

Socio-Cultural Factors in Nigerian Male Youth Violence: Relationship with Education and Employment

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ABSTRACT Violent crimes have quite visibly increased among Nigerian male youth in recent years. A major consequence of this situation has been increased insecurity in several dimensions of socio-economic and political life. This paper examines the phenomenon of youth violence from a background of a combination of Nigerian patriarchal traditions and modern socio-cultural and economic environment. The role of school socialization is given particular focus, especially as this impacts on the preparation of youth for future economic life. The paper concludes with prescriptions on possible areas of intervention geared at curbing male youth violence, bearing in mind the need to retain indigenous cultural identities within a contemporary context.

INTRODUCTION

It is important to begin this study by first establishing what is meant by the term youth. Sociologically, youth denotes a stage of life between childhood and adulthood. In many African countries however, marriage constitutes a major stage of responsibility and therefore signifies adulthood. Based on this view, whatever a person's chronological age, he or she is usually deemed to remain a youth until when married. Consistent with this requirement, the youth may therefore be a person who is between childhood and 30 years of age according to Chigunta (2003: 2). Both the United Nations and the Commonwealth define youth as people between the ages of 15 and 29-30 years. In Nigeria, youth age is between 15 and 30 years of age.

Violence in all its occurrence always constitutes sheer human tragedy. Violence affects all aspects of social life. It is to be found every-where, among all groups and associations. It is active in urban and rural communities as well as in political, cultural and economic organizations. Violence occurs in families, schools, work organizations, places of worship and religious activities and in governments.

This paper does not set out on an in-depth exploration of the perceptions and reactions of victims of violence, or seek to elicit the irrational or rational motives pursued by those people who perpetuate violent acts. Rather, the paper approaches the issue of violence from a sociological perspective, which views violence as a problem

of group behaviour largely mobilized and accentuated by the interactions within social structure. An example of this situation is that in Nigeria there are inadequacies in the system of jurisprudence, which lead people to despair of obtaining justice through legal means. Consequently they seek recourse in "jungle justice". To some extent, they revert to primitive existence, thus acting as though the requisite legal institutions are yet to be established.

Youth and in particular male youth are prone to violence due to factors of their youthfulness and their exposure. For instance, a male teenager of between 14 and 19 years of age is more likely than a female of the same age range or a person in late adulthood to become mixed up with gangs or to be involved in arguments which lead to fights, or to want to lash out violently at someone for perceived wrong doing. As a result, this demographic group and those in early adulthood between 20 – 30 years tend to be responsible for most categories of violent behaviour. It is this wide age range, from teenage to about thirty years that are referred to as youth in this paper.

Male youth violence is a phenomenon, which appears to be on the increase in most parts of the world. In the United States for instance, it was estimated in 1990 that there would be about 22 per cent increase in the arrest of youth involved in violent crimes between 1992 and 2010 (<http://www.apa.org/ppo/issues/pbviolence.html>). This information indicates society's focus on how to deal with youth violence. It is also important to note that youth do not only constitute major

perpetuators of violence. They are also the most likely victims of violence. Thus juveniles aged between 12 and 17 years and young adults between 18 and 24 years are more likely to encounter violence.

Youth victimization is a very common occurrence throughout the world and is an outcome of several factors. One factor is the tendency of youth group members to want to establish personal as well as group supremacy over others; necessitating use of force against other youth. Another factor that fosters youth victimization is the already established fact that violent crimes are often committed by them. This situation sets the agencies of law and order against youth, with the result that they are the most likely victims of police harassment and brutality and even unjustifiable homicides all over the world.

Thirdly, a large percentage of youth are victimized from early childhood within the confines of their families and neighbourhoods. Research focusing on this area raises questions regarding the consequences of victimization of children and teenagers on their behaviour in adult life. In particular, there are questions about whether they grow up into abusive adults, thus perpetuating violent behaviour in society. The indications are that aggressive behaviour is learnt and maintained in a manner similar to other behaviours (ED429419, 1998: 1).

