DEMYSTIFYING PRECIPITATION OF YOUTH VIOLENCE AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR ON THE VICTIMS AND NIGERIAN SOCIETY: MIRRIORING THE DARK CLOUDS

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Abstract: -

Youth violence is one of the many problems facing the globe. The issue of youth violence and or crime has been declared as intolerable and catastrophic. The United Nations and the World Health organization have both agreed that effective planning and measures must be taken to guide and provide the youth a reasonable platform for a sustainable growth and development to take place. This study examined demystifying precipitation of youth violence and criminal behaviour on the victims and Nigerian society. The paper adopted the Gary Becker (1976) Rational Choice theory as its theoretical framework. The method of data collection were the quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (key informant interview). Eight hundred (800) Likert scale well- structured questionnaires were administered and retrieved while six (6) Key informant interviews were administered on participants across six states (one from each geopolitical zone). The quantitative instruments were analyzed with the aid of SPSS version 24 presented in simple percentages while the KII were analyzed using manual content analysis and ethnographic summaries. The findings revealed that youth violence and criminal behaviour are barbaric, illegal, destructive in nature and deadly. The study recommends that government must be determined to solve the problem of youth in general by engaging them in profitable venture. Crime prevention and control mechanism and security architecture of the country must be revamped. Individuals, families, NGOs, communities, local governments and states must be supportive of the federal government policies and laws to stem the twin problem of youth violence and criminal behaviour in the country. Youth guidance, reorientation, sensitization and conscientization should be periodic and more frequent to instill consciousness on them. This will reduce the menace to a greater extent. Youth must learn not to be readily available tools to be used by the self or someone in carrying out inhumane acts in Nigeria and beyond.

Keywords: - *Trending, Patterns, Youth violence, crime, antisocial, deviant and criminal behaviour*

INTRODUCTION

No country in the world is immune from the problem of youth violence and criminal behaviour. Infact, from personal behaviour and sparing media report, the acts are on the rise but varies from one country and so are the trends and patterns. The United Nation`s Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA, 2021) through the World Youth Report (WYR, 2021) has warned that the youth population between the age of 18-24years is 1.1billion constitutes 18 percent of the world population and 24 percent if 24 years and younger are indexed. The agency warned that because of the untapped and unused energy due to poor guardian and direction the youth are most likely to dissipate their energies in the wrong direction. In a mission statement of the United Nations "youth 2030 agenda for sustainable development", it spells it out clearly that youth are the future and should be guided ad guarded for a reasonable future to be achieved. Youth violence and criminal behaviour have permeates the universe causing havoc and untold hardship on people and the country anywhere it is found. Experiences of youth violence and criminal behaviour are visible in media reports and personal observation.

The reports from National Bureau of Statistic of the United States revealed that youth crimes such as bullying street touting, drug peddling/abuse, thuggery, snatching of valuable, armed robbery, lone wolf syndrome, riot and demonstration, are taking the frontline of the crime index. This report is not very different from European countries where youth are involved in various act of violence and criminal behaviour like demonstration, riots, fighting, drug peddling, touting, killing, armed robbery, bullying and lone wolf syndrome. Reports from the Arctic and Antarctica on youth violence and criminal behaviour indicates that the phenomenon manifest itself in various forms like bullying, riots, touting, riots, drug peddling, armed robbery, abduction, street gangs, street fight etc. From Asia came instances of youth violence and criminal behaviour in form of street gangs, drug abuse, fraud, street fighting, touting, drug peddling and abuse, wars, riots, armed robbery and bullying among others.

From the African continent came bothering reports and stories from the media on the helplessness and inability of the government and its law enforcement agents in contending youth violence and criminal behaviour. This situation has most often resulted in international joint task force on crime prevention and control. Despite this effort less results has been achieved in the fight against, youth violence and criminal behaviour in Nigeria. This study is driven to demystifying precipitation of youth violence and criminal behaviour on the victims and Nigeria society with the view to mirroring the dark clouds.

