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Contents

Establishment of Force Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Implications for United Nations Peace Operations

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Abstract

The UN Force Intervention Brigade conceived as the UN's first combat force fundamentally challenges the tenets of traditional peace operations. It is seen as the UN's best chance at ending the cycle of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).The eastern portion of the Democratic Republic of Congo has been host to one of the longest, most complex, and brutal conflicts despite 21-year presence of the United Nations Mission in Congo. As many as a dozen foreign and local armed groups continue to threaten civilians in the region every year including former Rwandan Hutu genocidaires in the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Ugandan rebel group, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), and local militia groups known as Mai-Mai. Though currently inactive due to on-going peace negotiations with the Congolese Government, the M23 rebel group has been of concern over the past year due to their strength and brutality. This paper examines the implications of the establishment of the Force Intervention Brigade for United Nations Peace Operations. The Intervention Brigade is unique because of both its expansive mandate to take offensive action against illegal armed groups and its robust military capabilities.

Keywords: Conflict, Democratic Republic of Congo, Intervention Brigade, United Nations, Peacekeeping

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo is a nation located in Central Africa. It also borders the Central African Republic (CAR) and Sudan to the north; Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi in the east; Zambia and Angola to the south; the Atlantic Ocean to the west; and is separated from Tanzania by Lake Tanganyika in the east. In March 2013, the United Nations Security Council authorized its first combat mission through Resolution 2098 which established a Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) as part of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). This composed of infantry battalions, Special Forces, and an artillery company. The Brigade carries out targeted offensive operations against armed groups that threaten civilians or undermine state authority (UN Security Council Resolution 2098 2013). After the Security Council authorized the FIB, UN Secretary General then, Ban Kin Moon described the brigade's enforcement capacity as the most appropriate response to the active conflict environment in which MONUSCO has been operating (UN News Centre, 2013).

It marked a radical departure from the United Nations non-interference and the non-use of force which were the core tenets of traditional peace operations. For their actions to be considered appropriate and legitimate, UN personnel had to demonstrate respect for the principles of neutrality and impartiality. They had to refrain from taking sides in the domestic affairs of host states. How was it possible for the UN to justify a combat mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)? There has been a change in UN practices. UN move towards combat operations in the DRC is part of a broad shift in practices around neutrality and impartiality. Historically, neutrality and impartiality were "general legitimating practices for UN peace operations in their day-to-day activities, UN personnel performed "specific" micro-practices that mobilized and helped reproduce these general practices.

The Force Intervention Brigade is unique because of its expansive mandate to take offensive action against illegal armed groups and its robust military capabilities. The Brigade's new role in the DRC makes the UN a party in the conflict which many member states fear taints the UN's neutrality with future consequences of peacekeeping operations worldwide. The Brigade deployed despite explicit opposition by the M23, and actively fought alongside the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) against the rebels until political negotiations began in September 2013. Those in favour of the Intervention Brigade argue that the brigade's deterrent effect combined with the forceful repulsion of rebel attacks may compel armed groups to the negotiating table and providing a secure environment for the broader peace Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As the first UN-authorized offensive combat force, the Brigade is not restricted to the traditional UN peacekeeping standard prohibiting the use of force except in situations that require self-defence of civilians. Therefore, brigade missions may more closely resemble counterinsurgency operations than peacekeeping operations. During an offensive in August 2013, for instance, Brigade members included South African snipers along with artillery and mortar teams. Unarmed drones were to be deployed at the end of 2013, a first for UN operations. By directly engaging in conflict, the UN will need to determine responsibility for prisoners of war and classification of brigade troops killed in action. Whereas attacking peacekeepers is typically a war crime under international humanitarian law, the UN notably did not use this terminology to describe the combat death of a brigade troop in August 2013, leaving this issue open to dispute. How the UN handles these questions could alter local perceptions of the UN. Instead of impartial peacekeepers, blue helmets may be perceived as combatants, and therefore legitimate targets, which will not only endanger the lives of MONUSCO troops but peacekeepers in 15 other ongoing missions around the world. As the UN becomes a party to the conflict, it could stimulate ethical questions relating to the protection of civilians. Collateral damage by the UN is almost assured and rebel groups are increasingly responding to international actions by retaliating against humanitarian actors and civilians. In the meantime, numerous concerns were voiced as to the potential side effects of this unprecedented move towards active peace enforcement in DRC and the concomitant transformation of aspects of MONUSCO into an active belligerent. Force Intervention Brigade remains exclusive as no previous UN deployment has been given the mandate and tools to proactively pursue armed groups. It has a specific mandate to "neutralise" and "disarm" rebel groups in the eastern DRC which pose a threat to the civilian populace.

The mandate to purse offensive action against armed actors which threaten civilians has never been given to any UN Peacekeeping detachment. It has been observed that nearly all UN peacekeeping missions over the years had mandates to protect civilians; none has had such free ranging authority to proactively confront armed groups. This paper examines the implications of the establishment of the Force Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for United Nations Peace Operations. First, it looks at new peacekeeping practices; secondly, it views the background of the

conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, thirdly it examines the provisions and functions of the Force Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of Congo and finally provides a conclusion.

New Peacekeeping Practice

The United Nations peace operations have changed since the end of the cold war. The number of peace operations has increased rapidly, as has the number of troops contributing countries and the number of personnel deployed. Between 1948 and 1988, the UN Security Council deployed a total of 13 peace operations. Between 1989 and 1994, the Council created 20 new missions. The Council launched 7 new missions in 1998 alone. At the end of 2011, the UN had 15 missions deployed concurrently with a total budget of almost US$8 billion. Collectively they involved almost 120,000 people (Fre'chette, 2012). In 1991 there were fewer than 15,000 troops, observers, and police serving in UN missions. In 1993, 73 countries participated in UN peace operations compared to 115 in 2012 (Perry and Smith, 2013). The number and scale of UN missions have increased considerably since 1991. The scope and character of these missions also changed. Their goals became more ambitious and the types of activities that were considered appropriate for UN personnel shifted dramatically.

During the cold war, peacekeeping practices were based on the background knowledge of a statist episteme. The intersubjective knowledge of that episteme reflected the norms of what Christian Reus-Smit calls the "equalitarian regime." Established after the Second World War, and enshrined in the UN Charter, equalitarian arrangements recognize the formal equality of states through commitments to territorial integrity and political independence (Reus-Smit, 2005). Equalitarian norms like non-interference constitute a statist where the procedural dimension of legitimacy is crucial. Within this episteme, UN missions derive their legitimacy from compliance with generally accepted principles of right process (Franck, 1990). This concern for procedure is supposed to prevent ideological clashes and maintain ordered coexistence among states (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006; Hurd, 2007; Aoi, 2011). The mandates and practices of traditional peacekeeping missions bring this background knowledge to life; they place a strong emphasis on neutrality and non-interference in the domestic affairs of host states. In practice, this meant that UN personnel were not supposed to take sides or promote particular mode of social and political organization, and they rarely authorized the use of force (United Nations Department of peacekeeping Operations, 2008). Instead, they generally served as unarmed observers, patrolling cease-fires and monitoring the activities of belligerent groups.

The 1990s marked a major turning point for UN peace operations. In 1992, Secretary-General of the UN Boutros Boutros-Ghali viewed that the end of the cold war provided states with a new opportunity to achieve "the great objectives of the [UN] Charter - a United Nations capable of maintaining international peace and security, of securing justice and human rights and of promoting…social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."(United Nations, 1992). These ambitious new goals helped drive the expansion and transformation of UN peace operations, making it possible to justify a wide range of new practices. Conventional accounts of how and why peacekeeping changed during the 1990s tend to emphasize rational adaptation. In this analysis, practices like robust peacekeeping, and other more intrusive types of intervention, are a logical response to humanitarian catastrophes like Srebrenica and Rwanda (Tardy, 2011). These events beget new practices because old practices failed. This practice has lost much of its appeal because inaction has become associated with indifference to human suffering (United Nations, 2000).

As Pierre Bourdieu notes, the way a practice is perceived depends a great deal on context. Practices are a product of habits, which is itself a product of history and past experience. In this case a peacekeeping practice, like passively observing attacks on civilians, becomes shocking and unacceptable because of changes in habits. Instead of assuming that new institutional practices are a

rational response to altered conditions, we must look at changes in the background knowledge that shapes people's ideas about what constitutes a problem, and what type of solution is reasonable and legitimate. Doing so will enrich our understanding of institutional change. When it comes to UN peace operations, it will also help us understand how the micro-practices of the statist episteme fell out of favour, and how new practices emerged.

The ideological rivalries of the cold war, and their repercussions in the Security Council were a driving force behind the UN's commitment to neutrality required in peace operations. They also shaped on-the-ground interpretations of what neutrality required in practice. The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the East-West cooperation that followed, changed the normative context in which decisions about peace operations were made. The UN underwent an "ideological reorientation." (Bourdieu, 1977). It became more open to the concept of "human security" and more willing to re-interpret norms around state sovereignty (Paris, 2004). A human security lens gives the individual rights precedence over the rights and norms like non-interference. This makes it possible to substantiate international intervention if a state is unable to protect its own citizens (Axworthy, 2001). Like other International Organizations, the UN also embraced liberal internationalism, a worldview that treats market democracy as the "surest foundation for peace, both within and between states." (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001). It became a vocal proponent of political and economic liberalization, a move that would have been untenable during the cold war. These structural changes relaxed many of the normative constraints under which the UN had operated since its inception.

Brahimi Report argues that robust peacekeeping should be part of the UN toolkit for dealing with armed conflict. UN peacekeepers should, where necessary, be granted more robust mandates, and rules of engagement should not oblige peacekeepers to "cede the initiative to attackers;" instead, they should "allow ripostes sufficient to silence a source of deadly fire that is directed at United Nations troops or at the people they are charged to protect." Today, the UN treats robust peacekeeping as a specific practice that mobilizes the general practice of impartiality. The background knowledge of the human security episteme makes it possible to claim that robust peacekeeping involves the impartial application of an international consensus about human rights. According to the UN's principles and guidelines for peacekeepers, assertive military action is perfectly compatible with impartiality. They state that:

> United Nations peacekeepers should be impartial in their dealings with the parties to the conflict, but not neutral in the execution of their mandate .The need for even-handedness towards the parties should not become an excuse for inaction in the face of behaviour that clearly works against the peace process. Just as a good referee is impartial, but will penalize infractions, so a peacekeeping operation should not condone actions by the parties that violate the undertakings of the peace process (Paris, 1997).

This explanation allows the UN to give explanation for practices, like exchanging fire with parties to a conflict, which were almost unthinkable during the cold war. This is significant because specific micro-practices can challenge and redefine general practices. Changes in specific practices can tell us a great deal about the instability of the general practices to which they are ascribed (United Nations Department of peacekeeping Operations, 2008). In this case, the UN's rationalization of new micro-practices points to an important shift in the longstanding general practice of impartiality. The episteme based on liberal internationalism also has important implications for how neutrality and impartiality are practiced. Its background knowledge underlies much of the UN's day-to-day peace building work and has enabled a degree of intrusion and prescription that constitutes a radical departure for peace operations. Instead of seeking short-term solutions, proponents of liberal internationalism try to address the root causes of conflict. When it comes to making judgments about legitimacy, this

episteme draws on three main criteria: shared values, effectiveness, and special expertise. In this view, liberal values are broadly shared and liberal institutions are inherently appealing.

According to Roland Paris, contemporary peace builders "act upon the belief that one model of domestic governance - liberal market democracy - is superior to all others (Paris, 2002). The promotion of liberal values is also considered legitimate because of their perceived effectiveness when it comes to building peace. Most contemporary peace building is premised on the belief that "democracy and a free economy encourage people to resolve and express their differences peacefully" (Hansen, 2011). In practice, this often produces a strong focus on formal institutions, and on strategies for rebuilding and strengthening state authority (Newman, 2009). The liberal episteme also treats specialised knowledge as a source of legitimacy. Experts have come to play an integral role in the planning and implementation of UN peace operations (Newman, 2009). For proponents, these solutions derive legitimacy from their basis in technical knowledge that commands a broad consensus among experts. When liberal values are taken for granted and effectiveness is a priority, it seems logical to treat expert knowledge as another source of legitimacy. Critics of liberal peace building believe it is fundamentally incompatible with neutrality and impartiality. They argue that peace building is "inevitably a norm guided activity, aspiring explicitly towards particular aims."(Barnett and Duvall, 2005). When UN staff members help to draft new constitutions, implement market-based economics, or organize elections in the DRC, they inevitably favour some groups and interests over others. Some UN actors seem to recognize this; references to neutrality and impartiality are completely absent from many documents and statements related to peace building (Schaefer, 2010) Some UN personnel readily admit that partiality is an integral part of effective peace building. Yet others insist that peace building can and should be impartial (Confidential Interview, 2014). This claim rests on a contentious underlying belief: the idea that an international consensus exists about the pacifying effects of liberal norms, values, and institutions. Some might argue that this assertion is, at best, disingenuous. Others might claim it is part of an effort to legitimate contentious new micro-practices by associating them with established general practices. Either way, it suggests that neutrality and impartiality, as general legitimating practices, are currently quite unstable.

Background To the Democratic Republic of Congo Conflict

The Conflict is concentrated on the eastern border of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The country's powerful neighbours Rwanda and Uganda have provided overt and tacit support for rebel groups and the region is over shadowed by spectres of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda including reprisals, counter-reprisals and deep ethnic divisions. This was compounded by land tenure disputes, large number of refugees and returnees from neighbouring countries and a struggle for the natural resources of the Congo (Autesserre, 2008). The conflict has been one of the bloodiest in the world since world war II an estimated 5.4 million people died from war related causes from 1998-2007(Coghlan etal 2007). The number of causalities is on the increase. The violence has not only been bloody. It has been brutal, characterized by sexual atrocities leading the UN to name the DRC the rape capital of the world (BBC, 2010). The combatants have shown a vicious disregard for established standards. They took to recruitment of child soldiers and employment of sexual violence used as tact of war. Attacks frequently result in high numbers of casualties and deliberately targeting the vulnerable and innocent.

The perpetrators of violence form constantly shifting and internecine alliances, merging in different locations only to fracture into new and rebranded groups as events dictate. The result is a current tally of more than two dozen rebel groups and numerous fiefdoms and dominions. These include the Movement du 23 mars(M23) emerged in April 2012 as the latest manifestation of a former group, the Congress national Pour la defense du people (CNDP), National Congress For the Defence

of the people (Stearns,2012). The complex operating environment spread across an area the size of Western Europe. The UN has repeatedly attempted to break what former UN secretary General Ban Ki Moon described as the cycles of violence in the country and protect civilians from attack (UNSC, 2013).

In December 2015 there were roughly 70 armed groups operating in the area intermittently fighting each other and the Congolese armed forces (Forces Armees de la Republique Democratique du Congo, or FARDC) are entagled in a constantly shifting web of alliances and animosities. These groups claim diverse motivations from protecting the interests of various ethnic groups (Stearns and Vogel, 2015). However these groups have been able to sustain their operations through the exploitation of the region's natural resources and the violent coercion of civilian populations. According to a 2015 report by the United Nations Environment Programme the protracted conflict cycle and insecurity in Eastern DRC appeared increasingly dominated by economic interests rather than predominantly political motivations (UNEP, 2015). This shift has led to an increase in abusive methods for acquiring resources including but not limited to the exploitation of extractive natural resources, taxation of businesses, market taxes, household taxes, checkpoints, border crossings and outright looting. Nearly every armed group uses a combination of small or all of these methods in exploiting communities around them.

Since the deployment of Peacekeepers to the Democratic Republic of Congo the mission is still struggling to find peace to keep in eastern DRC and rebel groups continue to attack the population. The mandate of MONUSCO is authorized under chapter VII of the UN charter to us all necessary means in protecting civilians (UNSC, 2012). The mission's failure and that of its predecessor, the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MOMUC in providing effective physical protection and to prevent and respond physical protection and to prevent and respond, effectively to large scale attacks on civilian demands a revised to threats facing the region.

Force Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Force Intervention Brigade is the first of its kind to be created within a UN peacekeeping mission. It is distinct from previous UN troop deployments because of both its comparatively offensive mandate and its advanced military capabilities. If successful, a new precedent could well be set. Indeed, hopes are high that the force could help redress the more fundamental failings of MONUSCO, and its predecessor MONUC. Established to monitor the 1999 Lusaka Ceasefire designed to end the Second Congo War, the mission has gradually expanded with the re-emergence of conflict in the east (the result of the region's mineral wealth, porous borders, and tensions between former combatants). Yet despite its 17,000 troops, $1.4 billion yearly budget, and a mandate to support the Congolese army (FARDC) in its fight against non-state armed groups, such groups continue to proliferate. Changes in the UN's approach to dealing with conflict in the DRC are of interest to the public; however, they speak to broader trends in post–cold war peace operations.

UN Security Council resolution 2098 (2013), through which the Force Intervention Brigade was first authorized, stated that the Brigade should:

> "... In support of the authorities of the DRC, on the basis of information collation and analysis, and taking full account of the need to protect civilians and mitigate risk before, during and after any military operation, carry out targeted offensive operations through the Intervention Brigade... either unilaterally or jointly with the FARDC, in a robust, highly mobile and versatile manner and in strict compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and with the human rights due diligence policy on UN-support to non-UN forces (HRDDP), to prevent the expansion of all armed groups, neutralize these

groups, and to disarm them in order to contribute to the objective of reducing the threat posed by armed groups on state authority and civilian security in eastern DRC and to make space for stabilization activities."

For example, Mary Robinson, the then appointed UN Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, has described the force as "an important tool" in a "moment of renewed opportunity" for peace. Both the Kabila administration and opposition parties in Kinshasa expressed support for the Brigade. The deployment of the Brigade only made sense if we examine neutrality and impartiality having evolved as a general legitimating practice. Two major changes are worth noting, first as legitimating practices, neutrality and impartiality have faded to some extent. They exert less normative pull than they once did, and practitioners and policy makers have become more open to alternatives. Second, when neutrality and impartiality are involved, this often occurs because of their residual association with legitimacy. The willingness of the UN to initiate a plan like the FIB is in large part due to the strong political commitment of the neighbouring countries in the Great Lakes Region. The framework for peace security and cooperation for the DRC and the region was accepted by 11 countries in the Great Lakes Region in February 2013. This gave way for the UN to seriously consider the FIB (originally conceived by the international conference of the Great Lakes Region) as a strategy to break the pattern of violence in eastern DRC. Countries in the region recognize that instability in the region can adversely impact their own political and economic stability.

 Significantly the substantially reduced regional patronage of the M23 was critical to the success of the FIB experiment. The willingness of all the relevant (international and regional) actors, particularly among the 5 special envoys to work in unison to ensure that the military strategy that is the FIB concretely supported the ongoing political frameworks and strategy for the DRC is particularly important as it ensured a high level of political cohesion that did not necessarily exist previously. The UN at times justifies new specific practices by claiming that they mobilize these longstanding general practices. UN's involvement in the DRC demonstrates this. The Security Council first deployed the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) in 1999. Its mandate was limited, and its specific practices were in line with the legitimacy requirements of the statist episteme.

However, the Security Council expanded its mandate and the mission's legitimacy was increasingly judged according to criteria like effectiveness and the promotion of shared values. A series of perceived failures led the Security Council to further expand the mission's range of tasks and provide troops with greater latitude around the use of force. The FIB is a logical outgrowth of this trend. The UN also justifies some of its controversial new micro-practices by claiming they reflect a commitment to neutrality and impartiality.

The first Congo War was between 1996-1997 which was known as African's First World War (Gerard, 2009). It was a civil war and International military conflict which took place in Democratic Republic of Congo with major spill over into Sudan and Uganda. The Conflict culminated in a foreign invasion that replaced the then Congo President Mobutu Sese Seko with Laurent Kabila. However after Kabila had replaced Mobutu in May 1997, It was observed that Rwanda and Uganda were determined to exert control over Kabila's government. President Laurent Kabila was distrustful of the power held by these two countries. On the other hand the Rwandan forces were afraid of the possibility of the Hutu militias hiding in the eastern region staging an attack on the Tutsi. In early August 1998, Kabila accused his Rwandan allies 'of plotting a coup against him and expelled them from his country. This has been said to be what triggered the Democratic Republic of Congo's second war. Some experts will prefer to view the two conflicts as one war (Filip, 2009).

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) in 1998 and 1999, there were 7 different countries involved in the conflict and a wide range of informal armed groups operating in the DRC. The countries involved were: Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola, and the DRC (Human RightWatch, 1998&1999). After the Lusaka Peace Agreement was signed in 1999, the UN Security Council established MONUC (Human Right Watch, 2009). Resolution 1279 Requires the Secretary General with immediate effect to take the administrative steps necessary for the equipping of up to 500 United Nations Military observers with a view to facilitating future rapid United Nations deployments as authorized by the council.

This limited role reflects the background knowledge of the statist episteme. In order to be competent peacekeepers, UN personnel were supposed to serve as neutral third parties, staying at arm's length from the conflict. Hostilities continued, however and the Security Council later expanded the mission and strengthened its mandate. In July 2003, the Council expressed concern over grave human rights violation in the eastern DRC and increased the number of UN personnel to 10,800. It authorized MONUC to "take the necessary measures in the areas of deployment of its armed units and as it deems within its capabilities,", in order to protect UN personnel, ensure their security and freedom of movement, protect civilians and humanitarian workers, and contribute to the improvement of security conditions. This transition towards a more active role, both militarily and politically, demonstrates the growing influence of the normative beliefs associated with both human security and liberal internationalism.

Since the establishment of a transitional government in July 2003, widespread violence persisted in the eastern DRC throughout 2003 and 2004. In October 2004, the Security Council authorized the deployment of 5,900 additional troops bringing the total number to 16,431. In July 2006, with extensive help from the United Nations, the DRC held its first free elections and voters adopted Joseph Kabila as their President. MONUC remained on the ground after the elections to assist the new government with capacity building and a range of political, military and rule of law tasks. Although changes had been noticed in UN practices around neutrality and impartiality during this period, an important turning point came in 2008-2009. After years of instability and with a democratically elected leader in place, the Security Council decided that MONUC should support the Congolese Government's operations against the Force Democratique de Liberation du Rwanda (FDLR) . The FDLR is an armed group that operates primarily in the eastern DRC. It is largely composed of members of the Rwandan government and army, as well as refugees, who fled Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. It also has some Congolese members (United Nations Security Council Resolution 1279 (1999).

The UN's willingness to have MONUC act against the FDLR was based on conviction that using force and taking sides is legitimate when the underlying goal is to protect civilians and support nascent liberal institutions. In July 2010, the Security Council renamed its mission in the DRC and once again altered its mandate. Resolution 1925 created the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and authorized it to use "all necessary means to carry out its mandate."

Resolution 1925 is similar to earlier resolutions in that it authorizes a complex, multidimensional peace operation. Yet it also places more emphasis on two core objectives: protecting civilians and strengthening the authority of the Congolese State. It also makes the link between these objectives explicit. The resolution calls for a "strong partnership" between the UN and the government of the DRC. The Security Council declared that two of MONUSCO's main goals should be consolidating state authority through the deployment of Congolese civil administration in areas freed from armed groups and rebuilding the country's security forces. This language suggests that liberal internationalism has surpassed the human security episteme in terms of impact on how the UN

views the mission in the DRC. In resolution 1925 the UN clearly identifies formal institutions, namely a strong Congolese state as the long-term solution to violence and instability. In fact, UN support for the Congolese national army does not necessarily enhance the physical security of civilians in the DRC (Amnesty International, 2010). Cooperation with the Congolese State sometimes comes at the expense of civilian protection. Many members of the Forces Armees de la Republique Democratique du Congo (FARDC) was responsible for looting and attacks against their fellow citizens. As Amnesty International has pointed, locals are often left wandering "whether the UN is there to protect civilians or to support abusive troops" (Amnesty International, 2010).

According to Severine Autessene, state building efforts in the DRC have range of perverse consequences. She argues that international support for the Congolese state has increased an authoritarian government's capacity to harm and oppress its own people (Autessenre, 2012). These critiques go to the heart of tensions between liberal internationalism and the human security episteme. This example suggests that liberal strategies for promoting long term stability are not always compatible short-term goals; like guaranteeing the safety of Congolese civilians. Notwithstanding its size and the strength of her mandate, MONUSCO had a series of experiences between 2010 and 2013 that practitioners, policy makers and locals deemed unacceptable. Repeated failures to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence led many people to question the mission's competence and credibility (Autessenre, 2012). Not too long after resolution 1925 was passed in July 2010, three armed groups carried out a series of mass rapes near Walikale Territory, North Kivu. More than 300 people were attacked over the course of 4 days. The UN did not intervene even though the attacks occurred within 30 kilometres of a base where 80 peacekeepers were stationed (Amnesty International, 2010).

One of the UN's most contentious setbacks came in November 2012 when an armed group called M23 overran Goma, a city of almost a million people, in a matter of days. Although authorized to use force against rebel groups to protect civilians, UN troops stood by while members of M23 took over the city (Plett, 2012). This reflects that the background knowledge of human security episteme has become deeply entrenched in a short period of time. In both situations described above, the practices of UN personnel were exactly as what "competent" peacekeepers would have done during the cold war. The backlash against those practices speaks to a profound shift in habit. The patterns of action by which UN personnel create and maintain legitimacy have changed rapidly and dramatically. For instance, in the Security Council debates that preceded the passage of resolution 2098, the Guatemala's permanent representative to the UN expressed concern that the FIB mandate contravened the basic principles of UN peace keeping. He argued that in peace operations, the UN's presence must be "perceived by all parties as one of an honest broker and not as a potential party to the conflict (Rosenthal, 2013)." People worry that the FIB's involvement in joint combat operations would politicize UN staff and put humanitarian workers at risk, especially those who depend on armed MONUSCO escorts (Plett, 2012).

It is unclear how the Brigade's departure from the principles of peacekeeping will ultimately impact future operations in the DRC and elsewhere. Potential host countries may bar the UN from deploying peacekeepers due to a fear of mission creep, side lining UN peace operations from exercising responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. If the Brigade succeeds in neutralizing and disarming armed groups, critics of traditional peacekeeping mandates may seize on this success as evidence of the inadequacy of previous commitments to deal with intractable conflicts. This carries a two-fold risk: it could reveal other ongoing Chapter VII UN peace operations as inadequate, while also increasing host country demands for similar combat configurations from an already resource-strapped UN.

Despite the risks the Brigade poses to UN peace operations and to local and international actors in the area, it could effect meaningful change in the eastern DRC. The responsibility to protect civilians provides the moral justification to push peace operations into this new frontier. Before the Security Council authorized the formation of the Force Intervention Brigade, MONUSCO was unable to sufficiently protect civilians. Rebel groups terrorized civilians and the rate of sexual and gender-based violence in the eastern DRC was one of the worst in the world. The appearance of MONUSCO as cohabiting with, rather than confronting, the rebels tarnished its reputation among the civilian population. The Brigade thus offers an opportunity to win back local support, as it is better equipped to protect civilians. It has already had a positive effect in Goma, where it repelled the M23 away from the city, the major population centre in the region, saving lives in the process.

The intervention brigade's mandate could also change the calculus for many of the armed groups and spoilers in the region in ways that MONUSCO could not. After military losses to the UN and FARDC forces in August 2013, the M23 has returned to the negotiating table with significantly less leverage than when it posed a direct threat to Goma. Facing military defeat, other armed groups in the DRC may choose to negotiate a settlement rather than risk losing everything in battle. The intervention brigade also challenge Rwanda's role in the conflict. Rwandan-supported rebels took to fighting a brigade composed of soldiers from regional powers including South Africa and Tanzania. Rwanda risks isolation and the loss of international prestige by backing these groups. The Brigade could therefore help remove the threat of local and regional spoilers, which would significantly improve the region's prospects for peace. The strategy of deploying a military force to offensively engage with the rebel groups in eastern DRC was conceived and agreed by African regional powers in the International Conference on the Great lakes Region (ICGLR) in July 2012. Regional heavy weights such as Uganda supported by South Africa sought to address what it saw as the twin failures of the government of the DRC and MONUSCO in clearing eastern Congo of rebel groups, some associated with residual conflicts in the region, such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and National Union For the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Neighbour governments felt that this melting pot of insurgency presented a significant threat to regional stability (Nkala, 2012).

So far, the Force Intervention Brigade has been successful in its first goal, helping push the M23 to the negotiating table in September 2013. Although other armed groups continue to operate and the M23 could return to battle if negotiations fail, the most serious hostilities have ceased, allowing MONUSCO to amplify its work on security sector reform and developing the rule of law, among other UN-mandated activities. The UN, however, has been in a similar situation before: peacekeepers fighting rebels in the eastern DRC between 2005 and 2007 successfully reduced the potency of these groups. Military success did not translate into long-term peace, as the UN failed to consolidate its gains and properly address the conflict's underlying causes, including ethnic tensions, poor natural resource management, and interference by regional powers. In order to succeed, MONUSCO therefore needs to follow its military successes with a holistic strategy that centres on implementable capacity-building with a goal toward extending state authority in the eastern DRC.

Since the defeat of M23, the intervention brigade carried out offensives in tandem with the FARDC against the remaining rebel groups which continue to pose threat to civilians. The largest of these sequent-Intervention Brigade backed offensives have been directed against the Alliance Democratic Forces (ADF). The ADF is an Islamist group that originated in Western Uganda but has been operating in the Eastern DRC for decades They have carried out a string of horrific attacks against civilians (West,2015). They are held responsible for the kidnapping roughly 1,000 civilians over the last five years (Long, 2015). The intervention Brigade and FARDC begin offensive operations against the ADF in January of 2014 and by April the rebel group had been dislodged from its main base of operations

in Virunga National park (West,2015). The ADF Chief of Staff was killed in the fighting (Long, 2015). It targets the army but also combines forces with local militias, stirs up communal conflicts and perpetrates massacres of civilians often at night under opague circumstances (Congo Research Group, 2017). The UN's failure to tackle this problem has been a source of anger. Residents of Beni city set fire to attacks on civilians that claimed over a hundred lives since the start of a new army offensive in November 2019(AFP, 2019). The situation in the eastern DRC presented the Security Council with a knotty dilemma. Keeping MONUSCO is expensive and offers no clear path in resolving the problem of armed groups.

A number of council member's includingFrance, the UK and the US would like to see the FIB refocus on civilian protection tasks similar to the rest of the mission, perhaps acknowledging that an all out military strategy to defeat the ADF is unrealistic (UNSC,2019). South Africa is a lead contributor to the FIB and was a member of the Security Council 2019-2020 mention the challenge its personnel faced is a lack of good situational and signals intelligence in tracking groups such as the ADF (Carvalho, 2018). Pretoria brokered the political deal ending Congo's war in 2003 does not want FIB to lose its status as an offensive force with its own chain of command separate from that of MONUSCO headquarters. It was observed that the FIB is becoming a source of influence over Kinshasa especially with Tshisekedi administration which seems to focus more on relations with her neighbours including Rwanda, Tanzania, the other major FIB contributor (Reuters, 2019). However the Tshisekedi adminstration has indicated would support more joint operations between the FIB and the Congolese army. It will interest you that some army officers have links to armed groups could compromise such cooperation. `

Given that the mandate names specific rebel groups such as the LRA, M23 Movement, and ADF as targets, the implementation of the Force Intervention Brigade has called the UN's principle of neutrality into question. This has sparked criticism of the Force Intervention Brigade, which some believe undermines one of the fundamental values of UN peacekeeping (Peter, 2014). Some evidence also points to local civilian opposition to the presence of the Force Intervention Brigade. According to Teddy Muhindo Kataliko, president of the Civil Society in Beni Territory, "The population is very hostile to MONUSCO. Firstly because so many people are being killed, but even more so seeing all their arsenal, logistics and soldiers in the area" (Zahra,2016). This opposition stems from the civilian deaths caused by the Force Intervention Brigade, as well as the failure of the Brigade to eliminate most rebel groups despite long-term presence in the region.

Furthermore, scholars warn that the implementation of the Force Intervention Brigade under the larger MONUSCO mandate may be blurring the line between peace enforcement and peacekeeping (Lars, 2015). As a result, rebel groups may begin to target UN peacekeeping officials as well as humanitarian aid workers, even those who are not involved in the Force Intervention Brigade component of the MONUSCO mission. This may make it increasingly difficult for humanitarian aid to be distributed to civilians. The FIB will not be a panacea. Creating sustainable peace in the DRC is beyond FIB's mandate, but its strength is in its ability to create the space necessary for further UN Peace Support Operations (PSO) endeavours. While the conflict's complexities should temper expectations for a quick or simple solution to an enduring conflict, the presence of this new, and so far effective, UN force could finally put the DRC on a path to peace.

Conclusion

The Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) was seen as a milestone in UN Peace Support Operations, one which may have important ramifications for how the world seeks to protect civilians in conflict areas. It challenges some of the core notions of the traditional model of UN peacekeeping operations. It introduces the possibility of using more robust peace enforcement strategies in the UN's efforts to

improve the security of civilian populations. Although FIB has succeeded in combating armed groups through a more offensive mandate and military capabilities, we should not be in haste especially when it has not reduced overall level of violence against civilians.

 The FIB concept can only be applied in cases it is best suited for. The Brigade represents the future of peace support operation which was tested in the challenging theatre of the DRC. The war-weary populace of eastern DRC believe that the UN will bring lasting peace and security to their region. After almost 20 years of struggling to do so, the imperative is stronger than ever.

The addition of the Brigade created tactical challenges for the MONUSCO Force Commander who found himself having two tiers of troops under his command: the regular MONUSCO troops who are implicitly tasked with offensive operations and the Intervention Brigade that is explicitly tasked with them. This created division within the civilian, military, regular and Brigade elements of the mission. This posed a challenge to leadership in implementing a single mandate with different levels of force posture.

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Party Politics and Electoral Violence in Nigerian 4th Republic: Implications for Democracy

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Abstract

Electoral process in Nigerian fourth republic is gradually degenerating to a conflict situation and has become a recipe for electoral violence. Election periods in Nigeria witness high spate of assassination, maiming, thuggery, arson, unlawful arrest, abductions and intimidation of persons or group of persons. It creates an atmosphere of war which tends to create room for the survival of the fittest. This is because elections are seen not only as opportunity to control political power but an access to national resources. It is seen as an investment which no one will like to lose and so fair and foul means are exploited to get electoral votes. This ugly situation has negative implications on democracy. This study highlights the critical roles that political parties in Nigerian fourth republic play in the promotion of electoral violence. The research design for this study was historical-descriptive design. The data were obtained through secondary sources. Guided by the research methodology and structural functionalist theoretical framework, the study established a link between the character of party politics in Nigerian fourth republic and electoral violence. It found out that party politics was the major factor behind electoral violence in Nigeria which in turn hinders the democratic aspiration of the country. The study concluded that political parties in Nigeria have proved to be undemocratic and anti-democratic institutions. It recommended inter-alia, that political parties should be made to play critical roles in democratic consolidation and so, should change from mere institutions for acquiring political power to effective institutions that are capable of mediating and reconciling societal interests and conflicts. In addition, the rules and procedures that govern electoral behavior and conducts should be strictly applied and enforced to serve as deterrence.

Introduction

Party politics is a key attribute of electoral democracy. It involves the totality of activities exhibited by political parties in the bid to maximize party interests in a polity. The significance of political parties as vital institutions in a democracy cannot be over-emphasized. They are instruments for organizing political recruitment and representation, political competition and democratic accountability. They also serve as links between the state and the civil society, influence the executive, formulate public policy, articulate and aggregate diverse interests, present candidates for political offices and develop competing policy proposals that provide people with choices (Downs, 1952). It is said that a strong and sustaining democracy is dependent on well-functioning political parties (Levitsky, Steven and Maxwell, 2003). As key players in a democracy, their actions and inactions have great impacts on democratic consolidation or democratic crisis as the case may be while a peaceful party politics will engender democratic consolidation, a turbulent or violent party politics will inspire pessimism and generate democratic crisis and violence.

