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## THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN PREVENTION OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN BAUCHI METROPOLIS OF BAUCHI STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The escalation of violence has been one of the key security threats disturbing political stability worldwide. In Africa, predominantly in Nigeria, political violence is connected with electoral rigging, which has negative implications for the public and their occupations. Nigeria has been suffering political violence in most of its states, essentially Borno, Lagos, Rivers, Kano, Plateau Gombe, and Bauchi. However, Bauchi State has suffered more political violence than other Nigerian states. The frequency of violence in the state of Bauchi has caused a political reaction. This study scrutinized the role of the government in violence prevention strategies in Bauchi Metropolis. The research objectives will be to examine the impact of prevention strategies in Bauchi State. Nevertheless, this study will adopt a descriptive research design and use semi-structured interviews to collect data. The researchers will use a purposive sampling technique and select respondents from government officials and community leaders. In addition, the snowballing sampling technique will use to select both active and ex Sara-Suka members. Both primary and secondary sources of data will use. Data obtain from the field will be thematically analyze through interpretation and transcription. The findings of this study reveal that Bauchi state government use prevention strategies. It was found that statesmen have supported violence during elections, causing tension in the polling units prior to, during, and after the elections. The study concluded that the Bauchi State government has effectively managed political violence in the state. The study recommends that Sara-Suka members should be skilled and educated.*

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Government, Prevention, Political violence, Reintegration,

### 1. Introduction

Violence prevention has become a critical challenge for governments worldwide, particularly in Africa where political violence often coincides with electoral processes (Okpaga et al., 2012). In Nigeria, states like Bauchi have experienced frequent outbreaks of political violence that threaten stability and development (Omilusi, 2013). This study examines the role of government in implementing violence prevention strategies in Bauchi Metropolis. Specifically, it analyzes the impact of prevention programs targeting

youth groups Sara-Suka and evaluates government efforts to rehabilitate, empower and reintegrate former members back into society. By assessing initiatives such as skills training, amnesty programs, and public education campaigns, this study aims to provide insights into effective approaches for mitigating political violence and promoting peace in Bauchi State.

The aim of this study is to examine the role of government in implementing violence prevention strategies in Bauchi Metropolis, Bauchi State, Nigeria. The study focuses specifically on analyzing the impact

of prevention programs targeting youth groups involved in political violence, particularly the Sara-Suka group. It seeks to evaluate government efforts in rehabilitating, empowering, and reintegrating former members of such groups back into the social order. The study will assess various initiatives, including skills training programs, amnesty schemes, public education campaigns, and reintegration strategies. By scrutinizing these approaches, the investigate aims to provide insights into effective methods for mitigating political violence and promoting peace in Bauchi State. Additionally, the study sought to explore the challenges faced in implementing these strategies and offer recommendations for improving violence prevention efforts in Bauchi.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Empirical Review

Winton (2007) studies the gender structure of U.S. and Latin American gangs. The findings of the research showed that the overwhelming majority of members of the gang are male. Throughout Nicaragua and Guatemala, however, there is evidence of female gang membership. His work informs this study about gang organization. The current study differs from his work in that it focuses on the changing trends in the gangs group, something that he has not discussed. His study was also conducted in the United States of America and Latin America whereas the current study was conducted in Bauchi, Nigeria.

Studying gangs in Britain, Tita et al., (2005) looked into territorial groups. This indicates that participants limit their operations within the wider community to a limited number of locations. Their work informs this study on the geographical activity of gangs. Their study was conducted in Britain; however, this study was conducted in Nigeria. The scholars also do not provide the transformations these gangs have undergone over time, which is the main focus of this study. This is the gap that this study intends to fill.