Statement of the problem

The globe is perturbed by acts of violence and crime being perpetrated by man against man. In all countries of the world inhumanity of man to man persist and is said to be on the increase on daily basis. Most a times, these acts are presumed to be carried by people or youth within the age brackets of 18-35 years of age. In most streets in the American and European continent, youth violence and criminal behaviour such as bullying, abduction, touting, touting; thuggery, cultism, street fighting and armed robbery are noticed. The Antarctica and Arctic are common sights for youth violence and criminal behaviour like thuggery, touting; street fighting, touting, cultism, armed robbery and bullying. The Asian continent is plaque with instance of youth violence and criminal behaviour such as wars, riots, demonstration, street gangs, touting, and cultism among others. In Africa for instance, youth violence and criminal behaviours is trending in bullying, fraud, riots, demonstrations, wars; abduction, ritual killing, swindling, stealing, breaking and entry Kidnapping, cultism, political thuggery, street fighting and armed robbery.

Scholars like Alemika (2012), Utor (2016) and Akan (2017; 2021 & 2022) have adduced in their separate studies that the causes of   youth violence and criminal behaviour includes unemployment, poor socialization, poverty, dissatisfaction with government policies, revenge, media exposure, mental illness, peer group pressure, moral decadence, get rich quick syndrome, drug and alcohol use among others. The scholars further argued that the trends of such act are manifest in bullying, kidnapping, cultism, political thuggery, street fighting and armed robbery etc. the findings from those studies further revealed that the effects of youth violence and criminal behaviour common in Nigeria is that it leads to loss of lives, vandalism/ destruction of properties, loss of lives, unhappiness for victims and their families, increase school dropouts, pain and suffering on, bring about burden cost of treatment, trauma, disruption of family peace, injuries, enmity/threat to peace, health challenges, relocation, victimization, disruption of academic calendar, forceful closure of business etc. Akan (2022) study on the trending pattern of youth violence and criminal behaviour on residents in cross river state Nigeria: unveiling the myth revealed that Cross river youth violence and criminal behaviour is as a result of bad government policies, unemployment, idleness, desire to get rich quick, peer pressure and uncensored bad media content exposure amongst other. This new study has expanded that scope to cover the whole country. While the former study grouped the objectives and treated them as causes, patterns, trends and consequences, the present study broke the effects into various subheadings and approached them thematically. The previous study made use of only quantitative study; the present study triangulated the methods. These will help to facilitate and form a strong basis for a comparative analysis between the former and the present study for a more valid and generalized outcome to be drawn. Therefore, the present study premised to demystifying precipitation of youth violence and criminal behaviour on the victims and Nigerian society with the view to mirroring the dark clouds.

Research questions

The following questions were asked to give the study a direction:

1. What is the impact of street crimes on the victims and Nigerian society?
2. Of what influence is kidnapping on victims and the Nigerian society?
3. What is the role of political thuggery as a form of youth violence on the victims and Nigerian society?
4. How has cultism influenced youth violence on the victims and Nigerian society?
5. To what extent has armed robbery as a form of youth violence impacted on the victims and Nigerian society?

Research Objectives

The general objective is demystifying precipitation of youth violence and criminal behaviour on the victims and Nigerian society, while the specific objectives are:

1. To examine the impact of street crimes on the victims and Nigerian society
2. To ascertain influence is kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society
3. To evaluate the role of political thuggery as a form of youth violence on the victims and Nigerian society
4. To examine how cultism influenced youth violence on the victims Nigerian society
5. To measure the effect of armed robbery as a form of youth violence on the victims and Nigerian society

