

Effects of Poverty on ‘Yan Kalare’ Thuggery in Gombe Local Government Area, Gombe State (2007-2015)

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Abstract. This study is on the effects of poverty on Yan kalare thuggery in Gombe local government area, Gombe state (2007-2015). Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, elections in Gombe Local Government Area have been characterized by the criminal activities of Yan Kalare thugs. Poverty is argued to play a significant role in fostering the menace of Yan Kalare because most of the thugs that are used by politicians often come from poor family background. The study adopted Relative deprivation theory which explains a possible and potential cause of deviances in the society, when an individual’s means do not correlate with their goals which often lead to the extreme situation of violence such as rioting, terrorism, thuggery and many other crimes in the society. The study made use of both primary and secondary types of data. Questionnaires were administered in the field and text books, journals, newspapers, as well as online materials were also consulted. The findings of the research revealed that poverty has indeed promoted the menace of political thuggery, which has negatively affected electoral outcomes in Gombe Local government area. The study therefore recommends that existing policies that were meant to help eradicate poverty and the menace of Yan Kalare by reducing the level of poverty in Gombe Local Government Area should be strengthened in order to meet the desired target. Strict punishments should also be placed upon politicians and thugs who harbour or take part in the activities of Yan Kalare in Gombe Local Government Area. In addition, the government should sponsor willing youths to obtain their education, especially because most of them are either illiterates or school dropouts.

Keywords: Poverty, ‘Yan Kalare’, Politics, Political Thuggery.

1. Introduction

Contemporary Nigerian politics is seen as centered upon the use of thuggery by politicians, a situation which has allegedly facilitated false victory at the polls. The failure of the Nigerian government since the return to democratic rule in 1999 to address the issue of widespread poverty and other social problems in the country has been arguably blamed for the fragile democratic elections and corruption which has made political thuggery significant (Micheal, 2011). These groups of thugs go by different names such as *Yan Kalare* in Gombe state, *Yan Sara Suka* in Bauchi state, *Yan Daba* in Kano state, among numerous others. Their criminal activities usually begin from the early stage of elections and eventually become worse during election periods. These groups of unemployed youths are believed to be sponsored by politicians who lure them with extravagant promises, employment opportunities and financial rewards. Since 1999, these gangs of youths have been sponsored by politicians to carry out their dirty work and protect their political interests and ambition. But once elections are over, these trained youths are abandoned without any other means of survival (WeeklyTrust Newspaper, May 10th 2008). In Gombe state, these thugs are generally referred to as *Yan Kalare*. Their criminal actions range from snatching ballot boxes and election materials, as well as the harassment and intimidation of voters at the polling units. The actions of these *Yan Kalare* thugs is however connected with the fact that these energetic thugs are redundant and come from poor homes. It also coupled with the fact that politicians do not accept election defeat in good faith. As such, these thugs are easily susceptible to the manipulation of these desperate politicians (Omotola, 2008).

2. Conceptual Review

2.1 Poverty

Poverty represents the inability to cater for one's basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter, all of which could be as a result of manmade or natural disasters. Social scientists have made several efforts in an attempt to conceptualize poverty. Broadly speaking, poverty can be conceptualize in four different ways which are; the lack of accesses to the much needed basic necessities of life; lack of access to production resources; insufficient use of available resources ; and result of 'exclusive mechanisms'. Here, poverty being the lack of access to the basic needs of life such as food, health care and housing is basically economic and associated with consumption. The material aspect of poverty is highlighted in order to explain the depth of poverty, so as to be able to identify who is and who isn't poor. Hence, the poor folks represent those individuals or households in the society that are unable to afford some basic needs including a well nutritious food, water, housing and healthcare services, as well as civil rights which will allow them to take part in the decision making process of their respective communities (Streeten and Burki, 1978).

