
FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUTHS INVOLVEMENT IN VIOLENT GANGS: A STUDY OF KONTAGORA TOWNSHIP, NIGER STATE

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Abstract

Youth violence is one of the greatest social problems facing Nigerian society. Since the return of democracy in 1999, the issue of youth violence has assumed a new dimension. The phenomenon manifests itself through formation of gangs who carry out such acts like; vandalism, rape, arson, burglary, murder, robbery, ethno-religious militancy, and kidnapping etc. Politicians at times manipulate the youth into violence for political advantage. While youth violence constitutes a serious threat to our collective security; unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, Poor upbringing, support from politicians etc seems to be among the major factors responsible for youth's involvement in violent gang activities in the Nigerian cities. Youth gang is a determinant of diminishing moral fields in a society and its consequences are many, because it has some socio-economic impacts on the individual, family and community or society at large. The paper examined the factors responsible for youth involvement in violent activities in Nigeria. The study utilizes primary data (questionnaire and in-depth interview) were used as the instruments for data collection. The study recommends that employment opportunities, youth empowerment and poverty alleviation programs should be put in place in the country. Equally, good parental care, admonishing by faith based organizations should be given consideration to mitigate the persistent increase youth violent activities.

Keywords: Gangs; Violence; Violent gangs, Drug abuse

Introduction

The problem of youth violence and restiveness exists across societies and gender divides which affects their lives (Alexander, 2008). In most of cities all over the world, Nigeria inclusive most of the crimes are committed by the youths (Rotker, 2002). Consequently, since the return of democracy in 1999 there has been an increased of youth gangs violent activities in most cities and this culminate to the number of unwanted events. More worrisome is that the problem persisted under the auspices of some unscrupulous politicians who, on selfish ground, provide the youths with drug and illicit substances and even allowances and promise to secure their release when they are arrested by the law enforcement agencies. This incidence of youth restiveness is usually accompanied with a number of negative consequences, which manifests itself through the formation of youth gangs that carry out such criminal acts as vandalism, rape, arson, burglary, murder, robbery, ethno-religious militancy and kidnapping among others.

This work is both topical and timely because it is established that *youth involvement in violent gang activities* perpetrates criminal acts, such as *sara-suka*, an activity, which involves molesting, assault,

burglary, destruction and disturbance of public peace and other social vices as well as violation of laws and norms of the society. This therefore led to the growing concerns by the public on the rate of violence due to *violent gang activities in Nigeria*. This study examined the factors responsible for the youth involvement in violent gangs' activities in Kontagora, Niger State.

Statement of problem

Youth are considered to be an important segment of the society because largely they are regarded as the most productive part of every nation (Ismaila and Madaki, 2008). In order to attain level of development; societies should properly and adequately orient and socialize their youth so that they conform to the societal positive recommendations and ultimately get integrated into the main developmental society process. However, youth involvement in the democratization process has witnessed the emergence of political thugs, violent gangs and the likes

In Niger State, Kolo, Gyong and Heillendend (2014) reported that neglect and maltreatment of youth ushered in by poverty, social exclusion from the side of parents are other challenges being faced by youths in the State has created stressful and negative emotional situations in them particularly when social capital that will cushion the effects was lacking from the family and the community. This type of situation could stir violence in society. Scholars have long noticed that human beings act violently-that is, they act with the intent to physically or mentally harm one another (Murray, 2011). In Kontagora, these youth are often recruited by the members of the political class to serve as vanguards particularly during electioneering campaigns. In other words these categories of youth are not constructively engaged in the democratization process. Politicians at times manipulate the youth into violence for political advantage. While youth violence constitutes a serious threat to our collective security, unemployment and poverty seems to be one of the major factors responsible for violence in the Nigerian cities. Youth gang is a determinant of diminishing moral wields in a society and its consequences are many, because it has some socio-economic impacts on the individual, family and community or society at large. Against this backdrop, this study investigated into the factors responsible for youth involvement in violent gang in Kontagora, Niger State

Research Questions

This work examines the factors responsible for youth involvement in violent gang activities in Kontagora, Niger State. Specifically, the study provided answers to the following questions raised:

1. What are the predisposing factors for youth involvement in violent gangs' activities in kontagora?
2. What are effects of youth violent gangs' activities in kontagora?
3. What are the solutions to the youth violent gangs' activities in kontagora?

Objectives of the study

The broad objective this paper is to examine the factors responsible for youth involvement in violent gang activities in Kontagora, Niger State. Specifically, the paper:

1. Identified the predisposing factors for youth involvement in violent gangs in kontagora
2. Effects of youth violent gangs activities in kontagora
3. Find out the solutions to the youth violent gangs activities in kontagora

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Both biological and psychological theories of crime and deviance blamed nature and other

internal happenings as the etiologies of deviance and crime, but the Sociological theories put more emphasis on social environment (society). They argued both deviance and crime as a social problem which their causes are found in the very nature of every society. In the view of Durkheim (1897), anomie (normlessness) is what breeds crime and deviance. Merton (1938) also built on Durkheim's concept of anomie to come up with theory of social structure and anomie. Merton explain why crime and deviance occurs in society and argues that social environment influences people's behaviours and Person's behavior shapes his attitudes towards culturally defined goals and the institutionalized means of achieving those goals. In an attempt to achieve these goals, people use different ways either by conforming to or by deviating from such cultural expectations. People who aspire for the culturally prescribed goals but are denied the opportunities to realize those goals will experience what he termed "social strains". It is because of these strains in finding access to legitimate means that some members of society turn to deviant acts such as youth involvement in violent activities.

Sutherland (1939, 1947) developed differential association theory to explain deviance and crime. He argued that deviance is learned through interactions with other people. This theory holds that deviant tend to form social bonds with other non-conforming individuals or group from whom they learn deviant sub-cultural norms and values. Individuals learn not only how to perform deviant acts but also how to define these activity. Differential association theory might suggest that crime results from those whose role molds are criminals and thus who associate with people whose behaviour is different or abnormal.

The basic assumption of the theory is that when an individual is interacting with others whose definitions favor deviant behavior, as opposed to conformity, they are likely to deviate from society's norms and values and the reverse is the case. Although, Sutherland was not the first sociologist to relate crime with cultural factors and the learning process (Tapperman, 2006). Specifically, the theory posits that deviance and criminality are behaviors learned through frequent and extended interaction with people who live in an anti-social lifestyle. For Sutherland, people imitate what they see other people doing. In communities where crime is common, accepted and even highly organized, say drug dealing and youth gang activities, normal people are more likely to engage in crime, too. Tapperman (2006) argued that differential association theory notion of environmental influence on deviance and crime by arguing that living in a high-crime neighborhood and witnessing others benefit from a criminal lifestyle increase the chances of engaging in illegitimate activities, such violent gangs. In this context, the study can reflect on the violent gang often lives according to street code that justifies gaining respect from others through violence. The possession of weapons like guns and cutlasses, as indicated by Fagan and Wilkinson (cited in Tapperman, 2006), symbolizes respect, power, identity and manhood; they play a central role in initiating, sustaining and escalating youth violence. Thus, following Sutherland, Katz and Marquette (as cited in Tapperman 2006) argued that violence becomes appropriate behavior for youths who are regularly exposed to violence; youths that are gang members themselves; youths whose family or friends are gang members; youths that have peer support for violence. The relevance of this theory is that the violent youths is exposed to gang membership and violent gang activities through interaction with individuals from within the family circle, outside the family circle or other agents of socialization

Conceptual clarifications

Gangs: Gang as a social science concept has no single meaning. However, Alexander (2008) reviewed some definitions of gang given by the police, such as Metropolitan Police (2007), which

defined 'gang' as 'a relatively durable, predominantly street based group of people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity'. Similarly, Sharp, Aldridge & Medina (2006) defined gangs in their study as a group of three or more people that spends a lot of time in public spaces, has existed for a minimum of three months, has engaged in delinquent activities in the past 12 months and has at least one structural feature, i.e., a name, leader, or code/rules. This is clear when looking at youths gangs in Nigeria for instance 'Yan sara-suka in Bauchi, Area Boys in Lagos, Kalare in Gombe, Jagaliya or yandaba in Kano, Banu-Isra'il and Yan-shinko in Taraba and Adamawa, Swagger boys in Niger States etc. who have existed for long, bearing different names like *sparticles* and *waju* boys, they have their leaders among them and engaged in delinquent behaviors. Dan Asabe (1991) used the term *Daba* to represent youths gangs, *Daba* is derived from Hausa, which means "group", such group would consist of people of the same age, trade or profession who gather in a particular place. However with time the literal meaning of *daba* in Kano has changed as it is now associated with social vices in the society. It is institutionalized with individuals under it as the role actors- *Dandaba*. Madaki (2002) pointed out that: "It is a deviant institution like any other institution with subculture proscriptive norms governing the behavior of its members".