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This paper examines violence from the point of view of its deviation from generally held norms. Based on the above view, the paper sets off from Robert K. Merton's theoretical point of view, which emphasizes social structure as a major determinant of anomie. According to Merton, deviance in the United States results mostly from the culture and structure of society itself rather than from pathological personalities. He takes his stand from the standard functionalist concept of "value consensus", by which all members of a society share the same value. According to Merton, in a balanced society equal emphasis is accorded to both cultural goals and institutionalized means of achieving such goals. However, due to different members of society being placed in varying positions within the social structure (e.g. differing in terms of class positions), they therefore, experience differential opportunity for realizing their shared values. Hence, in Merton's

view "the social and cultural structure generates pressure for socially deviant behaviour upon people variously located in that structure" (1989: 139)

From this point of view, Nigerian society has in common the shared goal of success. All Nigerians strive for this goal and success in this context is generally measured in terms of wealth and material goods. However, in comparison to the high level of sharing of the cultural goal of success, a much lower level of importance is allocated to common adherence to the institutionalized means of achieving success. For instance, educational qualification, hard work, drive, determination and ambition are generally accepted in Nigeria as the means to success. However, there seems little or no consensus on how to apply these means to obtaining success. Hence, to the average Nigerian, examination malpractice constitutes technique for obtaining educational qualifications, which is an institutionalized means for obtaining success. In the same way, killing of an opponent is sometimes seen, even by those who are deemed respectable, as a way of demonstrating ambition and hence removing an obstacle to success. Those who have no direct opponents to remove, see themselves as serving the interests of their own success if they are paid handsomely by someone to remove that person's obstacle (Babafemi, 2004: 5-6). Rather than class variation constituting the problem, the Nigerian situation is as a result of wholesale non-alignment of available opportunities with the institutionalized means of achieving the primary goal of success.

The situation of weakness of alignment of available opportunities to the institutionalized means of achieving success could also be supported by Jackson Toby's analysis of deviance in terms of cultural evolution. In his view, weakened traditions, diminished informal neighbourhood control and increased expectation of material gains have combined to engender non-compliance to societal norms: (1979: 386-391)

Current widespread violence differs markedly from most Nigerian traditional societies. For instance, stealing other people's properties was generally abhorred; fratricide was taboo, rape was anathema and so on. Nigerian traditional states did not operate on the basis of 'jungle justice' as seems the case currently. Even today in spite of the proliferation of violence, it can still be said that up to 70% of Nigerians do not habitually

participate in it and would wish to see a change from this situation. It is therefore, possible that concerted and adequate action aimed at stopping violence can succeed in bringing about positive social change. A major aspect of such action must however involve providing the majority of Nigerians with access to the institutionalized means of obtaining success.

METHODOLOGY

This paper combines evidence from literature sources with those obtained from unstructured interviews and from observation of events as sources of reflections on youth violence. Nigerian newspapers and magazine articles on violence were also found to be very useful as sources of information and assessment of the situation from a variety of points of view. Major focus of the interviews was on students of secondary and tertiary education, school teachers, academic and other staff of tertiary educational institutions, politicians, policy makers, business persons and police. The interviews sought to establish peoples awareness and experience of violence and the part played by youth in such violence. It also elicited information on the causes and social consequences of youth violence, and possible ways of reducing their incidence. The researcher's own non-participant observation of current situation of violence throughout the country was also found to be useful source of assessment and analysis.

MANIFESTATIONS OF VIOLENCE

Nowadays, fear is an ever-present feature of life in Nigeria. This fear is the outcome of a very obvious situation of insecurity of lives and properties. People increasingly die, are maimed or injured due to violence. Violence is located at virtually all dimensions of daily living. Fear of armed robbery is gradually crippling Nigerian's economic life. Vast numbers of passengers of daytime public transportation are divested of their cash, or even mowed down periodically by armed robbers. Irrespective of security provided on these journeys, gangs of youthful armed robbers swoop on travelers and wreak havoc on the them. Fagbemi and Ogubaja (2004: 1-2) report that one such broad day-light violent robbery led to the death of 16 persons and the loss of ₦ 20 million cash along Ilorin Omu-Aran in Irepodun local government of Kwara State. Commuters and

other categories of daytime travelers to major Nigerian urban centers are particularly at risk due to infestation by these armed robbers. These long distance journeys, to Abuja, Lagos, Onitsha, Kaduna, Maiduguri and Port Harcourt are part of everyday business activities of Nigerians. Economic activity is therefore increasingly subjected to impediments. The solution here does not just lie in the improvement of difficulties regarding efficiencies in the provision and utilization of electronic money transfer facilities for traders and other business persons. More disturbing to business people is the fact that unsatisfied armed robbers have been known to unleash mass murder on their victims.

