SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC CORRELATES OF YOUTH VIOLENCE AMONG HOUSEHOLDS IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Background: Youth violence is a socio-cultural aberration in behaviour among the youth and is of great public health importance. Purpose: The study aimed at determining the sociodemographic and economic correlates of youth violence among households in Ado local government of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Methods: It was a mixed-method study realized through a questionnaire-based survey and indepth interviews of members of households in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State; conducted over a 6-week period. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 and thematic content analysis were used to analyse the quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Results: The study revealed that youth unemployment was strongly linked with youth violence. While 42.5% of the respondents could identify at least one youth with violence in the neighbourhood, 23.8% of the respondents had one time or the other been victims of youth violence. The males were less likely to suffer youth violence from this study (crude odds ratio: 0.545; 95% confidence interval: 0.342-0.867; p=0.010). The majority of the respondents agreed that media/cybercrime was a form of youth violence and that the prevalence was on the increase. Suicide was, however, not recognized by a small segment of the respondents as a form of violence. Conclusion: The study revealed youth unemployment as a strong determinant of youth violence; with a female gender being an independent predictor of youth violence. There is, therefore, an urgent need to mount result-oriented strategies for its prevention. Central to these strategies are, teaching of youth violence prevention skills in schools/communities, advocacy on gender equality and alleviation of poverty level partly by job provision for the youth.

Keywords: Sociodemographic, Economic Correlates, Youth Violence, Households, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Youth violence is a sociocultural aberration in behaviour among the youth and is of public health importance (Blakemore, Rak and Stuart, 2024; Sandberg, 2024). The World Health Organization described youth violence as intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, underdevelopment or deprivation (WHO, 2015). Sociodemographically, it is not a problem that is selective of society, age or gender but it

definitely seems to have a higher likelihood of occurring in certain demographics (WHO, 2015).

The reality is that the higher percentage of humans who are actively involved in these sorts of violent alterations are the youth with the peak age occurring between 15-24 years and male and female adolescents being the perpetrators and victims most times (Miller et al., 2021). Variants of youth violence range from bullying, physical fighting and banditry to criminal acts like kidnapping, media/cybercrime, robbery, vandalism, sexual assaults/rape and homicide/suicide (Wilkins et al., 2018; Awoleke and Olofinbiyi, 2020). The study aimed at determining the sociodemographic and economic correlates of youth violence among households in Ado local government area of Ekiti-State. Youth violence is particularly rampant in Nigeria and Nigeria has been described as a "theatre of youth violence" (Abdullahi, Seedat-Khan and Abdulrahman, 2016). Researchers have found that sustained violence across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria is inimical to the nation's growth and development (Abdullahi, Seedat-Khan and Abdulrahman, 2016). Ekiti State with a population of about 2.4 million is largely dominated by the youth; with the youth accounting for about half of the population (City Population, 2022). Anecdotal reports from the state have shown high rates of youth violence especially during tertiary institutions' riots, communal clashes, ritual killings; kidnapping and elections riots, causing death, rendering some homeless, useless and making them drop out of school. It is, therefore, necessary to have reliable information and data on the nature and determinants of youth violence in the State in order to be able to formulate concrete policies for prevention of the menace. This has made it imperative to carry out this type of study.

METHOD

Study Design

A mixed mode method was adopted for this study (quantitative and qualitative). The quantitative employed the descriptive survey design while the qualitative made use of deep in-depth interviews. Descriptive survey design was used for this study to obtain appropriate information about the factors influencing youth violence. The quantitative aspect involved the use of a questionnaire-based survey and the qualitative component employed in-depth interviews to elicit factors influencing youth violence from household members (the youth, parents and key informants like community leaders, clergymen, educators and security personnel) of Ado-Ekiti local government area of Ekiti State.

Setting and samples

The study was carried out among households in Ado-Ekiti local Government Area of Ekiti State, Nigeria. The State comprises 16 local government areas and is subdivided into 3 senatorial districts. Ado-Ekiti Local Government is the largest of the 16 local governments in the State with a population of 313,690 according to 2006 population census and projected to about 427,700 in 2016, with an area of 6325m² and density of 514811/SQKM. It comprises 13wards. The inhabitants are a mixture of artisans, civil servants, farmers, primary, secondary and tertiary schools students. Subjects for the study included members of the various households in Ado Local Government area; parents/guardians, the youth and other key informants in the household. Ado-Ekiti local government with a population of about 427,700 (2016 census) is expected to

have a youth population of about 299,390 (from 70% population projection for youth population).

Sample Size Determination

Using the Cochran's formula(Snecdecor & Cochran, 1991), sample size was calculated using a prevalence of physical fighting with the assumption that half of the youth were involved in physical fighting (maximum variability is 0.5, this implies that p=0.5).