According to Ukwu (2002) poverty has two basic concept, these are absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty represent a condition of serious lack of access to the basic needs and services, such as food, clean water and housing, among others. Relative poverty on the other hand represents the condition of an individual, household or community especially when compared with the living standards of the average living condition for the group or region it occupies. Poverty could also thrive as a result of insufficient use of the available resources which could be as a result of weak government policies, absence of adequate infrastructure, absence of adequate technology etc. Poverty could also be as result of certain groups employing mechanisms in the system in order to sabotage the development as well as the democratic process of a given country (Olatomide, 2012). Poverty has also no single cause. Rather, there is a combination of many factors. Some of these factors include; negative or low economic growth; lack of proper policies, crippled labour market due to limited job growth, low wages and productivity. Low standard of living and the presence of increased crime and violence and environmental degradation are significant factors (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2001; Ogwumike, 2002 and NPC, 2004).

2.2 'Yan Kalare'

Gombe state is home to a number of youths that have formed gangs who turn to crimes in order to make a living out of it. The residents of Gombe state generally refer to these notorious gangs as *Yan Kalare*. Political events and rallies are never carried out without these *Yan Kalare* thugs that are mobilized to threaten and scare away opponents or prevent the possible attack by enemies (Dailytrust Newspaper, July 2, 2013). Hassan (2011) explained that these *Yan Kalare* groups were originally hunters known to move in groups for the purpose of hunting wild animals. Lamido (2008) further explains that during the mid-1990s, a man known as *Kalare* was invited to Gombe state to attend a victory ceremony hosted by some hunters in *Jekadafari* ward, within Gombe metropolis. The guest, *Kalare*, performed very well and was appreciated and hailed. Afterwards, he received many gifts in recognition of his performance by the people of Gombe state. Eventually, youths in Gombe state joined the profession of hunting and idolized the man '*Kalare*', especially in the promotion of hunting activities in the state.

Similarly, Abdulaziz (2016), explained that prior to the return to democratic rule in 1999, there exist a group of youths whose mission was hunting and were generally referred to as *Yan Farauta* (hunters). They are known to help and assist each other through attending of naming ceremony, weddings, turbaning, among other local events. Some of them were also blacksmiths, farmers and long distance vehicle drivers. They are also known to seek protection from herbalist and *wanzamai* (local barbers) by collecting charms that they wear or carry around, which helps in making them immune to sharp and dangerous objects. However, after the return to democratic rule in 1999, and also two years into the administration of the former Governor of Gombe state, late Abubakar Habu Hashidu, who came into power under the defunct All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), some of these hunters broke into fight with each other while attending a naming ceremony. And the popular *Yan Farauta* turned into the dreaded *Yan Kalare*. Politicians afterwards, took advantage of this sudden change and began to show their support to these *Yan Kalare* groups by way of assisting them with money, food stuff, weapons and drugs. The *Yan Kalare* were then recruited to intimidate electorates and harass political opponents. These politicians also visit their 'temples' which refers to the *Yan Kalare* thugs meeting places and shower them with gifts of all kind.

These *Yan Kalare* gangs have engaged in politically motivated attacks, rape, and killing of innocent individuals especially during election periods. These *Yan Kalare* thugs are also easily identified by the weapons they carry such as machetes and sharp knives and their identities are known by many residents in the state. Once election is near, these dangerous weapons remain in their hands which will assist them in carrying out their deadly acts (Dailytrust Newspaper, July 2, 2013). There are different groups of *Yan Kalare* such as *Yan Kalare* of Dawaki, *Yan Kalare* of Bolari among numerous others. These different groups also engage in rival clashes between and among themselves, which is often bloody and affects innocent individuals.