Night life in many cities have been very adversely affected by the reign of terror instigated by armed robbers and assassins. Night casinos, clubs, music centres, game houses, hotels, drink parlours, restaurants, cinemas entertainment halls, shops and markets are part of legitimate business during night hours. These businesses constitute major economic activities providing opportunities for employment and income earning. These enterprises which used to provide leisure and entertainment for large sectors of the Nigerian population are now virtually non-existent in most cities in Nigeria due to fear of the night.

As a consequence of fear of attack, most businesses including fuel stations are closed by 6 pm. The result is that anyone in need of services such as fuel, vehicle repairs, purchase of stationeries, food and so on in most towns must wait till 8 am the following day. Businesses no longer open before 8 am for fear of early hours attacks. All this has vast adverse impact on the Nigerian economy as well as on the overall health and enjoyment of life of the nation.

People's homes are no safer than the roads, as homes are invaded at all hours, but particularly at night, by armed robbers, paid assassins, and ethnic or religion militias intent on murder (Adebayo and Owolabi, 2004: 20; Omonijo, B., 2004: 1-3).

Politicians are particularly endangered. They are subject to assassinations in their homes, at public functions and so on. The list of all categories of obvious political killings in Nigeria is fast increasing. In all cases, the persons who are suspected of carrying out the execution orders are youth. They are the ones with the dexterity and the courage to carry out the atrocious acts. And of course, they are the ones

in need of spending cash to enable them live big. Such youth crimes are mostly supported by a growing societal tendency to desperately pursue economic success in spite of inadequate education, unemployment and the risk to one's life.

Middle and high level manpower has in recent years been especially prone to danger within the confines of tertiary educational institutions. The assassination of lecturers in Enugu, Nsukka, Ile-Ife (Babarinsa, 2003: 60) and elsewhere are part of this trend. These assassinations are suspected to be carried out by student cult members.

Major towns in Nigeria have in recent months been subjected to situations of siege by armed youth gangs. About the situation in Port-Harcourt, Daniel (2004: 14) observes that "With the emergence of many armed gangs of cultists killing and maiming their victims in their fight for supremacy, residents now tread cautiously and avoid certain events and places in town". Assassinations within two years of up to five well-known politicians emphasize the danger posed to political activism. The life of foreigners are also endangered by youth violence. This situation is typified by the abduction of six foreign oil workers in Bayelsa State: not for the first time as shown by Nigerian Tribune (Aug. 18, 2003: 10).

Inter-community and ethnic violence for reasons of politics, religion, land dispute and so on is witnessed in many parts of Nigeria, costing the country the loss of huge numbers of lives and property. The most current of these crises are in Warri and Port Harcourt.

Violence in Nigeria sometimes is seen to come from the direction of the governance machinery itself, as in the case of the sacking of Odi, resulting in the loss of lives and billions of naira in cash and property. Perhaps, this was a bid to instill terror in the hearts of Nigerians for some cogent reasons. Terror, death and massive economic losses are however contrary to societal development.

While Nigerian government does not indicate full awareness of the dangers posed to Nigerian socio-cultural and economic development by the reign of all varieties of violence, the international community has shown less accommodation for the terrible dangers posed to life and security when this concerns foreign citizens. Hence, in 2003 British and United States governments took strong action, with British police: (James, Aug. 14 2003: 1-2) and United States Marines (Tribune,

Aug. 18 2003: 10) arriving in Nigeria to protect their citizens.

PATRIARCHAL TRADITIONS

The male youth in Nigerian traditional culture is a warrior. He is the protector of the community. In particular he is the protector of the women folk.

Various parts of Nigeria have traditions of rites of passage, which prepare the youth for a life of courage and honour. For instance, among the Ibos, he is initiated into the masquerade cult with the sacred secrets involved at about the age of 10. From this stage, he is separated residentially, and is taught the tough business of being male. Among the Fulani the 'Sharo' initiation into manhood signifies readiness to marry. This initiation is centred on public display of toughness through ability to endure terrible pain. These rights were socially accepted channels of validating masculinity.