This study focuses on the link between party politics and electoral violence in Nigeria's fourth republic: Implications for democracy. Understanding the link between party politics and electoral

violence in Nigeria's fourth republic will be useful in the management of the politics of violence and violence in politics in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Democratic consolidation in Nigeria through the conduct of credible elections has remained elusive. The history of electoral process in Nigeria since the acquisition of political independence till date has shown that party politics have generated so much bitterness and virulence which in some cases threaten the corporate existence of the country. Although, electoral violence has been a common characteristic of party politicsl in Nigeria from political independence till date but the situation appears to be worse in the fourth republic. Elections in Nigeria since 2003 have been plagued by violent activities such as theft and snatching of election materials, killings, arson, abductions, assault, intimidation, destruction of properties and election materials, rioting, looting, violent clashes and protests, mayhem and chaos (Ikelegbe, 2014). This has been a consequence of a hijacked electoral process which has in most cases witnessed lack of credibility for the official results of the elections, resulting in the partial or outright rejection of such results by the political parties and the electorates. In some cases, the election results are contested in courts even after it has degenerated to organized violence. The 2011 presidential election crisis is a case in point. This unfortunate development does not only inspire pessimism in the electoral process but is counter-productive to the collective existence of Nigeria. It is therefore on this premise that this study attempts to look at the link between party politics and electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Implications for democracy.

This study was guided by the following research questions

1. What are the links between party politics and electoral violence in Nigeria's fourth republic?
2. What are the impacts of electoral violence on Nigerian democracy?
3. What are the worthwhile recommendations that can reduce or nip-in-the—bud the incidences of electoral violence in Nigeria?

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this study are

1. To identify the links between party politics and electoral violence in Nigeria.
2. To discuss the impacts of electoral violence on Nigerian democracy.
3. To make recommendations that can reduce or rip-in —the —bud electoral violence in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

It is very appropriate to situate the key concepts of this study to their correct and proper perspectives. We therefore conceptualize the following concepts;

Democracy

This is the involvement of the people in the running of the political, socio-economic and cultural affairs of their society (Chafe, 1994). It is also the institutional arrangement in which individuals acquire political power by means of competitive struggle for people's vote (Schumpeter, 1975).It is however is commonly defined as government of the people, by the people and for the people (Abraham Lincolm).

Electoral Violence

This is the threat or use of physical force on persons and property, intended to alter, change and modify electoral behaviour, decisions, outcomes and perceptions that have consequences for the distribution, arrangements and configurations of power and resources. Electoral violence can be physical, structural and psychological. While physical violence refers to infliction of physical injury and destructions, structural violence is systematic and largely perpetrated through state power and resources. It affects issues of justice, equity and fairness.

The psychological violence injures the psyche and integrity of the persons. Electoral violence can also be mass based (such as riots, demonstrations), relatively unorganized and spontaneous like assassination or detonation of bombs.

Political Parties

Political party is an alliance of like-minded people who work together to win elections and control government (Badejo et al, 2015). Political parties are vehicles through which politicians legitimately compete against one another for political power and for them to put their philosophies and polices into effect.

Party Politics

This involves the totality of the actions or political behaviour of political parties directed towards the actualization of the interests of their members with special emphasis on controlling state power. The struggle for power amongst the political parties in a polity is an expression of party politics.

Theoretical Perspectives

There are several perspectives that can provide some framework of understanding and explaination of the high incidence of electoral violence in Nigerian party politics. However, this study shall be anchored on the theory of structural functionalism.

Political scientists like Gabriel Almond, William Mitchell and James Coleman adopted the structural functional framework of the sociologists to political analysis. Proponents of this theory such as Parson (1971) and Almond (1956) posit that socio-political structures have specific assigned functions to perform in the proper functioning of a system. This structures maintain functional relationship among themselves. The theory is useful in reflecting on whether state institutions and structures (political parties and electoral management bodies) in Nigeria which are saddled with the constitutional functions of political representation, political competition, democratic accountability and regulatory responsibilities are effectively discharging their functions.

The institutional –functionalism variant of the structural functionalism theory highlights the interface between the nature of state and governance institutions and the nature of political behaviour (Vallings and Moreno-Torres, 2005). The assumption is that weak and fragile institution of governance; weak laws, personalization and privatization of state institutions, power and resources and weak governmental legitimacy are associated with certain situations such as deep social inequalities, inequalities in group, identity and sectional access to development and resources, economic decline and poverty which create room for violent forms of electoral process. The structuralist model of the theory on the other hand argues that certain conditions of society drive, provoke or act as purveyors of electoral violence. These conditions include exclusionary and divisive politics, politicized identity, identity-based inequalities and grievances, social divisions and

marginality as well as protracted political mismanagement (Kambudzi, 2008), absence of national cohesion (Biegon, 2009) and absence of elite consensus on rules of the game (Cheeseman, 2008).

Party Politics and Electoral Violence in Nigeria: An Overview

The Nigerian electoral process has been associated with party politics that is characterized with lack of internal party democracy, ethnic driven politics, lack of committed political leadership, absence of clear cut political party ideologies and marginalization of the electorates. The situation has created room for an electoral process that mainly serve the interest of certain class of citizens. This runs counter to the norm in which the electorate are seen as the most important factor in the political calculus of the electoral process because they are supposed to be doing the electing (Frank, 2009). According to Frank, the electorate who are supposed to be kingmakers, turn out to be marginal participants in the process. This culture of alienating the electorate, having become the norm is contrary to democratic consolidation and to large extent a recipe for crisis.

To ensure the uninterrupted marginalization of the majority of the people by the political class and the drivers of the political parties, most ordinary Nigerians are made to be vulnerable and depressed. This is because from the beginning (after political independence), the political parties and political gladiators in Nigeria refused to pay attention to the development of the people. The people are only incorporated into the political arena during elections. Either as electorate or electoral officers, the impoverished masses merely respond to the socio-economic conditions of their existence by accepting the directives of the political class through monetary inducements for the purpose of swaying their political action. Ake(1996p.10) offers an explanation thus:

> Poverty disempowers and subverts democracy…in accepting bribe; voters collude in commoditizing their democratic rights and reinforcing their low self-esteem, thus, turning election into bondage.

The political parties and their sponsors have no doubt made party politics a do or die affair in Nigeria and so resort to exploitation and marginalization of every dissenting voice. With a large army of lumpen-proletariat which includes unemployed youths and motor park touts roaming the streets, the political parties have no difficulty in recruiting thugs and bodyguards who are ready to carry out their selfish instructions aimed at manipulating the electoral process. So, because of the high premium attached to acquisition of state power, thuggery, arson, assassination, kidnapping, snatching of ballot papers, intimidation and other forms of violence have become the defining characteristics of the Nigerian party politics. It is on the basis of this that party politics in Nigeria has degenerated to the Hobbesian state of nature (where life was described as brutish, nasty, poor, short and solitary). Obasanjo's statement in Tell magazine, No. 41, October 2002, captures the scenario thus;

> We fight and sometimes shed blood to achieve and retain political power because for us in Nigeria, the political kingdom has for long been the gateway to the economic kingdom.

This exposes the content, context and character of the Nigerian party politics and indeed explains the objective basis of electoral violence in Nigeria.

Mehler (2007) identified the following as the motivations for party- linked violence: expression of grievances, means of domination, discrediting the opposition, mode of political competition and contests, instrument of electoral contests and struggle for patronage and resources.

Electoral violence is sometimes deployed and mobilized by political parties to intimidate opponents, express grievances, protest against perceived injustice occasioned by manipulation and compromise of election outcomes or to make the violent entrepreneurs relevant in such a way that they can be called upon for settlement.

Politics in Nigeria means so much and has too much stakes that it is more or less regarded as war such that political opponents are regarded as enemies that must be crushed (Emordi and Unumen, 2011). There is "obsessive preoccupation with politics" and political power is pursued with maniacal zeal (Ake,1996, P. 24,28). Violence is thus a key instrument of politics. Ake (1996 P.73) notes;

> In the circumstance in which the state is privatized, those in power will use violence and state repressive apparatuses to retain power. The people excluded will resort to violence in their quest for office.

When the state power has been reduced to a private property, the acclaimed owners use all means at their disposal to retain it. It is on this premise that politics has been reduced to a competition without rules, restraint and impartial references and yet so intense, acrimonious, rapacious, violent, volatile, anarchic, unstable and warlike (Ake 1996 p.22-28). The Nigerian political elite is a divided, fragmented, fractious and incoherent class that is only united in the capture of state power (Ake, 1996), while the ruling class is largely self-seeking, anti-democratic, parochial and parasitic nature. Lacking in ideology and legitimacy, its principal organization and mobilization strategies are the politicization of identities, repression and violence. The Electoral Reform Committee Report (2008 p.19) stated as follows:

> The Nigerian politicians have become more desperate and daring in taking and retaining power; more reckless and greedy in their use and abuse of powers; and more intolerant of opposition, criticism and efforts at replacing them.

These negative occurrences are products of state weakness in terms of poor capacity, partiality, ineffectiveness, non-transparency and weak legitimacy of relevant state institutions like the security agencies, electoral management agencies and other public authorities associated with the management of the electoral process. Also, political parties compete for power in a violence prone environment and deep identity divisions that sometimes overlap with partisan interests.

Party Politics and Electoral Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Competitive and well-organized party politics are necessary conditions to deepen electoral democracy in contemporary time. A well organized party politics and a well functioning political parties are supposedly essential for the success of electoral democracy and overall political development of Nigeria (Ibeanu, 2013). However, the character of party politics in Nigeria from the time of political independence have always been associated with violent actions that often threaten the collective existence of Nigeria. This ugly scenario has remained a poignant index in Nigeria's electoral process. It is even more disturbing as this negative trend appears to be assuming a more dangerous dimension in Nigeria's fourth republic.

The Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar led military junta in its nine months of existence conducted a general election and consequently handed over power to a civilian government headed by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on May 29, 1999. This handover of baton to a civilian government marked the commencement of Nigeria's fourth republic.

From 1999 when the fourth republic was born till date, Nigeria has witnessed six general elections under the superintendence of civilian administration. The party politics that drove this elections operated in hostile habitat which were created by long period of military rule and so were characterized by poorly structured political parties that could not perform articulative, aggregative, communicative and educative functions. The political space was highly liberalized to the extent that many political parties were registered. Some of these parties were pretenders and not contenders. This development made the democratic process very fragile and amenable to electoral violence. The party politics as usual were associated with absence of internal party democracy, ethnicization of political privileges, poor leadership structure, party indiscipline and lack of clear party ideologies. Consequently, all the elections viz 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023 general elections as well as other staggered elections in the fourth republic witnessed different forms of irregularities and electoral violence such as killing, maiming and displacement of many lives and destruction of property worth millions of naira.

In the 1999 general elections which ushered in The Fourth Republic, three political parties contested the elections. They were the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the All Peoples Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). However, by the time the 2003 general elections were conducted, 27 additional political parties were registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to contest. This further rose to above 50 during the 2007 general elections and by the 2011 general elections, 63 political parties were on the ballot and by 2019 general elections, Nigeria had about 91 political parties. Some of these political parties had zero electoral base which made INEC to reduce the number to 18 political parties that contested the 2023 general elections.

Violence has been a common feature of party politics in the fourth republic and the political parties are the major purveyors. Nnoli (2003) argues that the political parties lacked ideological content and clear programmes as the platform for action, identification, mobilization, legitimization and conflict management but instead have displayed huge appetite for money, identity, patronage and violence. Most of the frontline parties are hijacked by the godfathers or sole founders who are driven by selfish interest, impunity and violence around distributive politics and power struggle. They are also plagued by disputes and factionalisation (INEC, 2007), greed, opportunism, self-service and deceit and are actually to some extent, coalitions of various functions of regional and economic rent seekers (Ojo, 2008 p.6). The political parties are also besieged by internal wrangling, recurrent tensions and crisis. It is therefore not surprising that party politics are characterized by electoral violence.

A clear evidence of the party-violence linkages are found in the nature of party primaries, intra-party conflicts, inter-party squabbles, patrons and client relations, ruling parties and state violence, opposition parties and mobilization of electoral violence and post election reactions. We shall discuss them as follows;

Party Primaries

The party primaries in the fourth republic were done with impunity and without recourse to approved party procedures. Party candidates were sold to the highest bidders and popular aspirants were recklessly substituted.

In the 2003 general elections, the process of primaries and nomination of candidates faced a different challenge due to the absence of thoroughness in the process. For instance, the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) cleared all but one of its incumbent governors and affirmed them eligible to contest the elections. Other political parties that had incumbent office holders followed suit. Adeyemo (2003) notes that although the political parties were empowered by the electoral Act

2002 to screen their candidates, the Act required the parties to verify the claims of their candidates before submitting them to electoral commission but this was grossly neglected.

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) 2003, a coalition of 170 human rights and civil society organization) noted that the 2003 electoral process in Nigeria was undermined by the conduct of the primaries of many of the political parties as "godfathers" foist their preferred candidates on the parties through undemocratic processes.

The Electoral Risk Management (ERM) reports emphasized that the 2015 election witnessed widespread rejection of party primaries results by contestants. In the report, it was indicated that violence broke out during party primaries across the federation especially in Ondo, Delta and Abia State (EMR, 2015). For the 2023 general elections, the primaries witnessed a situation where money openly exchanged hands. Infact, for the two major political parties (APC and PDP) victory mainly in the presidential primaries was procured by the highest bidders. For other elections, only the anointed candidates of political godfathers emerged as party candidates thereby leading to protest that resulted in the defection of some key party members and their followers to other political parties. For instance in Rivers state, Senator Magnus Ngei Abe and his followers defected to the Social Democratic Party (SDP) from the All Progressive Congress (APC) because of the over-bearing influence of the former minister of Transport Mr. Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi in choosing party candidates. A similar thing also played out in PDP when the former governor of Rivers state (Nyesom Wike) manipulated the governorship primary to favour his anointed candidate Mr Siminilaye Fubara.

Intra-party conflicts

Intra party politics in the fourth republic has been plagued by suspensions, expulsions of party members, defection and deep divisions and factions that have manifested sometimes in violence. The PDP, APC, ACN, ANPP and APGA in many states at different time have been riddled with internal rivalry, disputes and conflicts between factions and struggles over the control of party and governmental machineries which have led to emergence of dual party executives and party secretariats and the decamping of losing factions (Osumah and Ikelegbe, 2009; Guardian 26 October 2010 p.g). APC had suffered from different forms of intra-party conflicts to the extent that it has cost the party, participation in the 2019 general elections in Rivers State and Zamfara State. The case of APC appears worse in Nigerian history.

Some selected incidents of intra-party conflicts in Nigerian's fourth republic were reported in Vanguard 12 Nov., 2010 p.16 and Sunday vanguard 24 October 2010 p.25. They are as follows;

1. In 2007 general elections in Borno State, the ANPP witnessed violent intra-party clashes between the factions of Ali Modu Sheriff and Governor Kachala.

2. In 2010, in Edo State, the Labour Party witnessed a violent intra-party clash between factions at the state secretariat. Bloodshed was averted by police intervention.

3. In 2010, in Oyo State, the PDP recorded violent intra-party clashes between Akala and Ladoja factions. The violent attack was because of the suspension of anti-Akala legislators in the state assembly.

4. In 2010, in Edo State, the ACN recorded a violent intra-party clashes resulting in shootings and killings during party membership registration.

5. On May 11, 2018, aggrieved supporters of the All Progressives Congress (APC) allegedly loyal to Senator Magnus Abe clashed with those loyal to the Transportation Minister, Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi at the Rivers State High Court. The clash started when some faction members came to

the court to secure injunction to stop the local government congress billed to hold on Saturday May 12, 2018 but met the court under lock and key. The situation resulted in violent clash as some angry youths forced the gate open (Ereyi, 2018).

In addition to the above, in the build up to the 2023 general elections, the emergence of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar as the presidential candidate of the PDP as well as the non selection of Nyesom Wike as his running mate created serious intra-party squabbles that led to the withdrawal of support for the presidential candidate by Wike and his supporters. This development has caused serious crack in PDP today because of the recriminations and counter- recriminations it has generated in the party.

Inter Party Squabbles

The Nigerian political parties according to Guobadia as cited in (Kurfi 2007 p. 162) are war machines cocked almost permanently to go into combat with perceived opponents both existing and potential enemies that include not just "the opposition party but also the electorate who refuse to toe the party line. They have also been described as organized criminal organizations for seeking, gaining and retaining power (Alemika, 2011).

Akelegbe (2014 p324) reported some selected incidents of inter-party conflicts and violence between 2001 and 2009. They are

1. On March 21, 2003 in Kwara State, the PDP and ANPP had violent clashes between supporters of their gubernatorial candidates. Two persons were killed.

2. On March 21, 2003 in Cross Rivers State, the PDP and ANPP had violent clashes between supporters of their gubernatorial candidates. One person was killed.

3. On April 26, 2007 in Rivers State, the supporters of PDP and ANPP fought at Ogu-Bolo Local Government Area in Rivers State. One person died.

4. On March 2001 in Kogi State, the members of PDP and ANPP clashed. One person was killed.

5. On February 2009, in Edo State, members of ACN and PDP had inter-party clash with dangerous weapons in the House of Assembly. Several honourable members were injured.'

In the build up to the 2023 general elections, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), (2023) observed that candidates, election officials and politicians were violently attacked. Party militias, criminal gangs and other armed groups engaged in violence to suppress opponents, deter rival candidates from running and influencing the electoral process.

From the beginning of the 2023 electoral campaign, ACLED monitored the impact and dynamics of political violence in Nigeria through the Nigeria Election Violence Tracker, an interactive resource created in partnership with the Nigeria-based Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD). The report pointed that political violence in the build up to the 2023 general elections was largely in line with the levels observed in the 2019 elections.

In the 12 months preceding the 2023 general elections, ACLED recorded over 200 violent events involving party members and supporters, resulting in 100 reported fatalities. Part of the violence involved direct, organized attacks against civilians followed by mob violence and abductions. Unarmed civilians were the target of violence in many of the events recorded by ACLED. In one of such cases, gun men described as bandits killed an APC ward Chairman in Kaduna State in April 2022. The PDP candidate for Ideato North and South federal constituency in Imo State was killed in his residence in Akokwa community in January 2023. A former PDP women leader in Abia State was among the four people killed in Ohafia local government area in March 2022 while a Labour Party

women leader in Laura local government area of Kaduna State was killed in November 2022 after gun men raided her house.

In November 2022, supporters of NNPP and APC clashed in Gwale local government area of Kano State.

Patrons and Client Relations

Conflicts and misunderstanding between patrons and clients (godfathers and godsons) have led to political violence in some states. Good examples are that of Anambra and Oyo States. The attempts by Chief Chris Uba (Patron) to remove the former governor Dr. Chris Ngege (Client) from office in Anambra State thriggered a reign of conflicts, violence, governmental crises and stalmates between 1999 and 2006, involving thugs, armed groups and police (Ibeanu, 2007). Also, in Oyo State, Governor Rashidi Ladoja went against his godfather, the late Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu. Alhaji Adedibu was widely believed to have orchestrated the illegal removal of Governor Ladoja from office when the latter refused to allow Alhaji Adedibu unrestrained access to the security votes of the Governor (Abati, 2006). This led to series of clashes between the supporters of Adedibu and Ladoja.

Ruling Parties & State Violence

In certain occasions the ruling parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic use the security agencies to harass and unleash violence against opposition members. Such violence includes persecution and intimidation of opponents over alleged corruption, possession of arms and abductions. Sometimes this was followed by invasion of homes and business offices of the opposition members by security agencies, strangulations and destruction of businesses, severances of state patronage, arrests and detention. In September 2003, an ANPP rally in Kano was attacked by the police. The vice presidential candidate of ANPP Dr. Chuba Okadibo died subsequently allegedly from police tear-gas (Ogundiya & Baba 2005 p.379). The security agencies were also used to intimidate voters especially in the stronghold of the opposition party. A good example was the use of security agents to intimidate and harass voters during the 2019 governorship election in Rivers State. Also, ruling party and state officials and candidates who are dissatisfied with any action in the electoral process, use security agencies attached to them to cause political and electoral violence and irregularities with impunity (Abutudu & Obakhedo, 2009).

On January 31, 2023 in the build up to the 2023 general elections in Rivers State, political thugs allegedly hired by the ruling party in the state reportedly attacked the campaign team of the governorship candidate of APC Mr. Tonye Cole, shot sporadically and abducted the party's campaign director in Opobo town in Opobo/Nkoro local government of the state. Also, within the same period, the campaign team of the governorship candidate of SDP Senator Magnus Ngei Abe was also attacked in Ahoada West local government area of Rivers State leaving many injured by suspected thugs of the ruling party (PDP) in the state.

Opposition Parties & the Mobilization of Electoral Violence

The opposition parties in many states in Nigeria in the bid to contain the excesses of the government in power mobilize the youths, the lumpen-proletariats and thugs to resist alleged electoral malpractices and protect their mandates through barricades, road blocks and vigils on the road and INEC offices (Ya'u, 2009). In 2007, the opposition parties in Bauchi, Edo, Ekiti and Osun resorted to these methods to checkmate the rigging plans of the ruling party. Also, in Edo State, the supporters of ACN and voters demonstrated in parts of the state, burnt the INEC office at lgarra and some properties of PDP stalwarts in Benin City when the governorship election result was announced. In

Osun, belligerent youths, women, angry mobs and demonstrators burnt down properties belonging to PDP members and Oyinlola solidarity campaign office in Oshogbo following the announcement of the governorship election result in 2007 (Olorode, 2007).

In 2023, aggrieved supporters of the Labour Party Presidential candidate Mr. Peter Obi and that of PDP Alhaji Atiku Abubakar protested the declaration of the candidate of APC ,Bola Ahmed Tinubu as the winner of the 2023 presidential election.

Post Election Violence

A good example of post election violence in the Nigeria's fourth republic is the violence that the announcement of 2011 presidential election witnessed. The declaration of the 2011 presidential election results by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) which was in favour of the then incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan ushered in another epoch of post-election violence in Northern part of the country (Bamgbose, 2012). The violence witnessed the use of explosive devices in public offices, places of worship, vandalization of governmental properties and wanton loss of lives. In terms of human casualty, the 2011 post-election violence was unprecedented in Nigerian electoral history. While police records of death in Kaduna alone was 401, the Human Rights Watch (2011 p.1,4) recorded 180 in Kaduna and Zaria and over 500 in Southern Kaduna (Orji and Uzodi 2012 p.61). The Human Rights Watch (2011) estimated that 800 persons were killed in the violence. Hundreds of persons were injured, maimed, raped, beaten, matcheted, shot and brutalized in the affected states. A police report indicated that about 1,435 private houses, 987 shops, 157 churches, 46 mosques, 45 police properties, 16 government properties, 437 vehicles and 219 motorcycles were burnt or destroyed in Kaduna state alone (Ogbaudu, 2011, Cited in Orji & Uzochi, 2012). Between 48,000 persons (Omenazu & Pascal, 2011) and 65,000 persons (HRW) were internally displaced in about 12 states.

The violence was a response to an alleged claim that the election was rigged in favour of the ruling PDP against the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) which was placed second in the presidential election results. It is necessary to point out here that the CPC had prior to the election warned of alleged PDP intention to rig the election and through the presidential candidates, Gen. Mohammedu Buhari had threatened that "the people should lynch anybody that tries to tinker with the votes" and crush anybody that stands in the way of the people (Amina 2011 as Cited in Orji & Uzodi 2012 p. 41).

The February 25th presidential elections ended up in violence in Rivers state as angry youths allegedly protested against attempts by the state governor (Barr. Nyesom Wike) to manipulate the results of the presidential poll in favor of his preferred candidate. The development led to the killing of three youths suspected to be political thugs in a clash at Ogbakiri community in Emohua local government area of the state between political thugs hired by the two leading political parties in the community (the PDP and APC).

Implications of Political Party Linked Violence on Nigerian Democracy

Political party-linked violence is a recipe for democratic crisis. It is injurious to national stability, security and democratic consolidation. The involvement of political parties in electoral violence is capable of accentuating the proliferation of arms, armed groups, cultists and militias and heighten political tensions which is capable of precipitating the breakdown of law and order and bring to the fore an unpopular government.

It is also capable of causing low voter turnout and indeed political apathy. This is because violence during elections puts fear in the minds of the people and so virtually everybody including intellectuals,

social crusaders, students, market women and workers feel discouraged from party politics except those who have a neurotic attachment to power or no other means of livelihood or no self-esteem. This has led to a situation where mediocres and expendables take over the entire system, thus deepening cynicism.

Party-linked electoral violence is a threat to democratic consolidation and survival. It causes assault on civil rights and liberties as well as democratic values and ethos. It is also injurious to the collective sensibilities of the people.

Conclusion

The character of party politics in Nigeria makes the electoral process weak and vulnerable and its future remain endangered by the unholy attitude of the political parties. Political parties in Nigeria have shown open disdain for democratic consolidation due to their huge appetite to capture power by all means. The parties have jettison their traditional role of articulating, and aggregating citizen's interests, deepening democratic institutions, developing and promoting viable policy positions and programmes.

The unwholesome character of party leadership, weak cohesion, defections and gross disregard for electoral principles have made the political parties wear the toga of institutions with high propensity to violent conflicts. To redeem the image of political parties and rejig Nigerian party politics in line with democratic order and ethos, we make the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1. The political party should be made to play critical roles in democratic consolidation in Nigeria. They should be restructured from mere institutions for acquiring political power to effective institutions that are capable of mediating and reconciling societal interests and conflicts. Therefore the issue of effective leadership, internal democracy, party ideology and the mobilization and linkage to civil society and the citizenry have to be addressed.

2. The rules and procedures that govern electoral behavior and conducts should be strictly applied and enforced to serve as deterrence.

3. The culture of violence in the electoral process in Nigerian party politics has to change through proper political education, promotion of democratic values, ethics and procedures in political participation and competition. The rules and procedures that govern electoral behaviour need to be applied and enforced without fear or favour.

4. The regulatory agencies such as INEC, security agencies and anti-corruption agencies need to be strengthened in terms of competence, effectiveness, impartiality, integrity, confidence and credibility.

5. The political parties need to be strengthened as critical democratic institutions that play vital roles in the electoral process. They should develop capacity to moderate, control and manage their members passions and responses to grievances or perceived threats and losses. In this regards party-based grievances should be resolved before elections so that they do not become violence triggers.

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Traditional Extractivism and the Politics of Sustainability: Interrogating International Oil Companies (IOCs') Social Investment Approaches in Nigeria's Niger Delta

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Abstract

Natural resource extraction in contexts of limited regulation can generate significant adverse environmental outcomes, with negative implications for sustainability. Enhancing sustainability in turn requires targeted policy approaches to protect impacted communities' social and economic conditions. This paper spotlights International Oil Companies' (IOCs) social investment approaches in the Niger Delta region and how it impacts sustainability in the context of traditional extractivism. Through the lens of the political economy perspective, this paper investigates the interplay between the political economy of oil in Nigeria and the social investments of IOCs, elucidating the repercussions for the region's development. The political economy perspective offers a robust framework for comprehending the intricate mesh of interests, power dynamics, and resource allocation that mold the actions of IOCs in the Niger Delta. This perspective provides a holistic foundation for deconstructing the manifold challenges and opportunities arising from oil extraction in the region. The paper posits that IOCs' extraction activities in the Niger Delta entrench practices and processes which undermine social investment goals and impede sustainable development. The paper further notes that despite substantial financial commitments, IOCs' social investments often fall short in delivering substantial enhancements in overall living conditions in the Niger Delta. The paper underscores the imperative of embracing a comprehensive and sustainable developmental approach that champions the well-being of local communities and the environment. As a result, it recommends among others that there should be paramount importance on community engagement, fortifying transparency and accountability, adopting a perspective oriented towards long-term development, championing environmental responsibility, and bolstering economic empowerment and cultural preservation.

Keywords: Politics, Social investment, sustainability, Extractivism, Oil Companies, Niger Delta.

Introduction

Natural resource extraction and the policies of extractivism that underline it have significant environmental impacts and can generate imbalances in the productive structure of locations where actual extraction take place (Alonso-Fernandez and Regueiro-Ferreira, 2022). These imbalances can be ameliorated through targeted social investment policies that seek to prevent or ameliorate where necessary the unintended outcomes of extractivism as it affects the productive base of host communities. However, whether governments or extraction companies are able to achieve these

depends on the political economy of extraction and the interest and purpose of the state in pursuing extractivism as a development model.

In the developing South, as it is in much of Sub-Saharan Africa, states have opted for traditional extractivism. Traditional extractivism happens when states, due to limited technological development, rely more on natural resource rents while allowing multinational companies influence and determine the legal frameworks, conditions and processes for resource extraction (Gudynas, 2011; Portillo, 2014). This leads to states playing marginal roles in the regulation and coordination of extraction allowing for lesser controls of the negative externalities that emerge from the process of extraction. The implication is that marginal control and regulation of the extraction industry leads to failure to implement best practices that in turn exacerbates the decline in social conditions in communities. This is the scenario in Nigeria's Niger Delta.

The Niger Delta is one of the most important wetlands and coastal marine ecosystems in the world and is home to some thirty-one million people (Report of the Niger Delta Technical Committee, November 2008, p. 102). Crude oil extraction in the Niger delta has generated an estimated $600 billion since the 1960s (Wurthman, 2006). This underscores the immense economic significance of the oil industry in the context of the global economy and, more specifically, Nigeria's economic landscape. Despite this wealth, majority of the Niger Delta's population live in abject poverty. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) describes the region as suffering from "administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth and squalor, and endemic conflict" (UNDP, 2006). This is further explained by Raimi & Boroh (2018) who argue that the prevalence of vast human development challenges and infrastructural deficit in the region shows a remarkable mismatch in terms of the massive wealth generated and socio-economic wellbeing in the region.

Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), for instance, manages operations covering more than 31,000 square kilometers (SPDC, Nigeria Brief, The Environment, 1995). Interestingly, in spite of the extensive operational footprints that companies like SPDC and other International Oil Companies (IOCs) have in the region, the Niger Delta continues to suffer from persistent and adverse ecological impacts. Interrogating social investment in host communities becomes even more salient as increasing divestment of onshore assets by IOCs raises questions about socio-economic survival in these communities. Implicitly, there is a seeming disconnect between the intent and outcome of social investment, one that is shaped by the impacts of traditional extractivism in the region. This disconnect raises questions about the effectiveness of these investments in achieving long-term sustainability. How will increasing divestments impact the ability of local communities to sustain their livelihoods, after decades of degradation of their natural environment, and whose responsibility will it be? Is the current iteration of social investment approaches capable of ameliorating socio-economic uncertainties in these communities? How has politics impacted the outcomes of social investment attempts in the region? How does the interplay of politics and social investment efforts affect sustainable development outcomes in the region?

This paper proceeds with the proposition that the arising from the state's preference for traditional extractivism, dynamics of social investment of IOCs in the Niger Delta is nested in politics rather than genuine intentions to solve the many social, economic and environmental challenges in the region. This is a gross violation of the Triple Bottom Line framework that should ordinarily guide all responsible companies (Raimi and Boroh, 2018). It is from this plank of understanding of responsible extraction that this paper proceeds with the interrogation of social investment efforts of IOCs and sustainable outcomes in the Niger delta.

Conceptual Framework

There are four concepts associated with this work and the framework below shows their intricate relationship. These concepts are politics, sustainable development, international oil companies (IOCs) and the Niger Delta region. The intent is to outline how the processes and dynamics associated with the nature and strategy of social investment contributes to politics of class accumulation which in turn produces unintended outcomes for communities that suffer the direct negative externalities of crude oil extraction in the Niger delta. This conceptual framework is better understood when deconstructed within the context of the objectives of social investment and the specific social and economic contexts wherein it is implemented. It highlights how the interchanges and intermix between actors (policy makers and implementing agencies), beneficiaries (host communities and community leadership) combine to produces both intended and unintended outcomes and how these shapes objective realities in the Niger delta.
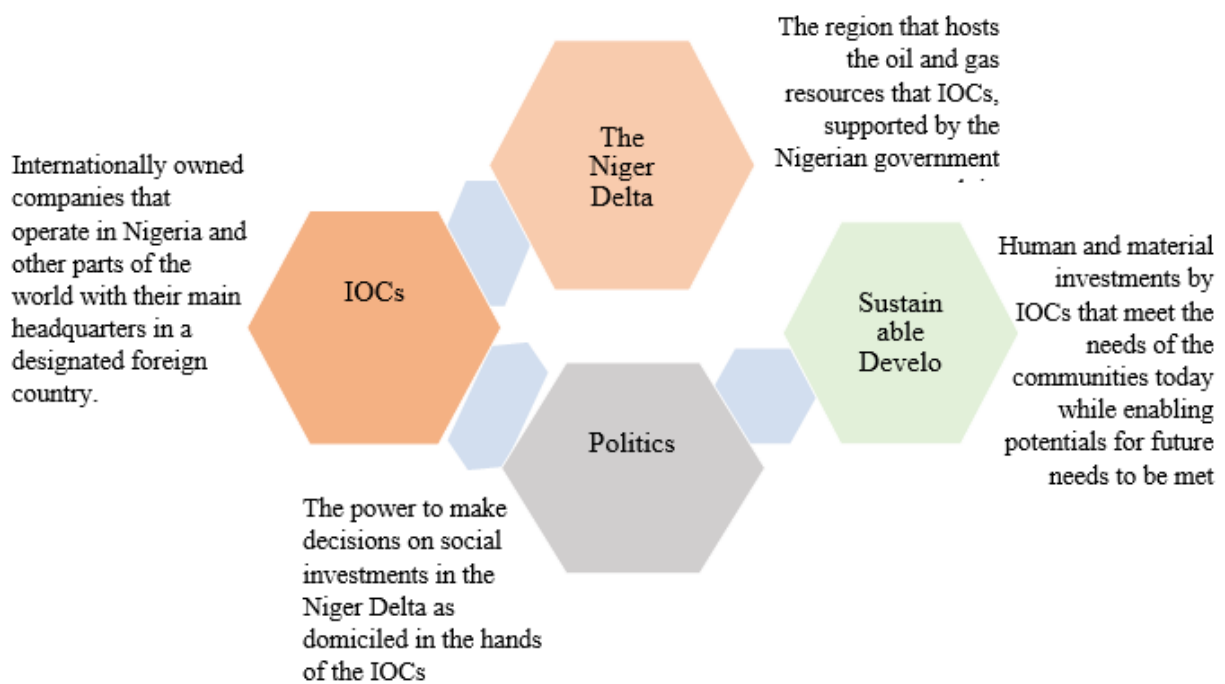

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

From Fig. 1 above, it is easy to see that politics in the context of this work relates to the power of the IOCs to make decisions on what to invest in as social interventions in the host communities where they operate. This clearly defines the domain of social investment power due to the fact that IOCs maintain some level of decision-making influence around investments, a situation that the introduction of the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIA) seemingly has failed to correct. The interplay of politics and decision-making around extraction in the region is captured by David Easton's position on politics as the 'authoritative allocation of resources and values for the society' (Easton, 1965). Politics encompasses the various processes through which those who control power respond to pressures from the larger society by allocating benefits, rewards or penalties. When captured in this context, the dynamics of decision-making around extraction and the role of oil companies can be simply illustrated as outcomes of the politics of extraction in the Niger delta.

Politics involves differing interests within a given unit of rule and each conciliated by giving them a share in power, importance to welfare and the survival of the whole community. Politics also deals with the interpersonal, intergroup and international quest for power. It locates politics in all

types of human communities where individuals, groups and states compete for influence, power and influence Ntete-Nna (2004). Nevertheless, a failure to understand that politics is a process of compromise and reconciliation is necessarily frustrating and difficult. This is so because it involves listening carefully to the opinions of others which leads to the growth of the democratic process across the developed world. It is in the absence of this healthy compromise between the IOCs and the communities in the region that social investment frustrations are recorded. Although Stoker (2006) puts it that, 'Politics is designed to disappoint'; its outcomes are 'often messy, ambiguous and never final'. This clearly shows why the politicization of social investment in the Niger Delta region has huge adverse implications for sustainable development.

