SYNERGY BETWEEN THE YOUTH AND A SECURED NATION: AN ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP NIGERIA THROUGH POLITICS AND ELECTORAL REMINISCENCE.

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ABSTRACT
Insecurity is another factor battling the political development of Nigeria. It has been observed over the years that no amount of political awareness of the populace, the country will remain underdeveloped politically until this issue is resolved. However, the youths have a lot of roles to play in order to restore the thrust in the government through their participation in the political process and combating with all their strengths the insecurity of the nation. The study therefore aims at examining these roles and some of the impacts of the persistent insecurity on political development in the country. Survey research method with the use of questionnaire to garner responses from various stakeholders and politicians was adopted by the researcher. System Theory was used to navigate the study with expected findings. The result of findings of the study shows that the youths can participate actively in the political affairs of the nation by; joining political parties of their choice, shunning all political violence, engaging in peaceful political rallies and campaigns and ultimately vying for elective positions in the country. It also identifies political apathy, low turnout of voters during elections, disinterest in politics, lack of trust in the leadership and fear of death and intimidation as some impacts of insecurity on political participation of the youths in Nigeria. The study thereby recommends that; godliness, provision of employment opportunities by the government, secured borders, good parental care etc will improve on the security state of the nation.

Introduction

Insecurity is gradually affecting the democratic institutions globally. In Africa, Asia, Americas, Australia etc, this surge is having serious effects on the values of the concept (Willige, 2017). The interconnectivity between insecurity, democracy and the youths as they influence political participation and or involvement is raising much concern in many political discourses. Even the US which is presumed to be the flag-bearer of democracy in the world, the presidential elections which saw Joe Biden as the winner and eventually becoming the 46th American President on the 20th January, 2021 was lagging behind upholding some principles of the form of government. In some emerging democracies however, the seeming delirium of democracy may still be subsisting due to the problems of insecurity and instability of the system (Okeke, Imaga & Obiakonwamuo, 2019).

Since democratic rule berth in Nigeria in 1999, the country has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity which is not too far from the incidences of the killings by the Boko-Haram insurgents, kidnappers, cultists, armed robbers, hired – assassins etc. It is argued that the failure of the democratic government to bring the dividends of democracy through the development process into the country has made several people vent their anger on the government through violent means. There is high tendency that frustration can lead to groups taking arms against the state (Ajaegbu 2012).

However, over the years, there has been a serious decrease in the level of political participation and this might not be too far from the level of trust and mistrust of the citizens in the government (Onakoya, 2019).

He wrote;

> *'Being a cynical apathetic – having low trust in the government, low level of political participation is gaining more ground on daily basis and thus influencing democracy and political life negatively. The youths have always been involved in this due to proper understanding of what democracy stands for. They are also active participants in the insecurity battling the Nigerian state' (Onakoya, 2019:34)*

On the other hand, the involvement of the youths in this nefarious act can't be overemphasized. Despite the country's lengthy embrace of the democratic system of government, national insecurity has persisted in the Nigerian state (Okeke, Imaga and Obiakonwamuo, 2019). The 'blame game' which erupted recently between some international media houses and the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture was as a result of our poor security system. The deaths which occurred during the peaceful protest of the #ENDSARS by the youths and the shootings at the Lekki Toll-gate further exposed the national security of the nation to the outside world. There were claims and counter-claims by the Military Headquarters and the Lagos state Government over who 'ordered' the shootings. This further worsened the already battered trust people has in the government and invariably affects our democracy.

Political participation is the involvement of the citizens in the political system. Adelekan (2010) described political participation as the process through which the individual plays a role in the political life of his society and has the opportunity to take part in deciding what common goals of the society are and the best way of achieving these goals. According to Akamare (2003) political participation is an aspect of political behaviour and it focuses on the way in which individuals take part in politics. It is a voluntary activity and one may participate directly or indirectly. The various ways by which the people can be involved in the political system include selection or election of political leaders, formulation of policies, community activities and other civic engagements.

Insecurity on the other hand is the state of being insecure or unsafe. The state is liable for providing security for members of the public. Wherever a state fails in this regard, the state is considered to be a weak state. Most of the weak states in the world are considered weak because they failed in their primary function in providing security for their citizens (Rice, 2007). In the post-Cold War era however, human security or a people centred view of security has assumed centre-state. This is based on the fact that threats to human life emanate not only from situation of violent conflicts but other non-conflict sources (Saliu, Luqman and Abdullahi 2007).