Types of Youth Gangs

According to Gardon (1995) five different types of youth gangs exist. They are: youth groups, youth movements, criminal groups, criminal business organizations and street gangs. These types of gang are briefly explained as follows.

Youth groups: They are small groups of friends, who mostly hang out in public places without harming or committing any criminal activities. They are concerned about being with their fellow gang members and are mutually respecting themselves and even the parents of their friends;

Youth movement: They are a group of friends that dresses distinctively and cooperatively in the process of performing their activities. The youth in such movement can share certain codes of behavior that are typical of subculture. For example, some groups of young people are into the 'ass down' subculture or listening to some types of music like Nigerian pop and rap singers. This attitude by youth gangs is not harmful to the society.

Criminal group: They constitute a group of friends that engages in different types of criminal activities. This group mostly consists of adult persons. Criminal group as a type of gang is to some extent relevant to this study as *Kalare*, in Gombe, *Daba* in Kano, *Ecomog* in Borno, *Area Boys* in Lagos, *Yan sara-suka* in Bauchi, *Swagger boys* in Niger and other violent gang groups in other parts of the country have some characteristics of this type of gang.

Criminal business organization: This is also a group of friends usually adults and youths that participate in criminal behaviors mostly for financial gain. Many organized criminal syndicates fall under this type of gang.

Street gangs: They are a group of youths or people who form semi-organized groups for the purpose of profits. They are violent and usually identify themselves through a unique dress and give their gang a street name. Therefore '*swagger boys*' members fall under this category since they have a unique name (such as *waju* boys, *sparticles*, e.t.c). They can terrorize, harm, maim and commit other types of violent criminal acts.

Equally, Allan (2004) argued that a gang member can be identified in two different ways viz: (i) all gangs are assumed to indulge in the same disruptive and criminal behavior; and, (ii) individual action is confounded with group action. Gang membership may be unique; they have common

characteristics wherever they are.

Violence: The term violence means different things to different people, and therefore public health researchers defined violence as “threatened or actual use of physical force against a person or group that results or likely to result in injury or death” (Mercy et, al. 1993). Also Murray (2011) sees violence as an attempt by human beings to act with the intent to physically or mentally harm one another. However, Carmecheal (n.d) sees violence as that behaviour which is an uncontrolled response to some form of stimulation. According to her, violent behaviour is more likely to be a physical response to the perception that the 'self', i.e. one's sense of identity, is threatened. Being violated either emotionally or physically appears to result in a violent response. Violent behaviour can be seen as a mask which protects the 'self from pain and memories of traumatic experiences. The common denominator in all the definitions has to do with aggression, use of force or otherwise to inflict pain on individual or group.

Factors Responsible for the formation of Violent Youth Gangs

Poverty and unemployment: Poverty and unemployment have led many youths to engage in violent activities. Poverty is a situation of lacking something. Depending on the severity of the deprivation, it can be absolute or relative. The former is abject poverty and the later is a deprivation based on prevailing socio-economic standard in the environment one lives. In the European Union (EU) people are considered as poor if their living standards are below those regarded by society as acceptable. Individuals whose income is less than 40% of the income of one equivalent consumer can be considered as extremely poor , while those whose income does not exceed 60% of the income of one equivalent consumer are considered as poor (Latvia, 2015 report). People who live in poorer areas such as the inner city may have to rely on strength, threats or violent acts to gain their peers respect. Every gang-dominate neighborhood engaging in violence is part of the lifestyle of the sub-culture of violence Wofgang & Ferrcuti (1967). For Kabir (2010), popular concerns in both developed and developing world shows youth crime is on the increase because they are (among others) being exposed to gangs, extreme poverty and violence. She adds that the social and emotional needs of the youth compound the issues; majority of them in Nigeria live among the group and neighborhood where it is common to experiment with drugs and alcohol at an early age.

Cohen (as cited in Giddens, 2010) argued that youth in the lower working class are frustrated with the position they found themselves in life and these in turn led many youths from lower class family background to join the delinquent sub-culture, such as youth gangs. It was argued by O'connor (2004) that youth who cannot achieve in life according to social norms and do well in school or find good jobs, create subcultures. The idea was that youth who are school dropouts create their own way of behaving in their societies, which may include smoking, substance abuse and engaging in various types of violent crime. Unemployed youths are in most cases in the forefront of the violence that erupt peace in the oil producing areas between oil producing companies and their host communities. The youths usually hold oil company workers hostage because, they feel the oil companies must provide solutions to all their problems.

Poor parental up-bringing: Poor or improper upbringing or non-socialization has been considered as one of the reasons behind youth restiveness. A study by Cicourel (1968) on youth involvement in crime revealed that young people from the single parent families are more likely to engage in criminal acts than those from two-parent homes. This clearly shows that children from single parent homes have no or less supervision than the two parent homes. He further adds that youth from lower class families were more likely to view their offences as a result of poor supervision or lack

of proper role models. Ajaegbu states that:

The rise in violent crimes (robbery, kidnapping, thuggery, terrorism) committed by youths is a sign of gap in the society. The society already has expectations for individuals and established means of achieving them. When the means are limited as the youth unemployment is 46.5% in 2011, people are forced to achieve the goals through illegal means to fulfill societal expectations. Kidnappings are on the increase across Nigeria and the unemployed youths view the business lucrative. (Ajaegbu 2012:317).

When the means are limited such as youth unemployment, they are forced to achieve the goals through illegal means to fulfill societal expectations (Ajaegbu 2012; Muller, 2013). Some of the youth that ultimately chose gang as the best lifestyle are products of broken homes. Cohen (1965) observes that they have background problems. Some, most especially hawkers and *almajirai* (child-beggars from Qur'anic schools), take to the streets because their parents are poor; and there is no alternative other than to go to street and beg for their survival. The *almajirai* grow without enjoying the warmthness of their mothers and fatherly cares. Hence, they lack proper socialization to become cultured youth, people of good manners and/or characters that they are susceptible to take part in youth violence. For example, virtually all the members of the *maitatsine* movement in Kano then and majority of *Boko Haram* members in North East were previously *almajirai*. For Tepperman (2006), the family process and parent child relations in particular have influence on risky behavior. Thus, the influence of parents, friends and peers are the most important sources of socialization among youths.

Drug abuse: Drug and substance abuse among Nigeria youths have contributed to the upsurge in youth violence. Hard drugs such as heroin, marijuana and cocaine are often found in the possession of youths. Violent clashes often occur under the influence of drugs and other mind disturbing substances. Ifaturoti (1994) is of the view that abuse of drugs, such as cocaine, and over-indulgence in alcoholic drinks, such as gin and whisky, alter the state of the user's mind and predispose them to violence. It is clear that most of the youths who engage in violent activities in Nigeria use drugs before carrying out their activities (Saleh, 2016).