However, in an effort to address the menace of *Yan Kalare* in the state, the administration of the former governor Muhammad Danjuma Goje created a policy which was intended to provide youths with employment opportunities in the state. An agency known as Gombe State Environmental Protection Agency was established, where youths benefitted from the policy. These youths received financial assistance and loans so as to enable them engage in small scale businesses (Abubakar, 2015). The administration of Muhammad Danjuma Goje also created the Anti-*Kalare* squad, as a response to the numerous complaints received from many residents in the state. The Anti-*Kalare* squad was tasked with the responsibility of responding to distress calls by residents of the state and also to engage in a 24hours patrol within the metropolis (Muhammed, Kamsiah and Lucy, 2017). Similarly, On his assumption into office in 2011, the former governor of the state, Dr Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo made efforts to ban the activities of *Yan Kalare* thugs. He created policies which are meant to assist in eradicating the menace of *Yan Kalare* in the state. These policies include the Talba Empowerment Scheme (TES) and the Talba Youth Orientation and Rehabilitation Programme, which enrolled and trained in batches over 2000 youths, most of which were *Yan Kalare* thugs. The Talba Empowerment Scheme (TES) was meant to assist in changing the mind set of these *Yan Kalare* thugs so that they can become productive and useful to the society (Ejere, 2011). At the start of the programmes, willing youths surrender their weapons and were trained as road marshals, sanitary officers and security assistants, who will assist the police in locking away bad people (The Nation, June 7, 2016). However, these policies and programs introduced by different administrations did not succeed in completely eradicating the menace of political thuggery in Gombe state, especially because the presence of these *Yan Kalare* thugs are felt in every

general election conducted, especially within Gombe state metropolis.

2.3 Nexux between Poverty and ‘Yan Kalare Thuggery

Poverty means having insufficient resources, and in an extreme form, it is the lack of basic needs such as adequate food, clothing, housing (shelter), clean water and access to healthcare services. Poverty can also said to be extreme or severe when it has caused immense sufferings or even lead to death. Poverty can also prevent people from accomplishing their goals or building up on their potentials. The frustration that comes with poverty can sometimes be expressed through the use of violence. Hence poverty is believed to have foster economic problems (Mukhtar, Isyaku, Sani, 2016). In an effort to escape from frustration and other financial constraints, youths often take refuge in political thuggery. Political godfathers and other top politicians take advantage of the situation to recruit, train and brainwash these youths into participating in the act of political thuggery, with their crimes often going unpunished as a result of the powerful political elite they work for (May, 2016). This assertion clearly shows that a poor person is often a desperate person and can be subjected to any means at his disposal, including violence, to be able to meet his required needs. And since these thugs are generally seen as poor, desperate and impoverished, they willingly allow themselves to be exploited by power hungry politicians seeking to obtain and or retain power at all cost.

Political thuggery is believed to be one of the outcomes of poverty and unemployment, coupled with other social and structural factors, which have put certain members of the society at a better position while others at a pathetic living state. Social differences in our society today are as a result of an unequal allocation of wealth, power and other social benefits. It is therefore not a surprise that criminal gangs are harbored in some of the poorest societies today (Siegel, 2010). Odumosu (1999) explained that, poverty is a key socio-economic obstacle that may increase the risk of crimes, especially as rapid urbanization is witnessed in the country. The constant presence of groups of idle young men in so many urban cities has aided the menace of political thuggery (Njoku, 2012). Therefore, the fact that poverty is related to criminal behaviors has since been theoretically proven and established by criminologist (McKeown, 1948).

The link between poverty and political thuggery has also been explained by the panel headed by Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, a prominent Muslim cleric. The panel which was established to investigate the causes of the 2011 election disturbances by the then president Goodluck Jonathan who contested under the banner of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). According to the panel report which was submitted on 10th October 2011, the obvious deepening poverty in the northern part of the country, as well as ‘easy access to drugs, serious general poverty at the grassroots level and youth unemployment in particular are providing many foot soldiers ready for recruitment.’