Interestingly, playing politics with social investment undermines the very foundational meaning of the concept of sustainable development as introduced by the Brundtland Report of 1987. This is perhaps why some argue that "Development that meets the needs of the people today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" means very little under authoritarian socioeconomic investment processes. The sad reality is that the Niger Delta region houses a huge laboratory where authoritarian social investment is practiced and this has had and continue to have severe negative impacts on the people and their livelihoods. Decades of crude oil extraction has had significant impacts on everyday survival in the region. Natural capital upon which traditional livelihoods depend have been adversely affected and destroyed (Oyebamiji & Mba, 2013; Nwosu, 2013). More than the socio-economic impacts, struggles over environmental protection and access have led to loss of lives in communities (Kotingo & Amuyou, 2015). The combination of these externalities of extraction in the region has led to looming environmental crises and scarcity in the region.

Politics and Social Investment in the Niger Delta – A Brief Review of Literature

The politicization of social investments by IOCs and hence sustainable development has received some huge attention by scholars in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The argument by most of these scholars rests on the negation of the foundational definition of the concept of sustainability which sees s development which meets the present needs of individuals without hindering the future needs of generations yet unborn (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) as sustainable. In light of this, Okwor and Odo (2019) accuse the IOCs of not living up to this definition especially as the huge destruction of local livelihoods in the region clearly suggests that generations yet unborn may not meet their needs because the requirements to do so may not be available to them.

The pursuit of social investments is fundamentally aimed at catalyzing lasting change and improving the quality of life. Despite targeted policy approaches towards sustainable social investment, very little progress has been made as strategies of implementation have been politicized and implementation embedded into clientelist networks as currency for compensating political loyalty both at the national, state and community levels. To achieve these investments successfully, a deeper understanding of the essential needs of the Niger Delta's populace is imperative. Rather than merely measuring expenditure, the focus should be on achieving the most effective and meaningful outcomes. This approach necessitates full citizen engagement, allowing them to realize their untapped potential – a process akin to unlocking local resources.

While IOCs have been engaged in social investment initiatives, there remains much work to be done. This is evident in Chevron's evolving approach, which shifts the emphasis of social investments towards economic development, employment generation, and the augmentation of local incomes. Such a shift aligns with the aspiration for genuine wealth creation within local communities (Grant

& Kaplan, 2013). However, the politicized nature of IOCs' involvement in the region has sometimes hindered the realization of these transformative objectives.

The multifaceted operations of oil companies in the Niger Delta, encompassing exploration and production (Upstream), the midstream distribution system involving tankers and pipelines transporting crude oil to refineries, and downstream activities like refining, marketing, and retail distribution through gasoline stations, have collectively wrought a grim toll on the region (Raimi, Onaolapo, Ige & Charles, 2015). Regrettably, the wealth generated from these operations has failed to translate into improved living conditions for the local populace. In this backdrop of neglect and the politicization of oil resources, the Niger Delta has become a crucible of unrest. Armed groups and criminal organizations, acting on behalf of the marginalized region, have sought resource control through illicit activities such as oil theft and violent acts. These actions, often deemed as reactions to the perceived injustices perpetrated by the oil industry, have exacerbated the region's instability.

Evidence in the region shows that host communities housing oil infrastructure have continued to bear the brunt of the negative externalities of oil extraction arising from unsustainable drilling and oil transportation processes. Local communities have continued to suffer environmental damage and scarcity. Interventions have been influenced mostly by state capture considerations that entrench primitive accumulation.

Sustainability and environmental boost are fundamental to the overall wellbeing and development in the Niger Delta. More than 60 per cent of the people in the region depend on the natural environment for their livelihood. However, this has been very difficult as natural capital on which livelihoods depend have been compromised by pollution and environmental damage arising from resource extraction.

According to ANNON (2006), the Niger Delta is "one of the world's most severely petroleum-impacted ecosystems". They stated: that "The damage from oil operations is chronic and cumulative, and has acted synergistically with other sources of environmental stress to result in a severely impaired coastal ecosystem and compromised the livelihoods and health of the region's impoverished residents."

> The Niger Delta has an enormously rich natural endowment in the form of land, water, forests and fauna. These assets, however, have been subjected to extreme degradation due to oil prospecting. For many people, this loss has been a direct route into poverty, as natural resources have traditionally been primary sources of sustenance (UNDP, Niger Delta Human Development Report, 2006).

The oil companies, particularly Shell Petroleum, have operated for over 30 years without environmental regulation to guide their activities (UNDP, 2006). Although, the oil industry in the Niger Delta comprises the government and multinational companies. The multinational companies, however, are the major operators, nonetheless, research has shown that the state's approach to extractivism has rendered it weak in regulating the activities of oil companies in the region. This has contributed to the failure not only to protect the environment but also remediating legacy crude oil pollution sites. Essentially, rural communities that play host to oil infrastructure has continually suffered the impacts of oil pollution, further contributing to the calls for environmental rights protection for these communities.

Given the preference for traditional extractivism by the Nigerian state, oil companies have exploited the weak extant regulatory system, and their operations are characterized by failure to take appropriate preventive and remedial action in relation to pollution and environmental damage.

Again, environmental governance in the region is plagued by blockages to access to information by communities as environmental impact assessments are produced without recourse to international best practices. Implicitly, access to information and opportunities for participation by community folks exist only on policy papers and legal framework documents. An internal SPDC report highlighted the lack of transparency in the company's operations in relation to many issues that affect communities, and the negative impact this has. While some information may legitimately be considered confidential, companies frequently take the approach that they will not disclose data unless required to by a court of law with competent jurisdiction. Notably, transparency and access to information in the extractive sector are critical factors in building trust and better co-operation with communities.

Essentially, there is a significant disconnect between the wealth the region generates for the Nigerian government and the transnational oil companies extracting oil from the region, and the region's human development realities. In agreement, the World Bank (2008) in her country analysis report on Nigeria concludes that more than anywhere in the world, the Niger Delta typifies the paradox of low development in an environment of rich natural resources. Such poor remark have continued till date and not many changes made or felt.

The low level of development indices in the region is not only blamed on the government as IOCs also share in the burden. As destruction of means of livelihood of the inhabitants of the region by IOCs received little or no concern from successive governments, IOCs and the international communities. This notwithstanding, the IOCs with businesses in the region argues that it is the responsibility of government of the host communities to develop these communities (Adati, 2012), because of the fact that they have not failed in their obligation to the government in the payment of taxes and royalties and that any efforts to provide any development intervention to the immediate communities is borne out of good will (Idemudia, 2007). This cannot be unconnected to the poor regulatory framework on the responsibilities of IOCs to the host communities. The community development efforts by International Oil Companies (IOCs) in the region have fallen short of expectations, despite their decades-long presence. While IOCs have emphasized social objectives as part of their policies to align with international best practices, there is a concern that these companies operating in the Niger Delta are not prioritizing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) but are instead engaged in corporate philanthropy. This shift has contributed to a perception of irresponsibility in their operations, as evidenced by the persistent issue of oil spills.

The provision of development by IOCs projects is often bedeviled by several factors, which are the problems of poor business environment, corruption of government officials among others. In Nigeria, it is argued that our business environment does not encourage corporate performance. For instance, our high rate of insecurity, constant fights between ethnic regions, crisis of the Fulani herdsmen, kidnapping, banditry, political strife, sabotage of oil installations, and other social unrest impedes smooth business operation. This according to Adati (2012) often discourages investment in an already capital intensive and volatile energy industry. The attitude of the youths in the Niger Delta Region also militates against development and the activities of the IOCs often negatively impacts on the environment which have continued to raise fundamental questions on the sustainability of their processes.

Framing a Political Economy of Oil in the Niger Delta through the Marxist Lens

The Marxist Political Economy perspective, rooted in the works of Karl Marx, serves as a valuable theoretical framework for scrutinizing the politics of sustainable development by International Oil Companies (IOCs) in the Niger Delta. This perspective, informed by the critiques of capitalism, is grounded in several key assumptions. The Marxist Political Economy approach underscores the

notion of class struggle, a concept that resonates significantly with the Niger Delta context. As Obi (2009) highlights in "Oil Politics and Violence: Nigeria's Militant Youth and the Petro-State," the region is marked by stark class divisions and tensions between IOCs, the Nigerian government, and marginalized local communities. These divisions are integral to understanding the power dynamics that influence decisions related to sustainable development projects and resource allocation.

Moreover, the Marxist perspective places a central emphasis on capitalist exploitation. Okwor and Odo (2019) in their work on "The Political Ecology of Oil and Gas Activities in the Nigerian Aquatic Ecosystem" delve into the exploitation inherent in oil extraction activities in the Niger Delta. They emphasize how IOCs, driven by profit motives, often extract oil resources at the expense of the local communities and the environment, contributing to long-standing socio-economic disparities and environmental degradation.

Furthermore, the concept of structural inequality, a cornerstone of Marxist analysis, is highly relevant when studying the Niger Delta. This perspective sheds light on how the concentration of wealth and resources from oil production exacerbates structural inequalities within the region, as discussed by Le Billon (2006) in "The Scramble for Africa: Oil, Inequality, and the Global South." Historical materialism, another key element of Marxism, underscores the role of historical and material conditions in shaping societies. This is particularly pertinent in the Niger Delta, where a historical trajectory of oil exploitation has left indelible marks on the region's sustainable development prospects. Understanding this historical context is vital for crafting effective and equitable sustainable development solutions. This is in addition to understanding the dialectical relationship inherent in this historical context. According to Raimi and Asamaowei (2019) note that the Marxist Political Economy (MPE) perspective enables a robust examination of dialectical relationships among various social structures within the Niger Delta, while also considering the unique economic infrastructure within the scope of this analysis.

The Marxist Political Economy perspective, with its emphasis on class struggle, capitalist exploitation, structural inequality, and historical as well as dialectical materialism, provides a critical lens through which it analyzes the complex socio-economic and political dynamics at play in the Niger Delta. Literature spanning various years, such as Obi (2009), Okwor and Odo (2019), and Le Billon (2006), offers valuable insights into the relevance of this perspective to the study of IOCs' role in sustainable development in the region. Therefore, the adoption of the Marxist Political Economy perspective for this paper on the politics of sustainable development by International Oil Companies (IOCs) in the Niger Delta greatly enhances its analytical framework. By grounding the analysis in Marxist tenets, the paper helps to highlight the region's socio-economic complexities with a critical and nuanced approach. This perspective underscores the significance of power dynamics among IOCs, the Nigerian government, and local communities and emphasizes the inherent exploitation in oil extraction activities. It also highlights how structural inequalities stemming from the concentration of oil wealth impact the region. Ultimately, this theoretical framework not only aids in the examination of the status quo but also serves as a foundation for crafting equitable and sustainable policy recommendations to address the region's development challenges.

Understanding the Social Investment Landscape of IOCs in the Niger Delta region

International Oil Companies (IOCs) operating in the Niger Delta region have channeled their social investment efforts into various critical areas aimed at addressing the region's socio-economic and environmental challenges. While these initiatives underscore their commitment to making a positive impact on the communities where they operate, several factors (discussed later) have tended to undermine their investments in host communities. One of the primary areas of focus for IOCs in the Niger Delta is education. They have invested in constructing and renovating schools,

providing scholarships, and distributing educational materials to enhance the educational landscape of the region. This investment in education aligns with the broader goal of improving human capital and empowering local communities (Okon, 2015). In addition, healthcare is another vital sphere of social investment. IOCs have established healthcare facilities and supported medical outreach programmes to enhance access to quality healthcare services for local residents. This investment is crucial for addressing the healthcare disparities prevalent in the region, contributing to improved health outcomes (Okwor & Odo, 2019).

Furthermore, infrastructure development constitutes a significant portion of IOCs' social investments. They have taken on projects to build and repair roads, bridges, and other essential infrastructure elements. These initiatives aim to improve transportation and connectivity within the region, thereby facilitating economic growth and development (Nwokocha, 2018). IOCs recognize the importance of community empowerment and, as such, support community-based organizations and provide skills training and capacity-building programs. These initiatives empower local communities to take charge of their development and participate actively in decision-making processes (Okwor & Odo, 2019). Also, environmental conservation is a critical concern in the environmentally sensitive Niger Delta. IOCs have undertaken environmental remediation projects and support conservation efforts to mitigate the environmental impact of their operations. These investments are essential for addressing ecological degradation and promoting sustainability (Okon, 2015).

In their social investment portfolio, IOCs also focus on supporting local livelihoods. This includes promoting sustainable agriculture, providing microfinance options, and offering entrepreneurship support to encourage economic self-sufficiency among local residents (Inyang & Edet, 2019). Cultural and social programme are not overlooked either. IOCs actively support cultural festivals, arts, and community events, recognizing the significance of preserving and celebrating local cultures. These initiatives contribute to a sense of identity and pride within the communities (Raimi & Boroh, 2018).

While IOCs have demonstrated their commitment to social investments in these areas, the impact and sustainability of these initiatives continue to be topics of discussion and scrutiny within the Niger Delta region. Local communities, governments, and civil society organizations actively engage in monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of these investments to ensure they align with the development needs and aspirations of the people. One prominent theme in the literature is the fact that IOCs' social investments in the Niger Delta reflect a huge mismatch between financial investment and outcome. Nkwocha (2018) argues that despite substantial financial commitments, these investments often fail to bring about significant improvements in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and overall living conditions. The focus on short-term and often visible projects, such as building schools or health centers, may not necessarily lead to sustainable development outcomes (Okwor & Odo, 2019).

Furthermore, the literature highlights a lack of community engagement in the planning and execution of social investment projects. Nwokocha (2018) underscores the importance of meaningful community participation to ensure that projects align with local needs and expectations. Without such engagement, social investments may be misaligned with the immediate priorities of the people. Transparency and accountability issues in IOCs' social investments have also come under scrutiny. Several studies (Adesanya, 2019; Marc-Antione, 2018) reveal instances of mismanagement, corruption, and diversion of funds meant for community development. This has raised concerns about the effectiveness and integrity of these initiatives. This is perhaps why the literature underscores the need for a more holistic approach to social investments. Adesanya (2019) argues that IOCs should address not only immediate needs but also long-term development goals and environmental concerns. This includes measures for cleaning up oil spills and mitigating environmental damage, which are essential components of sustainable development in the region.

How Class Politics affects the Sustainable Development efforts of IOCs in the Niger Delta

Class politics significantly influences International Oil Companies' (IOCs) sustainable development interventions in the Niger Delta region. This influence is evident in the unequal distribution of benefits from oil extraction, with the elite and political class often benefiting more from contracts, employment opportunities, and financial incentives. This unequal distribution leaves the majority of the local population marginalized (Obi, 2009). In addition, the politics of class also impacts decision-making processes regarding the design and implementation of sustainable development projects. The interests and priorities of the socio-economic elite may take precedence over those of marginalized communities (Obi, 2009).

Control over resources, including land and revenues, is central to class politics in the Niger Delta. Disputes over resource ownership and access have led to conflicts that can disrupt sustainable development efforts (Le Billon, 2006). Marginalized communities often mobilize and advocate for their rights, demanding a fair share of oil wealth and more equitable sustainable development projects. This activism is driven by the disparities in benefits and opportunities (Obi, 2009). Class-based disparities can also affect the transparency and accountability of sustainable development initiatives. The elite tend to have more influence in diverting funds or mismanaging resources meant for community projects, exacerbating inequality (Marc-Antione, 2018).

Additionally, the political economy of Nigeria significantly influences the unsustainable practices of International Oil Companies (IOCs) in the Niger Delta region, and by extension, hampering sustainable development. Nigeria's political economy is characterised by patronage networks and rent-seeking behaviour. IOCs often partake in rent-seeking activities by offering lucrative contracts and financial incentives to political elites and government officials, securing favourable terms and safeguarding their interests (Le Billon, 2006). Also, weak regulatory enforcement within Nigeria's political economy grants IOCs leeway to engage in unsustainable practices. Inadequate monitoring and lax enforcement of environmental regulations can result in oil spills and pollution, adversely affecting local communities and ecosystems (Obi, 2009).

Nigeria grapples with the challenges of the "resource curse," where the abundance of natural resources can foster corruption and mismanagement. IOCs' actions inadvertently exacerbate this curse by engaging in corrupt practices and avoiding transparency (Marc-Antione, 2018). In this regard, corruption and mismanagement of social investment initiatives provides conditions that undermine the sustainable development interventions of IOCs in the Niger Delta region. Hence, the political economy of Nigeria characterized by inequality and fueling of resource control disputes in the Niger Delta, contributes to social unrest and conflict that combine to further jeopardize the sustainable development efforts of IOCs. Interestingly, unsustainable practices, such as oil spills and land degradation, often serve as triggers for community protests and militant activities (Nkwocha, 2018). The profit-oriented focus in Nigeria's political economy often leads IOCs to prioritize immediate gains over long-term sustainable development. This clearly results in insufficient investments in infrastructure and community development, with a limited emphasis on wealth creation for local communities (Adesanya, 2019).

While all the submissions discussed under this section above address the structural political economy (especially the class relations) without the Niger Delta, a few scholars have concentrated on the emerging class relations within the host communities as a subject of concern with regard to the sustainability of the region. For instance, Amadi, Imoh and Obomanu (2016) alluded to the making of militia capitalists from the pull of warlords who graduate into becoming rich through the use of violent conflicts. This happens when they now, through violent conflicts, gain mouth-watering contracts from IOCs and political appointments from government given them inroad into

the propertied or ruling class. Clearly this has implications for sustainable development by creating what Raimi and Boroh (2018) have referred to as the cycle of violence. Interestingly, there is also the worry about an expansive army of conflict proletariats who continue to fight with the hope of pushing their class boundaries towards becoming part of the militia capitalists. This scenario which can be traced to the unsustainable practices of the IOCs under the support of the government now stands opposed to sustainable development of the region given its benefit captor orientation.

Conclusion

The exploration of the politics of sustainable development by International Oil Companies (IOCs) in the Niger Delta region reveals a complex interplay of factors that significantly impact the socio-economic and environmental landscape of the area. Throughout this paper, we have delved into the critical role of the political economy perspective in understanding the dynamics at play. The political economy of Nigeria serves as the backdrop against which IOCs operate in the Niger Delta. This intricate political-economic landscape is characterized by patronage networks, rent-seeking behaviours, weak regulatory enforcement, corruption, and resource conflicts. These factors have given rise to unsustainable practices by IOCs, ultimately undermining the sustainable development of the region.

As highlighted in the literature, these unsustainable practices encompass various dimensions. IOCs engage in rent-seeking activities to secure favourable terms and protect their interests, often at the expense of environmental and community well-being. Weak regulatory enforcement allows for oil spills and pollution to harm local communities and ecosystems. Corruption and lack of transparency in IOCs' operations contribute to the resource curse phenomenon. Additionally, the region experiences social unrest and conflict, often triggered by IOCs' unsustainable practices. Short-term profit-driven approaches further hinder long-term sustainable development. In essence, the political economy perspective serves as a lens through which we can understand the intricate web of interests, power dynamics, and resource allocation that shape the actions of IOCs in the Niger Delta. It underscores the need for a holistic and sustainable approach to development that transcends short-term gains and prioritizes the well-being of local communities and the environment. It is noted in this paper that redirecting social investment in the Niger Delta will be needed to achieve a number of goals. These goals will include but not limited to the following. The need to prioritize community engagement and participation which will require IOCs to actively involve local communities in the planning, execution, and monitoring of social investment projects. This inclusive approach ensures that initiatives align with community needs and priorities, fostering a sense of ownership and sustainability. There will also be the need to Enhance Transparency and Accountability through the implementation of rigorous monitoring and reporting mechanisms to ensure that funds allocated for social investments are used efficiently and effectively. Transparency and accountability are crucial to building trust with local communities and stakeholders.

Adopt a Long-Term Development Perspective which will require a shift from short-term, visible projects to initiatives that address long-term challenges and environmental concerns. IOCs should commit to holistic development that includes environmental remediation and sustainable community growth. There nis also the goal of promoting environmental responsibility through the actively engagement in environmental conservation and remediation projects. IOCs should adopt eco-friendly practices, address the ecological impact of their operations, and take responsibility for cleaning up oil spills and mitigating environmental damage. Lastly, there will be the need to support economic empowerment and cultural preservation. This will require investments in skills development, entrepreneurship, and economic self-sufficiency programs to empower local

communities. Additionally, continue to support cultural events and traditions, preserving local cultures and fostering a sense of identity within the communities.

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Money Politics and the Not Too Young to Run Act in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper interrogates the impact of money politics on youth inclusion as candidates for elective positions through the instrumentality of the 'Not Too Young to Run Act.' It argues that while the signing of the Act removed a basic hindrance to youth candidacy by lowering the age eligibility for contesting for public offices. It, however, observed that undue use of monetisation of the electoral process undercuts youth capacity to compete. To that end, it suggests that the provision on the limitation of election expenses for various elective offices must be strictly enforced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Political parties are also admonished to lower the cost of their expression of interest and nomination forms to prevent the unwholesome system of highest bidder. Lastly, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and sister agencies must see to it that those that involve in vote buying and selling are arrested and prosecuted.

Keywords: Election, Inclusivity, Money politics, Not Too Young To Young to Run, and Representation

Introduction

Election constitutes a fundamental means of ensuring the participation and representation of individuals and groups in political processes. Contrary to this, the Nigerian political space since the return to democracy in 1999 has been dominated by gerontocrats, older politicians, and patriarchs. Besides, the minimum constitutional age requirement for contesting election in the country makes it difficult for youths to participate in elections as candidates as evident in the low number of youth candidates in all elections in the Fourth Republic even as about 70% of the Nigeria's population is below 35years.

To counter this apparent structural conflict situation, youth and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) launched extensive campaigns aimed at lowering the statutory age of candidates for various elective positions under the aegis of the Not Too Young To Run Movement. The struggle eventually resulted in the signing of the Not Too Young To Run Act (NTYTRA). It was hoped that the Act will enhance youth inclusion and participation, and representation in Nigerian politics.

Unfortunately, experience over the course of two general elections: 2019 and 2023 that were conducted under the NTYTRA demonstrate that other variables other than age, principal of which is money politics undermines the aims of the NTYTRA. Although money is desideratum in electoral democracy, undue application of money in electoral processes weakens inclusivity and fairness. The monetisation of elections in Nigeria means that the already peasantised youth are systematically eliminated. Considering this, Okibe, (2022) noted that the gatekeeping functions of political godfathers and financial heavyweights that truncates and favours older politicians at the expense

of the youth. It is against this background that the paper interrogates the effect of money politics on the NTYTRA.

Understanding the Concept of Youth

The term youth has no universally accepted definition. It varies from one location, country, organisation, and region to another. Hence, it has cultural, social, economic, and political meanings depending on who is defining. For instance, the African Youth Charter, sees a youth as anyone that is within the ages of 18 – 35years. According to the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) young parliamentarians refers to legislators that are under 45 years of age.

The Nigerian National Youth Policy defines a youth as someone between 18 – 35 years. For electoral purposes, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) classifies youth as persons within the ages of 18 – 35years. Extrapolating from the result of the 2006 population census, an estimated 70 percent of Nigeria population are youth. It, therefore, infers that the level of youth representation in Nigerian politics is abysmally low.

The Not Too Young to Run Act and Expansion of the Democratic Space in Nigeria

Democracy is popularly seen as government of the people, by the people and for the people. The phrase 'by the people' is used both in plural, and as common noun, meaning that it is inclusive of all categories of persons that reside within the political system irrespective of gender, race, region, religion, and age. It, therefore, presupposes that all members of the society are eminently qualified to participate in political activities. However, states through constitutional, and legal instruments (regulatory guidelines) limit the capacity of individuals and groups to participate in the political life of their society. To that end, there exist a world of difference between existence of formal democratic institutions, and substantive democratic processes in a state. A fundamental aspect of democratic space is the ability of people to participate in the decision-making process where they can express their needs and opinions on issues of public concern.

Accordingly, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) provides four basic criteria for contesting election into elective offices in the country. These are: citizenship, age, educational and political party sponsorship. Specifically, the Constitution stipulates that to qualify for election, a person must be a citizen of Nigeria, has been educated to at least the school Certificate level or its equivalent; and must be sponsored by a political party to which (s)he is a member (Nigerian constitution, 1999 as amended). With regards to age, the constitution under Section 65(2a&b) provides that a person aspiring for Senate must have attained 35 years of age, and 30 years for House of Representatives. Under Section 106(b) for a person to contest election into the House of Assembly, the person must have attained the 30years of age. Section 131(b) stipulates that a candidate for the office of the President must have attained 40 years, while Section 177 (b) give 35 years as the age requirement for the office of the Governor (Nigerian constitution, 1999 as amended). Expectedly, the passage by the National Assembly and the Presidential Assent to the Not Too Young To Run bill, appears to have opened the democratic space for youths participation in elections as contestants considering the reduction in age requirements for contesting some elective positions.

The signing of the NTYTRA altered the provisions of Sections 65, 106, 131 and 177 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It lowered the age of eligibility for elective political office from 30 year to 25 year of age. With the modification, the eligibility age for the office of the President was reduced from 40 to 35 years, eligibility for Governorship was reduced from 35 to 30 years, Senate, 35 to 30 years, while that of House of Representatives, and House of Assembly were reduced from

30 to 25 years, respectively. The implication of the age limit alteration is that the issue of age that previously hindered youths under the age of 30 from participating in politics has been removed. With this development, youths were expectant that the tomorrow they have often heard of had finally arrived. Through the instrumentality of the NTYTRA, an increasing number of youths appear to join the race for elective political offices at various levels of government. Corroborating this view, YIAGA Africa also observed that the reduction of the age of limitation, has seen a massive increase in the interest of youth that ran for various positions across board in the 2019 General Elections (YIAGA, 2023a). The trend continued during the 2023 general election, which was the second general election to be conducted under the NTYTRA regime. It has been observed that the expanding number of youth candidacy and youth representation in federal and state legislatures is the consequence of the Not Too Young to Run legislation (YIAGA, 2023b). This is because the NTYTRA resolved a fundamental constitutional hinderance that limited the capacity of youth to actively get involved in politics as candidates.

The basic benefit of the age reduction legislation lies in the vibrancy, fresh ideas, energy, innovation, dynamism, robustness, and creativity that the youth will brings into the decision-making arena.

Money Politics as threat to the Not Too Young To Run Act

"What money cannot do, more money can. And what more money cannot do, much more money will" is a popular political slogan within Nigeria politico-electoral ecosystem. The idea behind the sloganeering is that politics and all that have to do with it is reducible to the power of money. Hence, it is not the man of character, but the man of means that society reveres. Politics in post-civil war Nigeria, starting with the defunct Second Republic elections, and the aborted Third Republic were monetised. The monetisation rascality was such that the then Military President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida gave it as one of the reasons for annulment of the 1993 Presidential election, when he observed:

> There were authenticated reports of election malpractices against agents, officials of the NEC and voters… there were proofs of manipulation, offers, and acceptance of money and other forms of inducement. Evidence available to the government put the amount of spent by presidential candidates at over 2.1billion naira (Davies, 2012 p.70).

Since the restoration of democracy on May 29, 1999, after years of military interregnum a major defining character of Nigeria politics has been resurgence and entrenchment of money politics in the current fourth republic. Between 1999 and 2023, Nigeria conducted seven general elections which is the longest in the country's series of democratic experimentation. In all these elections, namely, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023, there has been an expanding incidence and allegation of electoral commodification and monetisation by contesting candidates and political parties. Money is a necessary correlate of democratic politics as it enables candidates and parties to execute their strategic plans. Funds are required for purchase of expression of interest, and nomination forms, production of campaign materials, jingles, renting of campaign venues, music troupes, equipment, and so on. The problem, however, is the use of illicit and unregulated electoral campaign funds in the process. To countervail the untoward use of money during elections, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) under Sections 225 empowers the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to monitor, audit, and follow campaign financing, and sources of funds to political parties. In case of breaches, Section 228 of the Constitution authorises the National Assembly to punish violators. Although the Constitution did not expressly stipulate the maximum amount a candidate can spend, that shortcoming is however corrected by the provision

of Section 88 of the 2022 Electoral Act that stipulates limitations on election expenses for various elective offices.

Table 1: Limitations on Election Expenses for various offices

S/n	Elective Office	Maximum permissible election expense to be incurred by a candidate
1	President	N5,000,000,000
2	Governorship	N1,000,000,000
3	Senate	N100,000,000
4	House of Representatives	N70,000,000
5	State House of Assembly	N30,000,000
6	Chairmanship to an Area Council	N30,000,000
7	Councillorship election to an Area Council	N5,000,000
8	Individual or Corporate entity donation to a candidate	N50,000,000

Source: Section 88(2-8) of the 2022 Electoral Act

The critical analysis of conduct of candidates and political parties with regards to election campaign financing demonstrates that they contravene the provisions of the legislation that regulate campaign funding. It has been evident that candidates standing for various elective offices overspend their permissible financial limits. This is necessitated by the nature and character of Nigerian post-colonial state where politics and election to be precise is approached with a zero-sum mindset. The state in post-colonial formation is seen as an instrument of wealth and capital accumulation. This triggers politics of desperation, and absence of moderation among political actors that compete in elections as everyone seeks to do everything within their power to outdo the other. Under this condition, politics, and electoral contestation are without moderation because even the party in power that are supposed to regulate and moderate the democratic rule of the game is itself entangled in the corrupt practice as they seek to retain power. To achieve this, candidates mobilise and spend financial resources that are way beyond the permissible electoral limits for the offices they are vying for. For instance, it was alleged that the over 8,000 delegates that participated in the All-Progressives Congress (APC) primary prior to the 2015 election pocketed US$5,000 each. Each of them was said to have received US$2000 from Atiku Abubakar camp, and another US$3000 from Buhari camp. Considering the number of delegates, both camps could have spent about US$16million and US$24million on delegates at the primary (Matenga, 2016). Similarly, Hon. Adejoro Adeogun, a former member of the House of Representatives that represented Akoko West/East Federal Constituency of Ondo State revealed in an interview with the Premium Times that he spent an estimated ₦300 – ₦350 million to get elected in 2019 (Adewale, 2023). Besides, the audacity of money in determining the direction of electoral victory in the country was once again highlighted by the Governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodinma when he noted that if money is all that is required to win the 2023 Imo State Gubernatorial election, he is sure of victory (Odinibueze, 2023).

Money politics constricts the political space in terms of who can participate in elections as candidate. The charges for purchase of expression of interest, and nomination forms for various elective offices by political parties especially the two dominant parties: APC and PDP, are so exorbitant that only moneybags can afford them. This has led to the description of Nigeria's electoral politics as cash-and-carry democracy (Onuoha & Ojo, 2019). Although the 2022 Electoral Act placed a limitation on the amount candidates for various offices can spend. It however failed to restrict amount that political parties can charge aspirants for expression of interest and nomination forms. This has resulted in continued increase in the cost of these forms every election season.

Table 2: Cost of party nomination form for the two leading parties in the 2023 general election

Political Positions	APC (in Naira)	PDP (in Naira)
Presidential	100 million	40 million
Governorship	50 million	21 million
Senate	20 million	3.5 million
House of Representatives	10 million	2.5 million
State House of Assembly	2 million	600,000

Source: As compiled by authors

Information contained in the table indicate that between 2015 and 2023 general elections, the cost of APCs presidential nomination forms has gone up by over 300%, while there is more than 800% increase in the cost of the governorship nomination forms, a 506% increase for the senate forms, and a 354.5% increase and 263.6% increase for the House of Representatives and House of Assembly forms (Chukwuma, 2023). These amounts despite being exorbitant do not cover the cost of campaigns and mobilization that cost higher. As a result, older politicians that have the financial muscle continue to dominate the political space.

Table 3: Estimated presidential election expenses by the two dominant political parties

Political Party	Elections	Legal provision	Excess spending	Remarks
APC	2015 Presidential election 2.9 billion naira	1,000,000,000	1,900,000,000	Yet to submit its election expense for 2023 general election
	2019 Presidential election 4.6 billion naira	1,000,000,000	3,600,000,000	
	2023	5,000,000,000		
PDP	2015 Presidential election 4.8 billion [9.53billion] naira	1,000,000,000	3,800,000,000	Yet to submit its election expense for 2023 general election
	2019 Presidential election 3.3 billion naira	1,000,000,000	2,300,000,00	
	2023	5,000,000,000		

Source: As compiled by authors

The changing pattern of election spending between the two dominant political parties makes it apparent that the ruling party, either at the state or federal level, considering its access to state resources, and special interest donations to campaign funds for political patronage tends to spend higher than the opposition. The trend in spending beyond the permissible limits of electoral expenses (Chukwuma, 2023). Considering their culpability in violation of the limit of election expenses. Political parties in Nigeria often find it difficult to comply with provisions of Section 89(3) of the 2022 Electoral Act that mandates all political parties to submit to INEC their audited election expenses within six months after every election. These monies were spent on campaigns, billboards, print media advertisement, electronic media advertisement, musical performances, social media, and television coverage.

In relational terms, the incidence of money politics vitiates the capacity of youth to compete against the older politicians that have amassed wealth though various forms of state patronage. Besides, the character and structure of political parties in Nigeria indicates that party financiers and godfathers largely influence who emerges their party's flagbearers during primaries. Often, it is these party financiers that determine the amount that aspirants pay to obtain these forms. The price is often fixed to eliminate certain class of contenders who cannot afford it. Meanwhile, according

to statistics on youth unemployment rates by the National Bureau of Statistics for 2022, Nigeria has an estimated 53.40 percent of unemployed youth (Foundation for Investigative Journalism, 2023). Considering this, it becomes obvious that most youth in Nigeria cannot afford the forms. Those that manage to obtain the forms, later realised that they cannot compete with older politicians backed by financial heavyweights in the game of cash for vote (commonly known as vote buying) that has been entrenched in Nigeria's electoral ecosystem. Reacting to the contribution of money politics to the shrinking political space, Onuoha & Ojo, (2019) observed that it undermines the capacity of contestants with average pocket to contest elections in the country.

The logical outcome of money politics is that despite signing of the NTYTRA on May 31, 2018, by President Muhammadu Buhari who promised youth inclusion as contestants in the electoral process. The monetization of the electoral space throughout the electoral cycle limits the ability of youth to compete favourarly with veteran politicians both intraparty and interparty elections.

The commodification of elections and the Not Too Young To Run Act

With the signing of the NTYTRA expectations were high among youth and members of the civil societies that initially articulated and organized the Not Too Young To Run Movement rallies that culminated in sponsorship, and passage of the NTYTRA at the National Assembly. The passage of the law meant that with their numerical strength on party membership, and list of registered voters, youth will going forward occupy reasonable decision-making positions. At the heart of these expectations is the pertinent issue of elections. Elections are meaningfully democratic if they are free, fair, participatory, competitive, and legitimate (Omotola, 2010). Contrarily, both the politicians and political parties that supported the Not Too Young To Young Bill in the national assembly appear to have different plans. Nigeria's political parties, and politicians thrive on primitive accumulation of votes that manifest in various forms. At the start of the Fourth Republic, violence was the vehicle for primitive vote accumulation. As democratization takes root as evident in electoral reforms and the introduction of election technology, such as the Permanent Voter Card, Smart Card Reader (SCR), and currently the Bimodal Verification and Accreditation System (BVAS), INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV), among others that render violence largely ineffective, politicians switched to monetization of the electoral process. To that end, money becomes the basic instrument of primitive vote accumulation. Considering the high rate of youth unemployment in the country, it becomes obvious that despite signing of the NTYTRA, the impoverished youth cannot compete favourably with the financially enabled old brigades.

After the 2019 elections which was the first election conducted under the NTYTRA, youths occupied 0.6 of seats in the National Assembly. They also have a 6% representation in thirty-four State Houses of Assembly and 29.7% at the local government level (Yiaga, 2023a).