Patriarchal traditions are those traditional beliefs, which held that males are by right vested with the controlling position in society. Patriarchy by its nature allocates subordinate positions to women and therefore attracts the disapproval of feminist sociologists (Kirby and others: 1997: 169) However, patriarchy and attendant male youth power in traditional society were usually channeled towards what was considered the overall benefit of the entire community. While there was some level of militarism which called for strict regimentation in the lives of male youth, this also was directed at community welfare. A major factor to be noted in traditional societies are that male youth were respected and generally looked up to as those who provided for the well-being of their society.

In contrast to this situation, Nigerian male youth of today seem to be in disarray and generally target their masculinity to the negation of the welfare of their society. There are some globalization implications here as Nigerian male youth, like their counterparts in South Africa for instance (Africa News Service, 1998: Sept. 22) appear to be mesmerized by a "complex mix of masculinity and consumerism". Mass media and the internet has given rise to male youth expectation of the best of a good life in terms of material possessions irrespective of legal income. Youth who come from high-income homes also join violent criminal groups as a result of home socialization peer pressure and the desire to prove

themselves. Mainly for this reason, rich and poor youth congregate in drug abuse, secret cultism, assassinations, armed robbery, violation of females (Ganagana, 2004: 4), murdering women and children, battering and murdering of parents and siblings (Fagbamila, 2003: 17) and over-impressing girl friends.

CURRENT SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The majority of Nigerian male youth comprise of drivers, mechanics, other artisans, motor park and air-port touts, bus conductors, petty-traders, armed robbers, people with little or no education and very little and no skill training, unemployed or marginally employed persons. A large percentage of them reside in urban slums, have no fixed address, or share abode with males who are in similar situations.

From the above, most of Nigerian youth come from the lower classes and belong to the underprivileged section of society.

Gilligan (1996: 201-208) sees class and caste situations as a source of violence because it tends to breed a sense of inferiority and relative deprivation. This assessment is fairly true of the Nigerian situation. Because of the predominance of deprivation and poverty among youth, it is understandable that youth sub-culture in the Nigerian environment tends to emphasize what could be regarded as lower class tendencies. For instance, base and even 'primitive' behaviours such as drug-abuse, fighting and other forms of violent behaviours, promiscuity, and general sensuality are regarded as indicators of male youth masculinity.

FAMILY BACKGROUND OF VIOLENCE

Like charity, violence begins at home. As Gilligan observed- "the use of violence as a means of resolving conflict between persons, groups, and nations is a strategy we learn first at home" (1996: 5). People first learn to use violence as a strategy for resolving conflicts in their homes. This forms part of all overall strategy for dealing with everyday living. It can indeed be said that no existing family can claim exemption from experience of violence either as a perpetrator or a victim.

Family violence is therefore not new and has resulted in death, maiming and wounding of large sections of the population. In a third world country

like Nigeria, the reporting of this phenomenon is very scanty. Nonetheless its existence is real. Gelles (1987: 13) however reports that each year from 1980 in the United States as many as six million men, women and children are victims of severe physical attacks at the hands of family members. Family violence exists across cultures. Today, it is generally accepted as a pattern of behaviour woven into the family structure rather than as evidence of psychological disorder.

Within the third world context, family violence is not given the attention it enjoys in more developed nations. One reason for this is that many third world nations, including Nigeria, view family violence as part of the normative practice of child rearing, nurturing and marital differential roles governed by patriarchal principles. In this regard, child battering and child abuse are not easily discernible from accepted child rearing corrective practices. In Nigeria for instance, child beating is normal. Excessive beating in the Nigeria context, which translates into battering, therefore becomes a matter of degree and extent. It should be remembered that infanticides (for various reason) was at some time accepted in parts of Nigeria as normal enforcement of cultural requirements for family stability. According to the exchange theory of family violence (Goode, 1971) normative power structure in families, the private nature of families and a sub-culture of aggressive behaviour, all lead to encouragement of child battering and maltreatment. This typifies the situation in Nigeria.

SOCIAL CHANGE AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Current school environment manifest very marked changes from what are ideally expected. To begin with, Nigerian teachers were expected to regard their pupils and students as those for whom they were responsible. The Ibo adage, which says that "for the teachers adequate remuneration is collectable only in heaven", highlights two aspects of the teacher's work. First, is the moral dimension of the teacher's work. Secondly, it also indicates that this category of workers did not place premium on material well being such as salaries and allowances.

