainful employment opportunities. In Unigwe's "Heaven's Gate", the government of Enugu State bans commercial motorcyclists' operation in Enugu city which renders

Emeka jobless. The decision is taken due to unchecked influx of commercial cyclists in the state which is associated with the emergence of criminal activities in the polity. Lagos is assumed to be a city of opportunities and possibilities where dreams could be pursued and realised for the ambitious like Ifeatu and Emeka who have no time for frivolities. Nevertheless, immigrants and natives who exhibit immoral characters unlike goal-oriented Emeka and Ifeatu are equally welcome in Lagos. It is this unholy marriage of both the moral and the immoral elements in Lagos city that makes living in the city byzantine. Morally upright Emeka and Ifeatu in Unigwe's "Heaven's Gate" and criminally minded Scorpion, Cobra and Razor in Dibia's "What They Did That Night" and Showlogo in Okorafor's "Showlogo" are all accommodated by Lagos.

While some of Emeka's contemporaries are in Lagos with virtually no serious business and ambition, Emeka's migration to the metropolitan Lagos is for a serious business as he affirms that "I did not come to Lagos to admire flyovers I mean business!" (Unigwe 44) The implication of this is that, even though idleness thrives in Lagos, the city does not in any way discourage diligence within its space. It, therefore, appears that 'anything goes' in Lagos mega city. The liberality and permissiveness of Lagos city galvanise uncontrolled inflow of many migrants from virtually everywhere both within and outside of the country. Lagos' borders are usually wide open which again signals its accommodation of both the legal and the illegal. To further buttress the cordiality of the good and the bad in Lagos, Unigwe juxtaposes the contiguous characterisation of Reverend and those working under him. Reverend is a philanthropist who lifts up people from dunghill and establishes them economically while his middlemen promote illegality and *sinfulness* because they often "demanded a cut for their services." (Unigwe 41) The fact that

these middlemen are working under a servant of God should create some fear in them; the reverse is, however, the case. This implies that whereas *houses* of God are sprouting almost everywhere in Lagos metropolis, people only play religion. Reverend's employees exhibit ungodliness by demanding bribes from helpless people who come to seek their master's assistance. The preponderance of religious worship centres in every nook and cranny of Lagos does not make any significant impact on the character formation of Lagos inhabitants.

Moreover, the selected short stories represent ubiquity of human rights violation and brutality being perpetuated by the police. This literary depiction of abuse of power by the police is lent credence by Aremu who submits that:

The Nigerian police have also been labelled as brutal and unmindful of human rights. These have grossly impugned on their mission. It is the inalienable right of the police to understand the powers and authorities vested in them by using same to promote security and dignity of members of the public. Anything contrary brings the police to disrepute and also causes them to be derided and scorned (Aremu 34).

In other words, the ultimate indication of human rights violations is the apparent lack of respect for human lives. Obaro (426) surmises that:

The history and dynamics of the development of the Nigeria Police Force in the country indicate that the various police forces were established, organised and maintained by colonial and post-colonial governments largely for the protection of the interests of political and economic power-holders.

Consequently, the colonial and postcolonial dynamics in the formation of the Nigeria police fuel the display of "a culture of impunity, corruption, incivility, brutality, lack of accountability." (Obaro 427) Besides, as

implied in the foregoing, the personalisation of the Nigeria police by members of the political class for their self-interest exposes the masses to insecurity. There seems to be a wide gap between the contemporary policing and model of traditional or community-based policing in the rural setting. For instance, the ancient traditional policing is a form of collective self-policing where people would often collaborate with the police in ensuring their own security. However, the postcolonial indices of policing make it difficult for the people to *befriend* the police.

