

# Socio-Economic Predictors of Youth Violence in Nigeria: Library Intervention Strategies

Echezona, R. I. (Ph.D)<sup>1</sup> Ugwu, C.I<sup>2</sup> & Ozioko, R E. (Ph.D)<sup>3</sup>

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

[ifeoma.echezona@unn.edu.ng](mailto:ifeoma.echezona@unn.edu.ng)<sup>1</sup>, [ifeanyi.ugwu@unn.edu.ng](mailto:ifeanyi.ugwu@unn.edu.ng)<sup>2</sup> &  
[reuben.ozioko@unn.edu.ng](mailto:reuben.ozioko@unn.edu.ng)<sup>3</sup>

08035483000<sup>1</sup>, 08030612017<sup>2</sup>, 08030919177<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

**Purpose:** The paper aimed at developing some library intervention strategies for curbing violence in our society within the context of socio-economic predictors of youth violence.

**Method/Approach** The study adopted a descriptive survey design to explore the violent activities of youths and their socio- economic predictors. The population of the study consisted of librarians and youths in Nigerian Universities drawn from the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, while the Librarians from these selected Universities were studied ( $n_1=100$ ). A total number of 2,700 undergraduates were randomly selected from the three Universities studied ( $n_2 = n_3 = n_4 = 900$ ). Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection which was validated through expert opinion. The researchers employed research assistants for administration of the instrument and collection.

**Finding:** The finding revealed that the youths studied are involved in so many violent activities due largely to frustration. Libraries can contribute greatly to curbing youth violence by embarking on intervention strategies. These strategies include provision of information on different aspects of recreational activities for the youths, provision on employment opportunities for the youth, engaging in public private partnership initiation to check the violent activities of the youth.

**Implication:** Government at all levels should invest in library development considering its role in socio-economic development of the country and in stemming the tide of economic relate social vices I the society.

**Value/Originality:** It stem from the fact that information can effectively used to prevent or reduce violence in the society.

**Keywords:** Violent activities, Youth violence, library intervention, socio-economic predictors.

**Paper Type;** Empirical

## Introduction

Youth violence worldwide particularly in Nigeria has cast a dark shadow over the prospect for a peaceful, united, secure and prosperous society. According to World Bank (2003) youth violence and poverty are intricate and inter-related, they retard economic and social development in reverse.

Youth gangs and cult groups according to Oruwari and Opuene (2006) have been in existence in Nigerian cities for a long time. In the immediate poor civil war period, i.e. from early 1970s; there was a noticeable increase in the incidence of violent crimes and in the heinous nature of these crimes particularly in the use of dangerous weapons and killings. The national awareness and emergence of cult groups and increase in youth violence can be traced

back to the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war that lasted from 1967 to 1970.

Akparanta (1994) attempted to provide reasons for youth violence in post civil war Nigeria, arguing that following the war, there was an abundance of guns in private hands and times were hard economically. Albert (1994) indentified causes of youth violence in Africa. These include: high population growth rates with its attendant unemployment, poor wages, poor living condition, urban culture, shocks, and poor quality of urban management that is manifested in the crises in health care, transportation, housing and employment.

Following the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) from about 1986, the country started experiencing a serious contraction in the labour market. This resulted in a large proportion of youth both in-site and migrants, searching for jobs under the prevailing

harsh economic condition. The presence of this enormous pool of idle youth, who are both skilled and unskilled and sometimes homeless, created a fertile ground for deviant activities including violence. This culminated in an increase in urban crime of different types including drug-trafficking and drug abuse by youth, all of which fuel violent activities.

It would be stating the obvious that today the Niger Delta region of Nigeria for example is engulfed by such youth violence. Violence arose as a result of conflict in the region which has been present for many years and began to surge appreciably in the late 1990s. In 2000, the government of President Olesegun Obasanjo created the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to help end the violence and spur socio-economic development, neglect of which has fuelled violence in the region. Previous governments largely ignored the Niger Delta, partly because its geography made it relatively inaccessible. The long period of military rule in Nigeria contributed to bad governance and corruption, and the burden for the provision of government services fell to oil and gas companies, which were ill-equipped to supply water and electricity, maintain road networks as well as provide employment opportunities. The scale of this neglect, according to Asuni (2005), has been an important factor behind the violence in the Niger Delta, which is carried out by social groups or street gangs referred to by many as "cults". These groups – made up of youth from the Niger Delta originated with the intention of offering physical protection and providing its members with an opportunity to meet people with similar ethnic or social identities. In time, these groups acquired arms and also began to compete with each other over oil bunkering.