Political activities: Political activities are one of the predisposing factors that lead many youth to join violent gangs in Nigeria. The deviant activities of many gangs must be interpreted as an open manifestation of protest against the surrounding injustice and corruption with which they have to contend with on a daily basis. Such gangsters, as noted by Redl and Wineman (1951), often do not see anything wrong in what they do. They rationalize their activities by bending the general rules of the society to suit their own circumstances, which, of course, negate the accepted standards. Wunti (2012) and Halliru (2013) concluded that the availability of fire-arms under the auspices of unscrupulous politicians gives opportunity to many youths to engage in violent gang activities.

As Radda (2009) suggested in his study, politics is associated with violence in the African region and Nigeria in particular. Thus:

Nigeria witnessed unprecedented violence in the first Republic, culminating into its collapse. The Second and Third Republic was not better either. The fourth Republic turned out to be worse where armed youths were manipulated and used for violence, killing, maiming, electoral fraud etc. Nigeria's 2003 elections witnessed serious violence, political assassinations, criminal intimidation and electoral fraud never seen before

in Nigeria's political history. The atrocities were perpetrated by gullible youths that have become political thugs, recognized in Nigeria's political lexicon. (Radda 2009:39).

The above statement is an indicator that youths have been used to stir violence in Nigerian politics for many decades. The fact that people in authority are the orchestrators of this violence means that the violence by many Nigerian youth gangs is justified and rewarded as well as protected. That is why many cases of murders, assassinations and assaults were committed by these youth gangs with impunity only because of politicians' selfish interest

Methodology

Kontagora was founded in 1846 as a result of the war waged by Ummaru Nagwamatse (Musa, 2002). Kontagora town is the Headquarters of the Emirate with Wushishi, Danrangi, Rijau, Bobi, Kumbashi, Robu, Auna, Zugurma, Kaboji, Gulbin Boka, Dukku, Salka, Genu, Ibeto, Mashegu, Kontagora Gabas and Kontagora Yamma districts, respectively (Haruna, 2002).

Kontagora became the Headquarters of the then Mariga local government since the creation of Niger State in the year 1976 and later became a local government with its headquarters in Kontagora town in the year 1996. The local government covers an area of approximately 1,390.4 square kilometers. According to the 2006 population census, Kontagora has a population of 151,968 persons. The major ethnic groups in the area are Hausa, Fulani, Kambari, Dukkawa and Dakarkari. Other minority ethnic groups are Nupe, Gbagyi, Yoruba, Ibgo, and Edo who are residents of the town for commercial activities, farming, government work, marriage and educational pursuit. There are Muslims, Christians and African traditional believers in the town, but Muslims constitute the majority (NPC Gazette, 2007).

Kontagora town occupies the prime status of major junction town, a logical stopover of vehicles travelling from some northern states to southern part of the country and vice versa. Consequently, due to the numerous advantages of commercial, educational institutions, health care institutions, police and army barracks, farming and other economic activities, the town has continuously attract people from all parts of the country. .

The target population used was the entire population of violent gang members within metropolitan city of kontagora who are mainly unemployed youth and into drugs. The study was limited to six political wards within township with highest number of *members of violent* gang group (Central, Gabas, Kudu, Arewa, Magajiya and Yamma ward respectively). A total of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents were sampled using purposive and snowballing sampling technique. With the aid of informant the prominent *member* locations were identified in all the wards from which selection was made using availability of the gang members at the time of visit(s). The sample were selected from the gang meeting point/joint/chambers within the metropolis such as (sharp corner, morocco, kalakuta, pharmacy, sabon gari and tudun wada)

Questionnaire and interview instruments were used for data collection; the questionnaire was constructed in English and administered to the respondent by the researcher with the help of some research assistants. The questionnaire was administered as interview because a large number of the respondents were not literate. Equally, In-depth interview was conducted with gang leaders in Hausa language which was recorded and letter, transcribed and translated into English before the analysis. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. the major variables analyze includes age, Sex, Marital Status, Income level of the respondent and their parents, their level of education influences of inadequate parental care unemployment, poverty and political support, substance abuse among others. While qualitative data were analysed using

thematic analysis with verbatim quotations.

Results and Discussions of findings

This section present the data generated from the respondent, the data gathered covered respondent's personal profile, family background, residential condition, occupation, level of income and education.

Table 1 Age, Sex and Marital Status of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
10-20 years	70	46.6
21-30 years	55	36.7
31-40 years	25	16.7
Total	150	100
Sex		
Male	137	91.3
Female	13	8.7
Total	150	100
Marital Status		
Single	115	76.7
Married	30	20
Divorced	5	3
No Response	5	3.0
Total	150	100

Source: Field work 2022

Table 1 above indicates that majority of members of violent gang in Kontagora are between 10-30 years of age constituting up to 83.3%, while the remaining 16.7% are between 31-40 years of age. This suggests that members of the gang are mainly youth who are supposed to either be in school or productive employment. The table further indicates that majority (91.3%) of the respondents are males while 8.7% are females. The females found are mostly girlfriends to the leaders of gang. The gang members in Kaontagora are predominantly youth, mostly single in terms of their marital status constituting 76.7% of the respondents unmarried.

Table 2 Respondents and Parents Living Together

Living Together	Frequency	Percent
Yes	30	20
No	118	78.7
No Response	2	1.3
Total	150	100

Source: Field work 2022

The table shows that 78.7% of the respondents revealed that they are from broken homes and are not living together even the remaining 21.3% who claimed that their parents are together revealed that they cannot get all daily need necessities of life from the parents because of the poor economic position of the parents or unemployed status.

Table 3 Respondents Education Attainment

Education	Frequency	Percent
Qur'anic	70	46.7
Primary	45	30
Secondary	35	23.3
Total	150	100

Source: Field work 2022

It is evident from the data that significant percentage of the respondent have not attended formal school but rather attended traditional Qur'anic school but stopped at some point this constitute up to 46.7%, even those that have attended primary and post primary schools very few of them completed the schools as such many of them are dropouts. None of the gang member was found to have attended any higher institutions or universities.

Table 4 Poverty Motivate Formation of Youth Violent Gangs

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	140	93.3
No	7	4.7
No Response	3	2
Total	169	100

Source: Field work 2022

The table above indicates that poverty is among the major factor that facilitates the existence of violent gang. It is evident that 93.3% of the respondents indicate that poverty is one of the main reasons why they have become gang members. This finding tallies with current wide spread poverty in the country. Many of the members of the gang are living below the poverty line pushes them to join gang group as an alternative.

Table 5 Unemployment Encourage Formation of Youth Violent Gangs

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	140	93.3
No	7	4.7
No Response	3	2
Total	169	100

Source: Field work 2022

From the table above it is clearly indicated that 93.3% of the respondents are unemployed which predisposes them to join the violent gang group in Kontagora. This findings is in agreement with current unemployment noticeable by our teeming young men and women who are visibly seen roaming in the streets of many Nigerian cities

Table 6 Politicians Support Formation of Youth Violent Gangs

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	153	90.0
No	14	8.3
No Response	2	1.2
Total	169	100

Source: Field work 2022

From the data it is evident that violent gang members enjoy some support from politicians. Significant proportion of the respondents (90%) confirmed that the kind of support they get from politicians encourage them to be in the gang. They further noted that they tend to have some

support and backing from politicians and even the political structure, as most Politicians used them during political campaigns, rallies and to some extents during elections. These politicians used to provide them with weapons in order to give them protection and attack their perceived opponents during any political activity this is directly connected with the level of unemployment among the youth.

These therefore, suggest that the respondents were unemployed and living below poverty line with no reliable source of income, low level of education and from poverty stricken broken homes which denied them to have proper and adequate parental care and good upbringing. As human beings they have needs and since they have no alternative, politicians use them as political thugs to provide favorable services in the course of their political games while they provide them with financial support, weapons, drugs etc. to perpetrate their heinous act.