Police brutality and violation of human rights are graphically represented in Unigwe's "Heaven's Gate". The brutal act of the police in this text is more lethal as it culminates in the death of the easy going and well-mannered Emeka who goes about with his daily business of motorcycle operation. Like a beggar, a policeman asks Emeka: "Anything for the boys?" (Unigwe 51) By referring to themselves as 'boys', the policeman establishes the boyishness and childishness of some police officers which indicates that their *modus operandi* does not prove that they are grown-ups. This display of mendicancy by the policeman in question is responsible for the loss of respect for the police 'boys' among the populace. The policeman, however, loses his temper when Emeka offers him ₦50. Meanwhile, the police officer will not take his insubordination; thus, he gives Emeka a slap which throws him from his bike and orders him: "Empty dat ya wallet. You tink you can insult a whole policeman? N50, N100? You mad? Bloody civilian!" (Unigwe 52) The foregoing foregrounds abuse of power, legalisation of illegality, lawlessness and police brutality. Emeka's insistence to assert his right costs him his dear life. The policeman exercises his domineering power over him and eventually denies him what appears to be his foremost fundamental human right – right to life. Alemika and Chukwuma (30) posit that Nigerians often

complain about corruption, brutality, incivility and ineffectiveness of the country's police force. According to the scholars, the afore-mentioned problems are often attributed to the colonial origin of police forces and the protracted military rule in the country that institutionalised a culture of impunity. Ironically, policemen are meant to protect lives and property; however, Unigwe's "Heaven's Gate" reiterates moral decadence and the carnivorous nature of policemen in Lagos metropolitan city and, by extension, the whole nation. In addition, the killing of Emeka by the police officer reveals the bestiality of the police and that as 'friends of the people', they do not have any respect for human rights and lives that they are constitutionally empowered to protect. With this kind of brutal mistreatment meted out to the masses, "life becomes solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" in Lagos city (Hobbes 529). Down-to-earth representations of human rights violations by security agencies in Lagos inform Adeoti's (3) submission that the Nigerian city epitomises all that is wrong with the nation. The depiction of Lagos in Nigerian literature proves that the city is a fount of postcolonial anomie. Osundare perceives human rights violations as abomination. According to him,

Abomination. That is the word which captures the essence of the devaluation and desecration which this unfortunate country and we, its people, have been going through in recent times. We have been lied to, cheated, swindled, denied our rights, hanged, and dehumanised in countless ways by those who have imposed themselves on us (Osundare 320).

Most often, police suspicion and unfriendliness towards anyone who innocently reports crime discourage people from wanting to do so. When Ibukun, Lagos State University president of the student union, discovers the corpse of Emeka at the gate of the institution and she tries to be humane and collaborate with the police to end crime rate, the police display inhumanity

and uncooperativeness. Apart from being perpetrators of criminality, unethical attitude of the police remains a factor that fuels increase in crime rate in the nation. Thus, when Ibukun declares that “Let the dead deal with the dead” (Unigwe 53), she seems to suggest that criminality might remain unabated. The ‘dead’ in this context are the victims of police brutality and human rights violations generally; if they are only left to defend themselves against their fully armed tormentors without anyone serving as a voice for them, crime wave might remain insurmountable. Studies have shown that there is no good relationship between the police and the public in Nigeria (Alemika and Chukwuma 30). Police brutality, abuse of power, corruption, extortion, infringement of human rights and other unethical practices are responsible for the public cold attitude towards them.

Osundare posits that:

Every normal society has its own *aakii* (thou shalt not), a body of those customs, procedures and practices ruled out of the pale of healthy behaviour, practices whose avoidance is crucial to societal survival. A breach of these norms may signal the onset of profound societal dislocations, at great cost to the violator (Osundare 322).

A society where the opposite of Osundare’s submission manifests could, therefore, be termed abnormal. It is natural for every society to derive its sustenance and justify its sanity by certain normative patterns and paradigms. The ambiance pictured in the selected narratives contrasts the one described above. Law-abiding citizens’ fundamental human rights are grossly violated in Unigwe’s “Heaven’s Gate”, whereas Dibia’s “What They Did that Night” reveals that those who perpetuate crime are made to move freely in society without any fear of arrest by the police who often befriend and patronise criminal elements. Scorpion, Cobra and Razor, whose names and characterisation epitomise animalism and