According to Bates (2008), gangs across African states have become main agents of violence and are an indication of limited capacity to outsource territorial authority by African countries. These scholars' ideas inform this study about gangs which is the main focus of this study. The authors focus on state-owned security agencies while this study focuses on gangs. Also, they do not indicate the factors influencing the emergence of gangs, the changing trends in these gangs, and the factors underlying these changes. These are the gaps the current study aimed to fill, concerning the Sara-Suka gang

In the case of Kenya, Wamue, (2001) studied the Mungiki from the viewpoint of re-traditionalization. She argues that Mungiki is a religious doctrine-political gang representing a small number of individuals accumulating wealth, particularly those in political circles. The gang rose to rally the masses against the alleged government plan to prepare the tribal clashes of 1992 that saw the expulsion from the Rift Valley of many Kikuyus. The group advocated "*itwika*," she says, that is transferring leadership from the old generation to the new youth generation. She also reveals that Mungiki is not exclusively a Kikuyu affair because the party has membership from places like Pokot, Maasai, and Luos, outside the central province. Her thoughts are important to this study as she attests to the similar history and common goal of gangs. She also focuses on the factors leading to Mungiki's development, which is of immediate relevance to the current study of Sara-Suka evolution.

In Nigeria Awodiya (2006) articulates that one of the main reasons in the growth, development and transformation of ethnic gangs was the increase of influx of small arms. Records show there are about three million small and sophisticated arms privately owned illegally. In this way the author extends Obasi's (2002) claims that the increase of privately owned illegal arms give rise to the cultural violence and also encouraged disaffected ethnic groups into escalating direct challenges to legal authorities. Their ideas inform this study on the factors causing the rise of gangs in

Nigeria, which is the focus of this study. However, they do not highlight the changing trends in these gangs a gap that this study intended to fill. Additionally, the authors treat gangs in Nigeria as one entity, thus a possibility that they overlooked certain dynamics as far as these gangs are concerned.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Social Disorganization Theory and the Rational Choice Theory. The Social Disorganization Theory, developed by Shaw and McKay (1942), posits that crime and violence are more likely to occur in communities characterized by weak social bonds, poverty, and high population turnover. In the context of Bauchi Metropolis, this theory helps explain how socio-economic conditions and weakened community structures may contribute to the rise of groups like Sara-Suka and the prevalence of political violence. It provides a framework for understanding why certain areas may be more susceptible to violence and how strengthening community ties and improving socio-economic conditions can be effective prevention strategies.

The Rational Choice Theory, as applied to criminology by Cornish and Clarke (1986), suggests that individuals make rational decisions to engage in criminal or violent behavior based on perceived benefits and costs. This theory is particularly relevant in examining the motivations behind youth involvement in political violence and the effectiveness of government interventions. It suggests that by altering the perceived costs and benefits of engaging in violence through strategies such as skill development programs, employment opportunities, and legal consequences - the government can influence individual choices and reduce violent behavior. This framework helps in analyzing the effectiveness of rehabilitation and empowerment programs in providing alternative options to violence and in understanding how amnesty programs and other interventions might impact decision-making processes of potential or former Sara-Suka members.

## 3. Methodology

The study used the descriptive design of research which followed historical methodology. Therefore, it chronologically describes the occurrence of the event. The study used a qualitative approach to get into the depths of the issues. This design was important as it provided an analysis of the events occurrence.

This study was undertaken in Bauchi Town, North East Nigeria. Bauchi is a state in northern Nigeria, and its capital is situated in the northeastern part of the country and shares boundaries with Plateau State, Kano State to the north and Yobe and Gombe States to the northeast. The state was created when the former North-Eastern State broke up in 1976. It originally included the areas now in the state of Gombe, which in 1996 became a separate state.

Bauchi State is heterogeneous with large ethnic groups such as Hausa, Fulani, Jarawa, Tangale, Waja, Balewa, Sayawa, and Tarewa. Bauchi State's most predominant economic activity is agriculture. The vast fertile soil offers an added advantage to farming products including: corn, wheat, millet, groundnut, and guinea maize. Irrigation farming is practised using dams such as the Balanga dam. Cattle and other livestock are also reared in the state. The state also has industries such as Bazamri PVC-Wire Limited, Kuda Nails Plant, Yankari Natural Water Company, Zaki Flour Mills, and Arewa Ceramic Industry.