Consequently, due to the support from politicians violent gang members are visibly holding weapons and experiment with drugs especially during political rallies, campaign and elections. For example, according to one respondent:

These politicians give us money, we go to them and request for it and in return we serve them as vanguards/thugs in the political process and we always advertise their interest.

These politicians give them all the necessary support and encouragement to minimize case of arrest and apprehension by the law enforcement agents and equally secure their release in case if they are arrested. So political activities influence and facilitate violent gang activities in Kontagora. In fact the violent group members have come to realize their role in the political process and some of them are beginning to think of the indispensability of gangstarism in political and electioneering process. For instance according to one of the respondent:

The politics of today cannot go without us; we help them a lot especially during elections and campaigns. So the Politicians heavily depend on us to achieve their aim.

Equally, a respondent pointed out that:

Some politicians used us as their guards during political rallies and campaigns, and whenever we are arrested they immediately secure our release.

This is in line with the submission of Dan Asabe (1991) that emergence of modern politics led to the emergence and persistence of 'yandaba in our society.

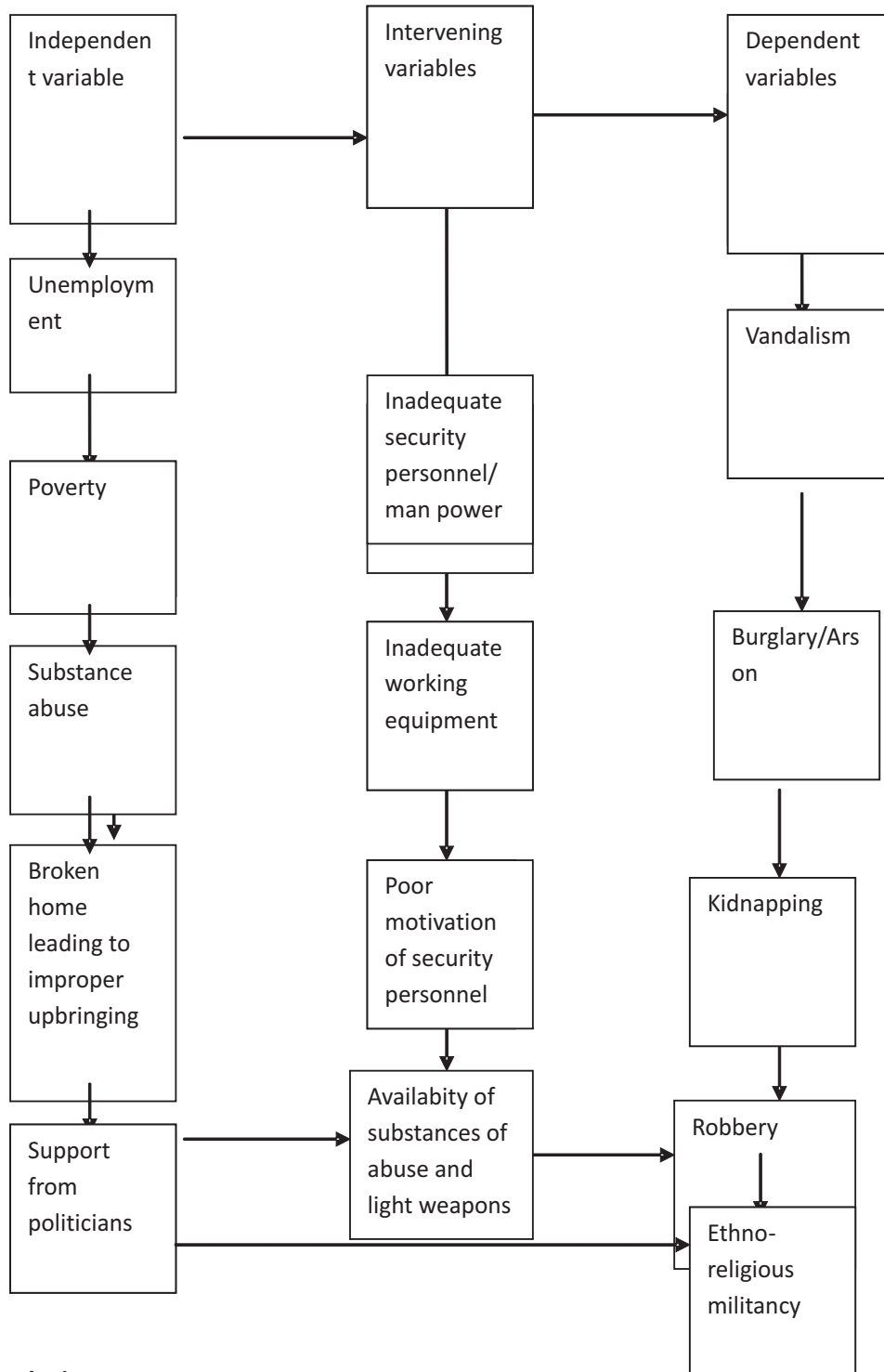
Table 7 Substance Abuse Encourages Formation of Violent Gangs

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	140	93.3
No	7	4.7
No Response	3	2
Total	150	100

Source: Field work 2022

As indicated in the above table, more than 90% of the respondents revealed that substance abuse is among the major factor responsible for their involvement into violent gang activities

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: Showing Factors Responsible for Youths Involvement in Violent Gangs



Conclusion

The paper examined how youth violence is becoming an alarming issue and pose serious security threats and peace in Nigerian society. It also highlighted the negative consequences of the increasing involvement of the youths in violence activity in Nigeria. It is accompanied with a number of unwanted events socially, politically and economically. The study discovered that majority of the

youths who form gang groups and those being recruited are from poor family backgrounds. This implies that poverty, unemployment, political activities and poor parental upbringing are some of the major causes of violent youth gangs in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided for the study

1. There is the ardent need for the creation of employment opportunities, and youth empowerment, poverty reduction programmes by government. NGOs and other philanthropic organizations should complement government efforts in providing opportunities for the development of variety of skills for the unemployed youths..
2. Agriculture should be given more priority and the youths should be encouraged to participate this will empower them and improve the economy.
3. Community and religious leaders should be involved in advocating the consequences of violence and other illegal behavior here and in the hereafter since they have special recognition in the society.
4. There is need for moral and value reorientation for the youths to be law abiding citizens as the leaders of tomorrow. They need to conform to societal norms and values. They shall be thinking of how to contribute their quota to the development of their selves and the society at large.
5. There is the need for educational opportunities to be made available and compulsory for all to meet the idea of universal basic education.

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POWER ROTATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC: THE ROLE OF DAILY TRUST NEWSPAPER IN THE NORTHERN PRESIDENCY

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Abstract

The perceived domination of power at the centre by people that hail from Northern Nigeria fuelled the agitation for rotational presidency. Although, rotational presidency is alien to the constitution of Nigeria, but the 1994 National Conference convened by late Head of State General Sani Abacha created six geopolitical zones for Nigeria and the conference's delegates agreed that power should rotate among the six geopolitical zones. Rotational presidency has a history that can be traced to ancient Greek hence this paper examined the role played by Daily Trust newspaper in promoting the stance of the Northern states in the debate over rotational presidency in Nigeria. This is with a view to determine how media organisations in Nigeria assist their host regions to achieve certain political goals being media a key actor in the dynamic interaction that takes place in political communication. For the fact that the clamour for rotational presidency often takes religious dimension in Nigeria, the paper employed Content Analysis and Survey Research to generate data, which revealed how news items featured by Daily Trust newspaper made the stance of the Northern states a national agenda in the rotational presidency debate and this led to the return of power to the North despite the resistance of other parts of Nigeria. The Agenda Setting Theory guided the paper in arriving at this finding. Considering the important role of the media in the peace and unity of Nigeria, the paper recommended that, Nigerian media should give emphasis to adherence to the agreed principles of rotational presidency than promoting primordial interest.