Theoretical framework

Rational choice theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The theory is propounded by Gary Becker (1976). The theory has its root in economics and the classical school of criminology. It believed that choice making is in the best interest of the person making the choices, hence, the need to be rational in making the decision. The theory holds that human being are pleasure seekers and pain avoiders; calculative and rational in their choice making. Therefore before making any choice, they rationalize and sieve between choices before deciding what on to do. If making a particular choice or taking a particular decision will be harmful, such a choice or decision would not be made but if the outcome will be otherwise, then the person is likely to make the choice. To this school of thought, crime is a free will decision indulged in by a criminal or deviant that has determined to do so because he or she would have weighed his choices and came to a particular decision because of what he or she is expected to benefit. The youth in Nigeria engaged in youth violence and crime out of their volition and because of what is expected to be gained. Nigerian youth engagement or involvement in bullying, kidnapping, thuggery, street fighting, armed robbery and cultism is out of their selfish motive and interest. Most often deviants and criminals advanced merciful and excusable excuses for participating in crime so that they can escape the long arm of the law when caught and apprehended. This theory has been able to throw more light on the reasons why youth violence and criminal behaviour exist among Nigerians. Despite its weaknesses, it has offered explained youth violence and criminal behaviour in Nigeria and beyond succinctly.

Methodology

This study employed the descriptive survey design method carried out in Cross River State, Abuja, Lagos and Anambra states in Nigeria. It universe were youth and comprised of 800 sample between the ages of 18-39. It triangulated the quantitative and qualitative (the questionnaire and Key Information Interview) methods. The respondents for the eight hundred (800) structured 5 scale Likert questionnaires were selected and administered via the simple random sampling technique to youth while six (6) the KII were selected using purposive sampling technique to security agents who are experienced on youth violence and crime in Cross River, Abuja, Lagos, Taraba and Anambra States in Nigeria. The questionnaire instrument was analyzed with the aid of SPSS version 24 using simple percentages tables. The qualitative instrument that is the Key Informant Interview (KII) was analyzed through manual content analysis and ethnographic summaries.

Data presentation and discussion of findings

Table 4.1: Effect of street crime on the victims and Nigerian society

Effect of street crime	A	SA	D	SD
Loss of lives	241(30.1%)	219(27.4%)	124(15.5%)	216(27.0%)
Vandalism	302(37.8%)	185(23.1%)	173(21.6%)	140(17.5%)
Pain and suffering	412(51.5%)	300(37.5%)	52(6.5%)	36(4.5%)
Cost of treatment	419(52.4%)	286(35.8%)	44(5.5%)	51(6.3%)
Trauma	423(52.9%)	274(34.2%)	33(4.1%)	70(8.8%)
Disruption of family peace	416(52.0%)	323(40.4)	29(3.6%)	32(4.0%)

Source: Field work, 2021.

The above examined the effect of street crime on the victims and Nigerian society. The finding revealed that out of the 800 respondents, 460(57.5) agree while 340(42.5%) disagree that loss of lives is an effect of street crime on the Nigerian society. This result is a proof that street crimes lead to loss of lives in the victims and Nigerian society. While 487(60.9%) support, 313(39.1%) were against vandalism as an effect of street crime on the victims and Nigerian society. this result is a pointer that vandalism is one of the effects of street crime on the victim and Nigerian society.

712(89.0%) respondent agree while 88(11.0%) disagree that pain and suffering is an effect of street crime on the victims and Nigerian society.705(88.1%) agree while 95(11.9%) disagree that cost of treatment is an effect of street crime on the victims and Nigerian society. this result showed that cost of treatment is an effect of street crime on the victims and Nigerian society. It was gathered that 697(87.1%) agree while 103(12.9%) disagree that trauma is an effect of street crime on the Nigerian society. This result is a proof that trauma is an effect of street crime on the Nigerian society. A whooping 739(92.4%) agree but a few 61(7.6%) disagree that disruption of family peace is an effect of street crime on the victims and Nigerian society. This is a clear indication that disruption of family peace is an effect of street crime on the victims and Nigerian society.

From the above findings therefore, the effect of street crime on the victims and Nigerian society are; loss of lives, vandalism, pain and suffering; cost of treatment, trauma as well as disruption of family peace.