In comparative terms, available data indicate that there is a decline that there was a decline in youth candidacy in the 2023 general election. It reduced from 34% in 2019 to 28.6% in 2023. Youth candidacy for House of Representatives declined from 27.4% in 2019 to 21.6% in 2023 (YIAGA, 2023a&b). Similarly, youth candidacy for State House of Assembly also dropped from 41.8% in 2019 to 35.6% in 2023 (YIAGA, 2023a&b). The breakdown of candidates that contested in the 2023 general election indicates that there were 18 Presidential and 18 Vice-Presidential candidates, 837 Governorship and Deputy Governorship candidates, 1,101 Senatorial candidates, 3,122 candidates for House of Representatives, and 10,240 candidates for State House of Assembly elections (YIAGA, 2023a&b). Hence, a total of 15,336 candidates contested in the election. Out of the 837 candidates vying for the position of Governorship and deputy governorship positions, 51 representing 12.2 percent were youth; of the 1,101 senatorial candidates, 41 representing 3.7 percent were youth, of the 3,122 candidates that contested for House of Representatives 674 representing 21.6 percent

were youth, while of the 3,632 candidates that contested for seats in States House of Assembly 3,632 representing 35.6 percent were youth (YIAGA, 2023a&b). What this means is that 4,398 of the 15,336 candidates that contested in 2023 election, representing 28.8 percent were youths (YIAGA, 2023a&b).

It is obvious that the NTYTRA did enhanced the consciousness of Nigerian youth as evident in how they mobilised and organised for the 2023 general election. Most youth that either contested or won elections into different elective positions were direct beneficiaries of the NTYTRA. In the same vein, youth identified more with the Presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi whom they assume is the youngest, and closer to their generation among the three leading candidates. These youth leveraged on every available media to campaign and mobilise especially on the social media for him, a development that kept the two establishment parties of APC and PDP on their toes. For the first time, in the country's politico-electoral history, the old brigades were worried and unsure of the likely outcome of a Presidential election.

Despite the existence of the NTYTRA, the absence of internal party democracy during political party primaries undermined the capacity of youth to successfully dislodge the older politicians. Often, the financial heavyweights and moneybags that bankrolled the financial needs of the parties used their positions to influence the process. The financial dependence of Nigeria political parties on these individuals popularly known as godfathers (patrons) offer them to leverage to deploy their financial resources and deep network of patronage to impose and sponsor candidates for elective positions. Worse still, the practice of vote buying limits the effectiveness of the NTYTRA. The lack of strong financial base to engage in the undemocratic practice of vote trading also exclude youth from contesting elective positions. Hence, Okibe, (2022) noted that monetized politics is an impediment to youth involvement in elections. This demonstrates that aside age limitation that was previously enshrined in the constitution, that economic factor much more than any other variable, determines and exerts greater influence on who gets what, when and how? To that end, the financial heavyweights within each party, leverage on their position as the political gatekeepers to impose and secure the election of the clients.

Conclusion

The paper examined how the practice of money politics undermines the operations of the NTYTRA that is intended to ensure youth inclusion, participation, and representation in Nigeria politics. It argued that despite signing of the NTYTRA that lowers the eligible age for contesting election, the monetisation of elections through exorbitant charges by political parties for expression of interest and nomination forms and the huge funds required for campaigns and vote buying appear to discourage youth candidacy. Moreover, it observed that even when youth succeed in clinching their party tickets, the incidence of vote buying where cash (money) is exchanged for votes equally prevents them from emerging victorious at the polls. The paper, therefore, concludes that the unbridled role of godfathers and moneybags that finance party's campaign expenses in imposing and influencing who emerges from party primaries does not offer youth equal, fair, and competitive opportunity. Hence, the continued low participation and representation of youth in Nigeria's elective democracy even after signing of the NTYTRA.

To that end, the study recommends that more electoral reforms to prevent vote trading and buying should be done to the 2022 Electoral Act before the 2027 elections. Also recommended is that to ensure fair competition, INEC must strictly enforce the law on electoral campaign finance. The audacity of political parties and candidates in violating the stipulation on limitation of expenses is alarming. Also, institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), and others

that monitor and regulate illicit financial transactions must track, arrest, and prosecute those who are found to be involved in vote commodification.

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Exploring the Drivers of Labour Force Participation in Nigeria:
A Multi-Variable Analysis

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Abstract

This study employed a comprehensive multi-variable analysis to explore the drivers of labour force participation in Nigeria. Objective was to explore the intricate interrelationships among key socioeconomic factors, including Access to Electricity (AE), Oil Revenue (OR), Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE), Total Unemployment (TU), and the Total Labor Force Participation Rate (TLFPR) in Nigeria. The study utilized data from the World Bank spanning 2000 to 2020. An ex post facto design guided the study, diagnostic tests to validate assumptions, ensuring the reliability of regression results employed. The findings revealed several crucial insights. Firstly, Access to Electricity (AE) did not exhibit a statistically significant relationship with TLFPR (Coeff. =-0.216785; p-value=0.2612). In contrast, Oil Revenue (OR) demonstrated a statistically significant connection with TLFPR (Coeff. = of 0.000623; p-value=0.0151). Furthermore, Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE) also showed a statistically significant relationship (Coff. =0.194391; p-value= 0.0292). Lastly, Total Unemployment (TU) did not display a significant relationship with TLFPR (Coeff. = -0.256802; p-value = 0.5683). In conclusion, this study provided valuable insights into the dynamics of labour force participation in Nigeria, underscoring the need for comprehensive policies that address the diverse array of challenges and promote inclusive and sustainable economic development. The study underscores the complexity of labour force participation determinants in Nigeria, emphasising socio-economic and contextual factors. These recommendations aim to foster inclusive economic growth and enhance labour force participation rate in the country.

Keywords: Economic Dynamics; Labor Force Participation; Multi-variable Approach; Robust Regression; Socioeconomic Analysis

Introduction

Labour force participation is a crucial indicator of a nation's economic vitality and social progress. It can be used to predict the level of a nation's level of economic development (Thaddeus et al., 2022). In the context of Nigeria, a nation marked by a diverse socio-economic landscape, understanding the drivers that shape labour force participation patterns is paramount.

Nigeria's labour market is characterised by a myriad of challenges and opportunities stemming from its vast population and rich natural resources (Ogwumike et al., 2006; Uduji & Okolo-Obasi, 2022) studies shows that poor households depend heavily on labour income; while the size of labour income depends on age-structure, sex, prospects of employment and wage rate. However, a nuanced understanding of the determinants of labour force participation in this complex

environment remains limited. Despite the existing body of literature on labour markets, employment, and economic growth, the intricate interplay of factors influencing labour force participation in Nigeria requires closer examination. The existing literature offers valuable insights into individual drivers of labour force participation. For instance, studies by Faridi, Malik, and Basit (2009) and Agwu et al. (2014) depicts that educational qualification raises the job opportunities of the entire individuals especially for females which underscored the significance of educational attainment in influencing employment prospects. Similarly, Sajid, Abdullah and Chik (2020) highlighted the role of infrastructure development, such as access to electricity, in promoting economic activities and labour force engagement. Meanwhile, Maurer and Potlogea (2021) shed light on the potential economic stimulus generated by oil revenue, emphasising its potential effects on job creation and labour force participation. While these studies offer key insights, they often focus on isolated factors and fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interdependencies among various determinants of labour force participation. This gap in the literature underscores the need for a multi-variable analysis that takes into account the complex interactions among variables such as access to electricity, oil revenue, educational enrollment, and unemployment rates.

Furthermore, the existing research landscape has primarily examined labour force participation through linear regression models, assuming normality and homoskedasticity in the data. However, the realities of complex economies like Nigeria's often challenge these assumptions. Non-linear relationships, serial correlation, and heteroskedasticity may distort findings and limit the accuracy of conclusions drawn from traditional regression methods. In light of these challenges, the study was designed mainly to comprehensively examine the drivers of Total Labour Force Participation Rate (TLFPR) in Nigeria using robust statistical techniques and a multi-variable analysis approach. However, specific objectives were to: assess the impact of access to electricity (AE) on TLFPR; analyse the relationship between Oil Revenue (OR) and TLFPR; examine the effect of Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE) on TLFPR; evaluate the relationship between Total Unemployment (TU) and TLFPR. By addressing this gap, this study provided a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the drivers shaping labour force participation dynamics in the country, contributing to informed policy-making and fostering inclusive economic growth. Hence, this study addressed the multifaceted question of what factors influence labour force participation in Nigeria through a rigorous quantitative multi-variable analysis.

Labour Force Participation Rate

The relationship between electricity access (AE), oil revenue (OR), total secondary school enrollment (TSSE), total unemployment (TU), and the total labour force participation rate (TLFPR) is a complex and nuanced one, shaped by various economic, social, and policy factors. Firstly, electricity access (AE) plays a pivotal role in influencing labour force participation. Improved access to electricity enhances productivity by facilitating the operation of businesses and industries, which can create job opportunities. It also encourages entrepreneurship, as reliable electricity enables the establishment of small-scale enterprises. Consequently, greater electricity access tends to correlate positively with labour force participation through economic growth and job creation. Secondly, oil revenue (OR) can have both positive and negative effects on labour market dynamics. On one hand, a substantial influx of oil revenue can boost government spending on social programmes and infrastructure, including education. This potentially leads to higher enrollment rates in secondary schools (TSSE), which can, in turn, influence labour force participation. However, the over-dependence on oil revenue can also result in economic instability and volatility, affecting employment opportunities. Additionally, excessive reliance on oil can hinder the development of other sectors, potentially leading to unemployment (TU) and under-employment issues that may negatively impact participation in labour force.

Thirdly, education through total secondary school enrollment (TSSE) is a critical determinant of labour force participation. Higher enrollment rates can lead to a more educated workforce, which tends to have better employment prospects and higher labour force participation rates. Education equips individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to access a wider range of job opportunities. However, the impact of school enrollment on TLFPR can be delayed, as it takes time for the educated population to enter the labour force. In essence, total unemployment (TU) may have a direct and immediate effect on TLFPR. When unemployment rates are high, individuals who are unable to find jobs are discouraged from participating in the formal labour force, resulting in a lower TLFPR. Conversely, lower unemployment rates tend to encourage more people to actively seek employment, thereby increasing TLFPR. The relationship between electricity access (AE), oil revenue (OR), total secondary school enrollment (TSSE), total unemployment (TU), and the total labour force participation rate (TLFPR) is multifaceted. It depends on various contextual factors, including government policies, economic stability, and the extent of development in each of these areas. The subsequent reviews border on the influence of each variable on total labour force participation.

The Impact of Access to Electricity on Total Labour Force Participation

Hwang and Yoon (2021) conducted a study with a focus on rural China in order to examine the effects of rural electrification on women's labour force participation. The findings added a layer of complexity to the relationship between electricity access and labour force engagement. Despite the widespread availability of electricity, it did not appear to correlate with an increase in non-agricultural waged labour for women. However, rural electrification did have a discernible influence on women's involvement in unpaid, non-agricultural family endavours. This suggested that electricity access may shape women's economic activities within their households and families, rather than directly impacting their participation in the formal labour market.

Additionally, Sajid, Abdullah, and Chik (2020) emphasised the critical role of electricity access in empowering women and enhancing their participation in the labour force, particularly in rural areas. The authors highlighted how electricity access facilitated educational initiatives and skill development among women. It was noted that the introduction of electric appliances, made possible by electricity access, alleviated household burdens, which, in turn, created opportunities for paid employment. The study underscored that electricity access fosters a harmonious balance between women's domestic and professional roles. In a similar vein, some scholars conducted a study in Nigeria, revealing that electricity access significantly influenced labour market outcomes. Specifically, their findings demonstrated a 7% decrease in agricultural employment and a simultaneous 15% increase in non-agricultural employment when accounting for electricity access (Tagliapietra et al., 2020). This suggests that expanding access to electricity to previously unconnected households could play a crucial role in boosting overall labour market engagement and reducing the country's reliance on agriculture. In sum, while these studies made important contributions to our understanding of the impact of access to electricity on female labour force participation, there is a clear need to broaden the scope of research to encompass total labour force participation, transcending gender-specific analyses. Such comprehensive research can provide a deeper and more nuanced perspective on the complex relationship between electricity access and labour force engagement, benefiting both men, women and even youths in society.

Petroleum-based Economy and Labour Force Participation

The relationship between a petroleum-based economy and total labour force participation is a subject of interest in various studies, particularly in regions like the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where oil income often plays a significant role in economic development. Several studies

have sought to understand the complex dynamics between oil revenue and labour force participation. Solati and Solati (2017)'s study in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region challenged the conventional expectation of a direct association between oil income and Labour Force Participation (LFP). Contrary to this assumption, the findings suggested that oil income did not serve as the primary driver for the low rates of female labour force participation in these countries. Instead, factors such as basic education and fertility rates were identified as more influential determinants. The study further emphasised the role of societal norms and patriarchal cultures in shaping female labour force participation rates, indicating that these cultural factors hold more sway than the presence of oil income.

In another examination of labour participation in the MENA region, Majbouri (2017) considered the influence of Islamic family law on labour force participation. The study found that in nations governed by Islamic family law, the impact of per capita oil and gas rents on reducing female labour force participation rates was more pronounced compared to countries without such legal frameworks. This observation highlights the interplay between legal and economic factors in shaping labour force outcome and suggests that the legal framework can magnify the effects of oil wealth on labour force participation. Additionally, Maurer and Potlogea (2021) contribute to this discourse by exploring the broader relationship between oil wealth and labour force participation. Their findings indicated an overall positive impact of oil wealth on labour force participation, particularly among single women. This suggests that the presence of oil wealth can create employment opportunities and economic conditions that encourage women to enter the labour force.

Collectively put, the studies above highlighted the intricate relationship between oil revenue and labour force participation, particularly in the context of the MENA region. While the economic benefits of oil income are evident, its direct impact on labour force participation, especially for women, is influenced by various factors including cultural norms, legal frameworks, and individual circumstances. Understanding these dynamics is essential for crafting policies and strategies that promote inclusive labour force participation in petroleum-based economies.

Education and Labour Force Participation

The nexus between education, specifically school enrollment, and labour force participation is a crucial determinant of an individual's economic prospects and a nation's workforce productivity. Education serves as a foundational pillar for human capital development, shaping individuals' skills, knowledge, and abilities. School enrollment rates, which reflect the percentage of children and young adults attending formal education institutions, have a profound impact on labour force participation. Firstly, higher school enrollment rates are associated with a more educated and skilled workforce. As individuals receive formal education, they acquire the necessary skills and qualifications to secure better job opportunities. This, in turn, leads to higher labour force participation rates as more people are motivated and equipped to seek employment. Secondly, education often extends an individual's potential career span. With better education, individuals are more likely to pursue higher levels of education, leading to specialised skills and qualifications that can increase their employability. Consequently, they are more likely to participate in the labor force over a more extended period, delaying retirement and contributing to economic growth.

Furthermore, education can foster a culture of lifelong learning and adaptability, which is essential in today's rapidly changing job market. Educated individuals are more likely to engage in continuous skill development and stay relevant in their careers, resulting in sustained labour force participation. Additionally, education plays a vital role in reducing inequalities in labour force participation. It provides opportunities for marginalised groups, including women and minorities, to access the labour market, thereby increasing overall workforce diversity and inclusivity. Fundamentally, the

relationship between education, particularly school enrollment, and labour force participation is undeniable. Education empowers individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to access employment opportunities, extend their careers, and adapt to changing economic conditions. Moreover, it contributes to a more equitable and diverse workforce, ultimately driving economic growth and development. Thus, investments in education and efforts to improve school enrollment rates are essential for building a robust and sustainable labour force.

The research conducted by Agwu, Nwankwo, and Anyanwu (2014) centered on agricultural labour participation in Abia State, Nigeria, with a primary aim to investigate the factors influencing youth engagement in agricultural labour. Their findings revealed several noteworthy trends, including negative relationships between participation and factors such as education, income from non-agricultural sources, parental occupation, paternal education, and mechanisation. In contrast, a study by Faridi, Malik, and Basit (2009) uncovered a positive correlation between overall educational attainment and female labour force participation. Moving beyond Nigeria, Lim, Abdul Rahman, and Arsad (2021) delved into the impact of labour force factors on Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPR) from a gender perspective across states in Malaysia for the years 2011 to 2016. The authors found that factors such as being outside the labour force, non-marital status, and higher education levels were associated with a decrease in male LFPR. For the determinants of female LFPR, it was revealed in another study that factors such as unemployment, widowhood, being outside the labour force, and among others were linked to a decreased female LFPR. Essentially, the above studies underscored the role of education in influencing labour force participation, with distinct relationships emerging between different education levels and LFPR for both males and females in these contexts.

In a study, a group of researchers (Sorsa et al., 2015) explored the intricacies of female labour force participation in India and uncovered a perplexing trend. Contrary to conventional expectations, they found that as education and income levels increased among women, female labour force participation actually decreased. This unexpected finding raised questions about the factors beyond education and income that might be influencing women's participation in the labour force. Notably, while the study identified this trend, it did not delve deeply into the specific impact of electricity access on this phenomenon.

Unemployment and Labour Force Participation

Unemployment can have a significant influence on labour force participation, as it directly affects individuals' decisions to either participate in the labour market or withdraw from it altogether. Unemployment has the potential to affect the level of labour force participation, which measures the proportion of the working-age population either working or actively looking for work, through various channels. These different pathways illustrate how unemployment can shape labour force participation rates. Firstly, the fear of unemployment can discourage individuals from actively seeking work and, consequently, lead to a decline in labour force participation. When job prospects are bleak, people may become discouraged and stop looking for work altogether, causing them to be classified as "discouraged workers." These individuals are no longer counted in the labour force, artificially lowering the labour force participation rate. Secondly, long-term unemployment can erode an individual's skills and work readiness. Prolonged periods of unemployment may lead to skills deterioration or obsolescence, making it increasingly difficult for individuals to re-enter the workforce. This skill atrophy can be a significant deterrent for people considering returning to work, further reducing labour force participation.

Furthermore, unemployment can have a cascading effect on labour force participation within households. If one member of a household loses their job, it can put financial strain on the entire

family. In response, other members may choose to leave or postpone their entry into the labour force to take on caregiving responsibilities or support the unemployed member. This phenomenon can particularly impact women, who often bear a disproportionate burden of caregiving responsibilities, leading to gender disparities in labour force participation rates. Additionally, the overall economic climate plays a crucial role in labour force participation. During economic downturns, when unemployment rates are high, individuals may be more inclined to stay in school, retire early, or rely on other sources of income, such as social assistance programmes. These choices can affect labour force participation rates, as people may temporarily exit the labour market until conditions improve. In brief, unemployment can significantly influence labour force participation rates in multiple ways. It can discourage job seekers, lead to skill erosion, affect household decisions, and be impacted by broader economic conditions. Policies aimed at addressing unemployment and providing support to those affected can play a vital role in maintaining healthy labor force participation rates and promoting economic stability.

Several studies have explored the relationship between unemployment and labour force participation, each offering unique insights and potential policy implications. Österholm's study in 2010 focused on Sweden and found a significant and long-term relationship between unemployment and labour force participation. This discovery challenged the Unemployment Invariance Hypothesis (UIH), suggesting that changes in labour force participation can impact unemployment rates in the country (Österholm, 2010). The study highlighted implications for economic policy and the need for further research in labor economics. The study conducted by Altuzarra et al. in 2019 delved into the intricate relationship between the unemployment rates (UR) and the labour force participation rate (LFPR) in Spain, with a specific focus on gender differences. Their findings offered valuable insights and policy implications. Notably, the research reveals that, for the aggregate population and male individuals in Spain, there is no discernible long-term relationship between UR and LFPR. In simpler terms, changes in labor force participation among these groups do not seem to significantly influence their unemployment rates over time, aligning with the Unemployment Invariance Hypothesis (UIH).

Tansel et al. (2016)'s study examined Turkey and indicated that there was no long-run relationship between labour force participation and unemployment rates in the Turkish context. This suggests that the dynamics between these two variables in Turkey differed from those observed in other countries, such as Sweden and Spain. Lastly, Emerson (2011)' s study centred on the United States of America and presented compelling evidence demonstrating the presence of a long-term equilibrium relationship between labour force participation rates and unemployment in the country. This finding suggested that changes in labour force participation could indeed have a long-term impact on unemployment rates. In conclusion, the reviewed studies collectively provide varying insights into the relationship between unemployment and labour force participation across different countries, emphasising the importance of considering country-specific and gender-specific dynamics when analysing this relationship.

Methods and Source of Data

This section delineates the methodology underpinning the research endeavour. It sought to scrutinise the forces steering labour force participation in the country through a comprehensive analysis using robust statistical techniques. The dataset, sourced from the World Bank report on Human Development Indicators (HDI), spans from 2000 to 2020, capturing a significant temporal scope. The author adopted a well-grounded *ex post facto* research design framework. This design is suitable for investigating relationships between variables in a retrospective manner, aligning with the study's objectives to explore the drivers of labour force participation over a specified timeframe. Meanwhile, the filter criteria for the data inclusion encompassed the years 2000 to 2020, reflecting

a judicious choice made to ensure consistent data availability and relevance. As shown in Table 3, the research sample comprised 21 observations years after these adjustments except one variable, maintaining statistical robustness and integrity. The study utilised multiple linear regression techniques to carry out the statistical analysis.

Variable Measurement

The proxies for "drivers of labour force" were: Access to Electricity (AE), Oil Revenue (OR), Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE), and Total Unemployment (TU). Meanwhile, labour force participation was denoted by Total Labour Force Participation Rate (TLFPR).

Model Specification

The model for "exploring the drivers of labour force participation in Nigeria: a multi-variable analysis" is functionally stated thus:

TLFPR = f(AE +OR+TSSE+TU)……………………………….. 1 (Model)

TLFPR =β_0+β_1×AE+β_2×OR+β_3×TSSE+β_4×TU+ μ_t………………… 2 (Model)

Where:

TLFPR=Total Labour Force Participation Rate (outcome variable)

β_o = a constant

β_1- β_4 = Coefficients of the predictor variables

AE= Access to Electricity (independent variable)

OR= Oil Revenue (independent variable)

TSSE= Total Secondary School Enrollment (independent variable)

TU= Total Unemployment (independent variable)

To assess the underlying assumptions of a linear regression, the study employed diagnostic tests to validate the model's reliability and accuracy. The Jarque-Bera test for normality was used to scrutinise the distributional properties of the residuals. Additionally, Multicollinearity using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was assessed, ensuring the independence of predictors for unbiased coefficient estimation. The evaluation of serial correlation was pivotal. Consequently, Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test was administered to detect the presence of serial correlation in the residuals. The identified serial correlation substantiated the adoption of Robust Least Squares regression. This approach, equipped with robust standard errors, effectively mitigated the potential issue of serial correlation, ensuring the reliability of the coefficient estimates.

As a part of model specification, the study leveraged the Ramsey RESET test to ascertain whether additional variables should be included to enhance the model's explanatory power. Also, addressing heteroskedasticity concerns, the heteroskedasticity test using Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey was conducted, underpinning the robustness of the results and inferences. In summation, this methodology encapsulated a comprehensive approach that aligns with the research's objectives and the characteristics of time series data. In essence, the adopted *ex post facto* research design

harmonised with the study's retrospective nature, and the rigorous diagnostic tests and techniques, including robust regression, fortify the integrity of the analysis.

Results

The provided correlation matrix in Table 1 below revealed valuable insights into the relationships among the variables: Total Labour Force Participation Rate (TLFPR), Access to Electricity (AE), Oil Revenue (OR), Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE), and Total Unemployment (TU). When analysing the matrix and applying a correlation coefficient threshold of 0.80, as recommended by Hair, Tatham and Anderson (2005), Garson (2012) and Owumi and Eboh (2022), numerous variable pairs exhibit correlations that either meet or surpass this established threshold. For instance, the correlation coefficient of 0.79 between Access to Electricity (AE) and Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE) indicates a robust positive linear relationship between these variables. Similarly, the correlation coefficient of 0.55 between AE and Total Unemployment (TU) highlights a moderate positive linear relationship. Perhaps most notably, the correlation coefficient of -0.85 between Total Labour Force Participation Rate (TLFPRF) and Access to Electricity (AE) signifies a strong negative linear relationship between these two variables.

The presence of correlation coefficients surpassing the 0.80 threshold raises concerns regarding multicollinearity. Multicollinearity arises when independent variables are highly correlated, which can lead to challenges in discerning the individual impacts of these variables within a regression model. Given these findings, it is advisable to conduct further investigations into multicollinearity using methods like Variance Inflation Factors (VIF). Should multicollinearity be confirmed, appropriate actions, such as variable transformation or removal, may be warranted to mitigate potential repercussions on the reliability and interpretability of regression models. Addressing multicollinearity is crucial for ensuring the robustness of the statistical analyses and the credibility of the derived insights.

Table1: Test for Multicollinearity Using Pairwise Correlation Matrix

	TLFPRF	AE	OR	TSSE	TU
TLFPRF	1				
AE	-0.85	1			
OR	-0.19	0.58	1		
TSSE	-0.76	0.79	0.69	1	
TU	-0.65	0.55	-0.06	0.17	1

Source: Author's Computation Using EViews 10

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Test for Multicollinearity

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) quantifies the extent to which multicollinearity affects the variance of the estimated regression coefficients. It computes the ratio of the variance of a coefficient when multiple predictors are included in the model to the variance of that coefficient when it's the only predictor. A VIF value above 10 is generally considered indicative of a potential issue with multicollinearity. Given that VIF values above 10 typically raise concerns about multicollinearity, the observed VIF values in this case may not be alarming and shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Assessment of Multicollinearity Using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Date: 08/11/23. Time: 14:02			
Sample: 2000-2020			
Included observations: 17			
	Coefficient	Uncentered	Centered
Variable	Variance	VIF	VIF
C	3.47E-25	256.7011	NA
AE	3.83E-28	728.7147	6.216584
OR	6.78E-34	13.55228	2.415081
TSSE	8.18E-29	96.15958	3.997536
TU	2.09E-27	31.94608	2.525262

Source: Author's Computation Using E-Views 10

Assessment of Normal Distribution in the Context of Labor Force Participation and Socioeconomic Indicators in Nigeria

To determine whether the data approximately follows a normal distribution, the researcher analysed the skewness, kurtosis, and performed a Jarque-Bera test. These statistics helped to assess the departure of the data from a normal distribution. In the context of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, the assumption of normally distributed residuals is important for valid statistical inference. In this study, the normal distribution characteristics of variables associated with labor force participation and key socioeconomic indicators in Nigeria was examined. These variables included the Total Labour Force Participation Rate (TLFPR), Access to Electricity (AE), Oil Revenue (OR), Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE), and Total Unemployment (TU). To evaluate the normality distribution of the variables and to ascertain whether the prerequisite of a normal distribution, essential for OLS regression, was upheld, the researcher scrutinised key statistical measures including skewness, kurtosis, and the Jarque-Bera test. Skewness values serve as indicators of distribution symmetry, with a value of 0 denoting perfect symmetry. A positive skewness signifies a distribution skewed to the right (tail on the right), while negative skewness indicates a distribution skewed to the left (tail on the left). In contrast, kurtosis values of 3 are characteristic of a normal distribution. Values surpassing 3 denote heavier tails and a more peaked distribution (leptokurtic), whereas values below 3 indicate lighter tails and a flatter distribution (platykurtic).

The Jarque-Bera test, which investigates both skewness and kurtosis, was employed to gauge the conformity of a variable to a normal distribution. This test calculates a statistic and contrasts it against a critical value, with a significant divergence from zero in the test statistic suggesting a departure from normality. Upon analysis, the results indicated important insights into the normality assumptions of the studied variables. The Total Labour Force Participation Rate (TLFPR) in Table 3 revealed a p-value of 0.437763, suggesting that its distribution is not significantly different from a normal distribution. Similarly, the variables Access to Electricity (AE) and Oil Revenue (OR) exhibit p-values of 0.571562 and 0.764437, respectively, implying that their distributions closely aligned with normality. Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE) further supported this trend with a p-value of 0.860685, indicating a reasonable adherence to a normal distribution. However, it is important to note that the Total Unemployment (TU) variable presents a contrasting pattern. With a p-value of 0.042092, its distribution significantly deviated from the normal distribution assumption. This departure underscored the need for caution when making assumptions about the normality of the Total Unemployment variable. So, it can be deduced that the normality assumption required of engaging OLS has been challenged here. This necessitated the adoption of the Robust Least Squares regression technique.

In the nutshell, the findings from this analysis shed light on the normal distribution characteristics of the studied variables. While TLFPR, AE, OR, and TSSE appear to reasonably adhere to a normal distribution, the distribution of Total Unemployment (TU) notably stands out. Acknowledging these distinctions is crucial for accurate statistical interpretation and modeling, reinforcing the reliability of insights drawn from the dataset.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Normality Test

	TLFPR	AE	OR	TSSE	TU
Mean	58.29588	51.19642	4597.496	39.01387	4.987381
Median	58.40606	52.20000	4732.501	39.23280	3.882000
Maximum	60.99928	59.30000	8878.970	56.20540	9.714000
Minimum	53.85224	43.12146	1230.851	24.60941	3.700000
Std. Dev.	2.123492	4.627795	2116.065	8.375362	2.025359
Skewness	-0.682901	-0.209753	0.174475	0.081595	1.345167
Kurtosis	2.316598	1.949951	2.298421	2.369942	3.055132
Jarque-Bera	1.652153	1.118766	0.537232	0.300053	6.335818
Probability	0.437763	0.571562	0.764437	0.860685	0.042092
Sum	991.0300	1075.125	96547.43	663.2358	104.7350
Sum Sq. Dev.	72.14748	428.3297	89554650	1122.347	82.04160
Observations	17	21	21	17	21

Source: Author's Computation Using E-Views 10

The Ramsey RESET test is used to check the adequacy of a regression model by examining whether adding non-linear terms of the predicted values (fitted values) of the dependent variable improves the model's fit. It helps to identify potential misspecification of the model. The Ramsey RESET Test results suggested that there was evidence to consider including additional powers of the fitted values (such as squared fitted values) in the model. Specifically, the Likelihood ratio test p-value of 0.2235 indicates that there was no significant indication that including squared fitted values would enhance the model's ability to capture potential non-linearity in the relationship between the independent variables (AE, OR, TSSE, TU) and the dependent variable (TLFPR) in the specified context of this study. However, it is important to note that the F-test p-value of 0.3384 did not support the inclusion of squared fitted values at a conventional significance level of 0.05. This suggests that the evidence for improvement from including squared fitted values is weak. In essence, while the Ramsey RESET Test results did not provide strong evidence for the inclusion of squared fitted values to enhance the model's fitness, it is crucial to recognise that model adequacy relies not only on statistical tests but also on theoretical understanding and practical considerations related to the specific variables and research context.

Moreover, the Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey test involves testing whether there is a relationship between the squared residuals and the explanatory variables in the model. If the p-value associated with any of these statistics is below 0.05 significance level, then it might be concluded that there is heteroskedasticity in the model. In this study, the p-values for all the statistics are significantly above 0.05 (e.g., 0.7786, 0.7049, 0.8742), indicating that there was no enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis of homoskedasticity. This suggested that there was no significant problem of heteroskedasticity in the model based on the results of the Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey test. Similarly, the Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test was conducted. It is a statistical test used to detect the presence of autocorrelation (serial correlation) in the residuals of a regression model. Autocorrelation refers to the correlation between the current value of a variable and its past values at different lags. In the context of regression analysis, it means that the error terms (residuals) of the model are correlated with each other over time.

In this study, the F-statistic in Table 4 was 5.551177, which indicated that there might be serial correlation present. The associated probability value (Prob. F) was 0.0239, which was below 0.05 level of significance. The p-value was compared to a chosen significance level of 0.05 to determine whether to reject the null hypothesis. If the p-values associated with the F-statistic and Chi-Square tests are both below the chosen significance level of 0.05, there would be evidence to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is autocorrelation in the residuals, meaning that the error terms are correlated over time. If the p-values are above the significance level, there would not be sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting that there might not be significant autocorrelation present in the residuals. On this note, the Ordinary Least Square regression assumption of no autocorrelation has been violated hence the adoption of Robust Least Squares (RLS) regression technique to correct the pitfall.

The adoption of Robust Least Squares regression can be a reasonable approach to mitigate the effects of autocorrelation indicated by the Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test. However, it's also important to consider the severity of the autocorrelation, the nature of your data, and the goals of your analysis. If autocorrelation is a major concern and the data is time series data, it might be worth exploring specialized time series techniques for a more comprehensive treatment of the autocorrelation issue.

Table 4: Model Specification, Heteroskedasticity and Autocorrelation Tests

S/N	Types of Diagnostic test	F-Test	P-Value
1	Ramsey RESET Test for Model Specification	1.001720	0.3384
2	Heteroskedasticity Test: Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey	2.167697	0.7786
4	Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test:	Prob.F(2,10): 5.551177	Prob.Chi- Square(2): 0.0239

Source: Author's Computation Using E-Views 10

Interpretation of Descriptive Statistics for Labor Force Participation and Socioeconomic Indicators in Nigeria

Table 5 provides a comprehensive set of descriptive statistics that offer insights into variables related to labour force participation and socioeconomic indicators in Nigeria. Key statistics include the mean, maximum, and minimum values, each of which contributes to a deeper understanding of the data's central tendencies, ranges, and implications. The mean, or average, is a fundamental statistic that indicates the arithmetic average of a dataset. In this context, it provided an insight into the typical value around which the data points tend to centre. For example, the mean Total Labour Force Participation Rate (TLFPRF) of approximately 58.30 signifies the average participation rate across the examined cases. This value serves as a central reference point and can be considered a representative measure of the dataset's central tendency.

The maximum and minimum values denote the upper and lower limits of the data distribution, respectively. They illustrate the range within which the data points vary. The maximum Total Unemployment (TU) value of 9.714 represents the highest unemployment rate observed in the dataset, indicating the upper boundary of unemployment levels. Conversely, the minimum Oil Revenue (OR) value of 1230.851 signifies the lowest recorded revenue during the reviewed period (2000-2020), highlighting the lowest point within the range. These values provide insights into the variability and extremities present in the dataset.

The implications of the foregoing are that, the mean encapsulates the typical value for each variable, aiding in understanding the average scenario for each indicator. The maximum and minimum values

offer insights into the upper and lower limits of the observed data points, providing a sense of the dataset's overall spread. These statistics collectively contribute to characterising the distribution and behaviour of the variables. Such insights are pivotal for making informed decisions in policy-making, research, and strategic planning, allowing stakeholders to grasp the central tendencies and extremities of the variables under examination. The implications of these statistics guide subsequent analyses, help identify potential outliers, and inform strategies aimed at managing the variables for socioeconomic progress.

Regression Results

The regression analysis examined the relationship between the Total Labour Force Participation Rate (TLFPR) in Nigeria and several independent variables, including Access to Electricity (AE), Oil Revenue (OR), Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE), and Total Unemployment (TU). Robust Least Squares with M-estimation, incorporating specific weighting and scaling methods, was employed for this analysis. The results indicated that the intercept term was significantly different from zero, with a coefficient of 75.00434 and a high z-statistic of 12.92471. This implies that, while considering all other factors constant, a one-unit increase in the baseline level of the Total Labour Force Participation Rate leads to an increase of 75.00434 units in TLFPR.

However, Access to Electricity (AE) did not appear to have a statistically significant relationship with TLFPR, as indicated by its coefficient of -0.216785 and a p-value of 0.2612. In practical terms, this means that a one-unit increase in Access to Electricity does not have a statistically significant impact on the Total Labour Force Participation Rate. In contrast, Oil Revenue (OR) showed a likely connection, with a coefficient of 0.000623 and a p-value of 0.0151. This suggests that a one-unit increase in Oil Revenue is associated with an increase of 0.000623 units in the Total Labour Force Participation Rate, and this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. Similarly, Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE) displayed a statistically significant relationship, with a coefficient of 0.194391 and a p-value of 0.0292. This implies that a one-unit increase in Total Secondary School Enrollment leads to an increase of 0.194391 units in the Total Labour Force Participation Rate, and this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. Nonetheless, Total Unemployment (TU) appeared to lack a significant relationship, as its coefficient was -0.256802, and the p-value was 0.5683. In practical terms, this means that a one-unit increase in Total Unemployment does not have a statistically significant impact on the Total Labour Force Participation Rate.

The analysis yielded an R-squared of 0.460504, implying that the model explained around 46.05% of TLFPR variability, while Adjusted R-squared is 0.280671. These results underscore the potential significance of Oil Revenue and Secondary School Enrollment but suggest a non-significant role for Access to Electricity and Total Unemployment in explaining TLFPR in Nigeria.