inhumanity, are a criminal gang that raids Colony Estate area of the metropolitan Lagos. The Lagos urban cityscape in the postcolonial era depicted in the text is laden with crime, lawlessness, and unprofessional conducts by the police. Members of this gang are involved in various forms of immoral and unlawful acts. The gang has a spy and ally among the police. They are accosted by the uniformed men; however, the moment Sergeant Sule recognises Scorpion, he orders the other officer (Gabriel) to let them through. Gabriel protests the given order but it falls on deaf ears. The gang, therefore, travels unhindered until it reaches House 8A, Lugard Drive where it carries out its operation which culminates in the rape and eventual death of a woman. Apart from the fact that the police directly unleash terror on the masses as depicted in Unigwe’s “Heaven’s Gate”, Dibia’s “What They Did that Night” shows that they equally conspire with robbers which makes life difficult for people. The narrator points out that Scorpion and his gang often ‘take care of’ the police following which they would be permitted to carry out their heinous acts without being disturbed. Dibia depicts various levels of human rights violations taking place in the cityscape, which include material and sexual robbery.

Furthermore, Dibia emphasises a major reason why war against crimes has been and might remain unsuccessful: that is, police connivance with criminals. Gabriel is aware that crime wave within the Lagos metropolis is preventable. In other words, if the city allows thievery and indolence, it is because those saddled with the responsibility of preventing criminality have compromised and sold their social conscience. Dibia’s narration serves as a damning exposé of how police often deliberately shield perpetrators of crimes and expose innocent people to insecurity and terror. The reality of perpetuation of brutality and illegality by the police makes Babatunde (103) conclude that the police force in Africa is more of an

instrument of terror than an agent of security. It is shown that those who live above the laws usually abuse power which in turn endangers the lives of the unprotected masses in diverse ways.

Moreover, Dibia's "What They Did that Night" is a representation of the dialectic of the popular saying "police is your friend". Paradoxically, the friendliness of the police towards the criminals is foregrounded in the text as characteristic feature of Lagos as place "where the police force was everybody's friend." (Dibia 40) It is revealed that the friendship of the police with the criminal elements is enmity with the victimised masses. The police, therefore, contribute to the increasing growth of crime in Lagos city through their unethical and unprofessional acts. Going by the etymology of the word 'police', there is a wide dichotomy between what the force should be and what it is practically. Aremu avers that "the term police from its derivation connotes civil organisation of citizens within a city, whose primary role is to provide security for the city and people residing in it" (Aremu, *Understanding Nigerian Police: Lessons from Psychological Research* 1). Within the context of the texts examined in this study, Aremu's postulated ideal of policing is far from reality as police officers often display incivility and brutishness.

The only police officer with moral sanctity and conscience in Dibia's "What They Did that Night" is Corporal Gabriel who indeed represents a new breed among the Nigeria police officers. Waging war against crime is viewed as a numbers game. Those who are with agents of criminality are far more above those who are against them. This makes Gabriel to be depressed and is also rendered incapacitated as he is outnumbered by the enemies of the defenceless people. Going by this portrait of crime wave in Lagos metropolis, it is evident that Lagos is capable of transforming people with positive mind-set

or intention. Realities that form Lagos character could strip someone off his/her human nature such that the person becomes an enemy of humanity. Many individuals with good intentions like Corporal Gabriel have become wounded and deformed by the multitude of unlawful acts among which they live. Thus, living in Lagos is like living "among a people with filthy lips" (Isaiah 6:5, the Holy Bible) which is capable of bringing doom upon one.

Dibia's narrative thematises conspiracy among the police. Emeka is quite aware that some officers are 'in bed with criminals' which makes it impossible to contain criminality in Lagos. The nature of police in Lagos defines the character of the city. As organised as the city is, lawlessness thrives, even among the security personnel. Since those employed and empowered to arrest the growth and threat of insecurity and criminality in Lagos have compromised and connived with those perpetuating social vices, it becomes practically impossible for Lagos to get rid of crime in its polity. The foregoing representations of realities in Lagos cityscape lend credence to earlier submissions of scholars who view the city as a theatre of class struggle, centred on land markets as machines for distributing wealth upward and on associated political claims from below about citizenship rights to urban space and resources (Scott and Storper "The Nature of Cities: The Scope and Limits of Urban Theory").

