POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND YOUTH GANGS IN BAUCHI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Nigeria as a multi-ethnic society is a flashpoint of all kind of instability such as political and ethno-religious violence. It is based on these premises that, this paper study the involvement in political violence by the youth gangs. The paper which is an empirical study based its analysis on data derived from the sample population of 450 respondents were initially selected for this study. Also, twelve key informants were utilized. The State has twenty LGAs while the instruments used for data gathering were questionnaires and in-depth interviews. A major consequence of this situation has been increased insecurity in several dimensions of the nation’s socio-economic and political life. The study findings indicate that a majority of youth who participate in political violence are males, with little or no education the study recommends that the nation’s rural economy should be planned to promote growth.

Keywords: Political violence, youth gangs, participation, political leaders

Introduction
Political violence refers to all collective attacks within a political community against the political regime, its actors- including competing political groups as well as incumbents or its policies. According to Anifowose (1982) violence has been a factor of election in Nigeria right from the pre-independence era; its causes are primarily election rigging, manipulation of voters register, ‘the winner takes all’ syndrome and monetization of politics.

Abdullahi (2003) defined youth as any person in the period between early childhood and old age. This permits further differentiation of youth stratum on the basis of seniority. For example, youth of 18-23 years, 24-29 years and 30-35 years. Odekunle (2002) cited in Abdullahi (2003:2) provides socio-economic variation and typologies of youths: ‘male/female, educated/uneeducated, employed/unemployed, rich/poor parental background, stable/unstable family environment, abled/disabled’ etc. The Nigerian Youth Policy of 1983, revised 1989 and 2007 defined youth as comprising all Nigerians between the ages of 12 and 30 years. Youth as a concept varies from culture to culture and from society to society.

The Nigerian National Commission for Refugees (2006) Report stated that more than three million Nigerians were internally displaced in several parts of the country as a result of political violence. Also, more than 11,000 Nigerians lost their lives in clashes along political line from May 1999 to the end of 2006. Youth are one of the greatest assets that any nation can have. Not only are they legitimately regarded as the future leaders, they are, potentially and actually the greatest investment for a country’s development. Their energy, inventiveness, character and orientation define the security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labour power, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. The youth serve as a good measure of the extent to which a country can reproduce as well as sustain itself. The extent of their vitality, responsible conduct and roles in society is positively correlated to the development of their country. National Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (2001) asserts that youth have for long been making important contributions to the development of their individual societies in the areas of agriculture, defense, transmission of cultural values and so on. This is in addition to the role they played during the colonial period on the struggle for self-rule. In the present day Nigeria, youth contribute in protecting the
nation from lawlessness within and offer defence against external aggression; they provide manpower for sports. The youth are one of the most important segments of every society who if are vibrant can help transform the society into an active and well-focused society.

It is in light of the above that the paper empirically investigates the phenomenon of youth gangs involvement in political violence and its implication for socio-economic and political development in Nigeria. It has been observed that political instability has become part of the Nigerian social problem for instance from 1960 to date Nigeria conducted almost seven general elections which include: that of 1964, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 respectively, these elections were conducted with several types of violent activities by the youth gangs such as Odua people’s congress, Bakassi Boys, Area Boys, Yandaba, Yansara Suka, Yan Kalare, and Ecomog The most unfortunate situation in Nigeria is that youths who are the future leaders are the main perpetrators of such instability.

Kushee (2008) asserts that these youth gangs go by different names, ‘ECOMOG’ (Borno), Area Boys (Sokoto), Kauraye (Kaduna and Katsina), Yan Daba (Kano), Yan Sara Suka (Bauchi) and Yan Kalare (Gombe). These are some of the local names given to political thugs operating in the states of the North East and North West geo-political zones of Nigeria since the re-introduction of electoral democracy in 1999. These groups of mostly unemployed youth are usually sponsored by desperate politicians who lure them with extravagant promises of employment and other illegal government patronage. When elections are over and the politicians, now in power, fail to redeem their promises, these used-and-dumped young men usually resort to robbery, kidnap and other heinous crimes to extort money and other valuables from the general public to make ends meet (Oruwari, 2006).