The measured distance from Abuja to Bauchi is equivalent to 182 miles, which is equal to 293 kilometers from the territory of the federal capital Abuja to the city of Bauchi. 2006 population census shows that the state has a population of about 4,653,066. See appendix 1: Map of Bauchi state. This study targeted indigenous Bauchi residents aged 18 years and above, both male and female. The administrative wards of Bauchi were targeted with eight units.

This study utilized purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was adopted because the researcher assumed that participants had valuable

research information. The method was used for interviewing community leaders and government officials. Snowballing sampling was used because the study is concerned with sensitive security challenges. Because issues related to political thugs are esoteric, insider knowledge was required to identify the study participants. The snowballing method was used to trace members of Sara-Suka and former members for interviews.

The sample population consisted of one hundred (100) participants drawn from the Bauchi metropolis. These consisted of 60 oral interviews (OI) and forty Key informant interviews (KII) the participants were selected depending on their availability and willingness to give information and more essentially, their knowledge of the Sara-Suka gang.

This study used both primary and secondary data. Using semi-structured interview for Oral interviews, primary data was obtained through direct interaction with participants. Secondary data was collected by subjecting books, journals, conference proceedings, dissertations and thesis as well as internet and magazines to critical textual analysis. Oral interviews were used to gather information from government officials, Sara-Suka members, ex members of Sara-Suka, and community leaders. Data from the interviews were used to gather opinions of government officials' involvement in gangs' operation in Bauchi in the period 1960-2015.

The data was analyzed in accordance with the study objectives. The collected information was organized and analyzed thematically and periodically. Data was transcribed and categorized in line with the study objective.

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

##### **The Role of the Government in Violence Prevention in Bauchi Metropolis**

A functional government is expected to safeguard the lives of its people and protect their properties. This is the essence of the social contract between the latter and

the former. As such, state-based institutions and organizations are responsible for the citizens' health. Nevertheless, particular accountability for the security of human lives and properties is entrusted with certain organizations and agencies (Okpaga et, al., 2012:80). On the same note a respondent noted that; the government worked with security agencies in promoting peace during election period. Societies played a vital role inculcating the culture of peace (,O.I.).

This research corresponds with the work of Omilusi (2013) who pointed out that the law enforcement officers, agencies for state security, military, border control officers, and Prisons services have been on the forefront in peacekeeping matters. Instability relates to an infringement of stability and peace, whether historical, religious, ethno-regional, civil, social, economic or political, that has made a significant contribution to regularly occurring conflicts as Nigeria has witnessed over the years resulting in futile devastation and destruction of property. Insecurity also expresses itself in political issues through lack of stability or violence through repeated regime changes, armed conflicts and trans-border combat, self-serving upper class hegemony, insufficient citizen recognition, and poor or counterproductive policy decisions. It is the administration's duty to deliver peace and security within societies at large. On the same note a key respondent noted that; Bauchi State government with the support of societies are protecting the lives and properties in the State particularly during and after the election (,O.I.).

This corroborates the work of Fawole (2012) who argued that it is also the paramount duty and obligation of any government through most of modern times to provide security and to ensure the safety of all the people who live inside its domain. Indeed, security as an extremely important framework is usually associated with alleviating the threats to appreciate values, particularly the sustainability in the near future of individuals or groups.

## **Rehabilitation and Training of Sara-Suka Members**

According to the National Mirror (2011), in 2009, the Federal Government launched an amnesty scheme for all Niger Delta militant groups, and they were to surrender their weapons and join the amnesty program. This was implemented to guarantee that militants' operations which had resisted military action in the region did not contribute to the economy's inevitable destruction. The ex-militants were to collect N65, 000 as a regular stipend while being trained on different skill sets at home as well as internationally to enable them gain employment and return to society.