Keywords: Rotational Presidency, Religious Interest, Political Communication

Introduction

The concentration of power at the centre makes every part and geopolitical zone of Nigeria to strive to produce the country's president. This makes the concept of rotational presidency to become part of Nigeria's political dispensations despite its non recognition by the country's constitution, which is the supreme law of the land. The media as channels through which information is disseminated are used by different groups in Nigeria to clamour for shift of power from one part of the country to another. Politicians, especially, use the concept of rotational presidency to grab power, although in most cases not for the interest of the section they claim to represent.

Similarly, in attempt to achieve their goals, politicians in Nigeria sometimes use religious sentiment to ensure that power shift from one part of the country to another. In this direction, the media are important tools that are used in promoting religious and other primordial sentiments. Since political communication entails a dynamic interaction between three actors – media, politicians and audience/readers – it becomes an intellectual ground to view the role that the media are playing for different parts of Nigeria in their strive to grab political power through the banner of rotational presidency. Because of the fact that religion plays a very significant role in Nigeria's politics, political communication is also a ground to assess the role of the media in promoting religious interest as one of the yardsticks of political choice in Nigeria.

This Aristotle's postulation shows an interaction of a speaker (politician), the speech (media), the audience and the effect of the communication and this interaction is what is known as political communication during the times of Aristotle. For Aristotle, the principal goal of political communication is persuasion. According to him, there are ways of achieving this persuasion, which

are logos, ethos and pathos. Logos entails the “logicality of speaker's argument”, which is the ability of the speaker to convince his audience that what he was saying was the truth. Aside of logicality of speaker's argument where the political communication contains plausible arguments or logos, Aristotle said the political communication must be seen as credible, as well. This quality or credibility is what Aristotle refers to as ethos, which describes the audience perception of a speaker based on the speech itself. Aristotle also believes that effective political communicator must know how to stir up various emotions in the audience, and these emotions or pathos can be anger, gratitude, empathy, admiration, indignation among others (Aristotle, 384-322).

It is from the foregoing that this paper examines the coverage of rotational presidency and religious issues by the *Daily Trust* newspaper with the aim of determining the impact of this coverage on the political dispositions of the Northern states of Nigeria. Haruna, Shariff and Yusuf (2003) posited that the unfavourable stance of the geopolitical North in the information balance of Nigeria made the region to voluntarily surrendered power to the South in 1999, largely because of the pressure that the Southern-based media mounted. The Southern media, according to them, set agenda for the whole nation by making the issue of rotating power to the South very important to the unity and survival of the country. Because of the fact that the geopolitical North has no enough media outfits to counter those narratives, political leaders of the North had no other option than to succumb, as the majority Southern media had overwhelmed the polity with a lot of propoganda and this made even some indigenes of the Northern region to buy-in in the arguments.

Therefore, this paper intends to look at the impact that *Daily Trust* newspaper made in reporting and supporting the stance of the geopolitical North in the rotational presidency debate. The coverage of religious issues by *Daily Trust* newspaper was also examined in order to determine the role that religion played in the politics of rotational presidency in Nigeria. Doing this has as well enabled the research to ascertain the role played by the newspaper in bridging the gap that exists between the North and the South in the information balance of Nigeria.

Literature Review

This review surveys and discusses available literature on the paper's subject matter. Therefore, the review focuses largely on literature written on rotational presidency, political communication and religion.

Power Rotation and Nigeria's Politics

The concept of power rotation is not a Nigerian formulation. It was said to have started in ancient Greek where power was rotated among the city states. Similarly, presidency is said to be rotated among ethnic nationalities in Switzerland. Most international organisations like the European Union, Commonwealth of Nations, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), among others, rotate the leadership of the organisations among member states. Therefore, many states and even non-state entities of the world practice rotational presidency in order to ensure peace, tranquillity and fairness. Rotational presidency also gives religions, ethnic nationalities, regions and individuals a sense of belonging in a particular state (Nwozor, 2014).

In Nigeria, the perceived domination of geopolitical north of the politics of the country fuelled the agitation of rotational presidency. Although Nwozor (2014) believed that the agitation of rotational presidency was more of an elite struggle for acquisition of power and wealth than ensuring equity and fairness among the regions, tribes or even religions in Nigeria.

According to Okwema (2011), agitations for rotational presidency led to many conferences in Nigeria in order to find an effective structure and polity for the country. For example, there was the 1994 National Conference under the regime of late General Sani Abacha, which took place between June 26, 1994 and June 26, 1995. The conference was called in order to address the serious political uprising that followed the cancellation of June 12, 1993 presidential election.

Although the conference was largely convened to consider the structure of Nigeria, but rotational presidency and resource control dominated the deliberations of the conference.

Therefore, at the end of the conference six geo-political zones were adopted. It was agreed that power at the centre would be rotated among these geopolitical zones with transitional period of 30 years, but this was not entrenched in the draft constitution that the conference produced. From the foregoing, the Nigerian constitutions, including the current 1999 constitution, did not recognise the concept of rotational presidency.

However, Nigerian constitution recognises Federal Character, which relatively has similarly goals with rotational presidency. Federal Character is enshrined in Section 13 (3) and (4) of the 1999 Constitution. It reads thus;

The composition of the 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 the need 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 in any of its agencies.

In addition to the above, the Third Schedule, Part 1 of the constitution established a special commission, The Federal Character Commission, as a federal agency for the implementation of the provisions of the Federal Character. It is the duty of this Commission to monitor, promote and ensure compliance to this principle by all agencies of government including parastatals, departments, ministries, police, the Armed Forces, and other security agencies. This principle also demands the states and local governments to reflect their diversity in the composition of their officials, political appointees and elected officers.

From the foregoing, despite the fact that Nigerian constitution did not recognise rotational presidency as a principle that should guide the emergence of a Nigerian president, but the constitution provided for reflection of Nigeria's diversity in all the institutions of governance through the Federal Character principle. The constitution considered the fact that, it is only through representation of different tribes, regions and even religions that peace and tranquillity would prevail in Nigeria.

Therefore, as stated earlier, one of the major factors that led to the agitation of rotational presidency in Nigeria is the perceived domination of the Hausa/Fulani at the central government. On this accusation, Nwosu (2004) said history of election in Nigeria reveals that northerners emerge as leaders because of certain circumstances. According to him, from the 1959 up to 2015 elections, it was clear that the Hausa/Fulani have to form alliance with another group to win election. Hausa/Fulani have never voted en bloc in the history of Nigeria. Even in the 2015 presidential election, President MuhammaduBuhari emerged successful through his alliance with the Southwest of Nigeria. Therefore, the assumption to power by the Hausa/Fulani either during the military or democratic dispensation was usually with support of other part(s) of Nigeria. From the foregoing, the Hausa/Fulani were able to dominate power at the centre, because of the support they enjoyed from the other parts of the country. History has shown that different Nigerian nationalities are more comfortable with the Hausa/Fulani personality at the helm of affairs of the country.

Since rotational presidency was introduced as a remedy to the perceived marginalization of some parts of Nigeria, the introduction of the six geo-political zones at the 1994 national conference was aimed at addressing the alleged manipulation of power by the north. However, Egbosiuba (2011) and Agagu (2004) said rotational presidency betray merit, objectivity and good governance. Therefore, rotational presidency has brought about oligarchic tendencies and encouraged division. This can be justified with the crises that followed the 2011 presidential elections. The north felt cheated when President Goodluck Jonathan contested and won the 2011

presidential election after the demise of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua. The argument was that President Olusegun Obasanjo, a southerner, has spent eight years in power, therefore the north should provide the president for the next eight years after President Olusegun Obasanjo. When President Umaru Musa Yar'adua died, the northern part of Nigeria was supposed to produce another candidate to contest the 2011 election, but President Goodluck Jonathan contested and won the election. This led to uprising that consumed lives and property worth billions of Naira.