While some will agree that age 15-24 are youths, others may extend it up to 35 or 40. For the purpose of this study, the age range of 18 – 35 as youth will be used as defined by the Nigeria Youth Policy. Thus, the youth constitute over 50 million of Nigerian population (NPC, 2006). Within the legal domain, age has been used to differentiate between crime and delinquency. The age of responsibility is vital in legal argument in this regard (Griffin, 2005). Such determination of age of responsibility has political connotations. This may explain why certain crimes are tried in juvenile rather than conventional courts. It is the duty of every government to determine the age of responsibility and age category that will be regarded as "youth".

Statement of the Problem

Considering the level of insecurity in the nation and the impacts this is having on the political participation of the youths, recent figures show that most of the young people of voting ages have either disinterested in the political affairs of the nation and/or are afraid of being killed or intimidated by the political class. In Epe Local Government of Lagos state, the results of the 2019 general elections saw a low-turn-out of the youths during the polls compared to that of 2015. In fact, there was a significance of about 35% drop in the rate according to the reports released by INEC. In view of the above, the youths have a lot of roles to play in the restoration of the democratic values in the country. However, a lot of literatures have dealt with these roles but not much have been exhausted on it. Here lies the lacuna the study wishes to fill and contribute to the existing knowledge.

Therefore, the following research question seems very imperative to answer in order to give us a realistic political front and acceptable democratic values.

What impacts do insecurity have on political participation of the youths in Nigeria?

Objectives of the study

The major objective of the study is to investigate the role of the youths in the political participation in Nigeria. Other specific objective is to examine the impacts of insecurity on political participation of the youths in Nigeria.

Literature review

Many literatures have been found trying to make meaningful contributions to the concepts of insecurity and political participation in Nigeria. Situating these to the real involvement and participation in political processes may not be dealt with extensively most particularly the roles of the youth in the democratic principles in the face of the lingering problems facing the institutions of democracy in Nigeria and its perforated insecurity status. Therefore, literatures where reviewed in a bid to conceptualizing various words considered as key in the paper.

Political participation is the involvement of the citizens in the political system. Eakin cited in Adelekan (2010) described political participation as the process through which the individual plays a role in the political life of his society and has the opportunity to take part in deciding what common goals of the society are and the best way of achieving these goals. According to Akamare (2003) political participation is an aspect of political behaviour and it focuses on the way in which individuals take part in politics. It is a voluntary activity and one may participate directly or indirectly. The various ways by which the people can be involved in the political system include selection or election of political leaders, formulation of policies, community activities and other civic engagements.

Arowolo and Aluko (2010) noted that the essence of political participation in any society, either civilized or primitive, is to seek control of power, acquisition of power and to influence decision making. Political participation is a means of contributing ones quota to the political system and overall development of the nation. Political participation is one of the fundamental requirements of democratic governance. Huntington and Nelson (1976) also defined political participation as an "activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making" whereas Verba (1995) characterized it as an "activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action – either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies." Any claim to any democratic regime or state must essentially embrace a high degree of competitive choice, openness, and enjoyment of civic and political liberties and political participation.

However, the level of political awareness as well as the measure of confidence in the political process determines the extent to which the citizens participate in the political system. In Nigeria, politics is influenced by money, ethnic and religious factors. Since independence in 1960, religious and ethnic politics characterize electioneering process in Nigeria. The youths tend towards participating in politics for mere participation sake and a lot lack the basic ideology of political participation. Some

are influenced by the money politicians spend during electioneering campaigns while to some others who are not ready to be part of the system find excuses in the inability of the government to provide basic amenities for them.

Ibrahim (2019) suggests that the only way government can get feedback from the people about certain policies and measures is allowing them to actively involve in the decision making of the government through political participation. This will go a long way in seeing individuals as stakeholders in the society and community they belong.

Therefore, political participation is the act of involving in the activities of politics from policy making, policy implementation, voting, campaigning, joining political parties, seeking elective positions to the act of governance in its real sense.

Security and insecurity are typical social science concepts which appear principally in the literature of social psychology, sociology, political and allied sciences. Security according to Jacobson 1998 denotes a situation which provides national and international conditions favourable to the protection of a nation, state and its citizens against existing and potential threats. The socio-psychological conceptual framework of national insecurity therefore is the opposite of the above. When a nation is facing internal and external threats, we say it is insecured (Jacobson, 1998). While using Israel as a case study, he identified two major approaches to the study of insecurity in any nation - the political and socio-political approaches. The first approach takes care of the orderliness and peace of the nation while the second takes care of the individuals living in the country. Both approaches are germane to any national development.