Table 5: Robust Least Squares Regression Analysis Results for Exploring the Drivers of Labour Force Participation in Nigeria

Method: M-estimation				
M settings: weight=Bisquare, tuning=4.685, scale=MAD (median centered)				
Huber Type I Standard Errors & Covariance				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-Statistic	Prob.
C	75.00434	5.803171	12.92471	0.0000
AE	-0.216785	0.192962	-1.123464	0.2612
OR	0.000623	0.000257	2.429378	0.0151
TSSE	0.194391	0.089127	-2.181064	0.0292
TU	-0.256802	0.450103	-0.570541	0.5683
	Robust Statistics			
R-squared	0.460504	Adjusted R-squared		0.280671
Rw-squared	0.852189	Adjust Rw-squared		0.852189
Akaike info criterion	31.98587	Schwarz criterion		36.81886
Deviance	16.24087	Scale		0.846728
Rn-squared statistic	31.00254	Prob(Rn-squared stat.)		0.000003

Source: Author's Computation Using E-Views 10

TLFPR= 75.00434−0.216785×AE+0.000623×OR+0.194391×TSSE−0.256802×TU

Discussion of Findings

Interestingly, the relationship between Access to Electricity (AE) and TLFPR was not found to be statistically significant. The presented finding aligns with a study conducted in rural China, which similarly failed to establish a clear association between increased access to electricity and women's participation in the formal labour market. Nonetheless, this result reaffirms the expectations set forth by studies emphasising the critical role of basic infrastructure, including electricity, in promoting economic activities and encouraging labour force engagement, as highlighted by Sajid et al. (2020) and Tagliapietra et al. (2020). Meanwhile, a positive relationship was noticed between Oil Revenue (OR) and TLFPR. This finding echoes a previous research that has pointed to the potential economic stimulus generated by oil revenue and its cascading effects on job creation and labour force participation (Maurer & Potlogea, 2021). The positive coefficient supports the notion that oil revenues can contribute to job growth, thereby bolstering labour force engagement. A study in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region did not link an increase in labour force participation to oil income. This contradicts the current finding, which suggests that there might be such a link (Solati & Solati, 2017). Likewise, in the context of the MENA region, Majbouri (2017) argued that the influence of per capita oil and gas rents on lowering female labour force participation rates was more noticeable when compared to countries without such resources.

Furthermore, Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE) exhibited a statistically significant positive relationship with Total Labour Force Participation Rate (TLFPR). This result diverges from conclusions drawn in a couple of prior studies that associated higher levels of educational attainment with decreased labour force participation (Agwu et al., 2014; Sorsa et al., 2015). It also contrasts with a study in Malaysia that linked higher education to a decrease in male labour force participation (Lim et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, the finding that Total Secondary School Enrollment (TSSE) exhibited a statistically significant relationship with the Total Labour Force Participation Rate (TLFPR) aligns with the expectations established by previous research. Several studies, including those conducted by Faridi

et al. (2009) and Solati & Solati (2017), have underscored the pivotal role of education in improving employability, thereby fostering higher levels of participation in the labor force. It is worth noting that while education holds the potential to enhance employability, certain cultural practices might impede the direct translation of education into a substantial increase in labour force participation, particularly among women. However, it is essential to recognise that this particular aspect falls outside the scope of the present study, which primarily focuses on the quantitative relationships between the specified variables. Further qualitative research or an exploration of cultural factors would be necessary to delve deeper into the nuanced dynamics of labour force participation in this context.

Surprisingly, Total Unemployment (TU) did not exhibit a significant relationship with total labour force participation. The result is consistent with that of Altuzarra et al. (2019) that found no discernible long-term relationship between unemployment rate (UR) and labour force participation in Spain. It also confirmed a previous study conducted in Turkey, which found that there is a disconnect between unemployment and labor force participation (Tansel et al. 2016). However, it contradicts a study in Sweden that established a significant and long-term relationship between unemployment and labour force participation in the country (Österholm, 2010). Emerson's study in the United States compellingly demonstrated a lasting equilibrium connection between labour force participation rates and unemployment in the country. The current study supports this prior research in the existing literature (Emerson, 2011).

In essence, the findings offered both insights and challenges as contextualised within the existing literature. While the significance of the intercept, Oil Revenue, and Total Secondary School Enrollment align with some theoretical expectations, the non-significant relationships of Access to Electricity and Total Unemployment raised intriguing questions about the interplay of various socio-economic factors in Nigeria's labour force dynamics. These disparities emphasise the need for nuanced analyses that consider local contexts, institutional frameworks, and potential interactions between variables to provide a comprehensive understanding of the labor force participation dynamics

Conclusion

In examining the intricate web of factors influencing labour force participation in Nigeria, this study has unearthed intriguing insights and challenges that add nuance to the existing literature. Notably, the non-significant relationship between access to electricity and total labor force participation calls attention to the intricate interplay of socio-economic variables in Nigeria's labour dynamics. While expectations rooted in infrastructure development literature were not entirely supported, it underscores the importance of considering localised factors and the specific context of Nigeria. Conversely, the positive relationship observed between oil revenue and labour force participation resonates with previous research, highlighting the potential economic stimulus of oil revenue and its positive impact on job creation and labour force engagement. This finding provides empirical evidence for the notion that oil revenues can foster job growth, thereby bolstering labour force participation, albeit contrary to some regional studies.

The positive relationship between education proxied by total secondary school enrollment and labour force participation, while consistent with some prior studies, reinforces the conventional wisdom linking higher education to increased labour force participation. However, it raises questions about the influence of cultural practices and other contextual factors that may hinder the direct translation of education into greater labour force engagement, particularly among women. Surprisingly, total unemployment exhibited no significant relationship with labour force participation, echoing findings from international studies and underscoring the complexity of labour dynamics. This result reinforces the importance of nuanced analyses that consider local contexts,

institutional frameworks, and potential interactions between variables in comprehending labour force participation dynamics in Nigeria. In the nutshell, the study underscores the multifaceted nature of labour force participation in Nigeria and emphasises the need for a holistic understanding that transcends simplistic assumptions. These findings provide valuable insights for policy-makers and researchers alike, serving as a call to further investigate the intricate socio-economic factors shaping Nigeria's labour landscape.

Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, several practical recommendations emerged for the Nigerian government and concerned stakeholders. These recommendations span diverse areas, including infrastructure development, economic diversification, education reform, gender inclusion, targeted unemployment solutions, entrepreneurship promotion, data enhancement, and a nuanced approach. By prioritising these measures, Nigeria can foster a more inclusive and robust labour force, ultimately contributing to its socio-economic development. They are enumerated thus:

1. Invest in Rural Electrification: Although our study did not find a statistically significant relationship between access to electricity and labour force participation, it is crucial for the government to prioritise rural electrification. Reliable access to electricity remains a fundamental infrastructure component that can stimulate economic activities and create opportunities for job growth, particularly in rural areas. Initiatives aimed at expanding the electricity grid and promoting renewable energy sources should be pursued vigorously.

2. Diversify the Economy: Given the positive relationship between oil revenue and labour force participation, it is advisable for Nigeria to diversify its economy beyond oil. Over-dependence on oil can be precarious due to price volatility and environmental concerns. Diversification efforts can include promoting non-oil sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology, which have the potential to generate employment and broaden labour force engagement.

3. Reform Education Policies: The positive relationship between total secondary school enrollment and labour force participation implies the need for a re-intensification of education policies. While education is essential, it is crucial to ensure that educational attainment aligns with employability and labour market demands to yield maximum labour force engagement in Nigeria. Policy-makers should focus on vocational and skills-based training programmes that equip individuals with practical skills needed for the workforce.

4. Tailored Unemployment Solutions: Since total unemployment did not exhibit a significant relationship with labour force participation, it is imperative to develop tailored unemployment solutions. This may involve creating targeted job training and placement programmes, improving labour market information systems, and offering financial incentives for job creation by businesses.

5. Enhance Data Collection and Research: To gain a deeper understanding of labour force dynamics in Nigeria, government agencies and research institutions should collaborate to enhance data collection efforts. Comprehensive and up-to-date data on labour force participation, unemployment, and education can inform evidence-based policy decisions.

6. Promote Entrepreneurship: Encouraging entrepreneurship can be a viable strategy for job creation and labour force engagement. Government support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including access to credit, business training, and regulatory simplification, can stimulate entrepreneurial activity and reduce unemployment.

Incorporating these recommendations into policy planning and implementation can help Nigeria navigate its complex labour force landscape, promoting increased participation, economic growth, and improved livelihoods for its citizens.

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Traditional Conflict Prevention and Peace Building: *Dzoro* System in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Despite its long history of existence among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, the dzoro system has largely remained undocumented in terms of its developmental and conflict prevention potential. In this article, it is clear that the *dzoro* system prevents conflicts and promote peace. It does so through promoting constant interaction among members of the community, enforcing the value of togetherness, facilitating food security and providing an efficient division of labour. This article acknowledges the fact that the *dzoro* system performs a cocktail of functions among the Shona people and that there is no specific function to which it has been designed. With such a multiplicity of functions, it is noted that the system is organized along the Ubuntu philosophy which is critical in the preservation of peace and the prevention of conflicts. The article is based on qualitative methods: unstructured interviews, focus group discussions and direct observations.

Keywords: Conflict Prevention, Violence, Peace building, Ubuntu

Introduction

This article examines how the *dzoro* practice has functioned in practice to manage peace and sustains it overtime in post-conflict Zimbabwe. With the view of "African solutions to African problems", this article provides an appreciation of the dzoro system in the peace building processes in the communities in which it exists. Being heavily grounded in the Ubuntu philosophy, the dzoro system complements other traditional peace building mechanisms to prevent conflicts or at least to manage them so that they do not degenerate into dysfunctionality. The article examines the quest for peace and sustainable development at various levels of society. It actually builds upon the recognition that the art of peace building and conflict prevention requires context specific solutions and mechanisms. This is not to say that the modern (sometimes referred to as the Euro-centric approaches) are null and void, but that they have to be blended with the traditional ones in order to build sound peace building structures.

Conceptualising *Dzoro* system

Dzoro (singular form) or Madzoro (plural form), are Shona terms meaning taking turns to herd cattle. They also literally mean rotations and as such they imply that households engage in rotations in herding cattle (see Changa and Mamvura forthcoming). In this article the singular form is widely used although reference to the plural form (madzoro) is made. The rotations here being referred to as the Dzoro are initiated and organized by community members. The person on duty is referred to as 'Mudzoro' ('Vadzoro' plural) (see Changa and Mamvura forthcoming). This title is not permanent as it is only assumed when one is on duty only. In Zimuto the size of the dzoro vary depending on the number of cattle in the area. Members of this particular community distinguish between dzoro duku (*small dzoro*) and dzoro guru (big dzoro). The small one is made up of very few households usually not exceeding five. This is done at the start of the planting season (October to mid-November depending on the amount of rainfall received). The logic of forming a small dzoro is that usually

during that time the pastures will be poor with very small grass as a result there should be a small herd so that they are fed well.

The big dzoro is organized when the pastures are now evergreen, with sufficient grass to feed large herds of cattle. These usually comprise of ten households or more but usually they do not exceed fifteen households depending on the number of cattle each household has. There are two types of madzoro, that is Dzoro rembudzi (for herding goats) and dzoro remombe for herding cattle. In this article focus is on both types and their contribution towards conflict prevention. The observation made in this study is that the dzoro system is a collective community driven practice designed to lessen the burden of herding cattle.

Conflict Prevention

Conflict is not a new phenomenon in Africa. It dates back to the pre-colonial era although changed shape and form with the advent of colonialism and Christianity. In relation to this, Musingafi, Mafumbate and Khumalo (2019) made the submission that conflict is an inevitable and necessary aspect of human societies. At one point or another all healthy social system are bound to experience conflicts although these may vary according to magnitude, forms and impacts. The African continent has not been immune to conflicts that range from political, economic, religious and ethnic conflicts. The prevalence of such conflicts should not be taken to understand the continent as inhabited by barbaric and primitive people as argued by some misguided Eurocentric scholars. Instead this should be interpreted as a harbinger of the existence of different interests that are also found in other parts of the world and that are natural and normal. It must be stated that every conflict situation has its own solutions that are embedded in the context in which it is taking place. Following this argument, this article acknowledges the fact that Africa possesses a huge package of conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms that are housed within its social, cultural and moral fabric. Thus for Mbwirire and Kurwa (2018) traditional values, beliefs and customs of the African continent constitute a vital cog in the peaceful existence of communities. These values and mechanisms have been in existence since the pre-colonial times although the wave of globalization and modernity has to some extent diluted them (Ajai and Buhari 2014). In concurrence with this, Ajai and Buhari (2014) juxtapose that Africans have their own ways of understanding conflicts and such an understanding is crucial in their approach to conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Although western ways of preventing conflicts have been glorified over the past decades with western institutions and ideas dominating, there is growing recognition among peace practitioners that traditional methods of conflict prevention and resolution can go a long way in promoting durable peace on the continent. This view resonates with the observation made by Ofulo (1999) that traditional approaches to conflict are in great demand in the contemporary world, particularly in Africa. This realization has prompted scholars to unravel the conflict prevention potential of traditional methods such as Kuripa ngozi (Chivasa 2019), traditional marriage (Dodo 2015), nhimbe (Sithole 2020) and the dare system (Musingafi et al 2019). This study also contributes to the already existing literature on traditional conflict prevention mechanisms by looking at the dzoro system, a communal system of herding cattle which has been in existence for several decades in Zimbabwe but which largely remains undocumented despite its boundless potential to prevent conflicts.

As noted by Mawere and Awuah-Nyamekye (2015), communities in African societies are reverting to their indigenous ways of knowing to solve some existential challenges such as recurrent droughts and environmental degradation (Tatira 2014). In terms of the prevention of conflict, the resurgence of traditional systems has been accentuated by the success of the Gacaca courts in Rwanda which proved beyond doubt that Africa can and should utilize indigenous knowledge and institutions to ensure peace (Musingafi, Mafumbate and Khumalo 2019). In Kenya, the Harambee system

represents a traditional approach to conflict as is the case with Ujamaa of Tanzania and the Gadaa system which was used to prevent conflicts over water resources in Ethiopia (Getui 2009). Failure to utilize these context-based mechanisms in addressing conflict result in huge amounts of money and precious resources as well as professional and technical efforts being exhausted without yielding any positive outcomes (Mbwirire and Kurwa 2018). This is because the western ideologies seriously lack cultural significance in African societies.

Whilst some of the traditional mechanisms perform a multiplicity of functions, it should be noted that those functions are aimed to maintain societal equilibrium and hence maintain peace. To exemplify, Sithole (2020) observed that since the 1800 people in most Zimbabwean communities were primarily pre-occupied with the economic and social outcomes of the nhimbe practice, thus leaving a gap in terms of its conflict prevention potential. It is now well documented that apart from being a community socio-economic assistance practice, nhimbe also has social reservoirs of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the communities in which it is practiced (Sithole 2020). This is because people eat together at the work party and there is strong interaction among community members and thus building strong social and moral bonds among them. Mbwirire (2017) juxtaposed that nhimbe have a triple effect of socio-economic assistance, social cohesion and conflict prevention. In this article there is an acknowledgement of the fact that the dzoro practice is similar in most respects to nhimbe practice and the two a complementary forces.

Although nhimbe covers a lot of agricultural activities including land preparation, threshing or shelling of grain, sowing of seeds, ox-drawn ploughing, planting, weeding, harvesting, thatching of houses among others (Sithole 2014), it does not extend to cattle herding, which is the primary focus of this study. Social interaction which Sithole (2020) pointed to as one of the principal elements in conflict prevention is more pronounced and frequent in the dzoro system than in the nhimbe practice. This is because the dzoro is a daily practice which allows communities to meet during the morning and in the evening. Such repetitive interaction is a super glue that cements social relationships. The fact that cattle graze together on the same pastures symbolizes a community working together and pooling resources together for the good of the society. In the morning cattle belong to individual households in their own private kraals but they are handed over to the 'Mudzoro' (the one on duty) they now belong to the same kraal. Scholarship on dzoro (Changa and Mamvura forthcoming) recognized the system as some king of division of labour which allows the community in question to do their agricultural activities and other non-farm activities in an efficient way. This has left the conflict prevention potential of dzoro at the periphery of research.

The traditional focus on conflict has also pointed to marriage as having the potential to prevent conflicts. The orthodox conceptualization of the marriage institution has generally focused on the functions of marriage such as reproduction, sustenance of the family name and primary socialization. However, Dodo (2014) juxtaposes that marriage among the Shona is also a conflict prevention mechanism. He reasons that the community dimension of marriage brings together two strange families. In some cases, previously hostile families are brought together through marriage so much so that there will be great friendship and cooperation. Marriage being the bedrock of society thus provides room for societal members to work together and strengthen moral relationships. In the end conflict is prevented. The dzoro system complements the marriage institution by combining a variety of marriages and families together. In fact dzoro constitutes a family because those who belong to the same dzoro develop strong ties. The observation by Dodo (2014) resonates with what transpires in Swaziland where the king marries from all groupings of people in the country in what is known as tribal intermarriages. Contrary to the general sentiments that such a system reflects the king's lustful behavior, Musingafi, Mafumbate and Khumalo (2019) argue that the system is

designed to prevent tribal hatred and conflicts as the king's marriage provides some checks and balances to the society.

Another interesting dimension of traditional conflict prevention mechanisms is the focus on the spiritual aspect of conflict (Jeranyama and Mpofu-Hamadziripi 2022). This reflects misunderstanding or discord between the living and the dead which can be settled by traditional rituals such as nyaradzo, kuripa ngozi, kupeta mufi, kogova nhumbi among other rituals practiced by the Manyika people of Zimbabwe. Although Jeranyama and Mpofu-Hamadziripi (2022) provided very useful insights on this spiritual dimension of conflict, the dzoro system has not been part of their focus as another mechanism which can be used effectively to address the relationship between the living and the dead. Like the Manyika, the Shona people in Masvingo north also believe that conflict is better averted than resolved and as a result they inherit the dzoro system as part of an appeasing ritual to ensure harmony within their communities. This study also built upon the foundation of the spirituality of conflict to unravel the potential of dzoro in preventing the emergence of an acrimonious relationship between the living and the dead among communities in Zimuto. Such forms of conflicts cannot be prevented by the western jurisprudential philosophies and institutions that have worked and continue to work in Africa (Kariuki 2015). As such an exploration of the potential dzoro in preventing such conflict is necessary.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative methodology to capture the conflict prevention potential of the Dzoro system in Zimuto area. The methodology was chosen primarily because of its ability to explore issues in an in-depth manner (Chalhoub-Deville and Deville 2008), hence suitable for an explorative study of this nature. Further, the methodology is very flexible and thus suitable to understand the subjective realities of social life from the view points of the research participants (Maxwell 2012). Qualitative methodology was therefore appropriate for capturing the participants' interpretations, experiences and understanding of the Dzoro system without necessarily imposing the researcher's external logic on the topic (as would be the case if quantitative methodology was used). The sample for the study was selected using the purposive sampling method. This sampling technique enabled the researcher to select information rich cases and since the researcher was a temporary resident of the area it was easy for him to identify the information rich cases. In the end ward 2 area of Zimuto was purposively selected and six villages from the ward were also selected using the same technique. This was primarily due to the accessibility of the area to the researcher. Village heads and other general participants were also selected using the same technique. For the purposes of interviewing and observations the researcher purposively selected some events and places that are closely related to the herding of cattle. This include dip tanks, grazing pastures and the meeting points where cattle are surrendered to the one who has the duty.

Unstructured interviews were used to solicit data from the participants. These enabled the researcher to gather in depth information and also provided room for probing for more information. These interviews were done with village heads and elderly members of the community who are the custodians of the customs and traditions of the area. These provided the background and benefits of the dzoro system captured in this study. Interviews were also done with cattle herders   at the grazing pastures. These interviews were aided by direct observations by the researchers. The researcher observed the dzoro system by following the cattle herders to the pasture lands although not necessarily spending the whole day with them. This helped to get a nuanced picture of the system and thus increased the validity of the data collected. Focus Group Discussions were also carried out at the meeting points and this were meant to enrich data collected from one-on-one interviews.

Since the dzoro system is a collective practice it was necessary to understand its relevance from a group perspective and hence the reason for focus group discussions.

Dzoro Rules and the Prevention of Conflicts

The dzoro system is made up of rules and regulations that govern how members operate. Most participants indicated that the rules just like any other societal rule must be adhered to religiously. It is such commitment to rules that helps to prevent conflicts among the members and consequently on the broad society. The rules can be classified into different categories. The first category of rules deal with time issues. In all the dzoro groups studied the time for handing cattle over to the one on duty is 9:00am. As a result, everyone must be at the meeting point on time. The rule is quite clear as enunciated by one participant during an interview:

> One has to bring their cattle at exactly 9:00. If one comes late they will either herd their cattle on that particular day or they have to follow the one on duty to the pastures. In the evening every member must be at the collection point at exactly 5:00pm. If they fail to so the one on duty simply leaves the cattle there and if anything goes wrong after five, the owner is responsible.

The time rules helped to homogenise community activities and operations. They allow members to meet at once and share their thoughts together. Coming at the same time helps members to confirm that the one on duty (herein referred to as *Mudzoro*) has been given such and such a number of cattle and that the cattle were all well when they were handed over. This also helps to cement relationships as people constantly interact with each other during the same hours.

With regards to damage to crops done by cattle, there are clear rules stipulating what is supposed to be done. If cattle destroy crops in the fields, it is the mudzoro who is responsible for compensation required by the owner of the field even if his or her cattle per se have not damaged the crops. This is based on the principle that once cattle are handed over to the mudzoro, they all literally belong to him/her and as such whatever happens during the course of the duty will be accounted for by him/her. This rule is important in preventing seasonal conflicts that erupt from time to time during the cropping season in most communal areas of Zimbabwe. One participant reiterated that:

> The cropping season is associated with a lot of conflicts emanating from damage caused by crops in the fields. People scold each other, some can even injure the cattle if they devour their crops and in some instances people engage in fierce fights. One can also get bewitched if cattle destroy someone's crops. To curb such occurrences, there is a rule that whoever is on duty compensates whatever damage to crops done by cattle.

The rule helps to keep the mudzoro focused on the duty, it ensures diligence when herding cattle. Since the mudzoro is solely responsible for compensating any damage to crops, conflict is kept from spreading into the whole community. Instead of having every member of the dzoro compensating, it is only the mudzoro and the one whose crops have been destroyed who discuss together over the matter. Participants also indicated that if is reckless and always let cattle damage crops, they can be expelled from the dzoro. This expulsion however, occurs after several warnings and normally the owner of the cattle can be asked to change his/her mudzoro. To further curb the vice, it is a clear rule in all the dzoro studied that very young people, those who are very old and those with some mental health challenges must not be on duty. Only those who are mature and responsible can take the responsibility of the mudzoro. This prevents any excuses for any harm done to cattle or crops hence preventing conflicts.

The social sanctioning of behavior through fear is very common in traditional approaches to conflict prevention. The fact that one is afraid of misfortunes that can befall them such as illnesses, death and social isolation implies some invisible coercive force to comply with the demands of the community and hence maintaining peace. Chivasa (2019) noted that the fear of avenging spirit makes kuripa ngozi a conflict prevention mechanism among the Shona people. Similarly, the fear of compensating for the damage caused by cattle to the crops helps to sanction the behavior of each member on duty to avoid misunderstandings.

In addition, if a member of the dzoro has an injured cattle or one that is strange, they have to keep it at home and look after it for themselves. This also applies to sick animals and even those that have a habit of straying away from the rest of the herd. This helps to reduce unnecessary burden on the part of the mudzoro and simultaneously reducing contamination of other cattle (as in the case of sick animals). Further, the mudzoro is mandated to look for any cattle that gets lost in the course of their duty until they find it. This prevents loss of livestock to predators such as hyenas that infest the area. The mudzoro can be offered help if he/she is facing problems in trying to find the animal. Again the one on duty has to do it even when it is raining. All members have to always psyche themselves to carry out their duty even when there is a heavy downpour. This rule ensures consistence in the execution of duties. A participant interviewed said:

> No-one knows when rains come or when to experience heat waves. As such everyone must embrace themselves for duty despite the weather conditions of the day.

The rule helps to prevent members from shifting goal posts should they feel that the weather is bad and hence avoiding the disruption of sequence of duties. The existence of rules proves the fact that the dzoro system is highly organized. As can be noted the rules are just a replica of the African values and virtues that are grounded in the Ubuntu philosophy. This is supported by Ayindo and Jenner (2008) who opine that laws and conflict techniques in African societies are intertwined to the overall system of morality and ethics of African religion. These arguments debunk the myths by some misguided European scholars such as Hegel and Conrad who paint a picture of a 'dark continent' populated by sub-human dark beings who did not have a culture, language nor philosophy. This society is inherently characterised by disorder of the highest order and total absence of any form of organization.

Dzoro system and the prevention of conflicts over pasture land

The findings of this research reveal that the dzoro system plays a pivotal role in preventing conflicts over grazing land. In most rural communities in Zimbabwe conflicts over pasture land are rife owing to the depreciation in both the quantity and quality of grazing land. This is because most pasture land is being converted into arable land meant for crop production leaving very small portions for grazing purposes. I an interview Mr Choto (not real name) concurred that through the dzoro system conflicts over grazing land have always been prevented in Zimuto area for several decades and the occurrence of such type of conflict is rare. He had this to say:

> Herding cattle communally has helped greatly in preventing violence over grazing land since we use communal pasture land. The pastures are 'ours' they do not belong to a particular individual. Since I was born, I have never heard of people who have fought over grazing land. We hear such stories from other areas.

These remarks are a clear indication of the potential of the dzoro system to suppress conflicts at community level over grazing land. In some places where cattle is herd by single households the tendency is to privatize pasture land and naturally this generates a cut-throat competition over such land. These sentiments were also echoed by an elderly man who is part of the chief's council in the area. He opined that there are rare incidences of conflicts over grazing land and they hardly come to the chief's court. This is because the conflicts are easily handled by community members without the interference of the chief as the land belongs to the people and not an individual.

In all the focus group discussions conducted, members pointed out that the dzoro system in Zimuto promotes the idea of communal ownership of the pastures. This was evident in such phrases as 'mafuro edu/vufuro hwedu' translated 'our pasture land'. Thus communal ownership also brings in the notion of communal responsibility and accountability. This approach is grounded in the Ubuntu philosophy which emphasises the significance of communalism. Collectivism is central to the communalist approach to life. It emphasises togetherness, peace and harmony in societies. It becomes apparent that the dzoro system helps to prevent conflicts by reducing competition over grazing land and encouraging collective responsibility to take care of the land. This kind of approach to life is reflected in many proverbs in many parts of Africa. The Xhosa people of South Africa say: 'Ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu' translated 'a person is a person through other people' and among the Shona people in Zimbabwe there is a saying that goes 'munhu munhu navanhu' translated ' a person is a person because of others' (David 2008). The high degree of interdependency being promoted by the dzoro system is crucial in the construction of personhood and the values of tolerance. All these virtues constitute the building blocks of peace in communities.

Everyday Interaction and the Prevention of Conflicts

The dzoro system promotes daily interaction of people at household, family and village levels. This is because members are drawn from different families and villages. All these people constitute a community and they meet on daily basis during the cropping season. In the morning members meet at nine o'clock at the designated meeting points to surrender their heads to the person on duty. In the evening the members once again meet in order to collect their cattle. This repetitive action is some kind of a ritual that promotes social cohesion. As observed by the researcher, members of the dzoro usually meet around 1645 hours waiting for their cattle. They sit in groups usually according to their age and sex and start discussing a whole lot of issues relating to social life. Some of the issues discussed include behaviour in the community, farming, weather and cattle diseases. This form of interaction acts as a glue that binds members of the community together (Changa and Mamvura forthcoming). As a result of this constant interaction among members of the community differences are likely to be diluted. Unlike other traditional conflict prevention mechanisms where members meet occasionally and sometimes depending on season, members of the dzoro meet on daily basis and hence creates greater opportunities for conflict prevention.

In one of the villages studied, the researcher observed that there is a football pitch at the meeting point. When waiting for the mudzoro to bring the cattle from the pastures, young boys play soccer there whilst the elderly watch. Most participants regarded this as a form of entertainment and a platform for young people to interact. This helps to cement the bonds between the young and the old. The elderly people who constitute the spectators help in controlling the behavior of the players by encouraging brotherly play. This helps to reduce stress among the community members and thus reducing the likelihood of conflict in the community. Again like nhimbe, the dzoro system provides a learning platform and acquisition of skills that are beneficial for societies.

Dare system through madzoro

The dzoro system is highly organized. This contradicts with the Eurocentric perspective of African practices and systems as primitive and backward. At the beginning of the cropping season, that is when people start to herd cattle, members of the dzoro hold a formal meeting where they discuss the rotations and how they are going to be done. They also remind each other about the rules of the dzoro and emphasize on the respect of rules. It is at this meeting that the challenges encountered during the previous season are discussed and workable solutions proffered. Since there is no leader of the dzoro there are no power dynamics involved although sometimes they appear in subtle forms. This design allows democratic discussion of the challenges without fear. This reduces gossiping which is a recipe for conflicts in all human relationships. Amai Tindo reiterated that:

> when we start our rotations, we meet at the usual place. At this meeting we discuss a lot of issues relating to the rules of the dzoro. These rules help to prevent conflict since every member will be made aware of what is to be done and what is not worth doing. We tell each other the truth since there is no hierarchy of authority in the dzoro. What we do not expect is grapevine after the meeting since this causes conflict.

The dare system as part of the Shona culture has long been a conflict prevention mechanism. Through this system, there is a smooth resolution of conflict. The dare provides a road map for the operations of any practice or ritual among the Shona people. It thus provides a framework for the Shona people's existential philosophy grounded in Ubuntu/vumunhu. In relation to these findings, Jreanyama and Mpofu-Hamadziripi (2022) assert that the dare system among the Shona people offers a platform that fosters a conducive environment and a neutral venue for problems to be solved. Dzoro system therefore works in cohorts with the dare system to prevent conflict. The dzoro system therefore fulfills the insatiable pre-requisite of human beings to rely upon each other in a plethora of life requirements (Rusbult and Van Lange 2008).

Sacredness of the dzoro and conflict prevention

The interviews conducted revealed that dzoro system is as old as the Zimuto community itself. No interviewee, even those that are over sixty years of age could not locate the time when the dzoro system started. Mr Ken (real name withheld) had this to say:

> dzoro system was even there when I was born. I will be lying to you if I claim to know when it started my son. Our forefathers even claimed that they just found the system there when they were born)

These sentiments reflect that dzoro system is an old system that has always been part of the Zimuto cultural landscape. As a result this points to its sacredness, it is over and above the individuals. Most participants argued that they have simply joined the dzoro group to which their forefathers belonged. As a result they are even afraid of breaking away from such groups with the view that this can invoke punishment from the ancestors. One old woman had this to say:

> we are still in the dzoro that our father belonged to when he was alive. If you get out of it, you would have despised the ancestors. If you do it even your herd will not be blessed by the ancestors.

The above findings find expression in Jeranyama and Mpofu-Hamadziripi (2022) who argued that conflict in the African context can take a spiritual dimension which goes beyond conservations and physical fighting but is characterized by disharmony with the spirit world. From these observations one can reiterate that the dzoro system is also crucial in preventing conflict between the living

and the dead in the Zimuto community. Thus maintaining harmonious relationships in the dzoro is also part of pleasing the ancestors who founded the dzoro institution. In maintaining these micro relationships, one will also be maintaining a good relationship with the dead and hence averting misfortunes. Broke-Utne (2007) also echoed the same sentiments as he argued that the fear of sorcery or divine punishment is also used to show what the breach of peace would bring upon the society and the conflicting parties. In the context of Zimuto there is fear expressed by participants to do away with the dzoro system and such fear is pivotal in maintaining good relations both among members of the community and between the living and the dead.

Most participants indicated that that it is a difficult decision to withdraw from the dzoro as this is synonymous to withdrawing from the community at large. This belief explains why over eighty-five percent of the households are part of a dzoro group. One of the participants opined that 'if one withdraws from the dzoro system they become isolated and in all community activities other members will not be willing to cooperate with them. This means they have to mourn their dead alone, withdraw from community gardens and also withdraw from the community burial associations'. This high sense of belongin to dzoro helps members to adhere to the dictates of dzoro. The feeling of isolation should not be taken for granted in the Shona community. Taylor (1963) asserts that an individual who is cut off from the community is nothing. This African philosophy acts as the lifeblood of community cohesion among societal members.

Dzoro Developmental Outcomes and Peace building

The dzoro system has several developmental outcomes that are crucial in the prevention of conflicts and the building of peace. In Zimuto most people eke out a living from subsistence farming which constitute over seventy-five percent of their livelihoods. The dzoro system contributes to the sustenance of livelihoods mainly through facilitating an efficient division of labour that increases productivity. In small groups (small dzoro), a household can herd cattle for only four days per month while in big groups a household can herd for only two days per month. This means that the rest of the time is devoted to work in the fields. One interviewee had this to say:

> the rotations that we make allow us to devote much of our time to farm activities. In my case only two days out of thirty or thirty-one are reserved for herding cattle. The other days I will be ploughing, planting, weeding in my fields, applying fertilizer, gathering humus from the hills or spraying pesticides. This also applies to many households in our community. The net benefit is increased yields and this lead to food security in the community.

It can be noted from the above sentiments that the dzoro system works hand-in-glove with other traditional systems such as humwe to promote food security. This food security prevents conflicts among community members. When there is shortage of food incidences of gender based violence are high and people fight over welfare provisions from the government. An efficient division of labour promoted by dzoro system therefore is crucial in peace building. This is supported by an English proverb which says 'a hungry man is an angry man'. Anger is associated with emotions and negative attitudes that can spark unquenchable conflicts in society.

From the above observations, one can argue that the dzoro system complements the humwe/hoka system in both developmental (Sithole 2020) and conflict prevention issues. Rather than being seen as discreet entities, the traditional developmental and peace building mechanisms must be seen as a web of interlocking initiatives that facilitate development at the same time ensuring peaceful coexistence among communities.

Conclusion

The paper managed to highlight the conflict prevention potential of the dzoro system in Zimuto community. The article reveals that the dzoro system is not divorced from other community-based traditional peace building mechanisms such as nhimbe and Kuripa ngozi. Instead these are complementary forces in ensuring a state of equilibrium in the community. The developmental outcomes of the dzoro system help in reducing competition among members and thus reduces the possibility of toxic attitudes. The system has also shown great resilience to the forces of globalization as it has remained intact despite the wave of individualism being promoted by western philosophies. It is argued in this paper that conflicts are inevitable feature of human societies but dzoro system plays a crucial role in preventing the escalation of such conflicts to dysfunctional levels.

Acknowledgements

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'Living Rugged, Dying Brutal': Understanding Gang Lifeworlds Through Death

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Abstract

This study examined death rituals as a frame to understanding the meaning of life and the after-life from the perspective of gang members, and how these meanings frame the violent sub-culture of gangs. Utilizing a case study analysis of the Iceland and Deebam gangs, the two leading gangs in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, we identified a collection of material and non-material death rituals which are separately embedded in the ideological orientations as well as practical activities of both gangs. Our findings showed that the meaning of life and death is drawn from a belief system that holds a promise of '*life after death*' or of '*dead gang members having lasting feasts with their gods'*. Such post-death privileges are believed to be a reward for gang loyalty often manifested through the '*ruggedity*' or '*brutality*' of the deceased gang members while alive. This implies that upon demise, membership and social status of gang members transcend to the afterlife. We argued that it is these belief systems amongst gang members that frame the forms of death rituals that are usually characterized by swearing by the gods, promise of revenge and other forms of rugged or brutal show of violence that incentivizes/sustains the violent sub-culture and precarity of the gang life.