3. Theoretical Framework

Relative Deprivation Theory: Relative deprivation is a concept used in the social sciences in order to explain measure of political, economic and social deprivations that are considered to be relative rather than absolute (Kurt, 1999). The concept of relative deprivation which was first used by an American sociologist Robert K. Merton was meant to understand social deviance. Social scientists, especially sociologist and political scientist have perceived Relative Deprivation as a possible and potential cause of deviances and other social movements in the society, which can even lead to the extreme situation of political violence such as rioting, terrorism, thuggery and many other crimes in the society (Robert, 1938, Ted 1970). For example, scholars of such types of social movements have explained the rise of such deviances by mentioning some of the grievances of these people who often feel that they are being deprived of what they perceive as values of which they are entitled to (Jerry, 1982). So also, individuals could engage in some kind of deviant behaviors especially when they see that their means do not correlate with their goals (Ted, 1970). Some of the basic assumptions of the theory include:

- Individuals in the society are engaged in deviant behaviors when they cannot be able to meet their goals and aspirations.
- A person is seen as deprived if and when he/she is underprivileged in a material or immaterial way.
- People who are deprived of valuable things in the society such as money, justice, status or privileges often join movements hoping to redress their grievances.
- People who see themselves as being exposed to relative deprivation are likely to have fewer aspirations as a result of their shortcomings

5. Data Analysis and Findings

- Ones aspirations as a result of their social class or status have the potential to create feelings of resentment which may cause one to retaliate negatively in the society.

Relative deprivation theory is significant to this research because the youths that are involved in *Kalare* are generally known to come from poor families that live below the poverty line. Relative deprivation emphasizes how and what these thugs feel in their community of residence, which actually gives them a greater incentive to engage in criminal activities such as political thuggery. Relative deprivation theory has been criticized for failing to explain why some who are deprived of things that are essential in the society, refuse to be part of such movements meant to redress their grievances. However, the proponents of the theory argue that, these people only want to avoid conflicts and difficulties that might be encountered in the process and with no assurance of having a better life afterwards (Diana, 2005).

4. Methodology

The study made use of primary and secondary types of data. The primary data are first-hand information which was obtained through administration of questionnaires. The secondary type of data was obtained through books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and other periodic publications or reports, prints and electronic. According to the National bureau of statistics (NBS) the projected population of Gombe Local government area as at 2016 is 367500 and according to the Krejcie and Morgan’s table, the sample size of 384 respondents is enough for the entire population. Probability sampling method was also used because of its appropriateness to this study. Questionnaires were distributed equally among all eleven (11) wards under Gombe Local Government Area so as to ensure an equal representation. These wards are; *Ajiya, Bajoga, Bolari East, Bolari West, Dawaki, Herwagana, Jekadafari, Kumbiya-Kumbiya, Nasarawo, Pantami and Shamaki*. Regular verification and validation of data was done with all inconsistencies checked and resolved with the researcher and research assistants. The study also made use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 22.0 version in processing the quantitative data obtained through questionnaire administered in the field, which are presented using tables.

Out of the 384 questionnaires distributed, 371 which constituted 96.6%, were filled and returned, and are the basis of our analysis. The unreturned questionnaires were 8 which constitute 2.1%, while the 5 invalid questionnaires constitute 1.3%.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

S/N	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Age	18-28 years	162	43.7
		29-39 years	149	40.2
		40 and above years	60	16.1
		Total	371	100
2	Sex	Male	261	70.4
		Female	110	29.6
		Total	371	100
3	Marital status	Married	168	45.3
		Single	184	49.6
		Divorced	10	2.7
		Widow/Widower	9	2.4
		Total	371	100
4	Certificate obtained	Primary school	190	51.2
		Secondary school	122	32.9
		Tertiary institution	28	7.5
		None	31	8.4
		Total	371	100
5	Employment status	Employed	112	30.2
		Unemployed	259	69.8
		Total	371	100

Source: Field work, 2019

This above table shows the age variable of the respondents ranged from 18-28, 29-39 and above 40 years. The sex variable shows that out of 371 filled and returned questionnaires, male category had 261 respondents representing 70.4%. The remaining 110 respondents representing 29.6% belong to the female category. The marital status variable shows that the marital status of the respondents consists of four categories; married 45.3%; single 49.6%; divorced 2.7% and widow/widower 2.4%. The certificate obtained variable consisted of primary school category 51.2%, secondary school category 32.9%, tertiary institution category 7.5% and the none category 8.4%.