Theoretical Framework

The System Theory

The idea of system theory originates from Bertalanffy general system theory (GST). His ideas were adapted and popularized by Kenneth Boulding, Ross Ashby and Anatol Rapoport. Bertalanffy defines system as elements in standing relationship. System means a configuration of parts connected and joined together by a web of relationship. Bertalanffy's idea behind systems theory is that nothing can be explained by isolating a component of system. His thought on scientific reductionism could not accurately explain a whole system because that thought pattern broke everything up into pieces instead of studying things as a whole (Beven, 2006). A system is a cohesive conglomeration of interrelated and interdependent parts that is either natural or man-made. Every system is delineated by its spatial and temporal boundaries, surrounded and influenced by its environment, described by its structure and purpose or nature and expressed in its functioning. In terms of its effects, a system can be more than the sum of its parts if it expresses synergy or emergent behaviour. Changing one part of the system usually affects other parts and the whole system, with predictable patterns of behavior. For systems that are self-learning and self-adapting, the positive growth and adaptation depend upon how well the system is adjusted with its environment. Some systems function mainly to support other systems by aiding in the maintenance of the other system to prevent failure. The goal of systems theory is systematically discovering a system's dynamics, constraints, conditions and elucidating principles (purpose, measure, methods, tools, etc.) that can be discerned and applied to systems at every level of nesting, and in every field for achieving optimized equi-finality (Beven, 2006).

The relevance of this theory lies in the way our systems work in Nigeria. The political system to a large extent does not permit much involvement of the youths in the democratization process in the country. The 'old gin in a new bottle' is almost the order of the day, therefore, leaving the youths at the other corner of hooliganism, thuggery, violence and the likes.

Research Method

Research design

The study used the descriptive survey method with the use of questionnaire to collect data from respondents randomly selected from the large population

Study Area: The study was carried out in Epe Local Government Areas of Lagos state. Epe

Local Government of Lagos State is in the southwestern Nigeria. According to the 2006 census, it has about 236,567 population. It lies on the north bank of the coastal Lagos Lagoon and has road connections to Ijebu-Ode and Ikorodu. A traditional settlement of the Ijebu people (a subgroup of the Yoruba ethnic group). It was established in the mid-18th century as the chief port (slaves, cloth, agricultural products) for Ijebu-Ode (17 miles [27 km] north-northwest), the capital of the Ijebu kingdom. It later served as the refuge for the forces of Kosoko, the Yoruba king ousted from Lagos (42 miles [68 km] west-southwest) by the British in 1851 (Edu, 2000).

Modern Epe is a collecting point for the export of fish, cassava (manioc), corn (maize), green vegetables, coconuts, cocoa, palm produce, rubber, and firewood to Lagos. Special leaves useful in preserving kola nuts are trucked to Ijebu-Ode, Shagamu, and the other main kola-shipping towns. Epe is best known for its construction of the motorized, shallow-draft barges which navigate the coastal lagoons. Major occupations of the residents are, civil service, farming, petty-trading, entrepreneurship, fishing, self-employment etc.

Politically, it has nineteen wards – Odoragunshin, Odomola, Ilara, Ibowon, Poka, Isale-Agoro, Ajaganabe, Lagbade, Ita-opo, Abomiti, Oriba, Erepoto, Papa, Itokin, Orugbo, Ota-Ikosi, Agbowa, Ejirin and Owu - for easy administration where its headquarters is located at the centre of the city, Itamarun (Onakoya, 2020).

Population, Sampling and Sampling Procedure: About 120 questionnaires were distributed and only 108 responded and submitted for final analysis by the researcher while considering the Yaro Tamane formulae of 0.005 of the total population of about 236,567 according to the 2006 census's report.

Research Instruments: Questionnaires were randomly distributed by the researcher with 3 basic sections. Section A was for the information of the respondents. Section B examined the major roles of the youths in the democratic principles of Nigeria. Section C gave responses on the impacts of insecurity on political participation of the youths in Nigeria.

Procedure for Data Analysis: Simple percentage method was adopted for the analysis of the data collected for easy understanding of the study.

Results of findings:

The results of findings of the study are as follows;

Table 1. Occupational distribution of the respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Civil servants	55	62%
Politicians	22	17%
Artisans	11	11%
Farmers	10	7%
Academics	9	3%
Total	108	100%

Source: Field survey, November 2020.

This table reflects the occupational distribution of the respondents. It was gathered that most respondents were civil servants with 62% due to the geographical location of the study areas, followed by Politicians with 17% and Artisans with 11%. Others were farmers and academics with 7% and 3% respectively.