In contrast to the above type of personality, present teachers in Nigeria's current economic recession era, seek to get out of their past mould and obtain improvement in their conditions of

service. Commitment of teachers to their work at all levels of the educational ladder have reduced, as they grapple with the difficulties of economic survival in these difficult times. Corrupt practices have also increased among teaching staff due to various factors which time does not permit here. Furthermore, most teachers at primary and secondary educational levels have at least one other part-time or full time income earning activity. These enterprises take much of the time required for adequate teaching and supervision in schools. At the tertiary levels, lecturers engage in forcing their students to purchase very expensive and often poorly prepared "handouts".

All told, the environment of educational institutions have completely changed. The economic situation has largely generated teacher preoccupation with making money at the expense of their students. This has not augured well for the overall quality of education. Furthermore, it has exposed youth to the greed and other decadent behaviour of adult members of society; thus reinforcing whatever inadequacies these youth bring from their homes. Even with adequate home upbringing, adverse school experiences of neglect and corruption are very potent. School and education are expected to impact on pupils and students. This situation still holds true even when the environment is inadequate

The economic situation, further impacts on school environments through inadequacies of facilities. Dilapidated facilities and over crowding breed over competition for school facilities, thus, heightening tension within school and engendering poor hygiene, unsavory habits and other problems.

Based on their experience or those of others students, youths tend to demonstrate very little faith that they will have a fair deal with regard to lecturer's dispensation of quiz and examination grades. This situation further exacerbates examination malpractice, thus, further aggravating mistrust. Most students are acutely aware that employment is not available and are not likely to be available for several years to come. This is because they see past graduates, of up to 5 years remaining unemployed, in spite of the fact that most of them are willing to do any type of work. The unfairness of this situation is not lost to students and adds to their desperate bid to obtain their current level of education and move on with the next level. Large increase in postgraduate programmes and student population is evidence

of the use of education to postpone unemployment and/or raise ones chances of success in obtaining employment. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, male youth disillusionment with education was aptly demonstrated in many south-eastern states of Nigeria, by their abandonment of schools: Ukaegbu (1999: 1)

SCHOOL LOCATED CONFLICTS

Violence - engendering divisions in Nigeria go beyond ethnic religions and political spheres. Divisions are also based on educational qualification whether it is the quest for such qualifications or possessing of certificate attesting to success. Tertiary education qualifications serve as a measure of economic success as well as prestige. For instance, children of educated parents must obtain educational qualifications at least commensurate with those of their parents. In general to have less education than one's parent is considered to constitute eternal disgrace to family honour and to one's self. Because education still represents the direct and prestigious path to social status, both parents and wards strive to obtain it by all means. This means that parents and other older relatives lend their blessings and assistance to examination malpractice. Vast increases of population of people who obtain university places through corrupt means, swell the cults as number of secret cults as these young education seekers find themselves highly frustrated and incapacitated by university academic inadequacies and reducing levels of probity. Many university undergraduates from all parts of Nigeria complain of high cost of fees compared with past situations, cost of books, miscellaneous university expenditures and so on. Understandably, university lecturers complain of student overcrowding of insufficient facilities, poor student quality and escalation of malpractice tendencies among students. All these do not make for on -campus peaceful co-existence between students and lecturers. It is therefore not surprising that students killing of individual, lecturers is fast increasing in tertiary educational institutions all over the country.

A third violence related phenomenon is division in tertiary educational institutions between cults. Conflicts between cult groups is a major source of murder maiming and assault on campus. As Nzimiro observed, military regimes and their tendencies towards extreme secrecy as