The KII finding revealed that the effect of street crime on the victim and Nigerian society are loss of lives, vandalism, pain and suffering, cost of treatment, trauma, disruption of family peace. This finding is in line with the quantitative data result.

Table 4.2: Effect of kidnapping on residents on the victims and Nigerian society

Effect of kidnapping	A	SA	D	SD
Loss of lives	297(37.1%)	289(36.1%)	114(14.3%)	100(12.5%)
Injuries	281(35.1%)	277(34.6%)	112(14.0%)	130(16.3%)
Financial cost/debts	214(26.8%)	312(39.0%)	99(12.4%)	175(21.8%)
Psychological trauma	291(36.4%)	348(43.5%)	74(9.2%)	87(10.9%)
Unplanned relocation	268(33.5%)	253(31.6%)	134(16.8%)	145(18.1%)
Protection/closure of business	281(35.1%)	263(32.9)	120(15.0%)	136(17.0%)

Source: Field work, 2021.

This table above examined the effect of kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society. The finding indicates that out of 800 respondents, loss of lives had 586(73.2%) with 214(26.8) disagree. This means that loss of lives is an effect of kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society. While 558(69.8%) agree, 242(30.2%) disagree that sustaining injuries is an effect of kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society. This result showed that sustaining injuries is an effect of kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society. Financial cost/debts as an effect of kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society had 526(65.8%) in agreement with 274(34.2%) in disagreement. This result proved that financial cost/debt is an effect of kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society. Psychological trauma received 639(79.9%) agree against 161(20.1%) disagree. This result means that psychological trauma is an effect of kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society. Unplanned relocation got 521(65.1%) agree with 279(34.9%) disagreement. This result proved that unplanned relocation is an effect of kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society. Protection/closure of business secured a total of 544(68.0%) agreement with 256(32.0%) disagreement. This result indicated that protection/closure of business is an effect of kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society.

From the findings above, one can deduce that the effects of kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society are; loss of lives, injuries, financial cost/debts; psychological trauma unplanned relocation as well as protection/closure of business.

Respondents from KII believed that the effects of kidnapping on the victims and Nigerian society are loss of life, injuries, financial cost/debt to pay ransom, psychological trauma, unplanned relocation, protection and forceful closure of business. This finding is in line with the quantitative data result.

Table 4.3: Effect of political thuggery on residents on the victims and Nigerian society

Effect of political thuggery	A	SA	D	SD
Intimidation	351(43.9%)	286(35.8%)	86(10.7%)	77(9.6%)
Injuries	414(51.8%)	219(27.4%)	73(9.1%)	94(11.7%)
Loss of lives	374(46.8%)	261(32.6%)	49(6.1%)	116(14.5%)
Vandalization of properties	282(35.2%)	347(43.4%)	108(13.5%)	63(7.9%)
Trauma	396(49.5%)	288(36.0%)	69(8.6%)	47(5.9%)
Victimization	428(53.5%)	301(37.6%)	43(5.4%)	28(3.5%)
Terrorism	218(27.2%)	234(29.3%)	146(18.2%)	202(25.3%)

Source: Field work, 2021.

The table above examined the effect of political thuggery on residents on the on the victims and Nigerian society Nigerian society. The finding revealed that out of 800 responses received, 637(79.6%) while 163(20.4%) disagree that intimidation is an effect of political thuggery on the victims and Nigerian society. This result means that intimidation is an effect of political thuggery on the victims and Nigerian society. While 633(79.1%) agree, 167(20.9%) disagree that getting injuries is an effect of political thuggery on the Nigerian society. this finding showed that getting injured is an effect of political thuggery on the victims and Nigerian society. Loss of lives as an effect of political thuggery on the victims and Nigerian society secured 635(79.4%) agree against 165(20.6%). This result means that loss of lives is an effect of political thuggery on the victims and Nigerian society. Vandalization of properties gathered 629(78.6%) agree with 171(23.4%) disagree. This result is an indication that vandalization of properties is an effect of political thuggery