Keywords: Gang Life, Death Rituals, Iceland, Deebam, Niger Delta

Introduction

Death, an inevitable end of all human beings is often accompanied by periods of mourning and other culturally prescribed rituals by living members of the society or group the deceased belongs to. Death rituals, although a global phenomenon differ according to cultural specifications of societies, as well as within societies depending on the nature of the group or the type of ritual performed which is oftentimes commensurate with the social status of the deceased (Cohen, 1981; Klass & Steffen, 2018). Conventionally, funerals depict an image of grieving, people gathering at a funeral home to console each other, say prayers, make donations, have refreshments, and extol the virtues of the deceased (Hemer, 2010; Riley, 1983). However, for social groups such as gangs who have notoriously earned themselves the identity of a deviant sub-culture, death rites usually have a different outlook. Gangs have a global footprint and are generally known for their inherent violent norms and values. Despite their global presence, there is yet to be a consensus amongst scholars on what should constitute a gang, due to its multifaceted and varied nature (Decker, Pyrooz, & Densley, 2022; Tostlebe & Pyrooz, 2022).

This notwithstanding, Klein and Maxson (1989) posit that the basic elements that define a gang from other social groups are its own self-recognition as a unique and separate group of predominantly adolescents or young males who associate frequently for the aim of mutual protection and profit;

residing in the neighbourhood and trying to control turf; and its regular involvement in delinquent and criminal activities that are enough to draw the attention of law enforcement agencies. While Klein and Maxson's description of gangs in relation to their nature, motives and criminal association may have some universal applicability, their demographic categorization of gangs is worrisome on two fronts. Firstly, gangs are not necessarily composed of adolescents and young adults, as in most cases gang membership or affiliation happens to be a lifelong affair. Secondly, the gendered dimension to gang membership or affiliation was overlooked in their conception of gangs. While it may be true that gangs are male dominated organizations, females do actively participate in gang activities. For instance, within the Niger Delta context, there are female wings of mainstream gangs, while in some cases, female gangs exist independently in their own right. Despite this attempt in providing conceptual meaning to what gangs are, the varied nature and manifestations of gangs makes it challenging to conceive of a unified and generally accepted definition of gangs. Nonetheless, within the context of this study, by gangs, we refer to street gangs largely domiciled and operational in major cities and communities in Nigeria, that are uniquely distinct from university-based campus confraternities.

Furthermore, the deviant sub-culture of gangs manifests not only in the everyday life of gang members, it transcends to death and the conceived afterlife. This is more evident in many countries across North America, Asia, and Latin-America where gangs are known to remember the dead through graffiti (Philips, 2021), tattoos, erection of statues, and dedication of poems/song lyrics to them etc. Gangs may also use a funeral of a deceased member as an occasion for violence, revenge, and even armed robbery. In other words, gangs may express violent norms through funeral rites of deceased members as well as be shaped by the same process of violence. While several anthropological studies have captured the social fact of endings i.e., death and funeral rites amongst societies (Abramovitch, 2015; Cohen, 1981; Eisma & Nguyen, 2022; Kearl, 1989), scarce literature exists on gang death rituals and its significance, especially in the Global South. This article relying on a case study analysis of street gangs in Niger Delta region of Nigeria, hence provides insights into the precarious violent gang life through the lens of death. While street gangs are known to be prominent actors in armed conflicts in the Niger Delta (Asuni, 2009; Nyiayaana, 2011), political competition (Jack & Tokpo, 2021) and access to clientelist networks (Iwilade, 2014) especially within the context of benefit capture of crude oil rents have been identified as key drivers of gang violence in the region. Beyond these political and economic factors, little is known about the underlying cultural and psycho-social forces that incentivizes and sustains violent sub-culture of gangs. Therefore, in this article we interrogate these overlooked, yet significant forces i.e., collective belief systems around death amongst street gangs. Based on analysis of data collected through extensive field research conducted in the cities of Port Harcourt and Yenagoa, we examined rituals associated with the death and funeral of deceased gang members; the significance of such death rituals to members; and how funeral performances reinforce gang violence through the show of "ruggedity" and "brutality". The use of the term ruggedity and brutality represents the violent precarity associated with the Niger Delta gangscape which Pratten (2007) describes as the 'rugged life' embedded in the show of power and force, as well as susceptibility to an uncertain 'brutal death'.

Theorizing Death Rituals

Social life and order are shaped by the central force of death which is primarily a biological feature that marks the end of life of an individual. Although the study of endings has been around since the late 19th Century, it was not until the 1980s that its social relevance began to draw attention from sociologists and psychologists. Riley (1983) notes that death is a social process with a biological origin, and its meaning are in a constant state of social transformation. Life and death have been the enduring themes of religion, science, mythology, and fear throughout human history. As a central dynamism underlying life, vitality and the arrangement of the social order, death serves as

a barometer for measuring the meaning and quality of life from various social angles (Cohen, 1981; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008; Kearl, 1989).

Death and bereavement are often attended by rituals or certain attitudes and emotions culturally prescribed and/or expected by the social group an individual belongs to. A ritual is a prescribed and sequential activity of a community or social group involving gestures, objects and words, and done within a sacred context. It is attended by sentiments and sacred symbols designed to regulate human interactions (Bird, 1980; Cohen, 1981; Durkheim, 1915; Okodudu, 2007; Turner, 1971). Thus, death rituals occur within a social context as they serve as a "continuing bond" (Eisma & Nguyen, 2022; Klass & Steffen, 2018), between the living and dead, expressed through proximity-seeking behaviours by the bereaved. This may involve reminiscing, having an elaborate procession, observing a wake, keeping of personal possessions, looking of photographs, visitation of gravesite, graffiti display and gun salutes (especially by military institutions and non-state armed groups such as gangs), and adoption of the deceased as a role model by the bereaved. The length of bereavement and amount of honour accorded to the corpse often reflects the social standing of the deceased in the community or social group (Hemer, 2010; Hughes, Schaible, & Kephart, 2021; Ogbuagu, 1989; Silverman, Baroiller, & Hemer, 2020; Wilkinson, & Chavez, 1992).

More so, on the significance and importance of death rituals, sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists have demonstrated that death rituals play significant roles within a community such as acting as a counterforce to the feelings of fear, dismay and demoralization associated with death (Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984), thereby providing answers to the meaning of life for the community (Abramovitch, 2015). Thus, death rituals serve as mechanisms to resolve what the anthropologist, Hertz (1960), refers to as social disruptions of life within a community occasioned by death of a member. These rituals remind group members of a common commitment, thereby strengthening group solidarity (Howells, 1962), while at the same time providing psychological and emotional relief between group members (Radcliffe-Brown, 1968).

Gangs of the Niger Delta: Deebam and Iceland in Perspective

The origin of cult gangs in Nigeria began with the formation of the first known campus confraternity in Nigeria - the Pyrates Confraternity (National Association of Seadogs), in 1953, by Wole Soyinka and six other undergraduate students at the premier University of Ibadan. As a non-violent pressure group, the Pyrates confraternity was a social movement aimed at eradicating injustice, tribalism, elitism and imperialism in the Nigerian society (Jack & Tokpo, 2021). However, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed the transition of campus confraternities from social movements to criminal organizations as many confraternities as well as splinter gangs began to emerge across the country (Nyiayaana, 2011). The intensification of competitive rivalry between campus confraternities in the 1980s and early 1990s culminated in the establishment of street gangs (Jack & Tokpo, 2021). These street gangs including the Deebam and Iceland gangs investigated in this study serve as the junior wing of the campus-based parent confraternities. The Deebam gang (alias Bobos), meaning "be strong" in vernacular, was established in 1991 as a street wing of the Klansmen Konfraternity (alias KK) - a campus confraternity established in the early 1980s at the University of Calabar, Nigeria (Wellington, 2007). Deebam's formal gang colour is 'white and black' with the 'Chelsea Dry' gin as their (sacred) alcoholic drink which members also use in performing gang rituals to their deity named 'Ogor', believed to be a goddess. The Deebam gang gained prominence in the Niger Delta region following its expansion to Rivers State, particularly in the Capital city of Port Harcourt under the leadership of one Onengiyeofori Terika alias "Occasion Boy" who was killed in 2003 (Nyiayaana, 2011). The Deewell gang on the other hand, was formed by some members of the Vikings Confraternity in the early 1990s in Rivers State to counter the dominance of the Deebam. The Deewell, meaning "stay well"

in vernacular, has its formal gang colour as 'red and black' with the 'Squadron rum' as its (sacred) alcoholic drink. Members of the Deewell also revere or acknowledge 'Odin' as their spiritual god - a Scandinavian god associated with their parent cult group the Vikings. The Deewell gang splitted into the Iceland and Greenland gangs in the late 2000s due to schisms within the gang, having roots in Port Harcourt. Thus, in addition to the Deebam, the Iceland and Greenland gangs have been strong rivals in places like Yenagoa, although both gangs still share similar norms, symbols, and traditions in common (Shepler, 2012). The Deebam and Iceland gangs have since their formation been great rivals, and have continued to spread rapidly mainly across the Niger Delta region and beyond (Asuni, 2009; Wellington, 2007).

Materials and Methods

In conducting this study, we adopted a qualitative participatory research design, relying on primary data generated through oral interviews with members of Iceland and Deebam, the two leading gangs in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. In addition to documenting the lived experiences of our interlocutors, we relied on the observation technique in rare cases to experience the performance of death rituals on a deceased gang member. This involved us in two major different occasions, observing from a close distance how gang members sang, chanted, and consumed alcohol and narcotics during and after the funeral of their deceased members. We also in a particular case had participate directly as sympathizers at a funeral where we built rapport with the gang members, without giving them the obvious impression that they were being studied. These observations were randomly made and are separate from the interviews we conducted with gang members. A total of fifteen (15) gang members participated in the study who were purposively selected through a snowballing (referral) procedure from some gang-dominated zones in Yenagoa and Port Harcourt, the two leading cities where gang activities are disproportionately present in the Niger Delta. The study sample includes eight (8) Iceland members and seven (7) Deebam members respectively. Our interlocutors were all males aged between 19 and 30 years of age, as both gangs are historically male dominated and the demographics of participants was well-suited for the study as adults old enough to give and/or withdraw consent at any given point. Many of the gang members were interviewed in Pidgin English which they were more familiar and fluent with, and their statements were later transcribed in English. The thematic analysis technique was utilized for data analysis as categories of themes were developed to provide meanings and to enable us draw inferences from the lived experiences of the gang members. The themes that emerged from the data as presented in the next section are grouped into two main categories, the first addressing forms of gang death rituals, and the second, the significance of death rituals. Ethical consideration was prioritized in the study as our interlocutors were duly informed about the purpose of the study, with their anonymity and confidentiality protected. None of them was coerced or induced to participate in the study, and interviews were all conducted only with their consent and approved locations.

Death Rituals and Funeral rites in Niger Delta Gangscape

Death and dying is common place in the Niger Delta's gangscape primarily due to unending conflicts and rivalries between gangs in the region (Ebiede, Bassey, & Asuni, 2021). The demise of a gang member is accompanied by corresponding death rituals and practices that befit the status of the deceased. Examining these rituals, our interlocutors were asked to identify and narrate the various death rituals or rites performed for their deceased gang members. While it is important to note that corpses of deceased gang members are formally buried by members of the deceased family, gang members play significant roles in the funeral ceremonies of their dead. The following themes surfaced from the interviews as the death rituals associated with the death and burial of a deceased gang member.

Mourning

Mourning is an integral part of the rituals that follows the death of a gang member. Our interlocutors noted that they often call for meetings almost immediately to mourn their dead member following the news of his demise. The length of the mourning period largely depends on the cause of death and the status of the gang member. An Iceland member stated:

> "We will gather ourselves at the home of the deceased or on our 'island' (i.e., gang meeting venue), to console ourselves and mourn the death of a member, especially if he was very important figure in the gang... We will think of a way to honour him and/or support his funeral" (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Borikiri, Port Harcourt/26 years).

Similarly, a member of the Deebam shared similar sentiments when he argued thus:

> "We will gather ourselves to mourn our deceased member... If he was killed by a rival gang, we will plan on how to retaliate as soon as possible..." (IDI/Male/Deebam gang/Amarata, Yenagoa/23 years).

Funeral Procession and Gang Music

The most common ritual associated with death is the observance of a funeral procession and playing of gang music locally called "*salley*" or "*oghele*"which are usually encoded with gang slurs. Music is usually improvised by gang members with the use of metallic objects, bottles, sticks, and local drums in honour of the fallen member. The use of hard drugs is also common during such funeral processions and musical frenzy. A funeral procession can be elaborate especially for a very important and "rugged" (Iceland) or "brutal" (Deebam) deceased gang member; that is, a member who was mostly reputed for violence and/or who held a high-ranking position in the gang. A member of the Deebam gang described this phenomenon:

> "Anytime we lose a member and want to bury him, we will observe a procession in the neighbourhood, singing, smoking, drinking, and chanting gang slurs... But this is done according to the rank and status of the deceased in the gang. If he was very 'rugged' or 'brutal,' then he is likely to gain a more elaborate procession" (IDI/Male/Deebam gang/Mile 1 Diobu, Port Harcourt/ 31 years).

However, some of our interlocutors noted that the level of gang procession also depends on the approval or willingness of the family of the deceased to allow them participate directly in the funeral.

Display of Gang Symbols/Insignia

Displaying of gang symbols and other insignia is also common amongst gangs at funerals of their deceased member. This involves dressing in formal gang regalia, displaying gang banners, having gang handshakes locally called '*claw*' or signs to the notice of spectators, drinking the (sacred) gang-associated alcohol such as the Squadron rum (Iceland) or Chelsea Dry gin (Deebam) etc. According to an Iceland gang member:

> "On the funeral day, most of us are expected to dress in our gang regalia such as in 'red-and-black' clothing, drink the Squadron rum and pour libations to the dead in the name of Odin - our patron god. We will 'claw '(i.e., gang handshake) each other and chant in a rugged way..." (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Amarata, Yenagoa/25 years).

In the same vein, a Deebam gang member stated thus:

> "Sometimes we drop or pin one or more empty bottles of the Chelsea Dry gin on top/around the grave of our member to show that he was part of us…" (IDI/Male/Deebam gang/Mile 1 Diobu, Port Harcourt/36 years).

Gun Salutes and Threat of Violence

Gang members perceive themselves to be street soldiers hence the demise and funeral of a deceased gang member is often accompanied by gun salutes and other show of violent tendencies, especially if they were very important and high-ranking members of the gang. According to a member of the Deebam gang:

> "It is almost compulsory that we give a gun salute to our fallen soldier… It does not matter whether the Police is present or absent at the funeral, we usually find a way to use fire arms either openly or secretly in honour of our fallen 'soldier' (i.e., gang member) during or after the funeral" (IDI/Male/Deebam gang/ Amarata, Yenagoa/26 years).

Buttressing the threat of violence during gang funerals, a member of the Iceland gang noted thus:

> "We look around the funeral to see if a rival gang member is present, and if we find any, he is likely to be an unlucky soul as we will violently attack him… Other members also use the funeral to go about looting or 'raiding' (i.e., a slang for robbing) unsuspecting members of the public" (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Ekeki, Yenagoa/30 years).

Some of our interlocutors however noted that despite the risks of violence during funeral processions, a rival gang member(s) who is not notorious in the neighbourhood may sometimes attend the funeral of their own deceased member if both of them were friends or family members, although such rival gang member does that at his own risk.

Significance of Gang Death Rituals and Funeral Rites

Understanding the significance or importance of death rituals to gang members, would provide nuanced insights into the motivations and implications of such gang rituals. Drawing from the lived experiences of our interlocutors, the following themes emerged as the significance of death rituals and funeral rites amongst gang members:

Show of Honour

Majority of our interlocutors held the view that death rituals and funeral rites for deceased gang member(s) is a symbol of honour to the deceased. The more elaborate the funeral rites, the more the proof of great honour to the fallen gang member. When asked why gang members observe death rituals and funeral rites, a member of the Deebam gang had this to say:

> "Why won't we observe funeral processions in honour of our fallen soldiers? For me, it is a show of respect to our deceased soldiers…" (IDI/Male/Deebam gang/Diobu, Port Harcourt/28 years).

Another member of the Iceland gang submitted thus:

> "Although I usually observe funeral rituals and processions for our fallen soldiers, but my level of participation also depends on how close the gang member was to me personally" (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/ Amarata, Yenagoa/29 years).

Reciprocity

Reciprocity was the second most cited reason for observing death rituals, according to our interlocutor. Observance of death rituals and funeral rites was important to them because it also provides them a chance of being remembered or honoured in similar manner when they die. Observing the death ritual of a fallen member is usually a reciprocal act within the gang and by extension even the family members of the deceased. Buttressing this point, a member of the Iceland gang noted thus:

> "If you don't participate in the funeral of other gang members, nobody would like to participate in yours or that of your loved one if they die... I want to also be honoured by my gang when I die at a ripe age, that is why I usually observe the funerals of deceased gang members" (IDI/Male/Iceland/Amarata, Yenagoa/33 years).

Appeasement Or Charging of the Spirit of the Deceased

Some of our interlocutors stated that death rituals enable the deceased gang member to find rest in the afterlife. For instance, the Icelanders have a belief system that "he who the gods love, they take (death) to 'Valhalla' (i.e., heavenly abode)". Yet, others stated that in situations when the gang member was murdered, death rituals can serve as a means to charge or invoke the spirit of the deceased to take vengeance against anyone who might have killed him. An Iceland gang member described this phenomenon:

> "We usually pour libations with the Squadron rum or any other alcoholic drink to pray for the spirit of the deceased to rest in 'Vahalla', with the god Odin and other chosen fallen soldiers or rugged 'sailors' (i.e., gang members) ... The spirit may also be charged to take vengeance on those who might have killed him. To ensure this, we or the family members of the deceased usually put dangerous objects such as cutlass, knife, razor blade or other fetish items in the coffin so he can use them in the spirit world to seek revenge" (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Aggrey road, Port Harcourt/26 years).

Death Rituals: An Insight into Gang's Violent Sub-Culture

In this section of the article, we explored the implications of gang death rituals and how funeral rites are lenses through which we can provide nuanced understanding of gang's violent sub culture. Our interlocutors were asked how the thought of a deceased member makes them feel, what kind of sensation they experience during and after the death rituals. We also examined the reactions gang members give towards rival gangs alleged to be responsible for the death of their own, and to narrate any incidence of violence they might have witnessed or heard about in the recent past during the observance of death rituals for a deceased gang member. From the interviews, the following themes were identified:

Desire For Retribution or Vengeance

The observance of a deceased gang member's funeral (especially in cases when the deceased was murdered) evokes anger and a feeling of vengeance against those who are known or perceived to be responsible for his death especially when they are rival gang members. This is even more likely if the deceased was a high-ranking or very important member to the gang. A member of the Iceland gang argued thus:

> "If the gang member was killed by a rival and we are observing his funeral, it usually makes us to seek revenge… We go about searching for opponents to strike back" (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Amarata, Yenagoa/29 years).

The above submissions notwithstanding, a few interlocutors noted that it is not always the case that the gang itself avenge the death of a member, but a clique or small group of members within the gang who might be close associates to the deceased could execute such acts.

Readiness to Kill or Be Killed

The killing of a gang member by rival gangs and its attendant funeral rites reminds surviving members the need to always stay alert and be ready to kill rival gangs who might be after their lives. Some other interlocutors also expressed their readiness to face death at any moment, firmly believing that if they were to meet a rugged or brutal end, their spirits would be welcomed by one of their respective patron gods (i.e., Odin or Ogor) in the afterlife. According to an Iceland gang member:

> "Anytime I hear about the violent death of a fellow member by a rival gang, I prepare my mind for the worse… If I die today, Odin will receive me in Valhalla with a feast with the gods" (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/ Borikiri, Port Harcourt/26 years).

This belief system explains the proneness to violence among gangsters and the precarity associated with the gang life. This notwithstanding, some of our interlocutors admitted that they do not actually believe there was an afterlife with Odin or Ogor in the literal sense apart from the popular Christian conception of heaven and hell.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that although death rituals by gang members takes on very similar social process like many other conventional funeral rites, there are rituals that are specific with gangs. Despite the peculiarities and dissimilarities in the belief systems of the two gangs, the Deebam and Iceland gangs share similar death rituals and practices. These gangs honour dead members through forms of material culture such as dressing in gang regalia, display of gang symbols, gun salutes, and use of hard drugs and alcoholic drinks (squadron rum for Iceland and Chelsea dry gin for Deebam). Their non-material death rituals include procession, music, libations or prayers, and dancing. These rituals usually reflect the social standing and status of the deceased gang member. These forms of gang-related death rituals support earlier studies by Ogbuagu (1989) and Hemer (2010) who also found most of these forms of bereavement and funeral rites to be present amongst other non-gang groups and culture. In contrast to gangs in the global North especially in North America where death and memorialization rituals of gang members include bodily inscriptions such as tattoos and use of graffiti (Philips, 2021), gangs in Nigeria's Niger Delta scarcely practice such rituals.

Furthermore, by bringing members together to honour the deceased, death rituals significantly reinforce social solidarity, individual commitment, and easing or diversion of pain amongst the Iceland and Deebam gangs respectively. The collective grieving by the gang sometimes generates a feeling of carrying out violent assaults on rival gangs as retribution either as a whole or a clique. Thus, violent masculinity is being shaped through death rituals. These findings also support previous death studies by Durkheim (1915) and Klass and Steffen (2018) who note that funeral rites create social bonds and immortalize the dead in the minds of the living. The implications of the death rituals hence, do not only provide the psychological relief for the living members of the gangs, it provides meaning to the precarious gang life and as Malinowski (1958) noted, participation in death rituals prepares the individual (in this context the gang member) for his own ultimate demise.

Conclusion

Culture, has generally been seen as comprising of the complex whole of a people manifested in material and non-material forms such as beliefs, custom/rituals, art, norms, and values, transmitted across time through socialization process to enable new members, inculcating skills and expectations needed for them to function in society (Okodudu, 2007). Thus, the Deebam and Iceland gangs also have certain unique rituals and customs (i.e., culture) they observe in the process of honouring a deceased member which are often expressed materially and non-materially. Death and bereavement are being policed by gang norms expressed in rituals, hence grief or reaction to a gang member's death is an intersubjective or social rather than an individual process (Hemer, 2010; Klass & Steffen, 2018). Although, depending on the social ranking (Wilkinson & Chavez, 1992) or importance of the member expressed by their "ruggedity or brutality" reflected in their reputation of violence within the gang, death rituals become another rites-of-passage which the corpse of a deceased gang member undergoes, like when they were first "jumped-in" (i.e., initiated) during their lifetime. Death rituals serve as a shock-absorber, which creates continuous bonds (Eisma & Nguyen, 2022) between gang members by easing the pain from the demise of a fellow member, reinforcing social solidarity either for peaceful and violent purposes, and offering of explanations and hope of immortality in an afterlife. In this regard, gang death rituals also incorporate elements of myths, religion and eschatology. These findings are important in understanding not only death rituals but the collective conscience they reinforce amongst gang members as reflections of levels of 'ruggedity' or 'brutality'. It provides insights into the psycho-social forces that triggers and sustains the violent sub culture amongst gangs. This implies that external factors such as political or economic competitions do not in itself provides explanations for the unending cycle of gang violence in places like the Niger Delta, rather these collective belief systems do sustain the violence. Based on the forgoing, we recommend that policy makers and conflict managers in addition to focusing on political and economic triggers, should mainstream cultural and psycho-social factors when designing conflict management interventions and post conflict policies.

Competing Interest Declaration

The authors declare none.

Acknowledgements

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Flood Disaster and Family Disorganization in the Niger Delta

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Abstract

Flood disasters are natural calamities that exert devastating impact on communities and families. These events often result in the loss of lives, destruction of property, and displacement of individuals and families. The perennial nature of this menace in many countries around the globe, including Nigeria has attracted attention from scholars and other concerned institutions. However, its propensity to disorganize the proper functioning of the family which is of the basic unit of society has not been fully examined. Thus, this work examined the relationship between flood disaster and family disorganization in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Based on the Family Stress theory, the study relied on secondary sources of data. The Study finds that flood disasters have wide-ranging effects on families, often resulting in family disorganization in the region. The loss of homes, disruption of social networks, financial strain, psychological trauma, and the disruption of education and healthcare services all contribute to this disorganization. In view of the above, support from government and community resources, counselling services, and disaster relief organizations can play a crucial role in helping families navigate the difficulties associated with flood disasters and facilitate the process of restoring stability and organization within the family unit.

Keywords: Flood, Disaster, family, disorganization, Niger Delta

Introduction

One persistent issue that has a terrible impact on many facets of life all over the world is flooding. A state of flooding occurs when a sizable region is totally submerged in water. Floods may be predicted by looking at patterns of water flow and rainfall. But occasionally, typhoons or levee leaks can cause floods to occur very quickly—a phenomenon known as flash floods.

Essentially, flood events are the product of climate change. Recent history shows that extreme weather events are occurring more frequently even in areas that have not experienced such in the past (Hettiarachchi, Wasko & Sharma, 2018). Escalation of rainfall and their increasing volume has been linked to the higher temperatures expected with climate change (Wasko & Sharma, 2015 cited in Hettiarachchi et al, 2018). This increase in extreme rainfall and its intensification creates a higher risk of damaging flood events that cause a threat to both life and the built environment, particularly in urban regions where the existing infrastructure has not been designed to cope with these increases (Hettiarachchi et al, 2018).

Apparently, climate change has influenced recurring incidence of flooding in different parts of the world. In 2011, severe floods were reported in Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Uganda in Africa; Brazil, Columbia, Mexico and the United States in the Americas; and Cambodia, China, India, Korea, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand in Asia, with fatalities in each flood exceeding 50 (over 1000 in the Phillippines and Colombia) and high material damage, in particular in the developed countries from the list above (Kundzewicz Z. W., Kanae S., Seneviratne S.I., Handmer J., Nicholls N., Peduzzi P., Mechler R., Bouwer L.M., Arnell N., Mach K., Muir-Wood R., Brakenridge. G.R., Kron W., Benito G., Honda Y., Takahashi K. & Sherstyukov B., 2014)).

In 2012, "killer floods" occurred Bangladesh, China, India, North and South Korea, the Phillippines and Russia in Asia; Argentina, the United States and Haiti in the Americas and Madagascar, Niger and Nigeria in Africa inducing more than 50 fatalities each country (Kundzewicz et al, 2014). This event repeated similar feat in Nigeria in 2022.

Perennial flood disasters in Nigeria have put individuals, communities, and establishments in danger. Millions of people have been displaced from their homes as a result of it, and it has also damaged businesses, contaminated water supplies, raised the risk of disease in different regions of the nation etc. (Baiye, 1988; Akinyemi, 1990; Nwaubani, 1991; Edward- Adebiyi, 1997).

Since disasters amplify preexisting inequalities and upend established institutions and social norms, natural disasters like floods fundamentally have social dimensions (Klinenberg, 1982). Flooding's tendency to destabilize families adds another layer to its destructive effects. Family disorganization is the term used to describe the dysfunctional dynamics within a family. Divorce, spousal, and parent-child conflicts are a few examples. Though not as severely as in the case of spousal conflict, tension between parents and children can lead to significant adjustment problems. When a marriage fails, which is crucial for a family to survive, the family becomes disorganized (Ukssay, nd).

Families sprang up to meet some of man's most fundamental social, psychological, and biological needs. Family organization affects both personal and social structures. As a result, the family has a big influence on how a child develops and becomes who they are. The family is the root of all altruistic behaviors, including cooperation, universal brotherhood, love of all living things, self-sacrifice, and service to humanity. When these needs are not met, the family becomes disorganized (Sreekumar, 2017).

Disorganization within the family influenced vices in the wider society. The breakdown of the family, which serves as the fundamental pillar of human society, is one reason why crime rates are rising in our society. Numerous studies have linked family disarray to a variety of socially unhealthy behaviors, including poor academic performance, criminal behavior, and drug abuse (Bakare, 2013; Odebode & Fatusi, 2016). Young people may seek alternative sources of direction and belonging as a result of family disorganization, which can lead to a lack of parental supervision and support in the context of crime (Akinola & Akinola, 2019). In Nigeria, the enormous negative effects of family disorganization are more pronounced than in other nations. Researches have proven that 70% violent and other social, economic issues such as terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and other related social problems today are as the result of family crisis that exacerbated to uncontrollable defect on the youths (Oye-shola, 2005).

While factors such as role conflict, urbanization, and economic crises, have been identified to cause family disorganization (Solomon, Mohammed, & Agwadu, 2020), there is little or no work in existence that specifically examine the relationship between flood disaster and family disorganization. In this light, this study seeks to unravel the nexus between flood disaster which have become a perennial problem and its proclivity to propel family disorganization. The study aims to bring to light the propensity of flooding in disrupting homes, occasion economic hardships, emotional distress, and the loss of social support systems, the result of which can lead to family disorganization. This become crucial to enable communities and governments recognize these challenges faced by families in the aftermath of flood disasters and provide adequate support and resources to help them recover as well assist in restoring stability and resilience within affected communities.

Families in the various states of Nigeria are frequently faced with the challenging task of managing the aftermath of the annual flooding problem. Such unanticipated events cause a crisis for families, regardless of the nature or length of the disaster. In addition to the regular everyday stressors that all

families experience, families affected by disasters must deal with both the immediate and long-term effects of the disaster.   Specifically, this work is intended to unravel the nature of flooding in the Niger Delta, examine the Impact of flood disaster, canvass the nexus between flooding and family disorganization in the Niger Delta and give possible solutions to mitigate the impact of flooding on the family.

Literature Review

Flooding in the Niger Delta

There are three main types of flooding in Nigeria: coastal flooding, river flooding, and urban flooding (Nwokoye, Uwajumogu & Ezenekwe, 2014). Coastal flooding affects the low-lying belt of mangrove and freshwater swamps along the coasts. While flash floods are associated with rivers in inland areas where sudden heavy rains can quickly transform them into destructive torrents, river flooding occurs in the flood plains of the larger rivers. Urban flooding is a common occurrence in settlements with flat or low-lying terrain, particularly when surface drainage is either poorly or completely neglected or when it is obstructed by waste materials from the local government, household trash, and eroding soil sediments. In Lagos, Maiduguri, Aba, Warri, Benin, and Ibadan, extensive urban flooding is a common occurrence during rainy seasons (Nwokoye, Uwajumogu & Ezenekwe, 2014).

According to Nigerian Environmental Study/Action Team, NEST (1991), the following regions in Nigeria are disproportionately impacted by floods:

a.   Areas that are low-lying and have very heavy annual rainfall in the southern parts of the country.

b.   The area of the Niger Delta.

c.   The floodplains of the larger rivers like the Niger, Benue, Taraba, Sokoto, Hadeja, Cross River, Imo, Anambra, Ogun, Kaduna etc.

d.   Flat low-lying areas around and to the south of Lake Chad which may be flooded during, and for a few weeks after the rain.

The Niger Delta is by far the largest area in Nigeria impacted by annual flooding due to its topography as a low-lying, swampy area of alluvial deposition through which the tributaries of the Niger meander (Agbonkhese, Agbonkhese, Aka, Joe-Abaya, Ocholi, & Adekunle, 2014)). It serves as the catchment area's ineffective outlet to the sea and a natural reservoir for the Niger-Benue. Its rivers are bordered by levees, and when these rivers flooded, the levees are overtopped and extensive areas are submerged. The area is vulnerable to two different types of flooding: rainy season floods brought on by rain in Nigeria and, in particular, rain in the delta region itself, which can range from 2000 mm to 4000 mm annually and is concentrated in a few months (Agbonkhese et al, 2014). The other type of flood is a river flood, which is almost always brought on by water that originates as far away as Guinea's Fouta Djallon Highlands. Most of the water is rainwater from the previous year's rainfall in these highlands, which is slowly making its way down to Nigeria. Almost every area of the Niger Delta experiences flooding at some point throughout the year, with the exception of the northern regions. Bayelsa State's Sagbama and Yenagoa regions frequently experience damage to towns, villages, and agricultural lands (Agbonkhese et al, 2014). Parts of the riverine regions of the states of Edo, Delta, Cross River, and Akwa Ibom are frequently impacted as well.

Impact of Flooding

According to Othman, Sharip, Kasim, Kamdari and Baharuddin, 2022 psychological morbidity, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, are linked to flood events. Regardless of

prior flood experiences, ongoing flood risk is regarded as a significant stress factor. Some survey participants in their study expressed anxiety even just about the possibility of a future flood event and showed low self-efficacy, which led to feelings of helplessness when it came to preparing for flood risk (Fothergill, 1999). The anxiety and resilience of those who did not assume the flood risk were also higher.

Senarath's (2011) research indicated that many kids who are exposed to natural disasters go through psychological distress, anxiety, and physical problems both immediately and later. According to Randeniya's (2018) study on the impact of flood disaster on teenagers, 88 percent of them feel uneasy during periods of persistent heavy rain. They fear that they might have to endure another unpleasant experience. The respondents were found to have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of this.

The majority of flood victims are extricated from their homes by the government or local authorities and brought to temporary shelters. While others might choose to stay at the shelter, some might visit their family members or close friends there. In both situations, it's likely that the victims will feel uneasy. They could be socially threatened by issues with privacy, crowding, and inadequate basic facilities.

As they would miss work until the flood subsided, their regular schedule would also be impacted (Yusoff & Kadir, 2017). In the end, some of the victims might go back to their homes, while others might not because the flood completely destroyed their homes. In the vast majority of cases, even if they are able to save their houses, their personal belongings might be destroyed. Enrico and Quarantelli (2005) found that disaster victims go through four stages of rehoming, including: 1) the temporary rescue center, which is the place they go to right away after being saved from the disaster, 2) the rescue center, where they would stay overnight with food supplies and basic necessities provided, and 3) the location where the victims will build or rebuild their home, either at the original location or a new once and 4) the permanent home where they would have to settle down regardless of their preference. These various phases take time and might seem terrifying to the victims. The victims' regular schedule would also be disturbed. They would be heartbroken by the drastic changes and the prospect of living without any of their previous possessions.

Additionally, flooding harms victims' health. According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) Floods and Health Fact Sheets for Health Professionals (2014), damage to infrastructure, ecosystems, food and water supplies, or social support systems can have a negative impact on people's health whether it happens directly through contact with floodwaters or indirectly through those same processes. After the floods have subsided, these effects may start to show up right away or days, weeks, or even months later. Over the course of a flood, drowning accounts for two thirds of all fatalities, while the remaining third are caused by physical harm, heart attacks, electrocution, carbon monoxide poisoning, or fire (Othman et al, 2022).

According to a study conducted in Nigeria (Olanrewaju, Chitakira, Olanrewaju, Louw, 2019), diarrhoea outbreak affects 47.1 percent of the study participants who were affected by flooding. This is mainly due to contaminated drinking water from destroyed sanitary infrastructure and sewer systems. Following the end of the flood season, flooding not only causes an increase in the frequency of meals and dietary variety, but also in the incidence of diarrhea and fever (Sajid & Bevis, 2021).

Due to inadequate infrastructure and scarce financial resources, flood events compromise access to essential health services, according to Bich et al. (2011, cited in Othman et al. 2022). The findings also indicated that the two main causes of injuries during flood events are falls and drowning. The prevalence of dermatitis and pink eye among the populace is also highlighted.

Impact of Flood on the Family

During a flood, families might discover that their regular routines have been completely changed. Additionally, complicated issues like the loss of an income source or a family farm may force parents to deal with them. In some cases, parents may need to change jobs. In order to find work, it might even be necessary for parents or the entire family to relocate to a different city. In order to help with the financial hardships caused by the disaster, a nonworking parent might need to go back to work. Young people might discover that they are sent to live with relatives while the disaster's damage is being fixed.

These kinds of changes necessitate choices that are challenging and frequently distressing for the entire family. In addition, these adjustments frequently mean less time is spent with kids, which deprives them of much-needed emotional support. It is understandable that the family system may no longer be able to function as it once did given the complexity and serious consequences of these decisions to each family member (Gordon, Farberow, & Madia, 1999). It is crucial to understand that these situations could result in family system changes that last long after the disaster has passed. These alterations within the family may consist of:

1. Dysfunction or disarray in the parenting.

2. A family member using drugs or alcohol more frequently.

3. Increased hostility or violent actions between family members or between family members and others.

4. Relocation (including alterations to the local school).

5. Job loss.

6. Parents are less present physically and emotionally.

7. Loss of children's social networks or the chance to engage in regular routines and activities (American Academy of Pediatrics Work Group on Disasters, 1995; Ebata & Borden, 1995).