According to Ukeje (2001), Nigeria has not at all been fair to the people of the Niger Delta. The suffering of the people, in spite of the enormous wealth that is got from their area, is inexplicable. That is why youth violence has erupted all over. According to him, youths were up in arms because of the seeming failure of non-violent action. People are suffering in the midst of so much wealth being generated. There are many young people, including graduates who have been unemployed for years. According to Deji Haastrup, Manager responsible for community relations at Chevron Nigeria Limited, in many remote areas where poverty and unemployment

are more pronounced and policing is almost absent, many of the youth have turned to violent crimes and the criminals have not had much deterrent.

The reality in the Niger Delta today is that decades of oil production have accentuated the impoverishment of the inhabitants. The period also witnessed an acute neglect by oil companies, who argue that it is beyond their corporate callings to play the role of an alternative government and provide social amenities and infrastructure to their host communities.

One cause of youth violence was the state's neglect of social amenities and infrastructure, such as pipe-borne water, good roads, health care facilities and schools. Moreover, lack of opportunities for gainful employment demoralized the youth in the oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta. Life for the mostly uneducated or semi-educated youth in a typical rural oil community is full of misery, because there is no chance for them to find employment and income-generating opportunities. The worst thing for many youth is that they have no hope of breaking out of the prevailing cycle of poverty, (Ukeje, 2001).

Historically, libraries have played a major role in creating, accumulating, organizing and disseminating information. Libraries, according to Echezona (2007) are key players in fostering the information society. Library and information services are key actors in providing unhindered access to essential information resources for economic and cultural advancement. In doing so, they contribute effectively to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom, democratic values, peace and universal civil right. (IFLA, 2002). Libraries can clearly play a significant role in youth violence. The role of the mass media as an agent of change and social integration is well documented and recognized. Byrs, Grardet and Markeivics quoted by Abiolu

Oluremi and Okere, (2009) noted that information has been described in different contexts-such as a bridge builder, intellectual capital, economic asset, among others. Information is too valuable to be set aside in the scheme of things. Information plays a major role in mitigating violence and conflict situation. Proactive action which has the advantage of reducing danger and saving lives and property can only be effective if timely information is

available. With information, trends can be analyzed, implication discussed and action taken without delay. This is one of the basics of security, violence and conflict management.

Albert (2002) has prescribed inter cultural education for students. Such education should focus on issues like human rights, respect for cultural diversity, building tolerance, mutual respect and peaceful co-existence between people. In other words, information and education which like twins go with each other have a vital role to play in violence and conflict management. The library performs the social function of providing information to the public through it varieteis of information resources which may be in the form of printed materials or non-print materials. The role of the library in dealing with youth violence comes in also when the violence has degenerated to issue of litigation. Any item of evidence at the court of law must come from recognized institution; most notably in this category is the library. Adewuyi (2009) suggested ways of enhancing the effectiveness of the library in dealing with youth violence as well as conflict resolution generally. According to him, public libraries should be established in all local and state governments of Nigeria, and by extension, recruitment of qualified librarians to manage such libraries. Also relevant libraries should acquire all government publications and the governments of Nigeria should ensure that all government publications, especially those that are not available for off-the-shelf purchase are sent to relevant libraries for depository purposes; Having acquired those items by the library, effects should be made to make sure that the items are processed, organized and kept in an environment that is best suitable for their preservation with a view to prolonging their life span. Displays and exhibitions have been known to be effective ways of creating awareness and drawing attention to valuable issues. This medium can be explored to full advantage by our libraries. This is particularly important since our libraries need to re-strategize to maintain their pride of place. Through sound, non-partisan and balanced library acquisition policies, libraries can contribute significantly to dealing with the issue of youth violence, peace and social integration.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the various violent activities of the youth in Nigeria?
2. In what ways do economic factors influence youth violence in Nigeria?
3. In what ways do social factors contribute to youth violence in Nigeria?
4. How can the libraries contribute to curbing violent activities in Nigeria?