Furthermore, it is observed that some police officers live above their earnings. For instance, in the district island that Gabriel covers, there are some corporals who drive exotic cars worth more than their annual remunerations, which implies that they involve themselves in criminal acts due to their materialistic tendencies. The paucity of the likes of Corporal Gabriel in the Nigeria police fuels the invincibility of criminality in Lagos city and Nigeria by extension. In the

same vein, the presence of Corporal Gabriel in the text implies that there are still morally sound and ethical individuals, although very few, in the Nigeria police. Perhaps Dibia deliberately and symbolically creates the characterisation of Gabriel to instil some faith in people that all hope is not lost in having a police force that is responsible and responsive to the insecurity realities in the nation as a whole.

The role of the media in containing crime in terms of reportage and investigative journalism is indubitable. In “What They Did that Night”, Dibia reveals the body language of the media to high rate of crime in Lagos metropolis. It is shown that the sad incident of the killing of a white woman is tucked in a small corner on page twenty of the *Lagos Gazette*. Gabriel is surprised that the killing of a big man’s wife is not accorded the seriousness it deserves. He also indicts ‘the noisy journalists’ for not deeming it fit to embark on investigation into the recently rampant criminal activities in some areas of the city. This suggests that criminality is not prioritised by the media. It is supposed to be a well foregrounded cover story, but it is only reported on page twenty in a small corner which signposts its trivialisation. Through this portrayal, the writer indicts the media for their insensitivity to life-threatening issues and also points out that the media have quintessential role in curtailing crimes in Lagos by not feigning ignorance and acquainting the populace with social happenings.

Moreover, Nnedi Okorafor’s “Showlogo” narrates hooliganism which is a recurrent feature of Lagos cityscape. It is about a well-known Ajegunle agbero (area boy – a member of the loosely organised street gang) popularly known as Showlogo. He is known all around as a typical hard, no-nonsense agbero. As an infamous ruffian, no one questions his authority because for “Showlogo, the rules were always different.”

(Okorafor 55) Like the police depicted in the Unigwe’s “Heaven’s Gate” and Dibia’s “What They Did that Night”, Showlogo is a law unto himself.

In the three selected texts for this study, the police are shown to be above the law and thus, no one is able to contain their illegal operations in Lagos metropolitan city. However, Okorafor’s main character, Showlogo, really “shows the officers his logo” as he ridicules them. Two police officers have demanded bribe from Showlogo when he returns from airport where he works as a luggage carrier. He refuses to give them money and they would not leave alone. After beating the two of them black and blue, he ties them so firmly to a tree that they could not liberate themselves. They burst into singing to attract passersby’s attention and they are later helped by some women. Okorafor metaphorically drags the police in the mud in order to lampoon them for their imposed superiority over the masses. This depiction affirms Aremu’s position that “the failure of police agency to be proactive and to attract public respect has derisively made its members (including officers) to be disdained and ridiculed” (Aremu 34). The writer pitches her tent with the people whose human rights are usually violated, while she rejoices in the downfall of human rights violators. The nature of the personality of the majority of police officers represented in the short stories of Unigwe, Dibia and Okorafor justifies the popular Yoruba maxim ‘olopa kii bimo re, bi ko bi kumo, a bi kondo’ (which is transliterated as the police do not produce anything good, if they do not produce club, they will produce cudgel), which means that nothing good can come from the police. The use of ‘club’ and ‘cudgel’ by the police suggests their tendency for human rights abuse and ruthlessness.