Table 2: Respondents views on whether or not Poverty breeds *Kalare* thuggery

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	292	78.7
2	No	79	21.3
	Total	371	100

Source: Field Work, 2019

Table 2 shows that out of the 371 filled and returned questionnaires, 292 respondents representing 78.7% believed that poverty breeds *Kalare* thuggery, while 79 respondents representing 21.3% believed it does not. Going by the above data, it is evident that there is indeed a significant relationship between poverty and *Yan Kalare* thuggery in Gombe Local Government Area since 292 respondents representing 78.7% have attested to that. This is also in line with the argument made by Micheal (2011) who posits that youths who are unemployed are the instrument of politicians, because poverty has made them to be susceptible to the crime of political thuggery and they believe that thuggery will liberate them from poverty. Similarly, Muktar, Isyaku, Sani (2016) explained that anger and frustration for reaching goals and potentials is often expressed in the form of violence. Thus, poverty has led to immense social, political and economic constraints.

Table 3: Respondents views on the causes of *Yan Kalare* thuggery

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Political Manipulation	112	30.2
2	Poverty	188	50.7
3	Drug abuse/moral decadence	42	11.3
4	Inactive security agencies	29	7.8
	Total	371	100

Source: Field Work, 2019

The Table 4.5 above mentioned some of the factors responsible for *Yan Kalare* thuggery in Gombe Local

Government Area. Out of the 371 filled and returned questionnaires, 112 respondents representing 30.2%

believed that *Yan Kalare* thuggery is caused by political manipulation. 188 respondents representing 50.7% believed that the major cause of *Yan Kalare* thuggery is poverty. 42 respondents representing 11.3% are of the view that *Yan Kalare* thuggery is as a result of drug abuse and moral decadence. And lastly inactive security agencies contributed to *Yan Kalare* thuggery as shown by 29 respondents representing 7.8%. Going by the above data, it is clear that poverty is a major cause of *Yan Kalare* thuggery in Gombe Local Government Area. Similarly, Njoku (2012) observed that, the constant presence of groups of idle young men in many urban cities has significantly aided the menace of political thuggery. Bjerk (2007) also argued that youth who grow up poor and lack adequate economic resources are most likely to be involved in serious crimes than their wealthier peer

Going by the above data, the findings of this research clearly portrayed poverty as one of the key factor which is responsible for the thriving market of *Yan Kalare* thuggery in Gombe Local Government Area, Gombe state. Most of the thugs hired by politicians and other sponsors to protect their interest are argued to have come from poor and impoverished families. This very factor has made these youths to be more susceptible to such type of deviant behaviors and by extension, become a nuisance to the society.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has discussed the “Effect of Poverty on *Yan Kalare* thuggery in Gombe Local Government Area (2007-2015)”. The high rate of unemployed youths coming from poor and impoverished families has aided the continuous acts of *Yan Kalare* in Gombe Local Government Area of Gombe state. Data gotten from the field have also helped prove the relationship that exists between poverty and *Kalare* thuggery in Gombe Local government area. This study therefore recommends that Poverty reduction policies on ground should be strengthened in order to make them more effective in the fight against poverty and *Yan Kalare* in Gombe Local Government Area. These will help these programmes to meet their required goal. The law should severely frown at those so-called politicians who are caught recruiting these jobless youths to engage in the act of *Yan Kalare* irrespective of their party affiliations. Doing so will help deter other politicians from sponsoring political thuggery in their locality. Government should also sponsor willing youths to pursue their education, especially because most of these thugs are illiterates or school dropouts, a situation which has aided their deviant behaviors at the detriment of the society.

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