However, corruption within the scheme made these goals hard to be realized. Complaints ranging from deterioration of the region's social infrastructure, which was in the first place the key cause of militancy, to variations in the definite number of rebel partaking in the program have been aired (National Mirror, 2011). Additionally, violent protests disgruntled ex-militants who were excluded from the program (Punch Newspapers, 2012; Premium Times 2012; Tamuno, 2012) added to the factors threatening the scheme.

On the same note a respondent noted that: Bauchi state government created an agency which is taking care of all Sara-Suka members which include training them to for skills while some members were taking back to schools in and outside Bauchi state (Yalwaji Bauchi, O.I, 10/11/2019). Sara-Suka activities is very much alive but in a lower-profile manner, the government set up a committee to come up the solutions to Sara-Suka operation the recommendation of that committee which advises the government to give Sara-Suka members job (O.I).

However, other crucial realities must be consider: the scheme was founded on the ground of injustice as ex-militants who committed atrocities were now rehabilitated and rewarded while their victims have been ignored (Aghedo, 2015). This does not argue well for any reconciliation. Neither is the culture of corruption in which huge amount of money were

budgeted while insufficient facilities were actually procured for the program (Amusanl, 2014).

## **Seminars and Workshops for Sara-Suka Members**

Communication as transmission of information or knowledge among individuals groups, communities, organizations or states is an essential part of living. It is essential in dealing with conflict. Through it, accurate conflict information is exchanged between both the parties to a dispute and those responsible for resolving the conflict (Omojunikanbi, 2019). Indeed, on the same vein a respondent norted that; the government used a good strategy by organizing seminars and workshops for Sara-Suka members to inform them the danger of political violence and election fraud in the State (O.I).

The above statement is similar to that of Omojunikanbi, (2019) who pointed out that communication must be designed and properly channeled so that it can be successful in any activity that it aims to accomplish. Afolabi (2015) sheds light on the involvement of the civil society in enlightening the general public on conflict prevention and resolution. He notes that the activities of the Open Society Initiative West Africa (OSIWA) were concentrated on many hypotheses: that the political elite were not ultimately responsible to the general public; that INEC could not run the elections on its own; and that the people wanted to protect their incompetence. Hence, it sought to cultivate citizens' understanding of the democratic process, rein in politicians' excesses and encourage transparency. On the same note a respondent stated that; the government signed agreement with some nongovernmental organization to organize seminar and workshops for Sara-Suka members in Bauchi (O.I).

This study is similar to with the work of Afolabi, (2015) who indicates that the MacArthur Foundation funded the campaigns of the Wise Council; the Center for Information Technology and Development, and several other NGOs that followed the election facilitated civic education and set up informal communication networks. Most of the pre-election issues were due to dis-information and false rumor. The MacArthur Foundation tried to resolve this by maintaining open

communication lines among key actors in the elections. The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Program (NSRP), a DFID-funded program, was one of the initiatives that helped societies resolve tensions throughout and even beyond the electoral process. Through the Justice for All programs, NSRP facilitated community-level transparency and helped community officials mediate conflicts before they were violent.

The above study contradicts the work of Afolabi, (2015) who argued that the Peace and Conflict Resolution Institute (IPCR), a think-tank also under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has also supported peaceful elections. Sponsored by UNDP, it arranged an interreligious dialogue in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria, to bridge the divide between Christians and Muslims on state peacekeeping concerns. Furthermore, it mobilized eight stakeholders Federal states like Edo, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, Ogun, Oyo, Kwara and Lagos these covered traditional authorities, security forces, religious leaders, media, youth organizations, road transport staff, political parties, INEC officials they recognize challenges to peaceful elections and provide responses that could preserve peace among citizens.

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reporting that 58.1 percent of young people between the ages of 15 and 34 are unemployed at the moment, the usage of youths as thugs, gangbangers and canon-fodders and during campaigns and polls stare the country in the face preventing election abuse is more than just keeping free and fair elections. Experts need to understand that a smooth democratic process is not a guarantee for democracy.