Aside bribery, corruption and brutality which are now commonplace among the police, it is also revealed that they are involved in cultism in Okorafor’s “Showlogo”. Police involvement

in diabolic practices is shown in their membership of cult group. This is a proof of moral reprobation of the set of people that ought to uphold moral sacredness in society. Reckless driving cannot be dissociated from incessant road accident in Lagos city. In his study entitled “Road Traffic Accident Variations in Lagos State, Nigeria: A Synopsis of Variance Spectra”, Atubi reports that 97.65% of road traffic accidents in Lagos Island could be attributed to recklessness on the part of drivers, ignorance of highway codes, driving under the influence of alcohol, wrongful overtaking, over speeding, pot holes, etc. leaving 3.44% to other factors. The preponderance of the stated causative factors of road accident within Lagos metropolis further emphasises entrenchment of criminality in the city. Unigwe’s “Heaven’s Gate” depicts another dark side of Lagos as shown in the experience of Emeka as an okada rider which is that of reckless driving. Unlike his experience in Enugu, drivers in Lagos cast caution to the winds and drive thoughtlessly. Emeka is afraid of either killing pedestrians or being killed by other road users due to disorderliness on the highways. As such, his first passenger complains of his snail-like speed, while his fellow riders usually move like lightning. Due to continual humiliation from his passengers as a result of his careful way of doing his thing, he nearly returns the motorcycle to Reverend. The thought of joblessness and pang of hunger would, however, not leave him alone.

Uneven distribution of resources and wealth is one of the banes of untrammelled crime wave in Lagos polity. The selected texts emphasise binary opposition in the socio-economic dichotomisation and othering/ordering of the living conditions of both the rich and the poor. Lugard Drive in Dibia’s “What They Did that Night” is vividly painted as a place that metaphorises orderliness, illumination, beauty, tranquillity and decorum. The locale setting of the

Lugard Drive baffles Scorpion as he compares it with other chaotic and rotten settings within the same city. This portrayal reiterates the wide contradiction between the rich and the poor in Lagos cityscape. Although the haves enjoy access to various social amenities to keep themselves safe from national chaos, the have-nots are made to swim in their unenviable lack. Nevertheless, that wealthy Lagos island suburb is prone to incessant armed robberies implies the porosity of the area. In spite of availability of regular power supply and expensive private security outfits, the habitation of the rich remains the centre of operation of criminals. Another location where Scorpion’s gang is to operate is portrayed to be a sharp contrast with the *normal* reality of Lagos. It is stated that “... the occupants of this one also had no idea about the real Lagos life, about constant power failure and taps with no running water. Everything worked here. Everything here was a big lie.” (Dibia 39) As far as the narrator is concerned, Lagos life is coterminous with regular power outage and waterless taps. Meanwhile, the secluded nature of this area makes the inhabitants not to experience the real character of Lagos. While the rich live in a utopian setting, the poor dwell amidst dystopian realities that make life and living hellish for them. The penetration of the area where the rich live also echoes the fact that the ‘temple curtain’ separating the rich from the unfortunate experiences of the poor has been irredeemably torn. Fadare (69) states that lop-sidedness in the social and economic structure of a society could degenerate into friction between the haves and the have-nots. Equitable spread of available resources among various strata of society without prejudice might prevent socio-economic insecurity which is currently commonplace in Lagos and Nigeria as a whole.

Scorpion is portrayed as a modern-day Robin Hood who takes from the rich. He justifies himself as a righteous man. This is because he

only kills those running after his life and the marginalising rich who promote uneven distribution of wealth by ensuring “that wealth of the community only circulated among themselves.” (Dibia 34) It is implied that the rich encourage crime by their promotion of socio-economic inequality which in turn serves as a catalyst for marginalisation of the poor. Thus, those that are not fairly treated by the rich become threats to their lives. In other words, it is inferred that if Lagos will not be ridden with criminality, wealth should be distributed evenly. The thick wall erected around the affluent will be demolished by the segregated and discriminated in Lagos metropolis. From this depiction, it is revealed that Lagos cityscape attracts more migrants than it could really cater for. Adeoti avers that “As a result, the opportunities to “make it big” are fewer in relation to the multitude of people that are hunting for them. The situation creates a dichotomy between the rich few who have access to the good things of life and the less privileged ones.” (Adeoti 3).