Religion and Politics in Nigeria

Notable classical scholars like Socrates, Aristotle, Jean Jaques Rousseau, Karl Marx, John Locke and many others have portrayed the relationship that exists between politics and religion. From the perspectives of what a religion is or what a religion does, we can trace the importance and role of religion in politics. From the perspective of what a religion is; it is seen as a set of beliefs, while from the perspective of religion does; it deals with functions that religion have in people's lives (Anifowose and Enemu, 1999).

From the approach of what religion does or substantivist approach, religion influences the political action of an individual. Similarly, from the approach of what religion is or functionalist approach, religion influences people's political belief. Therefore, when religion is taking from any of the two perspectives, religion has strong relationship with politics (Bachelie, 2011).

From the foregoing, it is not surprising that religion is influencing politics in Nigeria. This is why perhaps religion takes centre stage in the rotational presidency debate in Nigeria and this also transcends to the media coverage of political activities in the country. Religion is a sensitive issue that makes most Nigerians to act blindly in their political choice.

It is on this basis that all elective positions in Nigeria have to reflect the religious inclination of the candidates and the electorate. For example, if a presidential candidate is a Muslim, usually the vice presidential candidate ought to be a Christian and vice versa. In recent history, it was only the 1993 presidential election that Muslim/Muslim ticket won, otherwise political offices in Nigeria reflect the two dominant religions in the country, that is, Islam and Christianity. Since media is part of Nigeria's political system and one of the major stakeholders, they also portray the political and religious outlook of Nigerians.

Mass Media and Political Communication

Political Communication entails a system of dynamic interaction between political actors, the media and audience members, each of whom is involved in producing, receiving and interpreting political messages. Viewing political communication as a system of interaction implies that all three sets of actors are dependent on the performance of the other actors of the system as a resource for achieving their own interests and objectives (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1995).

As a result of the high degree of mutual interdependence, all these actors, particularly politicians and the media, are constantly involved in a complex web of interactions and negotiations over aims, procedures and, ultimately, control of the public agenda. Not surprisingly, these interactions are frequently characterised by conflicts and disruptions, but equally by the compromises and cooperation that are required to maintain the relationship (Votmer, 2006).

Political Communication is an increasingly important area in communication and media studies. Studies have shown the importance of the media in contributing significantly to creating public awareness and mobilising participation and nation-building, especially in times of political transformation. In this type of communication, the media help citizens to reach informed decisions about what course of action to take and also offer the citizenry the enabling environment to engage in discussions on how state power is utilised by those in authority (Des, 2012).

This implies that, it is in the media that people are able to participate freely in discussions relevant to the public good, and the media assist in resolving social conflicts and defining collectively

agreed upon objectives. By playing a part of resolving social conflicts, the media become the platform that link together divergent groups, thus, becoming a stabilising element in the society. The activities of the media, as stated above, shape and reshape public opinion for formation and building of an informed political decision by the citizens of different states, Nigeria inclusive. However, in Nigeria the nature of media reportage of the issue of rotational presidency had largely made most Nigerians to inculcate regional, tribal and even religious sentiments for or against the rotation of power at the centre. (Pate, Nwabueze and Idiong, 2013).

Systemic Relationship in Political Communication

According to Voltmer (2006), success and failure in political communication are systemic rather than the result of the performance of one particular actor. Hence, the quality of mediated politics depends on both politicians and journalists, and the way in which they address the citizens. Voltmer (2006), further said that any lack of diversity in the 'marketplace of ideas', low quality of information or absence of critical discussion are not, therefore, an isolated problem of the media, but as a result of the specific constraints evolving from the media's relationship with politicians and the audience.

Citizens' understanding of political matters and the way in which they fulfil their own role as the ultimate sovereign of the democratic process is to a large extent a response to the content, form and quality of the messages they receive from politicians and the mass media. Arguably, the mass media serve as the main link between governments, political parties, candidates, etc and voters, as the opportunities for direct communication between citizens and their representatives are extremely limited both in terms of the scale of the audience reached and the scope of the issues covered.

However, the media organisations are not just channels conveying the messages politicians want them to communicate to voters; they are also active participants in the creation of political messages. Even though most of the time the media are not the immediate originators of these messages, they have a significant impact on what is communicated in the public sphere, and what is omitted, thereby setting the agenda of the political debate (Voltmer, 2006).

Equally, whether or not the media form alliances with particular parties or subscribe to particular ideologies is influenced by the constellations within the political communication system. Most media are closely related to particular political actors: either as propaganda instruments of the government or ruling party, or as clandestine media in the hands of opposition groups (Voltmer, 2006).

In Nigeria, for example, most government-owned media, Federal or State, are said to have lost their credibility because of their inability to come up with objective reportage on issues that concern government; their owners. Most Nigerians now depend on privately-owned media outfits for reliable information or even the "gossip on the internet." Unfortunately, on issues like rotational presidency, the private media give prominence to the interest of their owners or the regions they are located, among other sentiments (Haruna, Sheriff and Yusuf, 2003).

Without fair access to the media, political actors, be it governments, political parties or civil society groups, would be unable to mobilise support, and elections as a democratic mechanism of allocating power would be meaningless (Voltmer 2006). Over the past couple of decades, political communication has undergone dramatic changes, which were believed, to have far-reaching consequences for the way in which democratic politics work. Never before have politicians put as much effort, resources and sophistication into communicating with citizens as today. This is why every region, state, tribe or even religion in Nigeria strives hard to have media organisation(s) that would champion its course (Brants and Voltmer, 2011).

From the foregoing, the media and politicians are constantly involved in negotiations over the political agenda that is publicly communicated, the frames in which contested issues and political

realities are defined. Since both actors depend on each other's resources to achieve their own goals, politicians need the media for publicity; journalists need politicians as authoritative sources of information, there therefore developed an assumed overall balance in the power relationship between these actors. But when it comes to the issue of news management and political marketing, it can be seen as an attempt by political actors to regain the upper hand in the communication process. This is particularly evident during election campaigns, especially in Nigeria (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1995).

Theoretical Framework

Researchers employ theories in order to have a direction and avoid being taken over by flukes. Therefore, the frame for analysis adopted by this paper is the Agenda Setting Theory. The Agenda setting theory entails that the media houses, through their activities, engage in producing national issues for discussion among the general public. The major assumption of the agenda setting theory is that the media set agenda for the public to follow. The theory holds that most times the picture in our heads, the things we worry and think about and most of the issues we talk about are based on what we have seen, heard and read from the media. Therefore, the media have a significant impact over what the people think, discuss or worry about if the media continuously give prominence and importance to such an issue (Pate, et al 2013) and (Des, 2012).

According to Busy and Holbert (2011) the agenda setting is the foundation from which one should approach media influence in politics. Agenda setting theory refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences. Agenda setting theory of the media describes the ability of the news media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda, that is, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important (Scheufele and David, 2006) and (Des, 2014).

Agenda setting theory was formally developed by Dr. Max McCombs and Dr. Donald Shaw in a study on the 1968 United States of America's presidential election. In the 1968 "Chapel Hill study," McCombs and Shaw demonstrated a strong correlation between what 100 residents of Chapel Hill, North Carolina thought was the most important election issue and what the local and national news media reported was the most important issue. By comparing the salience of issues in news content with the public perceptions of the most important election issue, they were able to determine the degree to which the media determine public opinion (Des, 2012).

Since this paper attempts to establish the role played by *Daily Trust* newspaper for northern states in the intrigues that shrouded the rotational presidency debate, the agenda setting theory becomes the most effective framework to guide the paper. The theory was used to determine the prominence that *Daily Trust* newspaper gave to the coverage of rotational presidency and religious issues and how that coverage assisted the stance of the northern states.