on the victims and Nigerian society. While trauma had 684(85.5%) in agreement, 116(14.5%) were in disagreement. This result is a proof that trauma is one of the many effect of political thuggery on the victims and Nigerian society. An overwhelming 729(91.1%) agree that victimization is an effect of political thuggery on the victims and Nigerian society but a negligible few 71(8.9%) disagree. This result is an indication that victimization is an effect of political thuggery on the victims and Nigerian society. 452(56.5%) agreed that terrorism on the Nigerian society is one of the effect of Political thuggery but 348(43.5%) disagree. This result is a pointer that one of the effects of political thuggery on the victims and Nigerian society is terrorism.

From the findings above, the effect of political thuggery on the victims and Nigerian society are intimidation, injuries, loss of lives; vandalization of properties, trauma, victimization and terrorism.

From the KII responses, participants were of the opinion that the effects of political thuggery on the victims and Nigerian society are intimidation, injuries, loss of lives; vandalization of properties, trauma, victimization and terrorism. This finding is in line with the quantitative data result.

Table 4.4: Effect of cultism on residents on the victims and Nigerian society

Effect of cultism	A	SA	D	SD
Threat/loss of lives	287(35.9%)	436(54.5%)	33(4.1%)	44(5.5%)
Disruption of peace	328(41.0%)	416(52.0%)	25(3.1%)	31(3.9%)
Destruction of properties	272(34.0%)	426(53.2%)	61(7.6%)	41(5.2%)
Unhappiness of victims	286(35.8%)	419(52.3%)	24(3.0%)	71(8.9%)
Increase school dropouts	271(33.9%)	438(54.7%)	68(8.5%)	23(2.9%)
Injuries	296(37.0%)	429(53.6%)	28(3.5%)	47(5.9%)
Health challenges	258(32.2%)	313(39.1%)	105(13.2%)	124(15.5%)

Source: Field work, 2021.

This table above examined the effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society. The finding indicated that out of 800 responses were received, a total of 723(90.4%) agree that threats/loss of lives is an effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society while 77(9.6%) disagree. This means that threats/loss of lives is an effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society. A whooping 744(93.0%) respondents agree while a few 56(7.0%) disagree that disruption of peace is an effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society. This result revealed that disruption of peace is an effect of cultism on residents on the Nigerian society. 698(87.2%) responses were received in favour of agree while 102(12.8%) disagree that destruction of properties is an effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society. An overwhelming 705(88.1%) agree while a negligible few 95(11.9%) disagree that unhappiness for victims and their love ones is an effect of cultism on residents on the victims and Nigerian society. This finding showed that unhappiness of victims and their loved ones is an effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society. Increase in school dropout as an effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society gathered 709(88.6%) support while just 91(11.4%) were against the view. This result proved that increase in school dropouts is an effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society. Incurring of injuries as an effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society had 725(90.6%) agree against 75(9.4%) disagree. This result means that incurring injuring is an effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society. It was gathered that 571(71.4%) agree while 229(28.6%) disagree that health challenge is an effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society. The result proved that health challenge is an effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society.
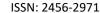
From the findings above, the effect of cultism on the victims and Nigerian society are threats/loss of lives, disruption of peace, destruction of properties, unhappiness of victim and their loved ones increased school dropouts, incurring of injuries as well as health challenges for both the perpetrators and victims.

It was generally accepted by participants from the KII that the effect of cultism on the victim and the victims and Nigerian society are threat to life, threat to peace and security on campus, destruction of properties, loss of lives, unhappiness for victims and their families, increase school dropouts, causes injuries, health challenges. This finding merely confirmed the qualitative data result.