### **Reintegration of Sara Suka into Society**

Tarila (2017) argues that the Nigerian government has set the pace it cannot reverse. By committing itself in facilitating the reintegration of ex-militants in the Niger Delta, militanats all across the country have become aware that governments would always grant them an olive leaf.

However, there is a risk armed conflict arising and it is a widely seen as critical in deciding the progress or

failure of the DDR programs. The News, (2009) notes that DDR programs were established out of the need for the Niger Delta region to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage, as well as stability in environmental and economic protection. In an interview with a respondent noted that; many Sara-Suka members were trained and given job by the government and nongovernmental organizations in Bauchi. ( O.I.).

This corroborates with the perspective of UN (2010) which revealed that comprehensive reintegration means ex-combatants who have been in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration DDR initiatives need to experience peaceful life in post-conflict communities without recourse to violence or discrimination among members of those groups For this purpose, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs guarantee that ex-combatants receive resources and advice to support them find employment and actively participate in completely legit economic development.

Amoda (2009) argued that the government amnesty approach to defense, politics and disputes is a constitutional strategy and notes that amnesty is a specific waiver by government to offenders and a systematic neglect of government offenses. Similarly, a respondent noted that; Bauchi state government gave Sara-Suka amnesty to stop all violent activities Bauchii ( O.I. ). This reduced their violent operations in Bauchi

Tarila (2017) maintained that in accordance with global disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme (DDR) trends, the Nigerian government has taken measures to promote the reintegration of ex-militants. The Nigerian government agreed to pay the ex-militants a monthly stipend of US\$ 400. This amount was decided upon as part of initiatives to maintain income for ex-militants undergoing vocational training The ex-militants commenced apprenticeship trainings in the areas of agriculture, marketing of agricultural products-processing, transportation, management, telecommunications and information, coastal services, construction and technicians in housing, petroleum & gas, and control of ecosystem and irrigation.

Kalio (2013) asserts that the programme's flexibility goes hand in hand with extra budget challenges. In particular, the reintegration process requires enormous financial investment, as it is typical of disarmament and demobilization globally. Plans for reintegration (DDR) are regularly evaluated but these evaluations also frequently require the infusion of fresh funds that altar the expenditure estimates accordingly.

Moreover, Kalio (2013) revealed that in the Niger Delta, there was a renewed demand for young people to move back to agric-farming. Due to the complexities of the amnesty program and the need to ensure food security and enduring peace in the region, the reorientation of young people to accept agriculture was imperative.

### **Sara-Suka Empowerment Program in Bauchi**

Sara Suka empowerment entails giving them skills and knowledge they need to participate in decision-making meaningfully and effectively particularly when those decisions have an influence on their lives. It also refers to involving Sara Suka in assessment procedures. This suggested that capacity building is a broad range of activities and has become crucial for economic development in Bauchi and in Nigeria

The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was created with an emphasis on social assistance programs, employment rates, infrastructural development, and preservation. In order to empower people in the automotive sector, train them in vocational skills, encourage internships, and offer microcredit opportunities, the National Poverty Eradication Programme was established in 2001. However, after ten years of execution in 2010, the initiative did not succeed in achieving its primary objectives.

When he took office on 2007, the late President Umaru Yar'aduahad to deal with a high rate of theft and vandalism, militancy (Ajibola2015). The "Black Gold" (oil and gas) deposits in the Niger Delta region are abundant the revenue generated by these natural resources will continue to be Nigeria's top source of

income. (Ajibola 2015) The government, its agencies, and the international oil firms working in the region are all accused of acting carelessly and casually which is considered the primary cause of the dispute in Niger Delta.

However, in an effort to stop the escalating conflict in the area, the late former president Umar Musa Yar'Adua adopted the technical committee on Niger Delta's advice to pardon local militants. The program's goals included de-escalating the violence in the area and rehabilitating, educating, empowering and reintegrating the gangs. Ajibola (2015) points out that the success of the program can be measured on the decreased rates of both violence and poverty.