Theoretical nexus

Political crisis is an endemic feature of most of the world’s political systems (Alanamu, 2005). This is particularly true of the developing countries, including Nigeria, where violent political conflicts have become essential characteristics of the political process, especially after independence. It was perhaps Nigerian’s pride that she achieved her independence with a minimum of disturbances (Tamuno, 1991). However, it is rather unfortunate that after independence, Nigeria stumbled from crisis to crisis and near disintegration, as the country witnessed a marked increase in the bitterness of party, ethno-religious antagonism and political intolerance. These regrettable propensities had culminated, at different times, in sectarian violence, riots, coups and counter coups and high-profile killings, etc.

Alanamu (2005) states that the country has demonstrated a very high propensity for political conflict during the Fourth Republic (1999-2003) and in 2003-2007, ethnic, religious and regional, tension was widespread. According to him, episodes of violence were ethnic or religious on the surface but were often caused by competition for political and economic influence in a country where politics is seen as one of the few avenues for one to be rich. Furthermore, he asserts that in Nigeria, when party lines and her political division coincide with ethnic or religious identity come to play in the political arena politicians are often able to capitalize on this sentiment to mobilize support, in many cases exacerbating inter-group resentment and hostility.

Political violence that characterized Nigerian State is attributed to the history and processes inherent in the State formation during the colonial era. He opined that, the colonial state was the foundation upon which the Post Colonial State was built. Therefore the process of state formation and the political use to which identity is put were determined in this process. Presently, the Nigerian State, he argues is a violent institution and to a large extent a crises generating mechanism because the development of a bourgeois nation-state based on respect for human rights, the rule of
law, and the institutionalization of democratic order and good government was not the priority of the colonialist in building the Nigeria state (Egwu, 2001)

In the same vein, Ekeh (1986) stated that political violence as well as, insecurity that engulfed the eighty years of the slave trade resulted in laying the foundation for the devaluation of human worth. By its exploitative tendencies, colonialism generated an extreme scarcity of socio-economic and political rewards and an intolerable degree of inequality. This scarcity and unbearable scope of inequality gave rise to political competition with and between youth groups in Nigeria. According to Oruwari (2006) youth groups have been in existence in Nigeria for a long time. In the immediate post civil war period, i.e. from early 1970s, there was a noticeable increase in the incidence of violent crimes and in the heinous nature of these crimes particularly in the use of dangerous weapons and killings. The national awareness and emergence of youth groups and incessant violence can be traced back to the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war that lasted from 1967 to 1970. The roots of youth violence have been attributed to the loss of traditional structures that kept people together (Aderinto, 1994).

Unemployment among the youths has steadily increased and the unemployed youth becomes a ready-made tool for unscrupulous politicians to be used thugs, hooligans and body guards. Past experience with political activism demonstrates that when social movements do not address the concerns of the most socially excluded and marginalized, youth gangs will institutionalize and take destructive forms (Owei, 2006).

**Youth political violence in Nigeria**

According to Amnesty international Report (2007) previous elections in Nigeria show a pattern of political violence and political killings related to elections committed by youth. In the 2003 elections, the report states that, there were numerous incidence of assassination of political candidates, clashes between supporters of different politicians both within political parties and between rival parties, intimidation, harassment of political candidates and supporters. According to the report, the large number of firearms available in Nigeria and the creation of armed youth gangs enabled politicians to instigate political violence at local and state levels.

The run-up to the 2007 elections has a similar pattern of political violence and impurity. According to the Nigeria Alliance for Peaceful Election (NAPE), seventy seven incidents of political violence were recorded between 13, January to 13, February 2007. These incidents vary from clashes at political rallies, to kidnapping of opponents and killings. As reported by Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), since March 2006 several candidates running for political office in the April 2007 elections in Lagos and Ekiti state. Many other politicians and political candidates were subjected to violent attacks and attempt killings, but managed to escape.

The following are some of the politically motivated crisis and violence by the youth from 2006 to 2007 adopted from the report of Amnesty international, April 2007.