The affective influence of Lagos on the character formation of migrants with good moral standing is portrayed in the experience of Emeka who is changed from being a law-abiding citizen to being lawless. Being a city where ‘anything goes’, Emeka would have to blend by getting acculturated to breaking rules which is rampant in Lagos. Among commercial motorcyclists, mirrors and handlebars have no functionality as they are usually tilted to one side in order to allow them slip easily through traffic congestion. According to Amos, a senior colleague to Emeka, without breaking certain rules, he would spend the whole day on the road with no single passenger. In the same vein, Emeka will have to prepare his mind to always grease policemen’s palm as they will often stop him. On the other hand, Emeka is warned not to be too generous because by so doing, he will dig a hole for himself as policemen will mark him and always extort

his over-generosity. In order to sail through in Lagos where those that should maintain law and order are the ones defying the same, Emeka will need to ‘be a tortoise.’ This affective influence of Lagos city life on Emeka is encapsulated in the anthropological concept of environmental determinism, which holds that environmental features directly determine aspects of human behaviour and society (*Encyclopædia Britannica*). Thus, people’s degeneration such as Emeka’s is not innate but a product of climate, landscape, and other environmental factors with which people interact with. As time goes by, Emeka becomes acquainted to all the tactics of making it in Lagos as well as driving maniacally as his colleagues did, and hurled insults at other drivers in proper Lagos fashion: “*Oloshi! Did you steal your licence? Madam! Who let you out of the psychiatric hospital? Useless woman! Your father’s sperm was wasted on you. Go and park that car if you can’t drive it!*” (Unigwe 47-48)

From the above, it is revealed that uncouthness especially among road users is a ‘proper Lagos fashion’. Lagos is characterised by moral and social decadence. The city and its dwellers are enmeshed in the use of vulgar and abusive expressions as they struggle to make ends meet.

Reacting to abuse of power in the Nigerian state, Osundare posits that “so many illogicalities, so many *non sequiturs*, so much moral *volte-face* have come to characterise the Nigerian chaos that even in the noonday glare of the sun, many Nigerians are finding it difficult to say for sure what part of day it is.” (Osundare 300) This committed artist cum nation’s conscience explains the reason for national despair and confusion which have become the hallmark of post-independence Nigeria. The disillusioned representations of criminality and human rights violations in Lagos metropolis are to serve as conscientisation to the concerned authorities in order to find lasting solutions to issues.

<http://ir.library.ui.edu.ng/bitstream/123456789/202/1/file.pdf> 27 September 2022.

Conclusion

Predicated on the postcolonial urban theory which interprets urban indices that foreground postcoloniality, the paper has been able to explore the notoriety of Lagos for criminality, human rights violations, immorality and illegality. Both the police and other criminal elements are found culpable in unleashing terror on innocent Lagos inhabitants through various abnormal acts. The police are meant to represent the pride of the nation as they carry out their lawful duties. However, the study finds contradiction in the ideals the police should represent and what they stand for in reality. Nigeria has witnessed increasing incidence of armed robbery which has led to a paralysing fear that affects economic and social life in the country. Being the nation's primal economic hub and the most densely populated city, Lagos has recorded top-heavy level of crime wave. For the police to appropriately wake up to their responsibilities, a thorough restructuring in form of character reformation of personnel is, therefore, highly quintessential.

Works Cited

Adeoti, Gbemisola. "People of the City Politics and the Urban Experience in Contemporary Nigerian Literature" *Paper in English and Linguistics* vol. 7 & 8, 2007, pp. 1-16.

"Anthropology." *Encyclopaedia Britannica Student and Home Edition*. 2010.

Abu-Lughod, Janet. "Tale of Two Cities: the Origins of Modern Cairo." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1965, pp. 429-457.

Akande, Omolola Risikat. "Representations of the City in the Early and Recent Nigerian Novel." Diss. University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 2013.

Alemika, Etannibi. "Criminal Violence in Lagos State, Nigeria." *Africa Peace Review*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1997, pp. 72-95.

--- . and Innocent Chukwuma. *Police-Community Violence in Nigeria*. Lagos: Centre for Law Enforcement Education, 2000.

Aremu, Amos Oyesoji. *The 'Trinity' and the Missing Mission in Policing*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. 2017.

--- . *Understanding Nigerian Police: Lessons from Psychological Research*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2009.