### Literature Review

There seems to be no safe places; the violence extends into our homes, neighborhood, schools, daycare facilities, shopping malls, workplaces and churches. According to Elliot (1994), research suggests that the absence of effective social bonds and controls, together with failure of parents to teach (and children to internalize conventional norms and values) put children at risk of later violence while Shell, the largest multinational player in Nigerian's oil industry, has indentified political, social and environmental factors that precipitate community disturbances in Nigeria. At the social level, Shell noted that "Anger is growing and increasing militant groups are overthrowing traditional social order in some communities (Ukeje, 2001). He further reported that another cause of violence was the state's neglect of social amenities and infrastructure, such as piped water, good roads, health care facilities and schools.

On the other hand, violence is seen and promoted as an economic opportunity by many subalterns and jobless youths. This phenomenon resonates with the greed versus grievances theory of Paul Coller and Anke Hoeffler (2002) who argued that the greed of predatory and militant groups considerably overrides grievance in accounting for the emergence, proliferation and prolongation of violent conflicts. Ukeje (2001) notes that lack of opportunities for gainful employment demoralized the youth in the oil-producing communities of the Delta and thereby triggers off crises. To buttress the point made by the above authors, United Nations (1998) noted that in Liberia for instance, the control and exploitation of diamond, timber, and other raw materials was one of the principal objectives of the warring faction, and control over these resources financed the various factors and gave them means to sustain the conflict.

Kontech (2007) supporting this position maintains that the World Bank aggravated the poor economic conditions of the people causing

impoverishment and desperation, thus becoming a major cause of many of the conflicts on the continent. This is further supported by Yeoman (2003), who contends that as a result, conflicts are now analyzed in market places and the World Bank (2003) has stated that, it retards economic and social developments and may be conceptualized as development in reverse. Maheswaran (2008), reported that although conflicts are threats to libraries, they can play an important role in creating ethnic harmony. Libraries are expected to change attitude of the civil society, which is a stakeholder in the peace process. Ogunkelu (2000) had started that seminar would go a long way in equipping researchers in the techniques of indentifying and preventing conflicts at their early stages, as well as manage and resolve them while Echezona (2007) notes that libraries now deploy ICT (Website), seminar and extensive services to full advantage. Haris' (2007) finding is in line with this view when he states that community radio, television, cartoon, cinema, drama, music could be employed to alert, inform or resolve conflict in rural areas, stressing that the information could be repackaged in a language the rural people could understand. Evans (2007) holds a similar view when he states that mobile libraries

could, to a large extent, enhance conflict resolution.

**Methodology**

The paper aimed at developing some library intervention strategies for curbing violence in our society within the context of socio-economic predictors of youth violence. The study adopted a descriptive survey design to explore the violent activities of youths and their socio- economic predictors. The population of the study consisted of librarians and youths in Nigerian Universities drawn from the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, while the Librarians from these selected Universities were studied (n<sub>1</sub>=100). A total number of 2,700 undergraduates were randomly selected from the three Universities studied (n<sub>2</sub> = n<sub>3</sub> = n<sub>4</sub> = 900). Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection which was validated through expert opinion. The researchers employed research assistants for administration of the instrument and collection. The data collected were analyzed using standard deviation (SD) and mean (X).

**Results of Findings**

The findings of the study are presented in the tables shown below

**Tables1: Descriptive statistics of the various violent activities of youth in Nigeria**

S/N	Activity	X	SD	Decision
1	Street Fighting	2.14	1.15	Negative
2	Intergroup Fighting	2.00	0.97	Negative
3	Physical Fighting	2.40	1.07	Negative
4	Drug abuse and misuse	2.48	1.26	Negative
5	Selling hard drugs	2.23	1.17	Negative
6	Aggressive Behaviour	2.43	1.14	Negative
7	Aggressive Thought	2.41	0.98	Negative
8	Aggressive Emotions	2.50	0.95	Positive
9	Carrying Weapons	2.25	1.08	Negative
10	Robbery	2.43	1.26	Negative
11	Sexual Assaults	2.29	1.12	Negative
12	Oil Bunkering	2.27	1.11	Negative
13	Kidnapping	2.26	1.12	Negative
14	Intimidation/Extortion of money/ Stealing by trick	2.50	1.15	Positive
15	Thuggery	2.52	1.26	Positive
16	Killing of People	2.16	1.07	Negative
17	Attacks on People	2.23	1.14	Negative
18	Bombing of houses and places	1.91	1.01	Negative
19	Community Squabbles	2.16	0.98	Negative
	Over all	2.30	0.93	