The role of politicians both candidates and those holding political office –instigating, encourages or perpetuating election – related violence in Nigeria is widely acknowledge by officials, civil society organizations and the media. In August 2006, the Inspector General of Police stated that politicians were recruiting students to engage in political violence. In the same month the Ebonyi state Commissioner of Police was reported to have identified political candidates who, according to police intelligence, had started to train “thugs” – armed supporters or gangs –in preparation for the elections. Similar statements made by police and security officials in several Nigerian states about the role of politicians in instigating and encouraging political violence have been reported in the media (TMG, 2007) According to Human Right Watch Report (2003), in the Tudun Wada area of Kaduna town capital of Kaduna state, there was a clash between ANPP and PDP supporters two days after the State House of Assembly election of May 3, 2003.
Also in Sokoto state, election observers recorded at least two deaths as a result of clashes between ANPP and PDP supporters. Both incidents occurred in the aftermath of the National Assembly elections of April 12, 2003 at Tureta Local Government Area, the other in Kebbe Local Government Area. In Tureta, a PDP supporter was stoned to death, while in Kebbe, an ANPP supporter died after being severely beaten.

Methodology

Population of the study
The population of the study are the members of youth gang (sara-suka) Bauchi state and prominent politicians in the state.

Sample size and sampling procedure
Bauchi state has twenty (20) Local Government Areas the respondents were drawn on the basis of availability from the three senatorial zones. One hundred and fifty respondents were drawn from each zone. Therefore, a total of four hundred and fifty (450) respondents were initially targeted for this study. Also, four (4) prominent politicians were selected from each zone, while a total number of twelve (12) politicians were selected to complement the information needed.

Methods of data collection
Quantitative data were sought through sample survey because of the need to look for commonly held attributes and to cover a large sample or a large proportion of the population in order to capture variations. The quantitative data were collected through the use of questionnaire for members of the youth gangs. Also, 12 in-depth interviews were conducted in order to generate data from prominent politicians in the area of study.

Methods of data analysis
The researcher analyzed both the qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0. Also the qualitative data were utilized in the analysis to support the quantitative findings.

Findings
This part focuses on data presentation and analysis. It is divided into four sections: section one is on the demographic and socio-economic features of the respondents; section two deals with reasons for membership of gangs and gang’s activities; section three covers political violence (types, reasons and sponsorship and benefits); the final section presents the discussion of the research findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Sex of the Respondents</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows the gender distribution of the respondents. It is evident from the table that a majority of the respondents (98.1%) are males, while only 1.9% of them are females. Thus, based on the data above, it can be said that a majority of the youth that participate in political violence in Bauchi state are males. This may be because men are more prone to deviance than their female counterparts. From the findings, it is evident that in Bauchi the high rate of poverty has affected greater number of youths, particularly male youth and this is the category that is bought over by politicians to participate in various political activities-campaign, polling agents and security guards.
Table 2: Occupations of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisans/Craftsmen</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Servants</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty Traders</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork (2009).

The table above indicates that a majority of the youth who engage in physical political violence are unemployed with 76.0% of the total sample. The farmers are the second highest category 12.0%. The civil servants and those who engage in one business or another were 6.0% and 4.7% respectively. However, the artisans and craftsmen (those involved in welding, shoe making, carpentry, painting, etc.) were 1.2% only. As such, in terms of occupation, those who are unemployed form a majority of youth in the sample.

On the other hand Gurr (1970) described relative deprivation as when player’s recognized inconsistency between their value potentialities. Value prospects are the goods and conditions of life to which people suppose they are fairly entitled.

Table 3: Reasons for Belonging to Youth Gangs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disenchantment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork (2009).

The youth were asked why they belonged to gangs. From the responses in the above table, it can be clear that 67.0% of the respondents reported that they belonged to gangs due to unemployment. Also, 25.8% of them reported poverty as their reason, while 4.8 percent of the youths stated that frustration was the reason for belonging to a gang. Only 2.4 percent reported that they belonged to gangs due to disenchantment with the system. Therefore, the above data shows that a majority of the youth in Azare who belonged to youth gangs did so due to unemployment.

The data show that when youth are jobless and disenchanted they become intolerant, because they have few opportunities for productive engagement. They become a ready pool of recruits for politicians seeking youth support for political purpose. While the primary motive for belonging to a gang is economic, power and politics become relevant as rival gangs struggle to protect their territories. Also, as politicians retain their services for personal protection and to intimidate or even eliminate perceived enemies (especially political opponents, even in the same political party).