Table 4.5: Effect of armed robbery on the victims and Nigerian society

Effect of armed robbery	A	SA	D	SD
Fear of insecurity	288(36.0%)	264(33.0%)	146(18.2%)	102(12.8%)
Loss of lives/properties	302(37.8%)	299(37.4%)	104(13.0%)	95(11.8%)
Impedes development	232(29.0%)	314(39.3%)	133(16.6%)	121(15.1%)
Invoke poverty on the victim	228(28.5%)	296(37.0%)	162(20.3%)	114(14.2%)
Wastage funds to fight crime	233(29.1%)	291(36.4%)	132(16.5%)	144(18.0%)
Causes disabilities of victims	331(41.4%)	257(32.1)	91(11.4%)	121(15.1%)
Leads to trauma	280(35.0%)	411(51.4%)	47(5.8)	62(7.8)
May lead to family relocation	371(46.4%)	319(39.9)	23(2.8)	87(10.9)

Source: Field work, 2021.

The above table examined the effect of armed robbery on the victims and Nigerian society. The findings revealed that out of 800 respondents, 552(69.0%) agree while 248(31.0%) disagree that fear of insecurity is an effect of armed robbery on the victims and Nigerian society. this result indicated that fear of insecurity is an effect of armed robbery on the victims and Nigerian society. While 601(75.1%) agree, 199(24.9%) disagree that loss of lives/properties is an effect of armed robbery on the victims and Nigerian society. it was gathered from 546(68.2%) in agreement with 254(31.8%) in disagreement that the effect of armed robbery on the victims and Nigerian society is that, it impedes development. This result revealed that armed robbery impedes development in the study area. 524(65.5%) agree while276 (34.5%) disagree that armed robbery invoke poverty on the victims. This finding proved that one of the effects of armed robbery on residents on the Nigerian society is that it invokes poverty on the victims. 524(65.5%) said wastage of public funds to fight crime is an effect of armed robbery on the victims and Nigerian society but 276(34.5%) disagree. This result showed that wastage of public funds to fight crime is an effect of armed robbery on the victims and Nigerian society. 588(73.5) respondents agree while 212(26.5%) disagree that armed robbery causes disability of victims is one of its effects on the victims and Nigerian society. This finding revealed that it does. While 691(86.4%) agree that one of the effects of armed robbery on residents on the victims and Nigerian society society is that leads to trauma, 109(13.6%) disagree. This result is an indication that armed trauma is one of the effects of armed robbery in the study area. It was agreed by 690(86.2%) respondents that one of the effects of armed robbery on the victims and Nigerian society is that it may lead to unplanned relocation but 110(13.8%) disagree. This result means that one of the effects of armed robbery on the victims and Nigerian society is that it may lead to unplanned relocation.

The findings above revealed that, the effects of armed robbery on the victims and Nigerian society are fear of insecurity, loss of lives/properties, impedes development, invoke poverty on the victims, wastage of public funds to fight crime, causes disability of victims, leads to trauma and may lead to unplanned relocation.

From the KII participants, the effects of armed robbery on the victim and the Nigerian society are insecurity of lives and property, loss of human resources, reduction in the level of development; invoke poverty on the victim, wastage of state resources on security management, permanent disability on the victims. This finding merely confirmed qualitative data finding.

Conclusion
This paper concluded that youth violence and crime are acts are barbaric, illegal, destructive in nature and deadly.

Recommendations
The following recommendations are drawn to help solve the problem under discuss.
- Government must be determined to solve the problem of youth in general by engaging them in profitable venture.
- Crime prevention and control mechanism and security architecture of the country must be revamped
- Individuals, families, NGOs, Communities, Local Governments and States must be supportive of the federal government policies and laws to stem the twin problem of youth violence and criminal behaviour in the country.
- Youth guidance, reorientation, sensitization and conscientization should be periodic and more frequent to instill consciousness on them. This will reduce the menace to a greater extent.
- Youth must learn not to be readily available tools to be used by the self or someone in carrying out inhumane acts.

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