Sample size (N) =
$$Z^2 PQ$$

$$d^2$$
Where: level of significance = 1.96
$$P = \text{prevalence of } 50\% \text{ (0.50)}$$

$$Q = 1 \text{-p} = 0.50$$

$$d = \text{error margin} = 5\%$$

$$N = 1.96 \times 1.96 \times 0.63 \times 0.37 = 384$$

$$0.05 \times 0.05$$

If a 10% non-response rate is added, the sample size will then be

N=384+(0.1 x384)

=422

The qualitative data were obtained within the households of Ado-Ekiti local government area. In order to give robustness to the study, 10% of the population was used for the qualitative in-depth interviews. Forty (40) individuals from different households in Ado local government areas were interviewed. They were randomly distributed as follows; 20 youths (10 males, 10 females), 10 parents, and 10 key informants (including clergymen, traditional/community leaders, educators and security personnel).

Sampling Technique

Ado-Ekiti local government has 13 administrative wards with about 72,000 households (NPI, as at 2019). In order to select the households for the study, a multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. The first stage was the purposeful selection of the wards, in which four wards were chosen especially those with high number of households due to their volatility and overcrowding which could make them prone to violence. The second stage involved a simple random selection of households with selection of respondents from each household for sampling. Four hundred and twenty two (422) questionnaires were distributed in each of the four wards and the selected households. For qualitative sampling, ten individuals were randomly interviewed in each of the four wards, comprising 5 youths, 2 parents and 3 key informants.

Research Instrument

A well-structured questionnaire was employed to gather information from the respondents, using the study objectives and research questions. Also, an in-depth interview question guide was developed. The quantitative questionnaire was pretested for further reliability before final administration. Ethical approval (Approval

number: BUHREC 016/20) for the study was obtained from Babcock University Health Research Committee.

Data Collection Procedure

The research assistants primarily employed for the study were drilled on quantitative data collection, in-depth interviews and ethical conduct guiding research. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with each participant using a semi-structured interview schedule, each lasting fifteen minutes per person. An audio recorder and field notes were used to collect the data. The participants consented to tape the interview with audio recorder expressly on the informed consent. Data saturation was a major guide during the process of the field work. The narratives from the participants were constantly assessed to see that new pieces of information were derived and when there were very frequent repetitions, data saturation was said to be reached and the fieldwork was concluded. Audiotapes were transcribed by the researcher and interview transcripts and summaries were checked with participants to ensure that their narratives were well captured and not distorted in any way.

Data Analysis

The Quantitative data made use of descriptive and inferential statistics of frequencies, percentages, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 23 (SPSS 23). The qualitative data were analysed using thematic approach technique by compressing inferences, systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages by grouping them into themes and then sorting them out. In doing this, the in- depth interviews recorded into tapes were transcribed from a local language (i.e. Yoruba, Igbo or pidgin) to English language. Responses to each question were summarized and important answers reported verbatim to complement the quantitative findings.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage		
Age (years)				
≤ 19	63	15.8		
20 – 29	218	54.5		
30 – 39	79	19.8		
40 – 49	23	5.8		
≥ 50	17	4.3		
Total	400			
Gender				
Male	161	40.3		
Female	239	59.8		
Total	400			
Employment status				
Unemployed	275	68.8		
Employed	125	31.3		
Total	400			
Religion				
Christianity	321	80.3		
Islam	79	19.8		
Total	400			
Educational level				

No formal	6	1.5		
Primary	7	1.8		
Secondary	54	13.5		
Tertiary	333	83.3		
Total	400			
Marital status	Marital status			
Single	283	70.8		
Married	112	28		
Divorced	5	1.3		
Total	400			
Ethnicity				
Yoruba	346	86.5		
Hausa	20	5		
Igbo	34	8.5		
Total	400			

Table 1 shows the core socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Most of the respondents, 281 (70.3%), were below the age of 30years. The larger populations of them were females, 239(59.8%); unemployed 275(68.8%); and of Christian faith, 321(80.3%). While majority of the respondents had tertiary education, 333(83.3%); only 1.5% (6) were not educated. Most of the respondents 346(86.5%) were of Yoruba extraction.

Table 2: Influence of economic/financial power on youth violence

No.	Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	l don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
i.	Youth unemployment	159 (39.8)	198 (49.5)	15 (3.8)	22 (5.5)	6 (1.5)
ii.	Low parental care	151 (37.8)	190 (47.5)	18 (4.5)	35 (8.8)	6 (1.5)
iii.	Poverty	142 (35.5)	196 (49)	13 (3.3)	40 (10)	9 (2.3)
iv.	Youth illiteracy	114 (28.5)	194 (48.5)	29 (7.2)	54 (13.5)	9 (2.3)
V.	Withdrawal of stipends	109 (27.3)	197 (49.3)	45 (11.3)	38 (9.5)	11 (2.8)
vi.	Lack of stipends	100 (25)	193 (48.3)	50 (12.5)	46 (11.5)	11 (2.8)

Table 2 reveals the Influence of economic/financial power on youth violence. Unemployment among the youth was the most commonly cited reason for youth violence among the study population, 159(39.8%); followed by poor parental care, 151(37.8%). Not giving stipends was shown to be the least cause of youth violence related economic or financial power of the youth, 100(25%).