Every year, families in various states of Nigeria, including the Niger Delta, are forced to deal with the consequences of a natural disaster like flooding. Such unanticipated occurrences put families in a crisis, regardless of the disaster's type or length. Disaster-affected families must deal not only with the short- and long-term effects of the disaster, but also with the usual daily stressors that affect all families.

Additionally, existing literature suggests that flood disasters disrupt family harmony and lead to violence against intimate partners. First, disasters heighten trauma and uncertainty from a social psychological standpoint (Frankenberg, Jed, Thomas, Nicholas, Robert, Iip, Rifai, Sikoki, Steinberg, Sumantri, Suriastini, & Thomas, 2008)), which may result in more volatile relationships and substance use (Powell & Holleran Steiker, 2012), outcomes that are positively related to intimate partner violence (Gage, 2005). Similar to this, a protracted feeling of uncontrollability can heighten a person's desire to exert control over their immediate surroundings (Shapiro, Schwartz, & Astin, 1996), which may have an impact on men's use of violence as a form of control. Families who experience a high level of destruction, such as losing a family member or suffering property damage, are likely to experience these effects of trauma and uncertainty the most strongly (Harville, Taylor, Tesfai, Xiong, & Buekens, 2011; Larrance, Anastario, & Lawry, 2007).

Men's and women's personal resources as well as the household economy are negatively impacted by flooding. Men who view violence as an acceptable means of persuasion in the absence of alternative resources may use force more frequently as a result of reductions in men's material resources

brought on by disasters (Goode, 1971). Women's personal resource bases may be diminished to the point where they are unable to support themselves and become more dependent on their partners (Kalmuss & Straus, 1982). Changes in household income may result in financial stress, which raises the level of conflict (Fox, Michael, Alfred & Wyk, 2002). In the wake of a disaster, women may additionally experience more restricted access to friends and extended family. This might happen if catastrophes increase men's desire to monitor their partners' whereabouts, if adverse household economic shocks make it difficult for women to pay for childcare or transportation, or if catastrophes cause the loss of or forced relocation of family and friends.

Disasters may alter habitational patterns in a way that raises the risk of violence against women. For instance, if one partner lost a home in a disaster, unmarried couples may be more likely to cohabitate. Unhappy married or cohabiting couples may, however, continue to live together following a disaster if changes to their financial situation prevent one or both partners from leaving the home. Disasters have the potential to limit the options available to public institutions that are intervening to protect vulnerable groups (Fothergill, 1999). This can make it harder for women to leave abusive relationships.

The risk factors for child abuse, such as caregiver stress, food insecurity, poverty, economic hardship, mental health disorders, displacement, family separation, and alcohol and other substance abuse, are increased by natural disasters like flooding (Cerna-Turoff, Fischer, Mayhew, & Devries, 2019). Evidence suggests that family members are most likely to abuse children, with male children more likely to be the target of violence while female children are more likely to suffer serious injuries (Seddighi, Salmani, Javadi, & Seddighi, 2019). Women are more likely to abuse children psychologically than men physically. Domestic violence was one factor contributing to the rise in psychological issues among Indian children and adolescents during this pandemic (Ghosh, Dubey, Chatterjee, & Dubey 2020). Family violence can cause immeasurable harm and have long-lasting effects due to the physical and psychological toll it takes, as well as the suffering it brings from the disaster.

Family Disorganization and Consequence

In Chauhan's opinion (2016), the following factors contribute to a family's value: a process of socialization and life balance; emotional, financial, and social support; cooperation between roles and functions; satisfaction of needs; equality of attitudes and values; unity of purpose; ambition and personal growth; and future plans and support. However, family become disorganized when there is a negative functioning of the family in view of the above mentioned. Children and parents, husbands and wives, and other relationships could all experience conflict. Although not as complex as those between husbands and wives, tensions between children and parents can lead to complex adjustment issues. When the marital bond, which serves as the main support structure for the family is broken, the family breaks down (Ukssay, n. d). According to Hood (what year? cited in Sreekumar, 2017), family disintegration is the breaking of familial bonds. Hood divides family breakups into five (5) categories:

1. Lack of a father-husband or mother-wife role is referred to as illegitimacy in this type of disorder. Illegitimacy is brought on by family members who are unable to carry out their responsibilities, such as the mother and father.

2. Annulment: In this kind of separation, one spouse decides to leave the other, leading to a divorce without carrying out their respective roles' obligations.

3. Vacuum Family: A type of family breakdown in which a couple resides under the same roof but has little communication and lacks the crucial emotional support of one another.

4. One partner's unintentional absence: This kind of separation causes havoc in the family. One or more family members' physical, mental, or emotional disorders are a catastrophe.

5. Divorce is the final stage in the process of a family breaking up. Divorce refers to the severance of family relations or the legal recognition of divorce.

According to Chauhan (2016), marital discord is the cause of family disorganization. This is the dissolution of pacts and loyalty, the dissolution of current relationships, the loss of family consciousness, and the onset of divorce. He cites a number of factors that contribute to disorganization, including changes in status and roles, role diversity, and role conflict; the effects of industrialization and urbanization; economic crises, problems, and tensions; physical and psychological issues; temperaments that are conflictual; unemployment; excessive parental and other family interference; professional tension; age inequality; and variations in cultural environments. The survival and continuity of the family are in jeopardy if they are not organized.

The negative effects of family disorganization on its members include stress, anxiety, and other mental disorders or illnesses, hopelessness, a sense of insecurity and loneliness, low self-esteem, stubbornness, criminal and social evils, emotional and mental disturbance, unemployment, family tension, and physical and psychological issues (Akinnawo & Adetula, 2008; Okunala, 2002; Ekiran, 2006 & Oakly, 2007).

Theoretical Framework: Family Stress Theory

Family Stress theory was developed by Reuben Hill in 1949 when he studied the impact of separations and reunions on families after World War II. To explain the circumstances leading up to a family crisis, he discussed the interactions of a number of variables. A family crisis develops in a predictable way, according to Hill (1958), when A (the event) interacts with B (the family's crisis meeting resources) and C (the definition the family gives to the event), to result in X (the crisis).

Hill's research solidified family crisis as a topic of interest and launched a tradition of theoretical and empirical research into family stress. After Hill's (1949) initial presentation of the ABCX Model, a number of theoretical articles on family stress (e. g. Hill, 1958; Hill and Hanson, 1964) appeared. However, Burr's (1973) adaptation of the ABCX Model and integration of family stress research into a theoretical framework reignited interest in the area and provided the impetus for further theory-building.

Burr focused on factor X, the crisis, as opposed to Hill who focused on factors B and C, contending that there had not been a methodical analysis of how and why the crisis varies. The degree of crisis, variation in the degree of disruption, and disarray that have resulted from a family's inability to stop change in the family system have been redefined as the X factor. Two ideas were thought to be essential to a family's ability to respond to a crisis: (a) vulnerability, or the capacity to withstand the initial impact of a stressor depending on the family's resources; and (b) regenerative power, or the capacity of the family to recover after a crisis.

Within the context of this theory, it can be deduced that flood disaster (A) cause immense stress and upheaval within families. The sudden loss of belongings, displacement from home, and the disruption of daily routines can all contribute to a sense of chaos and disarray. Without factors (B) such as social support networks, access to financial resources, and community cohesion which act as protective factors, it can leads to increased conflict, strained relationships, and even breakdowns in communication (C). This outcome produces family disorganization (X). Thus, it is crucial to recognise the profound effects that flood disasters can have on families and to provide support and resources to help them navigate through this difficult time. By understanding the dynamics of family stress

and its connection to flood disasters, we can work towards building resilience and promoting the well-being of families in the face of adversity.

Methodology

Materials for this study are obtained secondarily from textual works accessed from the internet, national newspapers, reports and materials from the library were also scrutinized to lush the work. These materials were textually analysed with the hope accomplishing the objectives of this work which borders on the nexus between flood disaster and the family disorganization.

Discussions

The Niger Delta terrain which comprises nine (9) states of the federation (Cross River, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Abia, Imo, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Ondo) is highly prone to flooding. This is because the area is the recipient of over 90% of all the water of the Niger-Benue River systems and 100% of all water from streams rising in the Delta Region. It is also bordered by the Atlantic Ocean. The terrain is flat and settlements are along the river systems, hence, the high vulnerable of the area to flooding (NEST, 1991).

Apart from its propensity to displace residents, destroy lives, property and infrastructure, flood also disorganise families. This finding is consistent with the position of the American Academy of Pediatrics Work Group on Disasters, (1995) and Ebata and Borden (1995) which indicated that disasters like flood can cause abnormal functioning in the home. Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta, PIND (2022) reported that as at October 12, 2022, over 3,200 households were displaced in Delta State, the same being applied to other Niger Delta States like Bayelsa, Edo, Imo and Rivers during the 2022 flood. It also reported that over 100 communities were displaced. This occurrence is challenging for the family as it alters its proper functioning and hampers the family's socio-economic and moral support system (Borden, n.d; Gordon et al, 1999). Due to the perennial nature of flooding in the region, almost every year families in the Niger Delta are adversely impacted leading to the increasing rate of family disorganization. This disorganization obviously is reflected in the rise of crime and social vices bedevilling the area (Wokocha, Mark & Obafemi, 2023). This is because the family performs an integral function and when once it is disorganised it leads to all manner of vices in society as it is witnessed in the region (Oyeshola, 2005).

The fact is that flood disasters disrupt the normal functioning of communities and families in Niger Delta region, causing significant stress and trauma. The sudden and unexpected nature of floods lead to a sense of helplessness and fear among family members. The loss of homes, personal belongings, and even loved ones can have a profound impact on individuals and their ability to cope with the aftermath of the disaster, all affecting family cohesion.

Essentially, family disorganization after a flood disaster in the region is birthed by the disruption of social networks and support systems (American Academy of Pediatrics Work Group on Disasters, 1995; Ebata & Borden, 1995). Floods often result in the displacement of families, forcing them to leave their homes and communities. This separation from familiar surroundings and the loss of social connections can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Without the support of extended family, friends, and neighbors, families may struggle to meet their emotional and practical needs, further exacerbating the disorganization within the family unit. Physical displacement/relocation also disrupts the family normal routines, stability, and sense of security within the family unit. It can lead to feelings of disorientation and uncertainty, making it challenging for family members to adjust and maintain a sense of normalcy.

The economic consequences of flood disasters also play a significant role in family disorganization in the Niger Delta. The 2022 flood which was adjudged as the worst in the region destroyed many farmlands, business and other sources of livelihood amounting to trillions of naira (Chukwu, 2022). The destruction of homes and property also lead to financial instability and hardship. In this setting, families face difficulties in accessing basic necessities such as food, water, and healthcare. On a general note, the loss of employment or income-generating opportunities (Yusoff & Kadir, 2017) further compounds the financial strain, making it challenging for families to recover and rebuild their lives. This financial stress causes tension and conflict within families, leading to disorganization and breakdown of relationships.

Expectantly, flood disasters often require families to adapt and take on new roles and responsibilities. For example, parents may need to take on additional tasks related to recovery efforts, such as dealing with insurance claims, coordinating repairs, or finding temporary housing. These changes in roles and responsibilities can create role strain and disrupt the balance within the family, leading to disorganization (Chauhan, 2016).

Another aspect to consider is the psychological impact of flood disasters on family members. Witnessing the destruction and loss caused by floods can result in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues (Frankenberg et al., 2008). Individuals may experience symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances, which significantly affect their ability to function within the family unit. Family members may struggle to effectively communicate and support each other during this difficult time. The emotional toll of the disaster can strain relationships, causing family members to withdraw or become irritable, argumentative and engender intimate partner violence, further contributing to family disorganization (Powell & Holleran Steiker, 2012). Also, floods can result in the loss of personal belongings, including cherished possessions and essential documents. This loss can be emotionally devastating for individuals and families. Rebuilding and recovering from such losses can be a lengthy and overwhelming process, which can further disrupt family organization.

Due to the dislocation/displacement caused by flooding children may be sent to live with relatives until the damage from the disaster is repaired. Changes such as these require decisions that are difficult and often emotionally painful for all members of the family. Moreover, these changes often result in a decrease in time spent with children to provide much needed attention, care and support which may snowball into maladjustment and unwholesome development of children. Given the complexity and serious ramifications of these decisions to each family member, it is understandable that the family system may no longer be able to function as it did previously (Gordon, Farberow, & Madia, 1999).

Furthermore, the disruption of education and healthcare services during and after flood disasters can have long-term consequences for families (Bich et al, 2011 cited in Othman et al, 2022). Children may be unable to attend school, leading to a disruption in their education and social development. Lack of access to healthcare facilities and medical services can also have adverse effects on the physical and mental well-being of family members. These disruptions can lead to a loss of routine and stability within the family, further contributing to disorganization.

It is a discovered reality that family disorganization is not only problematic to the social, economic and psychological health of family members but also determines the functionality of the whole society. This points has been corroborated by various researches which indicate that family disorganization in Nigeria and in the Niger Delta have resulted in poor academic performance, violent and criminal behaviour, drug addiction as well as socio-economic issues such as cultism, kidnapping and other related social problems bedevilling the region (Bakare, 2013; Odebode & Fatusi, 2016; Oyeshola,

2005). The tremendous negative effects of family disorganization in Nigeria are more notable com-pares to that of other countries.

Conclusion

Flood disasters have wide-ranging effects on families, often resulting in psychological, social and economic disorganization of the family. The loss of homes, disruption of social networks, financial strain, psychological trauma, and the disruption of education and healthcare services undermine the harmony, stability and the family support system, leading to disorganization. Recognizing and addressing these factors is crucial in providing support and assistance to families affected by flood disasters. By understanding the impact of flood disasters on family dynamics, policymakers, communities, and aid organizations can work together to mitigate the negative consequences and promote resilience within families.

Recommendations

Since flooding has become a perennial problem that is wreaking havoc and ravaging lives, property, infrastructure, livelihood etc., all adversely affecting the family to the point of disorganizing it, serious attention is required from government, non-governmental organisations and citizen to address the menace headlong. Thus, it is recommended that:

1. Education and Awareness: Governments and community organizations should invest in educational campaigns to raise awareness about flood risks and preparedness measures. This includes teaching families about evacuation plans, emergency supplies, and the importance of having an emergency kit readily available.

2. Early Warning Systems: Establishing effective early warning systems can provide families with sufficient time to evacuate safely. Governments should invest in advanced technologies such as weather radars and flood monitoring systems to provide accurate and timely information to residents in flood-prone areas.

3. Community Engagement: Building strong community networks can play a vital role in curbing family disorganization during flood disasters. Encouraging residents to participate in community organizations, neighborhood watch programs, and emergency response teams can foster a sense of belonging and enhance communication channels.

4. Clear Communication Channels: Governments and local authorities should establish clear communication channels to disseminate information before, during, and after flood events. This includes utilizing multiple platforms such as social media, text messages, and public announcements to ensure that families receive accurate and up-to-date information.

5. Mental Health Support: Flood disasters can have a significant impact on the mental health of affected individuals and families. Governments should allocate resources to provide mental health support services, including counselling and therapy, to help families cope with trauma and stress.

6. Temporary Shelter and Basic Necessities: In the aftermath of a flood disaster, families may lose their homes and belongings. Establishing temporary shelters equipped with basic necessities such as food, water, and hygiene supplies is crucial to ensure the well-being of affected families. Governments and humanitarian organizations should work together to provide immediate assistance and support in these situations.

7. National disaster and emergency policies should be strengthened to facilitate effective disaster preparedness and response. This approach will not only save lives and livelihoods, but it will equally reduce vulnerability to flood menace.

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Assessing Nigeria's Post-Civil War Idea of "No Victor No Vanquish" Agenda in the Southeast Geopolitical Zone:
A Panacea for National Unity

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Abstract

On 15 January 1970, at the end of the brutal Nigeria Civil War, pronounced the outcome of the war as that of "no victor, no vanquished" an important rhetorical effort to heal the wounds of the war and to give a sense of belonging to the defeated 'Biafrans' into the Nigerian State. The General Gowon administration made it clear that the aim of the Federal Government was the reunification and reintegration of the former citizens of the rebel Republic of Biafra into the Federal Republic of Nigeria. However, 53 years after the famous speech, the southeast geopolitical zone which constituted the majority of the former Biafra Republic is still struggling for political inclusion, social equity, and economic emancipation and development from the Nigerian state. The effect has been the reinforcement of the bitterness of the civil war which has in recent times resurrected the agitation for the independence of Biafra as evident in the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) with a severe threat to the unity of the country. The study therefore recommended the need for restructuring of the country, the creation of more states for the southeast, and inclusive politics among others for the restoration of peace and harmony in the country. The study relied primarily on secondary data and content analysis for its research methodology.

Keywords: National Integration, Civil War, Social Cohesion, Social Inequity, Political Exclusion, and Marginalization.

Introduction

On 15 January 1970, at the end of the brutal Nigerian Civil War, Major General Yakubu Gowon, the Head of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria pronounced the outcome of the war as that of "no victor no vanquished" an important rhetorical effort to heal the wounds of the war and give a sense of belonging to the defeated Biafrans back into Nigeria. General Gowon made it clear that the aim of the federal government was the unification and reintegration of the former citizens of the republic into Nigeria as part of the federation (Kobo, 2020). This was followed by the policy of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reintegration otherwise known as the 3Rs policy. The 3Rs policy was aimed at erasing the memories of the war, reintegrating the people and rebuilding the war-torn Eastern region where the war took place as well as improving the existing infrastructure in the region.

The Speech became famous and attracted accolades and commendations across the international community and also averted what would have later become a huge disaster for the Nigerian state and the entire Western African region. However, 53 years later, the southeast (Igbos) is still struggling with the inequities and inequalities that laid the foundation for the brutal war. The experience for the average Igbo man has been tormenting because of the social inequality, economic marginalization, political exclusion, discrimination in appointments and deprivation in terms of

infrastructural development thereby making the region the most affected in terms of federal developmental presence. This reinforced the bitterness of the long-forgotten brutal civil among the south-eastern Nigeria people who are mostly Igbos, which has found expression in the revocation of the Biafra agitations, seeking the sovereign and independent state of Biafra, from the Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) to the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB). Currently, IPOB is the rallying point for secessionists in South-eastern Nigeria with dire consequences. Against this backdrop, the study reappraises the post-Civil War declaration of "no victor, no vanquished" alongside the injustices meted at the southeast by the federal government as well as the emergence of IPOB. The aim is to draw out the implications of the injustices on the people of south-eastern Nigeria to Nigeria's unity so as to remind the Federal government, policymakers and opinion leaders of the consequences of such actions to Nigeria's unity and to make actionable recommendations on the way forward to addressing the challenges. Tell us the parts of which your paper will cover.

Methodology

The study relied largely on secondary sources of information and content analysis of the phenomenon under study due to its evolving nature. These include extant literature on the subject matter and the use of documentary evidence and reports, news reports from print and electronics, as well as social media reports from confirmed sources. This is supported by internet search engines which proved quite useful to the study in searching for information.

The Concept of National Unity

Ideally, national unity depicts the ability to accept other people from different ethnic groups as one, irrespective of religion, status, culture and geographical location. It encourages people to share ideas, values and emotional bonds and brings a feeling of unity within diversity. Just like other social science concepts, national unity has been defined by many scholars from different perspectives, incidentally, all the definitions seem to have common related basic concepts. This is the reason why it tends to include national cohesion, national integration, nation-building and social solidarity in its description (Bandyopadhyay & Greene, 2009). Although their evolution is intertwined, each of the concepts is different. The Concept of National Unity is used commonly to describe the process of uniting people of various races or ethnic groups with different cultures under one form of national identity (Ismail, 2003). The Malaysian National Unity Advisory Panel (1992) conceptualizes it as "a state in which all citizens from various groups (ethnic, religion, regions) live in peace as one united nation, giving full commitment to national identity based upon the Federal Constitution and the National Ideology". This contention is suggestive of a social situation wherein the citizens consisting of diverse ethnic nationalities, religious beliefs and regions co-exist peacefully as one united nation in accordance with national ideology and Federal constitution.

However, most scholarly definitions of national unity have used the term simultaneously with the term national integration which covers a vast extent of human relationships as well as attitudes ranging from the development of the sense of national identity to the integration of diverse and discrete cultural traditions which include beliefs, values, religion, culture, language, race, gender and many others (Chang, Azizan, & Amran, 2013:175). According to Amri and Etnik (2007), integration is a process that creates a national identity among a separate group in terms of cultural, social and political position, while Unity can be defined as processes that unite the whole community and country to create a sharing value and identity of oneness in order to love and be proud of the country. Morrison et al (1972) in Ojo (2009) argue that national unity is a process by which members of a social system (the citizens) develop linkages and locations so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and the numbers of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact,

cooperation, consensus and community. This view is upheld by Ojo (2009), who asserts that national unity is the process of unifying a country which tends to make it a harmonious city, based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious. Jacob and Tenure (2009) see it as a relationship of community among people within the same political entity … a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, and to be committed to mutual programmes.

Tee Abdullah (2010) put the words "integration and unity" together and defined it as a process to unite a community under one national identity. He further states that cooperation and unity can be promoted via the integration of the federal, economic, cultural, social, educational and political. It is based on this understanding that the Nigerian government has emphasised national integration as an integral part of national unity and national cohesion since the end of the civil war in 1970. However, the principles of such national unity and integration as articulated by the Nigerian constitution have been implemented in breach by successive governments to date. Thereby creating social disharmony, disunity and issues of social cohesion among the divergent groups in Nigeria. The emergence of IPOB and its associated security challenges in the southeast is a consequence of the poor implementation of the principles of national unity and integration as enshrined in the constitution.

The Tansi-International College Awka (2020) highlighted the principles of National Unity to include a common goal, mutual understanding, love, cooperation and trust among the divergent groups that make up a country, and insists that to ensure that these principles are achieved there must be tolerance, unity and faith in their fatherland. The College further highlighted the measures adopted by the Nigerian Government to promote National Unity such as Wazobia; an effort to bring the languages of three major ethnic groups into one national language. Programmes on radio and television were broadcast in the three major languages. WA-Yoruba, Zo-Hausa, Bia-Igbo. Three languages were introduced in the post-primary education curriculum (still in practice to date); the National Youth Service (NYSC) Scheme; the Unity Schools system, the Federal Character Principle; Sports and Cultural Festivals, and the Nigerian Defence Academy. Sadly, these lofty policies and programmes of the government have been defectively implemented to favour a particular region at the detriment of other regions. The most affected is the southeast geopolitical zone which over the past 53 years since the end of the civil war has been unjustly and unfairly treated in a union where it comprises one of the major three ethnic groups that make up the country. This has elicited several calls from scholars, opinion leaders as well as ethno-regional and religious groupings in Nigeria for national dialogue or the full implementation of the previous national dialogues or conferences such as the 2014 National Conference that addresses divisive politics, inequity and inequalities among divergent groups in Nigeria to strengthen national unity. However, it appears to have fallen on deaf ears as Buhari's administration ended up reinforcing the division rather than closing the gaps, which have plunged the country on the path to perdition and disunity.

Understanding the Southeast Geopolitical Zone in Nigeria and the Problematic

The Southeast geopolitical zone which constitutes one of the six geopolitical zones that presently, make up Nigeria is nothing but a chip of the Old Eastern Region which comprises what presently is regarded as the southeast and south-south zones without the Edo-speaking region. The journey of its creation started on 27 May 1967 in the midst of the clamour for self-determination prior to the declaration of the independent state of Biafra in July 1967. The region was fragmented by the then military government of Lt General Yakubu Gowon as part of his t welve states' creation to weaken the Eastern Region. The fragmentation culminated in the creation of three regions namely, the East Central State with capital in Enugu, the Southeast State with capital in Calabar, and River State with Port Harcourt as its capital (Eke, 1997), which resulted in the 12 states structure of the Federal Government.

The aim was to balkanize the formerly strong Eastern region into smaller and smaller space to single the Igbo ethnic group out into a land-locked region to weaken its economic base to serve as a check against the rise of Biafra. It also weakened its political strength, as the newly created regions clamoured for recognition thereby creating identity problems amongst the different ethnic nationalities in the former Eastern region. The aim was achieved and the region was pushed into a cul-de-sac. However, a few years after the war, the region which later became known as the East Central State with its Capital in Enugu bounced back to become one of the hottest commercial hubs in Nigeria with locations in Onitsha and Aba.

In a continuous effort to weaken the region, successive military administrations further diced the country from a 12-state federation in 1967, 19 states in 1976, 21 states in 1987, to 30 states in 1991 and finally 36 states and the FCT in 1996. And later the categorization and adoption of the states into six geopolitical zones: Northcentral, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, South-south, and southwest geopolitical zones by the then Head of State, General Sani Abacha in line with the earlier recommendation of the 1994 National Constitutional Conference (NCC) (Gbenga, 2010).

The six geopolitical zones automatically became the basis for sharing the country's economic, political, and educational resources. With only five states in the southeast geopolitical zone, which includes Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states as against other geopolitical zones with six states each and the Northwest with seven states, the Southeast automatically gets the least of the resources due to the disadvantageous position it found itself among others, economically and politically. Moreover, the region has the least number of local government councils, and the value of allocations is determined by the number of LGs. This means that it gets the least allocation from the federation accounts as against the huge bonuses of other geopolitical zones. Equally, the region has the least federal government assets and infrastructure sites in the country.

In terms of population, the southeast zone has an estimated population of 21,955,414 (21.9 million) approximately the size of Sri Lanka (NBS, 2017). The region's population is predominantly Christians and members of the Igbo ethnic group who make up approximately 18% of the national population, estimated at a total population of 223,804,632 people (Worldometer, 2023). Demographically, youth make up a moderate to high share of the overall population in the southeast. Three states among the five states are significant producers of crude oil and natural gas (Imo, Abia and Anambra states), and also share similarities of a petroleum industry political economy (Vanguard, 10 April 2018). Across the range of industrialization, the Southeast has the most minor numbers of publicly quoted companies in Nigeria (NWGAV, 2014). Cumulatively, the southeast economy is more informal and employs fewer graduates than other regions (NWGAV, 2014).

At the end of the 30 months (1967-1970) brutal Nigerian Civil War on 12 January and officially on 15 January 1970 with the acceptance of the instrument of surrender from Col. Phillip Effiong who then headed the Biafra in the absence of its leader, Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, who had earlier slipped out of his territory in search of international support, the Head of State, Gen. Gowon, rather than basked in the euphoria of perceived victory chose to face the most challenging task of achieving reconciliation and reintegration of the defunct Biafra territory and its people within the shortest possible time. This was expressed through the famous speech "No Victor, No Vanquished" aimed at healing the wounds of the war and charting a new progressive front for the entire country.
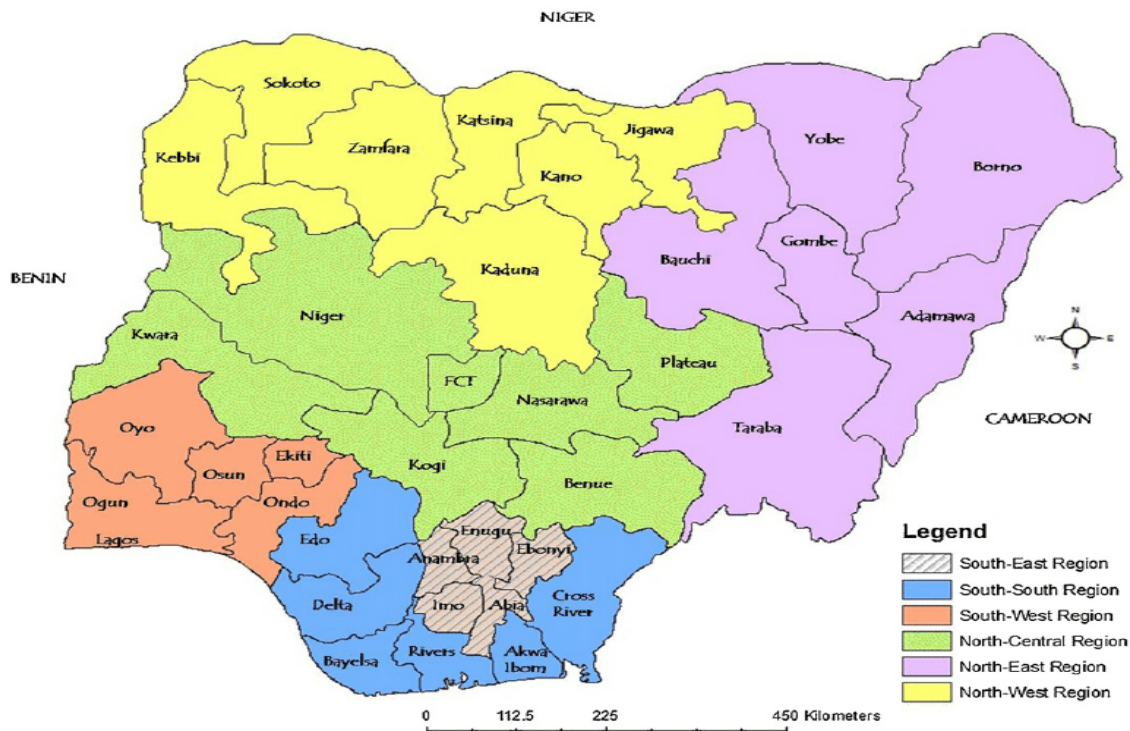
Figure 1: Map of Nigeria Showing the Southeast Geopolitical zone and the other five Geopolitical Zones

Source: Uploaded by Pius Ekong.

The speech was followed by the Federal Government policy of Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Reintegration (3Rs), to erase the scars of the war in the war-torn region. The 3Rs Policy did not just try to rapidly address issues of immediate socio-economic and infrastructural concerns but vividly underpinned Gowon's vision of the future; a vision of a greater, united Nigeria in which anyone, from the East, West, North and South could aspire success in any field of human endeavour (Gowon, 2015). To further strengthen the commitment to national unity and integration, a one-year compulsory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme was initiated by Gowon in 1973. The raison d'etre for the founding of the NYSC is multifarious but the most crucial objective was the cultural integration of the youths, young graduates who were posted to communities outside their home states to know their country, understand other ethnic groups, and to serve and help (Gowon, 2015). This was further supported by the Federal Government's establishment of Unity Schools across the 12 states of the federation. The schools brought about cultural and religious integration on one hand and academic excellence on the other (The Guardian, 14 June 2021). Unfortunately, apart from the NYSC being able to achieve its purposes to a great degree, the 3Rs policy was implemented in a breach and therefore could not achieve the desired results. Thus created the room for disenchantment and animosity that continued to cast aspersion on the federal government policies in the region. The disenchantment and disharmony led the Murtala/ Obasanjo regime to come up with the Federal Character Principle in the 1979 Constitution, to curb discrimination and underrepresentation that characterized the era and to give a sense of belonging to the Igbos in the administration of the country. However, the inability of successive administrations to drive these policies for national unity and integration has been poor and inadequate. Thus, reinforcing the inequities and inequalities of the pre-Civil War era that laid the foundation for the war. We shall therefore address these policies independently to draw out the challenges that have reinforced agitations in the southeast in recent times.

Creation of States

In May 1967 while the Igbos were being massacred across the northern and western regions after the countercoup of July 1966, the federal government of Nigeria under the leadership of Lt Col Yakubu Gowon fragmented the existing four regions (Northern, Western, Eastern and Mid-Western regions) into 12 federating states. This move led to the splitting of the Old Eastern Region into three more regions; East Central State with capital in Enugu, the Southeast State with capital in Calabar, and Rivers State with Port Harcourt as its capital. The aim was to weaken the strength of the region to form a formidable front politically and economically to confront the federal government. David J. Murray identified this plan when he said:

> "The Federal Nigerian Government will have to achieve new drive and dynamism if it is effectively to reintegrate the whole Ibo people…. This author notes that to those in power in the Eastern Region, the decree of May 1967, creating the 12 states was a device for removing from their control land, oil under that land, and thus wealth. The creation of the East Central, Southeast and Rivers States out of the former Eastern Region became the immediate cause of the attempted secession of Eastern Nigeria and the creation of Biafra." (Murray, 1970:135)

Incidentally, the aim was achieved as the federal government was able to Balkanize the region into smaller pieces to the extent that the Igbos were pushed into a land-locked situation. It created an identity and survivalist problem within the region as the newly created region became antagonistic to the Igbos in the quest to get closer to the federal government for political and economic support. In addition, the fragmentation continued to the extent that the southeast in recent times has the least number of states and local government councils compared to the other geopolitical zones and therefore gets the least allocation of revenue among the six geopolitical zones of the country. This is because the local governments and states form the basis of revenue allocation and sharing from the federation accounts. Thus deepening the marginalization of the Igbos in the sharing of the commonwealth of the country. Aribisala (2015) pointed out that the consequence of the southeast being the only zone with the least states is the least amount of revenue allocation in the federation. Collaboratively, the former Governor of Anambra State, Dr Chukwuemeka Ezeife and the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Chief Olu Falae, have argued that the creation of more states and local governments in favour of the Northern states was an injustice against their zones, southeast & southwest respectively as gave the North both political and economic advantages over the other regions (Kalu, 2017). Falae further pointed out that Lagos state which is densely populated, shared a uniform number of local governments (precisely 20 LGAs) with Kano state. However, Lagos has been made to retain the same number of local government areas, while Kano has grown to 71 LGAs inclusive of Jigawa State (44+27) (Kalu, 2017). Recall that Jigawa state was carved out of Kano. It is not only the lopsided revenue allocations being channelled to the northern region that are perceived as injustices, but the political inequities acutely manifest in addressing the national issues (Nsoedo, 2019).

Table 1 shows the distribution of local government areas in Nigeria by Geopolitical zones.

With such a structure, the voice of the region is suppressed by the overwhelming voices of the other regions, by inference affecting policies towards the zone in a negative way. The dilapidated nature of the southeast roads, the insignificant presence of federal government projects, the disadvantage in federal appointments, and the political exclusion of the southeast that has characterized the present administration are all part of the effects of a weak political structure.

Table. 1: Distribution of LGAs by Geopolitical zones

Geopolitical Zones	No of LGAs	Percentage of LGAs	Population of LGAs in Millions	Percentage in National Population
Northcentral + Abuja	120	55.5	12.5	14
Northeast	111	14.3	11.9	13.4
Northwest	186	24	22.9	25.8
Southeast	95	12.2	10.8	12.1
Southsouth	123	16	13.3	15.1
Southwest	139	18	17.4	19.6
Total	774	100	88.8	100

Source: Compiled from the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) as amended.

The Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Reintegration (3Rs) Policy

The Federal Government's 3Rs policy and the dictum of No Victor, No Vanquished by Gen Gowon, were meant to assure the people of the defunct Biafra territory that the war was officially over, and there was a great need to rehabilitate and reconstruct the war-torn region by attracting more presence of government, and spread of infrastructural development as well as citing national assets and critical infrastructures to complement and improve what was on the ground for effective functioning of the region (Gowon, 2015). It was also to ensure communities within the region that they have not been abandoned. However, the federal government rather than vigorously and successfully implementing the 3Rs policy, to achieve the objectives of the policy was found wanting, as the implementation was haphazardly conducted. Incidentally, successive governments after the Gowon regime have continued along the line with little or none to show for it, thereby entrenching in the discrimination of the region in terms of critical national assets and infrastructure citing across the country.

Official statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicate that: on quality and length of roads, the number of healthcare facilities and educational institutions provided by the federal government between 2003 and 2008, the North is generally higher than the South. Within the southern region, the south-south records are better and far higher than the southeast, and slightly lower than the Southwest (Udalla & Ezegwu, 2011). In addition, the entire Old Eastern region cannot boast of a functional international cargo airport and sea ports despite being the hub of the economic structure in Nigeria. For decades the Port Harcourt and Calabar ports have deliberately rendered redundant to frustrate economic activities in the southeast and emasculate the economy of the Igbos who are predominantly commercial traders.