Table 1 above shows the violent activities of the Nigerian youth. The results show that the greatest violent activity of Nigerian youths is thuggery (2.52). This is followed by such activities like aggressive emotion (2.00) and intimidation like extortion of money from

people/stealing by trick (2.50). The results also show that the least violent activity of Nigerian Youths is bombing houses and places. However, the findings reveal that youth violence in areas studied is considerably low. (2.30)

**Table 2: Descriptive statistical on ways Economic factors influence youth violence in Nigeria.**

S/N	Economic Classes	N	X	SD
1	High Economic Classes	4	1.21	0.18
2	Medium Economic Classes	8	2.08	0.74
3	Low Economic Classes	100	2.36	0.94
	Overall	1.12	2.30	0.93

Table 2 below shows the influence of economic factors on youth’s violence in Nigeria. The table reveals that children from high economic classes are less vulnerable to youth violence. Children from low economic classes engage more in

violent activities (2.36), followed by children from medium economic classes (2.08). The result shows that youth violence is inversely proportional to economic classes in Nigeria.

**Fig 3: Descriptive statistics on ways social factors contribute to youth violence in Nigeria**

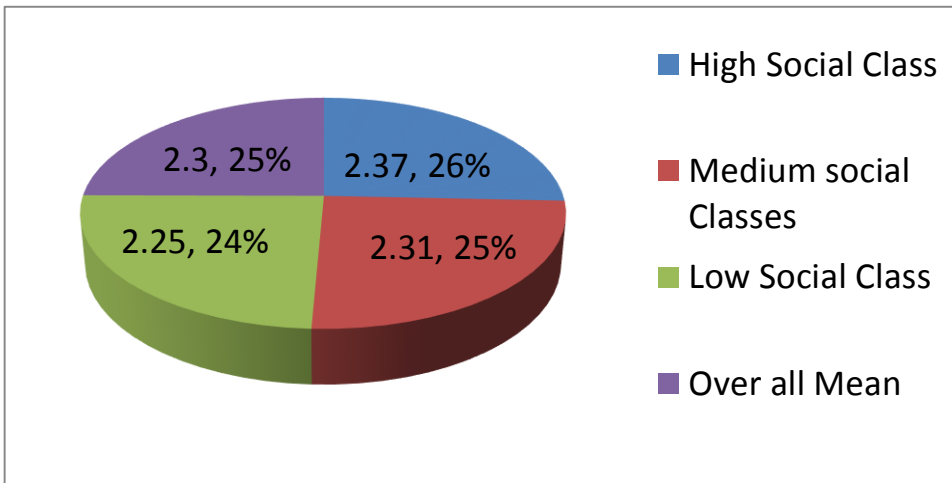


Table 3 above shows the influence of social classes on youth violence in Nigeria. The table reveals that children from high social classes engage more in youth violence than those from low social classes (2.37). It has been found that

children from medium social classes are also susceptible to youth violence (2.31). The results show that youth violence varies directly as social classes in Nigeria. That is, it increases or decreases as the social class changes

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on contribution of libraries in curbing violent activities**

S/N	Strategy	X	S	Decision
1	Libraries can provide information on different aspects of sporting/recreational activities for the youths.	3.51	0.57	positive
2	Provision of information on the employment opportunities for youths.	3.39	0.49	Positive
3	Libraries can provide life long learning program for youth.	3.42	0.56	Positive
4	Provision of information on violent activities and their consequences through different media such as radio, TV and cinema.	3.39	0.49	Positive
5	Collaboration with NGOs to provide youth with information resources on negative effects of youths violence.	3.32	0.65	Positive
6	Engaging on outreach programmes on prevention of negative effects of youth violence	3.35	0.70	Positive
7	Organization of workshops, seminar and symposium on prevention of violent activities and their consequences.	3.48	0.59	Positive
8	Using posters to create awareness of the negative effects of youth's violence.	3.39	0.49	Positive
9	Checking the violent activities of the youth through public private partnership initiatives.	3.23	0.49	Positive
	Overall mean	3.39	0.40	Positive

Table 4 above shows that the library can contribute in curbing youth violence in Nigeria. Even though all these strategies have been accepted by the respondents, the three most important activities' the library should engage in to stem the tide of youth violence in Nigeria are; providing information on different aspects of sporting/recreational activities for the youth (3.51), organizing workshops, seminar, and symposium on prevention of violent activities of youths and their consequences (3.48) and providing lifelong learning programmes for the youths (3.42). The above result shows that the library has significant roles to play in curbing the violent activities of youth in Nigeria.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings from this study are quite revealing. While economic and social conditions have been found to influence youth violence, their predictability has also been determined.