the backbone of successful coups, and their virtually unchecked powers used in the execution of governance, constituted patterns admired and emulated by youth in their everyday life. In imitation of these two characteristics, student secret cult grew during military regimes. As posited by Nzimiro (1999: 3) the era of moral ethos that respected honesty departed with the entrance of money making through control political power during early post independence years. In Nzimiro's views therefore cultism in universities is an offshoot of growing power drunkenness among national leaders, and the prevalence of corruption. Cultists in universities are youth and involve themselves in contending with university authorities and with others who trespass into their sphere of influence and power. Hence, their violent confrontations with other secret cults whom they consider as opponents and threat to their supremacy. Sometimes, secret cults claim to protect their members from domination by school authorities and staff. Be this as it may. It is however, remarkable to note that control of their membership is absolute. No government school or family mechanism has nearly as strong a hold on youths, as do these cult groups. Cult groups high level of control can be said to be typical of peer group influence over youth behaviour (Macionis, 1987: 135). This is an ironic situation considering that youth culture usually promotes dissidence from authority. Due to the absolute nature of loyalty of cult members, a large part of control over youth behaviour resides in their hands. Consequently, they are able to secretly and assiduously execute their projects including their missions of violence.

At this juncture, it is necessary to note that secret cults in tertiary educational institutions and even at the secondary educational level thrive, due to a culture of violence existing around them. Rather they mirror the violence-laden society in which they satisfy the needs of youth. In reality, youth violence has roots in other factors besides secret cultism. Furthermore, lecturers and educational administrators have been known to be secret cult members too, thus lending their socializing influence to youth involvement in cultism. Parents are also members of various well-known cult associations in their own rights, though these same parents would wonder that their children join school secret cult groups.

Divisions that engender violence also exist in tertiary educational institutions between cult

members and the generality of the student population. Forcible recruitment into secret cults is not uncommon. A significant number of unwilling students have suffered assault, maiming and even death for refusal to join up. In recent years, increase of rape, blackmail, extortion and fear - induced acceptance of unwelcome male cultist attention by girls in tertiary educational institutions, have also been related to increase in cult-related activities.

ETHNIC MILITIAS AS YOUTHFUL AGENTS OF VIOLENCE

In Nigeria, there has been a tendency towards a metamorphosing of solidarity groups of various descriptions into conflict engendering groups. The situation whereby political and ethnic based associations served as solidarity groups in the immediate post independence up to 1980s (Nwosu, 1977: 4) seems to have left indelible marks. Similar groups or new ones now take up positions as agents of conflict perpetuation and purveyors of violence against persons and groups.

These groups tend to play dual roles of generating and carrying through violence against other ethnic groups and at the same time engendering conflict and atmosphere of violence within its own ethnic boundaries.

Defender of its ethnic group against all antagonisms; real or imagined and at the same time carrying out same form of intra ethnic/state or political party cleansing by killing of those with views opposed to those of their master-minders.

These groups, serve as rallying ground for disgruntled youth and as focus of financial and moral support from those who see them as tools with which to obtain important political and economic gains.

These organizations however have no locus standi in any state where all the apparatus and institutions of government function in accordance with established standards. For instance, these ethnic militia sometimes fill gaps caused by inadequacies in governance. One of them in a major city obtains illegal fees from citizens conducting various forms of public fora or engaged in commercial activities. Failure to pay up invites violent sanctions from this group. This situation represents an anomaly, which would be considered unacceptable in any well-ordered state. Some ethnic/religion groups also perpetuate

violence within their geographical areas of operation on those who hold other view. Religious fanaticism constitutes attempt by certain individuals and group to forcefully lay claim to certain boundaries of power and allegiance. By the vary nature of those organizations as defenders of faith, those of other faiths who find themselves within their territorial boundaries are endangered as enemies. What is manifest here is the absence of room and opportunity for dialogue or for meeting half way between different beliefs. In the process, people's basic human rights are trampled upon. Crisis of violence in Nigeria have demonstrated that ethnic militias can degenerate into local gangsters. They may, as their legitimate operations dwindle, even become terrorist groups perpetuating mayhem upon individuals and groups and stirring up local rivalries. This happened in Aguleri/Umuleri during their fratricidal clashes, a few years ago (Agbaegbu, 1999: 16-20; Maduemesi, 1999: 26-28)

VIOLENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Violence by its very nature is disruptive. It causes destruction of some sort; to physical well being and health, to life, to property. It is usually an outcome of unwholesome feelings of anger, frustration, aggrievement, hatred, and rage.

Violence manifests an absence of law and order or inadequate knowledge of or a mistrust of legal systems of obtaining redress and justice or even belief that one is above the law. Whichever way, above sidetracking of the law functions, it shows that there is no doubt that violence is a manifestation of some level of breakdown of law and order.