Similar schemes include the Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (YEDI), Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWin), Graduate Internship Scheme, Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programmes (SURE-P), and other youth empowerment programmes which were developed by the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan. The Federal Ministry of Finance implemented it to give young unemployed Nigerians in the thirty six of states temporary employment options. The beneficiaries are given employment chances so they can improve their skills and acquire some work experience (Udo, 2013). If efforts were focused on building an enabling environment by providing basic facilities in both rural and urban regions, SURE-P is capable of reducing poverty and unemployment among Nigerians.

Empowerment, according to Idoko (2014), includes several methods people can be encouraged to make improvements in their way of life. He argued that empowering entailed teaching them how to translate ideas into skills. He emphasised that giving people the chance to get the skills they need to support themselves will boost their economic capacity and general wellbeing. Developing skills makes people more competitive in the society not only in Bauchi but globally.

Similarly, Nigerian government, through its many agencies, has increasingly focused on empowering Nigerians in various types of business (Central Bank of Nigeria 2012). According to Amadi and Abdullah (2012), a youth empowerment programme is a capacity-building strategy that includes vocational training and skill development to get people ready to contribute more to society. Thus, youth empowerment as a type of human development intervention gives people the chance to receive a variety of vocational skill training owing to their socioeconomic circumstances, which hamper their overall welfare (Kuti, 2006). This is achieved by empowering people socially, economically, and intervening in their educational pursuits. It also provides a wide range of opportunities for behavioural change in people through empowerment programmes, which aims to prepare them psychologically for a variety of challenges in life.

Additionally, according to Jimba (2007), there are numerous approaches to assist people in bringing about changes to their way of life. He emphasized that people empowerment refers to a strategy for teaching people the spirit of turning ideas into creativity. It is a way of introducing people to training or skills that make them productive. It covers means by which people might be introduced to trades that can enable them to engage in long-term paid and independent work. Researchers have argued that empowerment and national development go hand in hand, and that there is a favourable correlation between empowerment and poverty alleviation. Especially in developing countries like Nigeria, the presence of human development and citizens empowerment can reduce poverty and create jobs (Hussaini, 2014; Ntiwunka, 2014). The fact that young people have adequate energy, strong creative impulses, and a strong desire to improve the world is one of the main reasons industrialised nations invest enormous financial resources in the development of human capital, especially among the young.

According to Emejuru (2017), empowerment comprises initiatives that entail the dissemination of practical training and education so that people gain the skills they need to thrive and contribute as effectively as possible

to the development and advancement of their country. He listed three essential elements for empowerment, including education entrepreneurship training, and financial independence. It entails changing the people's attitude and belief patterns in order to give them the capacity to affect change in both their own lives and those of others.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed that the Bauchi State government has implemented various violence prevention strategies targeting youth groups, particularly the Sara-Suka gang. These strategies include rehabilitation programs, skills training, and reintegration efforts for ex Sara Suka members. The study finding also revealed that the government has collaborated with security agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community leaders to organize seminars and workshops aimed at educating Sara-Suka members and ex members about the dangers of political violence and election fraud. Finally, the study finding confirmed that an amnesty program was introduced by the Bauchi State government for Sara-Suka members, which led to a reduction in their violent activities. This program included providing job opportunities and educational support for ex of Sara Suka members.

Based on the findings, the study recommends:

- i. The government should focus on addressing the root causes of youth involvement in political violence, such as unemployment and poverty, by expanding and improving skills training programs and creating more job opportunities for youth in Bauchi State.
- ii. There should be increased efforts to strengthen community ties and improve socio-economic conditions in areas prone to violence, as suggested by the Social Disorganization Theory. This could involve community development projects and initiatives to enhance social cohesion.
- iii. The government should continue and expand its public education campaigns and workshops, involving

both active and former Sara-Suka members, to raise awareness about the consequences of political violence

and promote peaceful participation in the democratic process.

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