Suffice it to know that up until the Nigeria Civil War, the Port Harcourt Port was a bustling port (Information Service, 1956 quoted in Nsoedo, 2019). It was also the second largest port in the country commissioned in 1913 as with Lagos port (NIMASA e-Library, n.d). The Calabar seaport was equally busy handling exports and imports, thus aiding commercial activities across the region. This deliberate redundancy of the seaports by the federal government frustrated Igbo businesses and led to the massive migration of their businesses to Lagos and Ogun states because of their proximity to the seaports and the resultant steady congestion of the Lagos port. A recent report based on estimates by terminal operators has it that more than 2 million twenty tons equivalent units (TEUs) of laden containers are awaiting clearance at Lagos seaports (The Pointer, 2019). The Lagos ports handle over 80 per cent of the cargo that comes into the country (The Pointer, 2019). These challenges prompted Nsoedo (2019) to ask:

> "In spite of these problems and the perennial calls for the decongestion of the Lagos seaports, the federal government have remained adamant, sometimes with frivolous excuses of why it could not be down. The question is, if there is oneness in the country as it is being propagated by the federal government, why is the River Niger not dredged till now? Why are the Calabar and Warri ports still not improved, or make it friendly to use Port Harcourt port to ease the economic waste arising from the concentration of activities in the Lagos ports?" (Nsoedo, 2019:430).

There is also the issue of functional cargo international airports in the southeast geopolitical zone despite being the hub of commercial trade as well as the massive population of the Igbos scattered around the world with businesses on importation and exportation of goods and services across the world. It is highly worrisome and unacceptable that there is no single functional international flight from the zone. It is more pathetic when they could only connect direct international flights from Lagos, Abuja or Kano and not Enugu or Owerri. In 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan was able to complete the facilities at the Enugu Airport now Akanu Ibiam International Airport to commence international flights. However, there are still impediments as it is only Ethiopia Airline with a direct route from Nigeria to Addis Ababa that plies it. It is important to note that the inability of the federal government to upgrade the Enugu Airport to international status was deliberate and a ploy to emasculate the economy of the region

In addition, under the President Buhari administration, the southeast geopolitical zone was deliberately excluded from the Federal Government/EXIM China US$22.7 billion project loan presented for approval in the Senate in 2020 is a striking example. According to the President, the loan was to ensure the prompt implementation of projects under the borrowing plan with specific emphasis on infrastructure, agriculture, health, education, water supply, growth and employment generation, poverty, reduction through social safety net programmes, governance and financial management reforms among others (The Guardian, 18 March 2020). Looking at the extent of deprivation and marginalization in the southeast, one begins to wonder why a loan meant to be invested in the improvement of infrastructure in the country excluded the most deprived of the regions, in terms of government critical national assets and infrastructure. Details of the loan, when it was made public, revealed that the southeast zone was excluded from the projects it was intended for. None of the projects captured in the loan for execution when it is eventually received falls within the southeast zone. Just as other zones will enjoy a measure of succour from it. Available details indicated that southwest will get $200,000,000 while south-south, excluding Edo State, will get $4,270,000,000. Northwest will get $6,372,000,000, Northeast will get $300,000,000, and Northcentral will get $6,531,000,000 while $5,853,900,000 is reserved for general expenses (The Guardian, 18 March 2020). While the southeast gets nothing. Distribution or allocation of government resources in such a manner sets the zone on a warpath with the government and also reinforces the embers of disenchantment and disunity in the country.

The Abandoned Properties in Rivers State

The term 'Abandoned Property' is generally used to describe the property acquired by non-indigenes in the various States in Nigeria before the Nigerian Civil War, and which property was left in the States where they were resident before returning to their states of origin. It was an official term used by the Nigerian government to describe the property of fleeing Nigerians from their States of residence to their home States and which property was taken over by the Nigerian state (Akolokwu, 2012). In Rivers State, it was used to designate premises or compounds, buildings and lands belonging to the Igbos who were resident in Port Harcourt before the Nigerian Civil War but who left to return to their states; and which properties were handed over to the abandoned Property (Custody and Management) Authority. According to the Rivers State Edict on Abandoned Property (1969):

"Abandoned Property means any moveable of immovable belongings to a person whose hometown or place of origin is not situated in the Rivers State of Nigeria, which in the opinion of the Military Government or the Authority has been abandoned by the owner thereof as a result of the civil war in Nigeria or the disturbances in the country leading to it and is at the time of the making of this Edict not in the physical occupation or under the personal control and management of such owner" (Edict No 8, 1969).

As part of the unification and reintegration of the country after the civil war with the hope of giving a sense of belonging to the Igbos back into Nigeria and also finding a lasting solution to the disenchantment and frustration of the Igbos who lost their properties outside their territory, the Murtala/Obasanjo regime that took over power from Gowon in 1975 set up the Col. Daramola Panel on Abandoned Properties in Rivers State. The Policy marked the first serious attempt to find a solution to the problem of abandoned properties during the post-civil War era (Onoh, 2023). It was seen by many to have transcended ethnic politics. In accepting the recommendations of the Panel, the Head of State, Gen. Murtala advised in a broadcast to the nation: "At this stage, any just solution to the question of abandoned properties must involve the spirit of give-and-take on all sides" (quoted in Onoh, 2023). Afterwards, a package of N14 million naira was announced by the Murtala to enable the two states (Rivers and East Central) to pay rent arrears on all the building property. Both State governments were directed to pay adequate compensation on all acquisitions to the owners. According to Onoh (2023):

"Specifically, Adeniji enumerated in his review that the White Paper on the Panel's report directed that 75% of the houses in Port Harcourt should be sold to indigenes of Rivers State while 10% should be sold to other Nigerians, excluding the Igbos. By mathematical deduction, 15% of the building in Port Harcourt was to be released to the Igbo owners. Those who have their buildings now belong to this category (Onoh, 2023).

Selling 85% of the houses to Rivers people and other Nigerians excluding the Igbos when the properties in question legitimately belonged to the Igbos is not in tune with the dictum of No Victor, Vanquished as declared by Gowon after the end of the war. Even the federal government implementation committee on Abandoned Properties (APIC-Abandoned Properties Implementation Committee) under Maj. David B. Mark was unfair to the Igbos and as a result increased political pressure on the government. It impacted severely the lives of many Igbos because many could not reclaim their properties and investments in their States of residence after the war having fled to their homes during the war. As a result, the properties came under the control and management of the state governments where they were situated and became subject to new conditions and laws. Some of the properties were converted to public use while others were destroyed or rebuilt resulting in loss of the character of the buildings (Akolokwu, 2012). Up to this moment, the Igbos have always shown dissatisfaction with the implementation of the API Committee. In 1990, a bill to repeal the Abandoned Properties Act Cap 1, Laws of the Federation 1990 and declare void the sale or disposition of abandoned properties conducted by the Abandoned Properties Implementation Committee and also seeks to revert and vest all rights and interests in the properties tagged 'abandoned' to their original owners was sponsored by Hon Tony Anyanwu (Abandoned Properties (Repeal) Bill 2000).

Unity Schools System

As part of the efforts to unify and reintegrate the country a few years after the brutal war, the Federal Government of Nigeria under the leadership of Gen. Gowon established new Unity Schools across the 12 states of the federation. For at least two decades the schools brought about cultural and religious integration on one hand as well as academic excellence on the other hand. Till the

early 1990s, admission into the Unity Schools was very competitive, though consideration was also given to students in the catchment area of each school. Merit was the foremost consideration for admission, to ensure that each college admitted brilliant students, thus precipitating healthy academic competition, which helped the average students to up their ante (The Guardian, 14 June 2021). In addition, the ethnic, cultural, religious and social backgrounds of the students were diverse with pupils from wealthy and influential families mingling freely with those from humble homes. However, these glories have been terminated by the discrimination and lopsided behaviour of the administrators to the detriment of merit and academic excellence that was the dictum of the schools. More opportunities are given to the other regions at the detriment of the southeast zones, even when the candidates from the southeast score higher marks than others.

Quite recently, the Federal Ministry of Education in the bid to concretize the inequity and inequality in the admission policy into the 104 Unity schools has favoured states in the North over the South by granting very low cut-off marks from the North while the Southern states are denied admission through very high cut-off marks (Onyekakeyah, 2017). For instance, a situation whereby out of the maximum score of 200, candidates from Zamfara and Bayelsa states only need to score 2 and 72, respectively, while their counterparts from Anambra and Lagos must score 139 and 133, respectively, to be admitted is not only absurd but also unacceptable. This has been the situation, despite a court verdict that abolished the disparity in cut-off marks in the schools in 2014. The Federal High Court in its ruling gave a "mandatory order compelling the Minister of Education to implement a uniform cut-off mark for the 36 states of the federation" (Landmark Ruling, 07 April 2015). The Ministry has chosen to disobey the court order and nothing seems to have been done about it. Hapless pupils from the southern states, particularly are been denied admission simply on grounds of the state of origin and tribe. The table below shows the cut-off mark according to states.

Table. 2: National Common Entrance Examination Cut-off Marks by States

Geo-political zone	States	NCEE Cut-off Marks	
		Male	Female
NORTH CENTRAL	Benue	111	111
	Kogi	119	119
	Kwara	123	123
	Nasarawa	58	58
	Niger	93	93
	Plateau	97	97
NORTH EAST	Adamawa	62	62
	Bauchi	35	35
	Borno	45	45
	Gombe	58	58
	Taraba	3	11
	Yobe	2	27
NORTH WEST	Kaduna	91	91
	Kano	67	67
	Katsina	60	60
	Kebbi	9	20
	Jigawa	44	44
	Sokoto	9	13
	Zamfara	4	2

Geo-political zone	States	NCEE Cut-off Marks	
		Male	Female
SOUTH EAST	Abia	130	130
	Anambra	139	139
	Ebonyi	112	112
	Enugu	134	134
	Imo	138	138
SOUTH WEST	Ekiti	119	119
	Ogun	131	131
	Ondo	126	126
	Osun	127	127
	Oyo	127	127
	Lagos	133	133
SOUTH SOUTH	Akwa Ibom	123	123
	Bayelsa	72	72
	Cross River	97	97
	Delta	131	131
	Edo	127	127
	Rivers	118	118
FCT	FCT	90	

Source: Compiled from the full list of cut-off marks for the 36 States and the FCT, 2018 Academic Session.

This discrimination and lopsided admission that have characterized the Unity Schools is fast derailing the raison d'etre of the schools which is foremost to entrench a sense of unity among young people where each of them related with one another in a cordial way regardless of ethnic or religious background. Equally, it is fast instigating disenchantment and disharmony among the most affected southeast region, particularly at this time when agitations and mass discontent are ragging across the country.

Federal Character Principle

Section 318(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended defines the federal character of Nigeria to mean the distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national integration and loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation. Section 14(3) of the 1999 constitution as amended also captures the federal character saying:

> "The composition of Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and to promote national unity and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies" (The Constitution of Nigeria, 1999 as amended)

Based on the constitution, the purpose of the Federal Character principle was to prevent dominance by any sectional group, be it either ethnic or religious, in the country's political governance. The principle of federal character was first introduced into the Constitution of Nigeria in 1979 under Gen Olusegun Obasanjo's regime. The underlying philosophy of the Principle is to provide equality of access in the public service representation to curb dominance and reflect Nigeria's various diversities.

It marked a strong stance of the regime about Nigeria's unity, especially after the brutal civil war and in tune with the No Victor, No vanquished dictum. In 1996, the federal government established the Federal Character Commission (FCC) as a federal executive agency to implement and implement and enforce the federal character principle of fairness and equity.

Regrettably, the implementation of the Principle has been biased and does not reflect the philosophy of the Principle especially when it comes to placing a south-easterner (Igbo) in certain positions. For instance, Section 14(3) and (4) of the 1999 Constitution states that "the constitution shall provide for the equitable distribution of positions in the military, paramilitary, police, all other security institutions, public service, parastatals, and publicly owned companies" (Chapter IV, 1999 Constitution). But for decades this has not been reflected in the appointments of public officers in Nigeria for decades. Evidence has shown that portfolios given to the southeast are not accommodative enough and ineffective for the human and infrastructural development of the southeast (Ezemenaka & Prouza, 2016). This statement re-echoes Muhammed Bello's argument that although the purpose of the Federal Character Principle is laudable, its application and operation tend to disintegrate rather than integrate Nigerians (Bello, 2012). This misapplication of the federal character principle has been prevalent in Nigeria for decades since the second republic, but the Muhammadu Buhari eight-year (two terms) administration was the worst offender that had been called out for his insensitivity to the southeast when making appointments. According to Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, "the incumbent Nigerian President, General Buhari has wilfully ensured that the southeast zone was not included in the National Defence Council" (Premium Times, 23 October 2018). The exclusion is not only in the National Defence Council but also in the entire leadership of all the three arms of government in the Buhari administration. However, this was rationalized with a bogus claim that the zone did not produce any ranking senator or member of the National Assembly on the platform of the All Progress Congress (APC) (Nwabufo, 2019). But on its part, President Buhari repeatedly without remorse made it clear that his administration considered 95 per cent of its projects to the 98 per cent that voted him to power, therefore the southeast is only considered in the 2 per cent remnant of the projects (The Cable, 26 May 2017). This is suggestive of an indication of a deliberate move to marginalize the zone by the administration, which is directly opposed to the dictum of No Victor No Vanquished.

The Buhari administration also made sure that the region did not get close to any of the principal officers of the government from the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) to principal officers of the National Assembly (Senate President and Speaker), and the Chief Justice of the Federation. Even the appointment of the heads of the services and other paramilitary institutions was denied the region. Even the second term of the government did not correct the inequity in the zoning arrangement: the President (Northwest), Vice President (Southwest), senate President (Northeast), Speaker of the House of Representatives (southwest), Deputy Senate President (South-South), and Deputy Speaker (Northcentral).

The deliberate exclusion from the political equation of power in Nigeria and the fear of appointing an Igbo man to hold sensitive strategic positions by those who have been running the federal government since the end of the Nigerian Civil War is what Ike Okonta refers to as a continuation of "war against the Igbos by other means." (Okonta, 2012: 166). It is not that appointments are not given to the southeast, but the 'non-inclusiveness' of the Igbos and other ethno-phobic behaviours in the top political circles (where deliberations concerning the country are meted out) since the civil war remains a major reason behind the call to restructure Nigeria as well as the several agitations across the country include IPOB.

The Implications to the Southeast Geopolitical Zone

According to Gen Yakubu Gowon the philosophy of the No Victor No Vanquished dictum which he pronounced at the end of the civil war in 1970 was to roll up their sleeves as they set their hands on the plough to rebuild Nigeria after they had silenced the guns. However, 53 years down the line the speech is yet to walk the talk resulting in social inequality, political exclusion, economic marginalization as well as discrimination and deprivation on the people of the region with severe implications on the region. The implications are as follows:

Emergence of Separatist Movements in the Southeast Geopolitical Zone

The poor implementation of the No Victor No Vanquished Dictum of the Federal Government and the continuous inequality and inequities meted out on the southeast by the federal government have cumulatively brought about several lamentations, disenchantments and disharmony against the federal government which have found expression in the emergence of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) with its severe implications to the unity of Nigeria. According to Professor Ebere Onwudiwe, the mismanagement of General Yakubu Gowon's Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (3Rs) policy, which the military government put in place to erase the scars of war was the major reason for the resurgence of Biafra uprisings (The Guardian, 8 June 2017). He further stated that "it was the failure of Nigeria to vigorously and successfully implement the Tree Rs policy that was partly responsible for the establishment of Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)" (The Guardian 8 June 2017). MASSOB led the way in the early period of the fourth republic precisely in 1991. Due to the loss of trust in the leader, Chief Ralph Uwazuruike, IPOB, a more vociferous and radical group was formed in 2012 by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. IPOB

By 2015 with the establishment of the "Radio Biafra" IPOB became the rallying point of the Igbos' agitation against the inequity and inequality of the federal government over the years, especially the disenchanted youths who see Nigeria as a failed state that offers them nothing but "blood, pains ad sorrows". Their belief is that the realization of the independent and sovereign state of Biafra is key to the end of social injustice, marginalization, deprivation, inequity and inequality that are been meted out to the Igbos. Unfortunately, the federal government rather than address the demands of the group, decided to coercively shut them down. Firstly, it arrested and incarcerated the leader of IPOB, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Then followed by the pronouncement and proscription of the group as a terrorist organization in 2017 by an ex parte order granted by the Federal High Court, Abuja (Daily Post, 12 October 2022). However, the proscription of IPOB has turned out to be one of the most politically divisive actions taken by the Federal government under the Buhari Government. Today, IPOB, a non-violent and unarmed group agitating for an independent state of the former Eastern region known as the blight of Biafra have been forced to wield arms against the government with severe implications for the security and unity of the country. A situation that has led to several fracas between federal government security forces against members of IPOB.

Sadly, there is the emergence of different faceless and vicious groups in the region in the name of Unknown Gun Men (UGM) unleashing all manners of violent attacks such as arson, the brutal murder of high-placed individuals and politicians in the region, kidnapping for ransom, violent attacks on police formations and barracks, prisons, market places and event centres, etc., In many instances, the UGM have threatened and attacked businesses of other ethnic groups who are either bringing their wares for sale or residence in the region from other regions in the name of fighting for the release of IPOB leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu or implementing a "sit-at-home order in the region". Statistics from Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) show that 970 incidents were reported between 2019 and 6 January 2023, with an estimated 1,360 deaths reported. About 60 per cent of

these attacks were carried out by Unknown Gun Men, while the IPOB carried out 129 attacks and communal militia 101 (The Conversation, 2023). All these put together stand opposed to the unity and integration of the country which the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria envisages.

Return to Regional Politics

One of the implications of the political exclusion and economic marginalization in the southeast is the region's recoil to regional politics from mainstream politics. The experiences of the 2019, and 2023 elections have shown how the entire region has supported a particular party on the basis of capturing political power. In 2015 the PDP had the full support of the southeast because of the emergence of Peter Obi as vice presidential candidate to Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party despite the pleading of the APC chieftains to woo them to support President Buhari's second term. In the just concluded 2023 general elections, 98 per cent of the region voted for Mr Peter Obi's Labour Party to show solidarity with one of their own against the major political parties' (PDP and APC) domineering influence. An issue that has polarised the country across ethno-regional fault lines.

Hatred and Divisive Politics

One major effect of the negligence of the region resulting from the poor implementation of the No Victor, No Vanquished dictum was the reinforcement of hatred and divisive politics between the Igbos and other ethnic groups in Nigeria. In many instances, these grievances and hatred have manifested between the Igbos and those in power thereby resulting in violent attacks and reprisal attacks at the slightest provocations from other ethnic groups at the helm of power. The incidences of violent attacks on the Igbo ethnic group in Lagos during the 2023 General elections aimed at disenfranchising them are striking examples (Sahara Reporters, 20 March 2023; ThisDay, 22 March 2023; Premium Times, 15 April 2023). Such incidents also played out in the majority of the northern states during and after the 2015 and 2019 general elections that saw the emergence and return to power by President Buhari. During the lead-up to the gubernatorial elections in 2015, the Oba of Lagos stated that if Igbos did not vote for Akinwunmi Ambode would perish in the Lagoon River within seven days (Royal FM 95.1MHz, 06 April 2015.

Distrust towards the Federal Government

Trust is one of the key elements of social cohesion and largely determines the extent of a citizen's allegiance to a country. Therefore when it is lacking among citizens in a multi-ethnic and religious country like Nigeria, it sends a wrong signal to its unity. The negligence of the No Victor No Vanquished speech on the people of the southeast has brought with it a lack of trust or distrust from the citizens of the southeast geopolitical zone towards the federal government to the extent that they tend to believe the pronouncements of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and his Radio Biafra instead of the government of the day. Thus, reinforcing the proclivity towards their ethnic group over nationalism. Though this is not peculiar to the southeast, they are the worst hit. The 2021 Nigeria Social Cohesion Survey conducted by the African Polling Institute (API) revealed that there is growing citizens' distrust towards the state and fellow citizens as well as a proclivity towards ethnicity over nationalism (The Nigeria Social Cohesion Survey Report, 2021:14). It also reported that the country is more divided today at the time of the survey (2021) than it was 4 years ago. This is absolutely true, because of the high level of injustice. For instance, how can the Igbo ethnic group which is among the three major groups that make up the country not be included in the National Security Council of the country and be expected to take it hook line and sinker? It is impossible else the treatment continues. It is issues like this that are breeding the overwhelming lack of trust in the country. This is worrisome, given

that citizens' trust enhances allegiance which is essential for the country's economic growth, unity and development.

Disenchantment, Acrimony and Violence

In any given society where a particular section or section is treated socially unequally, politically excluded and economically marginalized, the implications are always disenchantment, social acrimony and violence. Violence uprising is always resorted to as a last resort for self-preservation and sustenance of the movement. This is exemplified in the several violent attacks on security forces that have become prevalent in the southeast region in recent times as well as the formation of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), an armed wing of IPOB, the rise of Unknown Gun Men and other faceless criminal groups claiming to be fighting for the actualization of Biafran state and the release of the leader of IPOB, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Between January and May 2021, criminals strategically targeted government facilities, especially police stations and personnel, in the various states of Nigeria's South-eastern region, and a total of 16 police stations were attacked, buildings burnt, arms carted away, and officers killed (FES Policy Brief, 2021).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Obviously, there is no gainsaying that the emergence of separatist movements such as the MASSOB and now IPOB, the rising disenchantment and acrimony, the recoil to regional politics, the violent uprising, the hatred and divisive politics and the rising distrust in the southeast over the federal government are offshoots of the negligence of the federal government towards the implementation of the No Victor No Vanquished dictum that was pronounced at the end of the Nigeria Civil War, aimed at healing the wounds of the war by reconciling the two groups, rehabilitating the war-torn eastern region and reintegrating the people back to the Nigerian system to maintain one indivisible entity. Therefore to find a lasting solution that would assuage the people of the southeast region, douse the tension and resolve the anomalies for national peace and unity, the paper recommends the following:

1. **Restructure:** There is a need for the Nigerian government to agree to the much talked about wholesome restructuring of the country to correct the imbalances that characterized the entire country in terms of allocation funds, state creation, political exclusion and marginalization of the southeast region.

2. **Equity and Fairness:** There is a need for equity and fairness in the administration of policies to ensure a sense of belonging among the ethnic groups that make up the country. Fairness and equity help in managing crises of nation-building like the IPOB agitation and reducing multi-ethnic tension rather than the application of force. The issue of agitations for marginalization and deprivation in the southeast would be a thing of the past if the resources of the country were equitably distributed among the various geopolitical zones of the country.

3. **Provision of infrastructure in the southeast:** The southeast ranks lowest among the six geopolitical zones in terms of the presence of federal government infrastructure. Across the range of industrialization, the Southeast has the least number of publicly quoted companies in Nigeria. The dilapidated road networks should be rehabilitated, and new ones constructed to ease traffic. There is also the need to revive the redundant seaports in Calabar and Port Harcourt for easy economic activities in the zone as the people are predominantly commercial traders.

4. **More States for the Southeast:** The present structure and composition of the geopolitical zones is not favourably to the southeast, economically and politically. For the fact that the states and local government areas remain the bases of resource allocation sharing the southeast will

continue to get the least amount. For the purpose of equity and fairness, one or two more states should carved out of the southeast and more local government areas created also.

5. **De-proscription of IPOB:** There is a need to review the proscription handed to IPOB and if possible withdraw it. The organization is neither a terrorist organization nor an armed group. The continued proscription of IPOB compared to the "patting on the back" approach of the deadly Fulani herders is counter to bringing peace in the zone. It is viewed as an orchestrated plan to maim Igbo youths rather than an approach to suppress the group. The southeast is seriously bleeding and the federal government should find a proper way of assuaging the zone rather than inflict more injuries on them.

6. **True Inclusive Politics:** True inclusive politics should be practised in Nigeria to ensure that the three major groups that formed the regional tripod in Nigeria should be well represented in the running of the affairs of the country from the presidency to the Security managers of the country. The absence of true inclusive politics steers ethno-phobic behaviours and other centrifugal pulls that bring disunity and conflict in a multi-ethnic society. This is because those who are excluded in the affairs of the country will not be comfortable maintaining the union while those with power ride on impunity. The end result is always tension and conflict as the case with the Igbos and the present government where they are treated as "third class" citizens.

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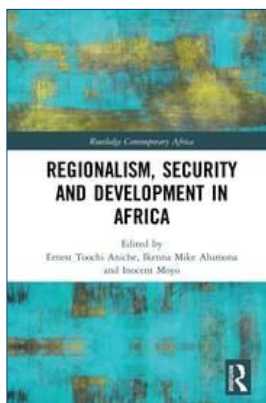# Regionalism, Security and Development in Africa

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Regionalism, Security and Development in Africa is a collection of seventeen chapters edited by Ernest Toochi Aniche, Ikenna Mike Alumona, and Innocent Moyo. The book is a comprehensive one that explores the intricate relationships between African regionalism, security, and development, aiming to stimulate academic research, scholarly debates, and intellectual discourse. To achieve this, the volume is divided into 17 chapters written by esteemed scholars, mainly from Africa. The book reflects three intellectual traditions: Afro-optimism, Afro-pessimism, and Afro-realism. These perspectives shape the contributors' views on regional integration, security, and development in Africa. The book is organised around four main themes: History and Theory of African Regionalism, Africa's Comparative Regionalism, Regionalism and Security in Africa, and African Integration and Development.

In the introduction, the editors opine that the partitioning of Africa during the scramble for Africa, formalised at the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), has left a lasting impact on the continent. Despite decades of pan-Africanism and regional integration efforts, African economies remain fragmented, weak, and dependent on external powers. The legacy of colonialism and the ongoing influence of international financial institutions have hindered Africa's economic development and integration. Regional integration initiatives, such as the African Union and the African Economic Community, have made progress but face numerous challenges. Further, they state that scholars have identified various obstacles to successful economic integration in Africa, including disparities in size and development among member states, fear of domination, and external influences such as neo-colonial ties and multinational corporations. Despite these challenges, some scholars remain optimistic about the prospects of pan-African regionalism, highlighting potential benefits such as larger markets, economic cooperation, and trade facilitation. However, others argue that African regionalism has not lived up to its promise and that a new approach is needed.

The first part of the book explores conversation on various debates and ideas on the history and theory of African regionalism, focusing on how cooperation among nations can address security and development challenges. Chapters examine the evolution, concepts, theories, foreign policy implications, and political economy of African regionalism. It comprised of Conceptualizing and

Historicizing African Regionalism in the Context of Pan-Africanism; Beyond Neo-Functionalism: Africa in Search of a New Theory of Regional Integration; Foreign Policy Initiatives and Pan-African Regionalism; and Migration and Regional Integration in Africa: Some Critical Disjunctures.

Part Two focuses on Africa's Comparative Regionalism. Individual chapters compare regional integration in Africa with other regions, exploring prospects, challenges, and trans-regional partnerships. African regionalism aims to promote decolonization, continental unity, collective self-reliance, and economic transformation. It involves multiple regional economic communities (RECs) with overlapping memberships, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA). Chapters here include: Towards a Single African Economic Space: Informal Cross-border Trade and the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area; Regional Integration and Trade in the Central and West Africa: ECCAS and ECOWAS in Comparative Perspective; European Union and African Union Internal Coordination and Crisis Management: Some Critical Reflections; and African and Latin American Regionalism: Perspectives for Interregionalism and South-South Cooperation

The third chapter investigates Regionalism and Security in Africa. Chapters identify and discuss peace and security implications, regional security architecture, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, militancy, insurgency, terrorism, counter-terrorism efforts in Africa, and related issues. We have Security Challenges and African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA); Nationalism, Separatism, Conflicts and Pan-African Integration; Insurgency, Terrorism, Militancy, and African Regionalism; Political Succession and Regional Integration in Africa; and The African Union and Its Expanding Role in Peace Keeping and Conflict Resolution in the Post-Cold War Era here. The book adopts an expanded concept of security, emphasizing the protection of individuals and community involvement.

The fourth and last part of the book assesses African Integration and Development: Chapters investigate regionalism's role in promoting economic integration, trade, and investment in Africa, including democratization, gender, trade, bilateralism, multilateralism, and globalization. Chapters included in this theme are Developmental Regionalism and Democratization in Africa; Developmental Regionalism Strategies and Gender in Africa: A Study of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); Multilateralism and Regional Trade Agreements: The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA); and Globalization and Modern African Regionalism. This book emphasizes the importance of people-centred development, leading to holistic improvements in quality of life, political stability, and community involvement.

The contributors' perspectives are rooted in Afro-optimism, Afro-pessimism, or Afro-realism, providing a comprehensive understanding of African regionalism, security, and development. The book employs desktop studies, historical and documentary research, and qualitative analysis. Contributors suggest theoretical alternatives and policy options, making this volume a valuable resource for scholars and policymakers. With the recent ratification of the AfCFTA, this book is timely and topical, likely to stimulate scholarly debates on regional integration in Africa and beyond.

Regionalism, Security and Development in Africa is a valuable contribution to the literature on African regionalism. It provides a comprehensive overview of the complex relationships between regionalism, security, and development in Africa. It provides a solid foundation for future research and policy engagement. The book provides a comprehensive overview of African regionalism, security, and development, covering various themes and perspectives. The editors have brought together a diverse group of scholars from Africa, providing a range of perspectives and a nuanced understanding of the topics. The book employs an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on insights from politics, economics, sociology, and history. The book's focus on Afro-optimism, Afro-pessimism, and Afro-realism provides a unique and refreshing perspective on African regionalism

and development. The book's publication coincides with the ratification of the AfCFTA, making it a relevant and timely contribution to the field.

However, some chapters' heavy reliance on desktop studies and historical research, may limit the book's empirical rigour. While the book's theoretical contributions are valuable, some chapters prioritized theory over practice, which may limit the book's appeal to policymakers and practitioners. Some chapters may repeat or overlap with each other, which may detract from the book's overall coherence and impact. The book could benefit from more quantitative analysis to support its arguments and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issues.
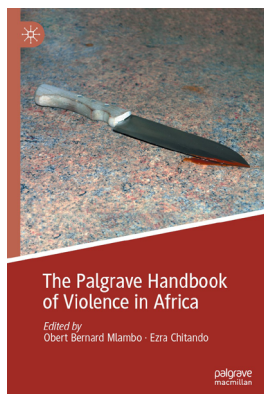
The Palgrave Handbook of Violence in Africa

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The Palgrave Handbook of Violence in Africa is a collection of fifty-six chapters edited by Bernard Mlambo and Ezra Chitando. The individual chapters are authored by scholars with expertise in African studies and profound knowledge of conflicts in Africa. The book is divided into seven different parts discussing systematically the key elements of African culture, and the cultural mechanisms that create, sustain, resist, and mitigate violence in Africa. The book enumerated the enormous role violence has played in the continent's affairs, before, during, and after Western rule and dominance. The book also pays detailed attention to theoretical emphases on the link between violence in Africa and other factors such as colonialism, regionalism, race, gender, warfare, statecraft, elections, apartheid, technology, etc. It also attends to theorises between violence and political regimes in Africa.

In the introduction, the editors stated that violence is a concrete dimension of the African historical and contemporary experience. It is not stereotypical, but rather a live experience of encounters that define and shape existential realities. Although, they made it crystal clear that the aim of the book is not to perpetuate some sort of stereotype of Africa as a violent continent or the home of never-ending forms of violence. Discussing this aspect of the continent is crucial because the continent's socio-political crisis cannot be addressed without attending to the structural, stratified, and epistemic violence that has underlain the nation-state project in Africa.

The book discusses violence in Africa in its various forms of expression, including psychological and cultural dimensions, mechanics, constitutive elements, patterns, progression, characteristics, etc. The chapters did not merely proffer a prescriptive approach to violence in Africa but considered interpretative reflections, and non-deductive data analysis, both at the macro and the micro levels. The handbook also proffers an understanding of violence through the storytelling approach. The introductory part concluded by pointing out that every single discipline of study in the social sciences and humanities is preoccupied with the phenomenon of violence and no single discipline can discuss violence exclusively without borrowing from the other. This is evident as there is the absence of shared definitions of what violence is, its causes, methods, and approaches.

The first part of the book conceptualized violence in Africa. The section attempts to clarify what violence is all about especially from an African lens. Some of the chapters in this category analyzed the use of technological devices in perpetuating crimes in Africa. In the first chapter of this section, Ezra Chitando and Obert Bernard Mlambo asserted that violence is never a simple concept and should never be presented as such. Hence, the topography of violence, technologies of violence, terrorism, civil war and insurgent violence, child soldiers and violence, epistemic violence, structural violence, violence and memory, violence and the law, cultural mechanisms for creating, sustaining, resisting, and mitigating violence, political violence, violence in moments of religious, social, and geo-political transformation, gender and violence, and violence against nature, among many other themes were all touched in the chapter. Contributors to this section laid the foundations for clear and intense forms and causes of violence in Africa, as well as proposed solutions that can contribute towards curbing or overcoming violence. Aside from the conceptualization of violence in Africa, the first section of the book discussed violence in Africa: reflecting on a broad concept; the rate of oppression (ROp); systemic and epistemic violence in Africa; technologies of violence in Africa; border violence in Africa; diaspora and the afterlife of violence; the chemical violence of colonial encounters in Africa; epistemic violence in the postcolony; geographies of violence and informalization; and through the Afrocentricity lens: terror, insurgency and implications for regional integration in Southern Africa from Cabo Delgado province, Mozambique.

The second section of the book discusses State and violence in Africa. The authors highlighted political violence and the mechanics of legitimation in official commissions of inquiry in Africa. Since 1990, there have been more than seventy commissions of inquiry in Africa that have investigated incidents, periods, or patterns of violence, from the various truth commissions. The section further discussed other topics like party politics, violence, impunity, and social, injustices in Zimbabwe (1980–2022). Topics on preventing electoral violence in Africa: towards sustainable peace; EndSARS and Police brutality in Nigerians; among others were all discussed.

The third part examined the phenomenon of violence in Africa and its various effects on youths and children in Africa. Some of the chapters under this section provided an in-depth investigation of how patterns and cultures of violence affect youths and children, analyzing how youths and children are both subjects and objects of violent conflict in Africa. The issue of child soldiers in Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, Eritrea and the Democratic Republic of Congo were well analyzed. In this section, Babayo Sule, Ibrahim Kawuley Mika'il and Mohammed Kwarah Tal discussed other political phenomenon like violence, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and conflicts in 21st Century Africa. They examined the nexus between the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) among the youth and conflict in Africa.

In the fourth section of the book, the authors analyzed the religious and cultural nature of violence in Africa. Some of the chapters in this section examined the role of religion in conflict escalation and de-escalation. Illustrations on how religion and cultural beliefs have contributed in causing and de-escalating violence in African societies were stated.

In part five of the book, which marks the second volume of this handbook, scholars of African studies and violence explore the issues of violence and gender in Africa. The conceptions and misconceptions of gender ideologies by both genders in Africa were x-rayed by some of the authors in this section. Also, sexual violence against girls and women in African conflicts was highlighted under some of the chapters in this category. An issue like how sexual violence disproportionately affects girls and women in Africa during conflict covers a major aspect of this section. The chapters adopt a discursive approach to examine sexual violence in African conflict.

Part six of the handbook focuses on violence, memory, and the law in Africa. Some chapters in this section presented memory as another dimension through which violence is conceived, remembered, and imagined. The section examined the psychological aspect of conflict and explored the role of memory in contributing to violence in Africa. How various laws in Africa have contributed to the debate on violence in Africa was equally examined by some authors. It also explored how laws are deployed to deal with violence in Africa.

Finally, section seven analyzed how violent conflicts can be prevented and de-escalated not just in Africa but across the globe. The chapter by James Tsabora proposes an institutional response mechanism that could be appropriated and deployed to address the violent conflicts in Africa. Whereas Victor H. Mlambo, Ernest Toochi Aniche, and Mandla Mfundo Masuku in their chapter under section seven "Managing Conflict in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities for the African Union" examined the extent to which the African Union has been successful in addressing widespread violent conflicts in Africa.

The in-depth nature of this book has presented it to serve as an antidote to the long-awaited theoretical and practical solution to minimize violent conflicts in Africa whose origin predates colonialism. By assembling scholars on African studies and conflict studies, the editors have provided both students and researchers of African studies and conflict studies a qualitative and quantitative academic material that will aid further studies on related topics, especially in this twenty-first century.