Methodology

One of the sources of data for this paper was the news items featured by *Daily Trust* newspaper. On this basis, the paper employed Content Analysis in gathering the data for the study. Content Analysis was used to content analyse the front page stories, editorials and back page columns of the editions of *Daily Trust* newspaper from 2004 to 2014. This was based on the fact that Voltmer (2006) has said that front page stories and editorials of newspaper determine its identity.

Within the period under study, *Daily Trust* newspaper, being a daily title, produced four thousand and fifteen (4,015) editions, if an average of three hundred and sixty five days (365) per year is taking into consideration. Therefore, in selecting the editions of *Daily Trust* newspaper for the purpose of content analysis, systematic sampling was adopted.

After adhering to the postulations of the systematic sampling, the research reviewed one thousand

five hundred and fifty eight (1,558) editions of *Daily Trust* newspaper, representing 77.61% of the targeted editions (population) of two thousand and seven point five (2,007.5). News items on rotational presidency and religious issues were considered in line with the objectives of the paper.

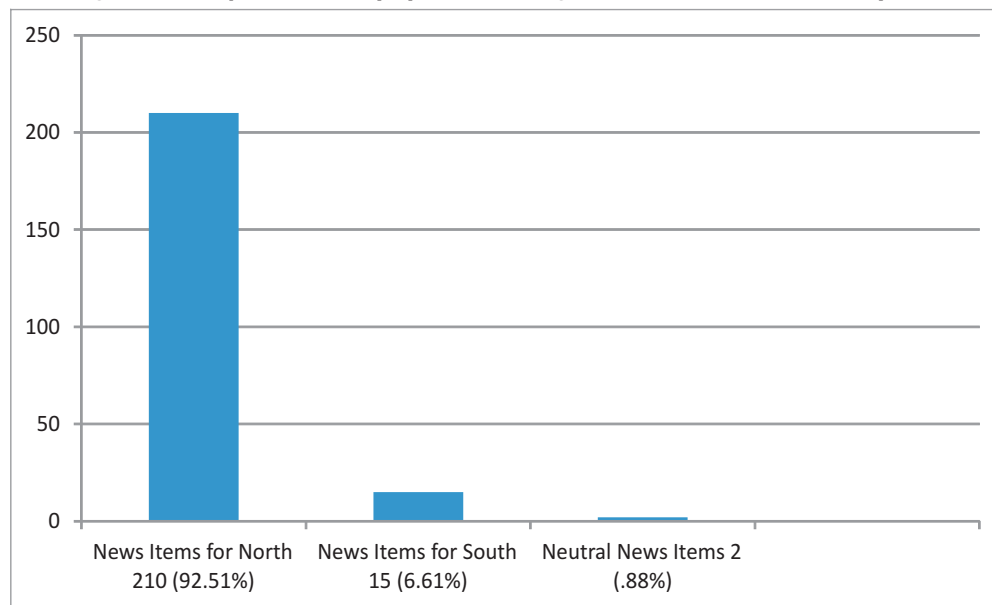
Therefore, the unit of analysis for this study were front page stories, editorials and back page columns of *Daily Trust* newspaper within the period under review. Similarly, the content categories were direction and frequency.

Again, the paper also used Survey Research in data collection. The Personal Interview Method was used. The two founders of *Daily Trust* newspaper, Malam Kabiru Yusuf and AlhajilshaqAjibola, and two columnists of the paper, Malam Mohammed Haruna and Dr. Bala Muhammad, were interviewed. Babbie (2010:254-256) offered many reasons to support the argument that personal interview is the best method of collecting primary data. Those postulations influenced the decision of this paper to adopt the method.

The selection of *Daily Trust* newspaper was informed by the fact that, it is seen by many Nigerians as a Northern media house. Since the aim of this research is to find how a Northern media outfit is supporting, or otherwise, the political goals of Northern states, *Daily Trust* newspaper has assisted this research in understanding the role that the media played in the rotational presidency debate, which sometimes takes religious colouration.

Data

Figure 1: *Daily Trust* newspaper's coverage of Rotational Presidency for Northern



Source: Field Work (2014)

Source: Field Work (2014)

Figure 1 above shows an analysis of news items featured by *Daily Trust* newspaper on Rotational Presidency. Within the period under study, the newspaper has featured two hundred and twenty seven (227) news items on Rotational Presidency. Out of this number, two hundred and ten (210), representing 92.51%, were for the Northern states, fifteen (15), representing 6.61%, were for the Southern states, while two (2), representing .88%, were neutral. This shows that, *Daily Trust* newspaper has favoured the Northern states in its coverage of Rotational Presidency.

Below are examples of the news items that *Daily Trust* newspaper featured on Rotational Presidency:

PDP, PRESIDENCY GANG UP AGAINST NORTH – AWONIYI: NO CAUSE FOR ALARM, SAYS BUHARI: The federal government and the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), were reported to have resolved to ensure that the presidency eludes the North in 2007....(Daily Trust, January 16, 2006:1-2).

2007 PRESIDENCY: WHO LEADS THE NORTH: All things being equal, it appears that the national political mood is becoming increasingly favourable to the transfer of power to the North. Expectedly, the last few weeks have seen the emergence of Northern presidential contenders in more numbers....(Weekly Trust, June 17 – 23, 2006:1-5).

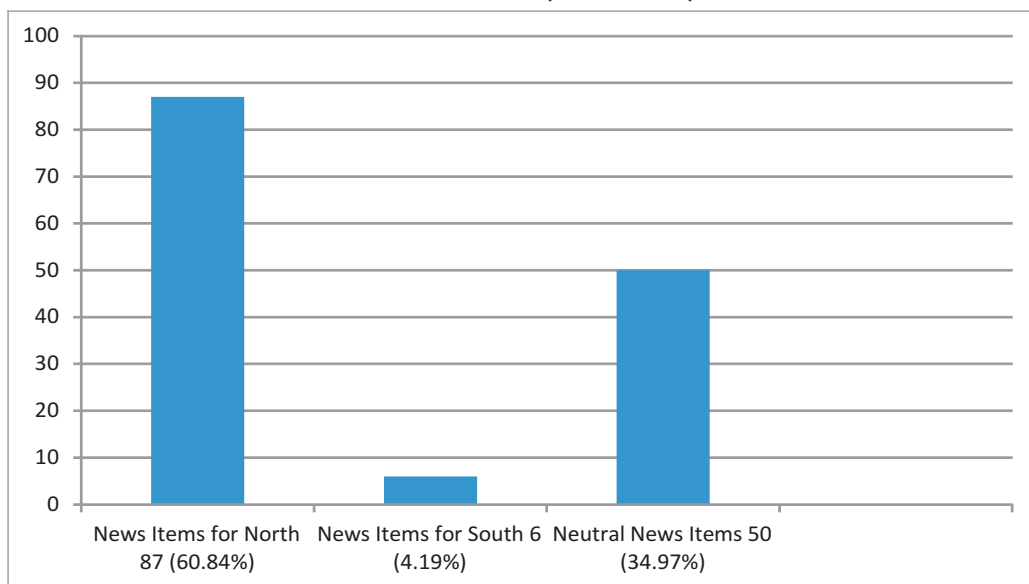
2007: NORTH SEARCHES FOR CONSENSUS CANDIDATE: The political battering the North has been receiving from the South over the 2007 presidential race has encouraged elders in the region to resolve to come together behind one credible candidate that will be supported by all Northerners...(Weekly Trust, July 15 – 21, 2006:1-9).

SUMMIT OF SOUTHERN STATES: WOULD IT STOP POWER SHIFT TO THE NORTH?: PRESIDENCY IS THE TURN OF THE NORTH IN 2007 – PROF. OMO OMORUYI: At the last South-South, South-West and South-East partnership meeting in Lagos, speakers after speakers harped on retaining the presidency in the South...dignitaries....said the North would never taste power again for the next coming years...(Weekly Trust, December 17 – 23, 2005:1-5).