Table 2. Educational status of the respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Ph.D	12	11%
Bsc	39	44%
HND	7	9%
OND/NCE	22	17%
SSCE	10	11%
Primary Certificate	9	5%

Others	9	5%
Total	108	100%

Source: Field survey, November 2020.

In the above table, it shows that most respondents were holders of bachelor degree holders with 44% followed by OND/NCE holders with 17%. These were followed by PhD and SSCE certificates holders with each set having 11%. Others were HND holders with 9%, primary school-leavers and others without any educational qualification with 5% each.

Table 3. Major roles of the youths in the democratic principles of Nigeria according to the respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Joining political parties.	21	22%
Participating in electoral processes.	13	14%
Vying for elective positions	42	42%
Conducting peaceful electoral rallies and campaigns.	11	11%
Shunning all forms of political violence.	9	9%
Assisting the government in policy implementation.	7	6%
Suggesting possible solutions and ways to further address the dilapidated socio-economic structures.	7	6%
Total	108	100

Source: Field survey, November 2020.

The above table shows that most respondents representing 42% of the total responses want the the Nigerain youths to actively participate in the democratic affairs of the country by contesting elective positions in the nation. Also, 22% of the respondents would want the youths to join political parties of their choice in preparation for elections. Participating in electoral processes and others followed in sequence as reflected in the table. Therefore, the responses are really expatiating the roles of the youths in the democratic principles of the country.

Table 4. The impacts of insecurity on political participation of the youths in Nigeria.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Political Apathy.	62	65%
Poor and low turn-outs during elections.	6	4%
Disinterest in politics.	22	20%
Lack of commitment and trust in the leadership.	6	4%
Fear of death and intimidation	12	7%
Total	108	100

Source: Field survey, November 2020.

In the above table, insecurity will lead to serious apathy in the polity. This represents 65% of the total responses. Also, there will be disinterest in the political affairs of the nation and this takes 20% of the responses. Fear of death and intimidation follows with 7% of the responses. Poor and low turn-outs during elections and lack of commitment and trust in the leadership have 4% each in the table.

Discussion of Findings:

For easy understanding, the study has itemized its major findings. These are basically;

a) Major roles of the youths in the building of good democratic principles in Nigeria.

   i. Joining political parties.

   ii. Participating in electoral processes.

   iii. Conducting peaceful electoral rallies and campaigns.

   iv. Vying for elective positions

   v. Shunning all forms of political violence,

   vi. Assisting the government in policy implementation.

   vii. Suggesting possible solutions and ways to further address the dilapidated socio-economic structures etc

b) The impacts of insecurity on political participation of the youths in Nigeria as identified in the study are;

   i. Political apathy.

   ii. Poor and low turnout during elections.

   iii. Disinterest in politics.

   iv. Lack of commitment and trust in the leadership.

   v. Fear of death and intimidation etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study examined the roles of the Nigerian youths in the democratic affairs and principles of the nation. Some of these were, joining political parties, vying for elective positions, shunning all forms of political violence in the country, conducting peaceful electoral rallies and campaigns and a host of others. It has also identified some impacts of insecurity on political participation of the youths in Nigeria. These are:- political apathy, low turnout of voters during elections, disinterest in politics, lack of trust in the leadership and fear of death/ intimidation.

Contribution to knowledge

The study among others has examined the roles of the Nigerian youths in the democratic principles of the nations and also exposed the impacts of insecurity on the political participation of the youths in Nigeria thereby paving way for further studies on the roles of the youths.

Recommendations

After elaborate analysis of the discussion and the result of the findings, below are some of the recommendations of the researcher to the study. These are based on the responses got from the field work on the subject. It is hoped that if these are taken into consideration and strictly followed by the government, the poor state of the nation's security will be a thing of the past. Godliness is very paramount in whatever we do as good citizens. Whenever God is put first in all our doings and activities, we shall triumph and get the necessary dividends of democracy we want. Then security is assured.

The government at all levels must also see to the prompt provision of employment opportunities to the unemployed youths. This will give them the needed focus and duties to see nation building as a thrust for all.

Our parents must see to the wellbeing and training of the children and wards. It should be taken very seriously as the saying goes that charity begins at home. A secured nation and depends largely on the orientation given to our youths right from home.

It is high time the federal government saw the urgent need to beef-up security along our border lines most particularly the porous ones. These are entrances to the nation. Bandits and insurgents use our borders to smuggle in various arms and ammunitions which are used to cause mayhem and crisis in the country.

The military must be well equipped. Budgetary allocation to the defense ministry must also increase. When we do these, we are moving gradually towards securing the nation better and stronger.

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