Atubi, Augustus O. "Road Traffic Accident Variations in Lagos State, Nigeria: A Synopsis of Variance Spectra." *African Research Review*, vol. 4., no. 2, 2010, pp. 197-218.

Babatunde, A.E. "Insecurity and the Imaginative Arts: Revolutionary Strategies in Osofisan's *Aringindin* and Ruygendo's *The Barbed Wire*." *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria*, vol. 9, 2017, pp. 103-118.

Dibia, Jude. "What They Did That Night." *Lagos Noir*. Ed. Chris Abani. Abuja: Cassava Republic Press, 2018, pp. 25-40.

Fadare, Nureni O. "Social Malaise and Joblessness in Liwhu Betiang's *The Rape of Hope: The Diary of a Wasted Generation*." *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria*, vol. 9, 2017, pp. 69-88.

Hobbes, Thomas. *The Works and Life of Thomas Hobbes*. New Jersey: Carriet, 1956.

Holy Bible: New Living Translation. Carol Stream IL: Tyndale House Publishers. 2015.

Jacobs, Jane. *The Economy of Cities*. New York: Vintage, 1969.

- . *The Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Jazeel, Tariq. *Postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Kehinde, Ayo. "Narrating the African City from the Diaspora: Lagos as a Trope in Ben Okri and Chika Unigwe's Short Stories." *African Identities*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2007, pp. 231–246.
- King, Anthony D. *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.
- Obaro, Ogaga Ayemo. "The Nigeria Police Force and the Crisis of Legitimacy: Re-Defining the Structure and Function of the Nigeria Police." *European Scientific Journal*, vol.10, no.8, 2014, pp. 421-436
- Okorafor, Nnedi. "Showlogo." *Lagos Noir*. Ed. Chris Abani. Abuja: Cassava Republic Press, 2018, pp. 54-70.
- Onukaogu, A. Allwell and Ezechi Onyerionwu. *21st Century Nigerian Literature: An Introductory Text*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2009.
- Osundare, Niyi. *Dialogue with my Country: Selections from the Newswatch Column (1986 2003)*. Ibadan: Bookcraft, 2017.
- Ren, Julie. *Postcolonial Urbanism*. 2010. 10.1093/OBO/9780190922481-0018
- Robinson, Jennifer. *The Ordinary City: between Modernity and Development*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Roy, Ananya and Aihwa Ong. *Worlding Cities*. London: Wiley Blackwell, 2011.
- Roy, Ananya. "Urbanisms, Worlding Practices and the Theory of Planning." *Planning Theory*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2011, pp. 6–15.
- Scott, J. Allen and Michael Storper. "The Nature of Cities: The Scope and Limits of Urban Theory." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 2014, pp. 1-14. DOI:10.1111/1468-2427.12134.
- Unigwe, Chika. "Heaven's Gate." Ed. Chris Abani. Abuja: Cassava Republic Press, 2018, pp. 41-53.
- Uyieh, Jonah. "'Eko Gb'ole o Gbole': a Historical Study of Youth and Tout Culture in Shomolu Local Government Area, Lagos, 1976–2015." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* vol. 30, no. 3, 2018, pp. 323-338.

Author's profile: Solomon Olusayo Olaniyan PhD is a lecturer in the Department of English and Literary Studies, Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria. His research areas include postcolonial African literature, English literature, comparative literature and migrant studies. He has published articles in both local and international learned journals. His recent articles are: "Migritudinal Temper in Helon Habila's *Travelers*", *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2020, 68-83; "Narrating Human Trafficking Victimhood in Tina Okpara's *My Life Has a Price*", *Texts and Contexts of Migration in Africa and Beyond*, edited by Oluwole Coker and Adebusuyi Adeniran, Pan-African University Press, 2021, pp. 171-183; and "Leaving to Live but Not Without Scar: Trauma of Departure in Helon Habila's *Travelers*", *Omnes: The Journal of Multicultural Society* vol. 11, no. 1, 2021, pp. 1-19. Email <dvenolasolomon@gmail.com>