Violence by its nature takes the form of violation of people's rights. These rights may reside in various dimensions of social life. Hence, violence may be ethnic in its orientation, manifested in clashes between tribal ethnic or even racial groups. Violence may be political in orientation hence occurring within the sphere of governance and power sharing. It may be religious in nature, involving people's beliefs with regard to worships of others and emanating from intolerance of the views. Gender divisions may evoke violence as when women as a group suffer violence from their male counterparts as in wife battering, rape and so on.

Child related violence is another dimension that is prevalent in family relations in homes and also in schools and within child labour relationships.

Nowadays, with the blossoming of varieties of cult activities, cult violence has become a very serious source of disruptive activities in our society. Not only does this form of violence lead to physiological damage to persons, it also creates an atmosphere of distrust and fear.

Youth gang violence is usually seen as manifesting violent crowd behaviour. It is usually seen as directionless and depicting 'mindless' destructive tendencies. These beliefs may however not be altogether true, as gangs also have goals and objectives and it is these that may determine their pattern of violent behaviours. Gang violence has the potential to lead to terrorism.

In all these, it is quite evident that societal progress is not served but is rather endangered by all forms of violent behaviours. The requirements for societal growth and improvement for the benefit of all stakeholders is therefore an environment of prevalence of law and order, actualization of human right, security of life and property, opportunities for self-improvement and economic growth. All these culminate in improvement in life expectancy.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The high level of violence associated with all manners of inter-personal and group interactions in Nigeria points to urgent need for adequate institutional measures capable of addressing this very serious problem. Very stiff penalties should be set out and enforced against all those who violate clearly articulated modalities for duly bringing disputes to the knowledge of relevant organs of arbitration. Commensurate efforts should be made to ensure, that arbitration mechanisms are manned by people of high integrity. Efficient checks on corruption, favouritism, and other inefficiencies should be built into such arbitration mechanisms so as to ensure the confidence of Nigerians.

Educational systems have for some time served as fertile breeding grounds for varieties of violent behaviours. It is high time for comprehensive assessment of the content and environment of education. This should be geared towards removal of all constraints, as well as incentives which motivate students and staff towards violence engendering behaviours. Necessary guidelines should be provided by an appropriate organ, comprising of all stakeholders in education, towards government and private

sector provision of adequate and affordable formal and non-formal education and training of youths.

There is also urgent need to review the factors that lead to constant eruption of violence in higher educational institutions, with a view to understanding the impact of Nigerian political world environment of greed, excessive power play, repressive behaviour and infringement of human rights, on youth behaviour. So far, Nigerian political class reaction to cultism is akin to "policing the crisis", in what may be described as "moral panic", (Haralambos and Holborn, 1990: 636). Focus is directed on labeling and moral panic rather than rational attempt to seek solutions.

While it cannot be argued that cultism is an automatic and inevitable response to youth marginalization, it is indeed their own response to what they construe to be extremely unfavourable conditions, located in various sectors of society. Commensurate efforts should therefore be made, to provide not only wage employment opportunities, but also necessary infrastructure and finance required to assist youth in self-employment. Effort being made in this direction by the Directorate For Employment is commendable but grossly inadequate.

Provision of work opportunities should be complemented with emphasis on inculcation of 'doing' orientation in the educational system. This will facilitate a high value for self-employment among school output. Government inability to vitalize Introductory Technology option in secondary schools, demonstrates the 'lip service' nature of past policy emphasis in this direction. Educational institutions, especially second and third generation ones, should be provided necessary infrastructures, facilities and manpower (for curricular and extra-curricular activities), which make them more amenable to the pursuit of human dignity.

More opportunities should be created for incorporating progressive indigenous culture into academic practices and environment. Parents should be encouraged to have greater knowledge and appreciation of life within individual educational institutions and the education system in general, so as to reduce the gap between them and student and teachers. In general concerted effort should be made to reduce unnecessary foreign, elitist and 'ivory tower' nature of education, while still keeping in view the need for a universal perspective.

Youth organizations should be encouraged, whether in or out of school. They should be

regarded as opportunities for youth leadership training; offering opportunities for inculcation of pro-national ideologies, violence reduction ethics, co-operation, competition, dialogue and project accomplishment, in directions valued by society.

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