The results of the study show that youth violence in Nigeria varies inversely as economic class and varies directly as social class. This means that as economic class increases, youth violence decreases. And as social class increases, youth violence increases. In other words, while children from high economic class engage less in violent activities, those children from low economic class engage more in violent activities or heinous crimes, while children from low social class equally engage less in crimes or violent activities. For the economic class, the reasons for the findings may be due to poor

living conditions, poor wages and employment indentified by Albert (2002) as some of the causes of youth violence in Africa. For the social class, the reason for the finding may be greed. There are situations where greed may override every other factor in accounting for the emergence, proliferation and prolongation of violent activities or conflicts. The greed versus grievance theory of Collier and Hoeffler (2002) provides a good explanation for this finding.

he results also show that the library has significant roles to play in curbing youth violence in Nigeria. The Library's role includes information provision confirming educational development of youths, organizing outreach programmes, awareness creation, organizing workshop/seminars and collaboration/partnerships. Their specific roles are in line with Adewuyi's (2009) suggestions on ways of enhancing the effectiveness of the library in dealing with youth violence. This author's suggestions centered on information acquisition, organization and provision as well as awareness creation via displays and exhibitions.

**Library Intervention Measures**

The present study has recommended the following library intervention measures in curbing the menace of youth violence in Nigeria:

1. Provision of information on different aspects of sporting /recreational activities for the youths.

2. Providing lifelong learning programmes for the youths.
3. Organizing workshops, seminar and symposium on prevention of violent activities of youths and their consequences.
4. Provision of information on employment opportunities for youths.
5. Creating awareness of the consequences of youth violence through the radio, TV cinema, outreach programmes and posters.
6. Collaborating with the NGOS to provide information resources on the negative effects of youth violence as well as to check the violent activities of youths.

### Conclusion

Youth violence is one of the evils that face our society today. It is rearing its ugly head day by day and the rate at which it escalates is alarming. It has been found that the library has significant roles to play in checkmating the excesses of our youth. What is therefore required is government support in the form of providing both funds and the enabling environment to enable the library to function effectively. In addition, public libraries should be established in every state and local government in the country to help in the social-economic development of the country. These two indices of national development can be adversely affected by youth violence. The library should therefore be re-positioned, re-engineered and re-invented to begin to function to address all the developmental challenges through knowledge creation and dissemination.

### References

Abiolu O.A and Okere, O.O. (2009), *Rethinking information services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Nigerian perspectives*. Paper presented at the 47<sup>th</sup> National Conference and Annual General Meeting of the

Nigerian library Association, Jogor centre, Ibadan.26-31 July. Pp 43-51.

Adewuyi, O. W. (2009), *The Library as a Tool for Conflict Resolution: The Nigerian perspective* paper Presented at the 47<sup>th</sup> Nigerian Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Library Association, Jogor centre Ibadan, 26-31 July pp 53-60.

Albert, I. O. (2002), Cultural and Conflict Transformation, *African Notes*, 26 (1&2): 31-44.

Asuni, J. (2005), *Federation and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*. United States Institute of Peace. <http://www.usip.org/>

Echezona, R. I. (2007), The Role of Libraries in Information Dissemination for Conflict Resolution, Peace Promotion and Reconciliation. *African Journal of Library and Information Science* 17(2), 143-151.

Evan, R. (2007) *Mobile Library Services* London: Butterworth & Co.

Maheswaran (2008), Study of Roles of Libraries in Conflict and Peace in Sri Lanka . *Journal of University Librarian Association of Sri Lanka* Vol. 12

Ogunkelu, B. (2000), An Address Presented at the International Seminar on Conflict Resolution Held in Abuja, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2001 Unpublished.

Ukeje, C. (2001), Youths Violence and the Collaspe of Public Order in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, *African Development* 26 (172): 227 -366

United Nations, (1998), The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa;. Report of the Secretary General to the UN Security Council. New York: United Nations pp. 7.15

World Bank (2003), *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil and Development Policy*, Washington D C World Bank.

Yeoman, C. L. (2008), Globalization and Conflicts in the Third World: Protracted Structural Conflict in the Americas. Retrieved February 2, 2009, from <http://www.odifreg.uk/espanol/publication>.