2007: IT'S NORTH'S TURN, SAYS GOV IGBINEDION: Governor Lucky Igbinedion of Edo state, yesterday in Abuja advised the South-South to jettison its desire for the presidency and support a Northern candidate in next year's election....(Daily Trust, June 30, 2006:1-2).

IBB: YAR'ADUA TICKET BELONGS TO THE NORTH: Former president Ibrahim Babangida said yesterday that the PDP was being dishonest when it said President Jonathan could run for election next year on his initial joint ticket with the late UmaruYar'adua....(Daily Trust, August 30, 2010:1-5).

Figure 2: Daily Trust newspaper's coverage of Muslims/Shari'a for Northern and Southern States (2004-2014)



Source: Field Work (2014)

Figure 2 above shows an analysis of how *Daily Trust* newspaper covered Muslims and issues of Shari'a during the period under study. From the above figure, the newspaper has featured one hundred and forty three (143) news items on Muslims and Shari'a issues during the period under study. Eighty seven (87) of these news items, representing 60.84%, were for the Northern states, six (6), representing 4.19%, were for the Southern states, while fifty (50), representing 34.97%, were for both the Northern and the Southern states.

The above figure revealed the interest that *Daily Trust* newspaper has on issues that concern the Muslims and Shari'a in both the North and the South. Both the two founders of the newspaper interviewed by the study and two of the columnists of the newspaper have confirmed that *Daily Trust* newspaper was founded to, among other things, give voice to Muslims and Islam not only on rotational presidency, but all other national issues.

Alhaji Ishaq Ajibola, one of the two founders of *Daily Trust* newspaper said; "there were two things that were important to us; to cover the North very well like no other newspaper; our religion was also important for us." (Interview, 2014).

Also, Malam Kabiru Yusuf said thus; "I think every news medium that is located in a certain area would have to go along with the belief and the views of its readers to some extent. So, being in the North with largely Muslim readership meant that, to some extent, we have to respond to those issues or views that our readers have and to the kind of information that they are interesting in. To that extent, I cannot say that we set up in a vacuum. We are conscious of the community where we are based. And we thought that the only way to succeed is to respond to their needs and aspirations to the best that we can." (Interview, 2014).

Again, Malam Mohammed Haruna, a *Daily Trust* newspaper columnist, said; "the way some people would think that the *Daily Trust* is Northern or Islamic paper, I don't think they should apologise for that. Because every newspaper in the world has an immediate constituency, and unless it serves that constituency well, it wouldn't survive." (Interview, 2014).

In the same vein, another columnist of the newspaper, Malam Bala Muhammad, said thus; ".....Not necessarily the North. My first agenda is Islam. I am a Muslim and I always feel that Islam is underreported and misunderstood. Part of my contribution is to see that people understand Islam more, and that it is not what people think it is, especially our compatriots in this country, the non-Muslims. So, that is my first agenda to set the record of Islam correctly, to ensure that at least I do a little bit of explaining the religion." (Interview, 2014).

Below are examples of the news items featured by *Daily Trust* newspaper on Muslims and Shari'a issues:

NATIONAL CONFAB: NSCIA DECRIES MUSLIMS MARGINALISATION: The apex umbrella organisation of Muslims in Nigeria, the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), has risen against the apparent discrimination and marginalisation of Muslims in the selection of delegates to the national conference on political reforms.....(Daily Trust, February 24, 2005:1-2).

HAJJ: MOST PILGRIMS MAY MISS 2011 ELECTIONS: Most of the 95,000 expected Nigerian pilgrims may not have the chance to participate in the 2011 elections based on the guidelines released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).....(Daily Trust, September 10, 2010:1-3).

BARKA DA SALLA: Muslims all over Nigeria, like their counterparts in many parts of the world, are today celebrating the Eid el-Fitr to mark the end of Ramadan....(Daily Trust, September 10, 2010:30).

IZALA FACTIONS UNITE: Sheikh SaniYahayaJingir yesterday emerged as the national leader of the unified Izala movement, after days of consultations that culminated in the unification of the sect's two factions at a meeting in Kaduna....(Daily Trust, December 22, 2011:1-5).

ISLAMIC SCHOOL BOMBED IN DELTA: Six children and another person were injured on Tuesday night when assailants threw a homemade bomb in the midst of about 100 kids taking lessons at an Islamic school in Sapele, Delta State, witnesses and police said....(Daily Trust, December 29, 2011:1-5).

PUNCH AND AREGBESOLA: In November, Alhaji Abdul RaufAregbesola, the governor of Osun State, declared the 15th of November 2012, which coincided with the 1st of Muharram, a public holiday to commemorate the commencement of the Islamic Hijra New Year. By the nature of things, this declaration ought to have been supported by all those who normally clamour for a proper federation. Alas, this was not to be. Immediately after the announcement, there was what appeared like orchestrated press opposition to it; and The Punch would go to the extent of writing an editorial to castigate the governor's action....(Daily Trust, January 11, 2013:64).

Discussion of Findings

The literature reviewed by the paper have established the passion that Nigerians attach to the issue of rotational presidency. Some scholars see rotational presidency as an approach to ensure fairness and inclusiveness in the Nigerian polity, especially on who becomes the president of the country. However, other scholars like EgboSiuba (2011) view rotational presidency as oligarchic in nature, which has the ability to cause division and nepotism in Nigeria hence rotational presidency negate the basic tenets of democracy.

Media as one of the three actors that engage in dynamic interaction in political communication are involved in the debate over rotational presidency, largely in support of a given region, tribe or religion. It is on this ground that this paper established the involvement of *Daily Trust* newspaper in the debate over rotational presidency where the paper supported the position of the Northern states. By this, *Daily Trust* newspaper has given the Northern states a voice in the debate and represented the states in the information balance of the country. This has assisted the Northern states to regain power in the 2007 presidential elections.

The research also established how *Daily Trust* newspaper covered religious issues in favour of the Northern states, particularly the Muslim citizens of the states. This has assisted the clamour for the return of power to the North, which became a reality in the year 2007. For the fact that, the debate over rotational presidency sometimes takes religious colouration, the prominence given to religious issues by *Daily Trust* newspaper has added value to the stance of the North on the need for power to rotate as agreed when adopting the principle of the rotational presidency.

Conclusion

As political communication entails a dynamic interaction among three actors – media, politicians and audience/readers – therefore in a diverse state like Nigeria this interaction most often is guided by sentiments and primordial interests. This brought about the emergence of the principle of rotational presidency in Nigeria, because every part of the country wants to produce its kinsman at the president. Every part of Nigeria effectively utilise the media in order to set agenda for the rest of the country. This was why the media was used by different parts of Nigeria in order to support their position on the debate over rotational presidency. *Daily Trust* newspaper has played a significant role for the Northern states in the rotational presidency debate, particularly in this political dispensation. The coverage of the issues of rotational presidency by *Daily Trust*

newspaper is one of the factors that ensured the return of power to the North in the year 2007 after the region has voluntarily surrendered power at the centre in 1999.

The agenda setting theory has assisted the paper to establish how *Daily Trust* newspaper made the return of power to the North a national agenda through the prominent coverage of the issue in favour of the Northern states. Although rotational presidency encourages divisions in Nigeria, but at the same time rotating power between regions, tribes and even religions is capable of making Nigeria more cohesive.

The foregoing brings up the need for the media to give more emphasis on the adherence to the terms guiding the principle of the rotational presidency despite the fact that it is not recognised by the constitution of Nigeria. When the terms are bridged like in the year 2011, the media ought to be united in ensuring that the right thing is done. In essence the media should deemphasise promotion of sentiment for the unity of Nigeria.

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