This is also in accordance with the views of Cohen (1955) in delinquent subculture theory who expressed that delinquent behaviour of lower-class youths is actually a protest against the norms and values of middle class culture. Because social conditions make them incapable of achieving success legitimately, lower-class youths experience a form of culture conflict or status frustration. As a result, many of them join gangs and engage in “non-utilitarian, malicious and negativistic behaviours”.

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Table 4: The Gangs’ Activities as Given by the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurgery</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>73.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riot</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Assassination</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidnap</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>418</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork (2009).

Respondents were asked the activities of their gangs. From the above findings, it is clear that thurgery ranked the highest (73.0%), followed by kidnapping (14.4%). Robbery was 10.7% and riot 1.2%. However, assassination ranked lowest with only 1.2%. Hence, thurgery was discovered to be the major activity of the youth gangs in Bauchi. The findings above indicate that violence is the method of operation for all gang activities. It defines interactions within groups. Intimidation, harassment, assault, murder, abduction and armed robbery are known processes of engagement, though not evidently endemic. On the issue of the type of politically violent acts the youth gangs participate in, 49.3% of them reported that they were involved in election violence. While 26.3% of them reported that they were involved in party clashes; 12.4% of them stated that they were involved in acts of sabotage like destruction of voting materials. While 7.2% of them confirmed that they participated in hijacking and snatching of ballot boxes. However, only 4.8% asserted that they terrorised political opponents. Thus, it is evident that a majority of youth in Bauchi State who participated in politically violent acts were involved in election-related violence.

Table 5: Respondents’ Participation in Political Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>98.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>418</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork (2009).

The above table shows clearly that the majority of the respondents (98.1%) had participated in political violence. Only 1.9% of the youths claimed not to have taken part in political violence. The high level of youth gang participation in political violence can be due to disenchantment with the existing system. The data above indicates that in Bauchi, the atmosphere of cynicism about government, economic stagnation, hopelessness and historical political fragmentation encouraged the formation of youth gangs and their participation in political violence with weapons; and they operate unchallenged most of the time due to patronage from powerful forces.

Discussion of findings

In this part, attempt has been made to discuss the major findings of the work in line with study objectives and some of the reviewed literature.

1. Demographic and socio-economic characteristics: Youth gangs in Bauchi can be classified according to their geographic scope of operation (daba) i.e. territory, and also on the basis of the motivating factors, whether political, economic and/or social. While the primary motive of gang formation is economic, power and politics become relevant as rival gangs struggle to protect their territories and as politicians retain their services for personal protection and to intimidate or even kill perceived enemies (especially political opponents, even in the same political party). The data collected from the work indicates that a majority (98.1%) of the respondents were
males; with 73.7% which also constitutes the majority of the respondents were found to be single in terms of their marital status. The findings indicates further that majority (39.2%) of the respondents have no formal education. And the average age of the youth gang members are between 25-29 years of age. All these are in line with the findings of Egbue (2006) as reviewed in the literature that, the majority of Nigerian male youths comprise of drivers, artisans, motor-park and airport touts, bus conductors, petty traders, armed robbers, people with little or no education and very little or no skill training, unemployed or marginally employed persons.

The twelve politicians interviewed had formal education, six of them have at least bachelor degree and three of them were political party chairmen while three were party secretaries and all the respondents were males and between the ages of 40-60 years.

2. The causes of youth participation in political violence: The findings indicate that 67.0% of the respondents are unemployed followed by poverty, with 25.8% of them reported as their reasons for participation in political violence. This supports the findings of Owei (2006) that unemployment among the youths has steadily increased and the unemployed youth becomes a ready-made tool for unscrupulous politicians to be used thugs, hooligans and body guards. Past experience with political activism demonstrates that when social movements do not address the concerns of the most socially excluded and marginalized youth gangs will institutionalize and take destructive forms, and this is in harmony with the findings of Siegel (2004) that violence is linked to substance abuse, violence becomes endemic when drug gangs flex their muscles to dominate territory and drive out rivals.

3. Unemployment and youth participation in political violence: Further, the findings indicate that majority (76.1%) of the respondents are unemployed. All these are in line with the findings of Salami (1994) that economic factors include unemployment or marginally employed and poverty. After over four decades of Nigeria’s independence, poverty still exists among the youth in all parts of Nigeria. The reasons inter alia are largely due to bad leadership, corruption, incessant tribal wars and natural disaster; capitalist exploitative tendencies, poor planning and policy distortion and inconsistencies. It is also evident from the findings of this research that majority (73%) of the respondents engaged in thuggery during election in Bauchi State. Also, majority (67.6%) of the respondents belong to different gangs due to unemployment and this is in harmony with the findings of Omeje (2005) as reviewed in the literature that “the staggering level of youth unemployment leads to hopelessness, restiveness, and feelings of frustration, which often precipitates or fuels violent conflicts. Therefore, there is a link between violence and unequal access to employment, and the situations of widespread, severe inequality heighten the potential for alienated, frustrated and excluded populations particularly the youths to engage in different forms of violence, including economic-related gang violence, and politically motivated identity conflict.

4. Manipulation of youth gangs and participation in political violence: The work revealed that majority (95.7%) of the respondents asserted that they are being sponsored by the politicians, and (76.1%) of them also stated that they are manipulated by the politicians. This is in accordance with Kushee (2008), that these groups of mostly unemployed youths are usually sponsored by desperate politicians who lure them with extravagant promises of employment and other illegal government patronage. When elections are over, the politicians, now in power, fail to redeem their promises. Also, according to the findings; fear has been the main response of the civil society. People generally have a deep distrust of the police, accusing them of collusion. Wealthy Nigerians, top government officials and politicians who can afford it, have armed police escorts or body guards and pay the police regular allowances for special patrols, according to Joseph (1999) the politicians and the elites have promoted youth gangs violence. He further states that the politicians are the major players in the exploitation and manipulation of non-elites and
youths, usually directed towards personal interest.

**Conclusion**
Political violence by the youths in Bauchi State, based on the data gathered and analyzed exists among the youth gangs. The findings indicate that majority of the youths that participate in political violence were males and they are between the ages of 15 – 35 years. Also, a majority of the members of youth gangs were single, with low level or non-formal education. Also, a majority of them were earning between ₦84,001 – ₦108,000 as their average annual income, and most of them are poor and unemployed. Therefore, based on the findings of the work, it can be concluded that there exists political violence by the youth in Bauchi State. It is evident from the data collected and analyzed, that the youth participate in political violence. The research revealed that a majority of them were never arrested by the police let alone be taken to court for trial.

Furthermore, the findings show that a majority of the youth gang members covered know that their level of participation is either high or very high. In terms of why they are supporting a particular candidate, the work evidently shows that they consider perceived injustice meted out to that particular candidate as what motivates them to garner support for the candidate. In the area of employment, the findings show that they are willing to renounce violence if handwork is provided for them. Also, they are willing to renounce violence if a majority of them will be sent to school. Furthermore, most of the youth gang members interviewed asserted that they will renounce violence and gangsterism if government or civil society adequately intervenes to alleviate their situation. However, the research reveals that some of the few youth gang members already consider themselves as “dropouts” and have no intention of returning to school.

**Recommendations**
Based on the findings of this work, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Federal Government and States in Nigeria must take a more critical look at the nation’s urban centres, especially in the areas of physical planning, economy and the provisions of services. In doing these, priority must be given to helping the urban poor meet their needs for sustainable livelihood and to fight against poverty in general.

2. The nation’s rural economy must also be planned to promote growth in the agricultural sector, provide jobs and improve the rural quality of life. This should reduce the lure of urban employment that fuels the large-scale migration of young people, especially males, to growing urban areas that can be easily recruited by politicians.

3. An important pool of recruits for the gangs is from the street children, the weak, the feeble, the strong and the abled. This calls for action to take the children off the streets before they become targets. Government should provide shelters such as good accommodations and education. In this regard, local governments, religious organisations, non-governmental organisations and even charitable individuals can partner to provide care on a regular and consistent basis.

4. Job creation and making sure that youth are gainfully employed is a major task for government. The political class and those in government must appreciate this and give it the serious attention it deserves by providing employment for the teeming number of unemployed youth.

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Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, see: http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G06/06/40/


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