Table 3: Distribution of perpetrators or victims of youth violence

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Violence caused by any youth in your household?		
Yes	170	42.5
No	230	57.5
If YES, which form of violence? (n = 170)		
Street fighting	89	52.4
Bullying	23	13.5
Sexual assault	15	8.8
Media / cybercrime	10	5.9
Suicide / homicide	1	0.6
Robbery	13	7.6
Electoral violence	5	2.9
Kidnapping	11	6.5
Rioting	3	1.8
Have you been a victim of youth violence?		

Yes	95	23.8		
No	305	76.3		
If YES, which form of violence? (n = 95)				
Street fighting	42	44.2		
Bullying	26	27.4		
Sexual assault	13	13.7		
Media/cybercrime	4	4.2		
Suicidal ideation	3	3.2		
Others	7	7.4		
Have you been interrogated by the law enforcement agency?				
Yes	51	12.8		
No	349	87.3		

Table 3 shows the distribution of perpetrators or victims of youth violence. Of the respondents, 170(42.5%) knew youths in their households who had perpetrated violence. Almost one-third of that number was accounted for by street fight or bullying, 112(65.9%); with suicide or homicide being the least, 1(0.6%). Almost one-quarter of the respondents had been victims of youth violence, 95(23.8%); with 42(44.2%) having experienced street fighting and 26(27.4%) having suffered bullying. About thirteen percent (12.8%) of the respondents had had to be interrogated by law enforcement agents.

Table 4: Relationship between socio-demographic variables and youth violence among the respondents

Variables	Categories	Crude odds ratio (95% Confidence Interval)	p-value
Age (years)	≤ 19	1.970 (0.576 – 6.735)	0.280
	20 – 29	1.476 (0.495 – 4.395)	0.485
	30 – 39	0.849 (0.271 – 2.666)	0.780
	40 – 49	1.500 (0.356 – 6.323)	0.581
	≥ 50	1.000	
Gender	Male	0.545 (0.342 – 0.867)	0.010*
	Female	1.000	
Employment	Unemployed	1.882 (1.167 – 3.036)	0.010*
	Employed	1.000	
Religion	Christianity	1.536 (0.889 – 2.656)	0.124
	Islam	1.000	
Education	No formal	1.404 (0.161 – 12.206)	0.759
	Primary	0.374 (0.082 – 1.710)	0.205
	Secondary	0.562 (0.301 – 1.046)	0.069
	Tertiary	1.000	
Marital	Single	5.459 (0.892 – 33.407)	0.066
	Married	3.919 (0.625 – 24.591)	0.145
	Divorced	1.000	
Ethnicity	Yoruba	1.408 (0.646 – 3.070)	0.389
	Hausa	0.972 (0.291 – 3.253)	0.964
	Igbo	1.000	
*significant at	p < 0.05		

Table 4 shows the relationship between socio-demographic variables and youth violence among the respondents. Using regression analysis, the association between the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents and their experience of youth violence was tested. While males were less likely to suffer youth violence from this study (crude odds ratio: 0.545; 95% confidence interval: 0.342 - 0.867; p = 0.010), the odds for an unemployed respondent to suffer youth violence was 1.88 times higher than the odds for an employed respondent.

Thematic Analysis

The in-depth interviews identified 3 dominant themes; namely, the general knowledge about youth violence, types of youth violence, perpetrators of youth violence. The respondents had the following sociodemographic characteristics; 20youths (10 males and 10 females); ages, 20-35years; 10 parents and 10 key informants; ages 50-70 years.

The general knowledge about youth violence

Generally, all the respondents shared a similar opinion that youth violence involves the use of force to achieve a goal and that the goal is usually a bad one, resulting in varying forms of injuries, property damage and death at times. It was also generally shared that youth violence is an antisocial behaviour.

"Violence means an act that brings about force to achieve a particular purpose and youths are mostly involved. It is an antisocial behaviour that is affecting our community". (Female, 60 years, retired teacher).

Some of the respondents pointed out that youth violence could be a means by which the youth express their feelings or a means of making the society appreciate how energetic or stubborn the youth could be.

"We youth are stubborn, energetic with much power; so we need to display this through the concept of youth violence". (Male, 19years, tertiary institution student).

Types of violence

Majority of the respondents cited street fighting, bullying, sexual assault, robbery, kidnapping, and homicide as examples of youth violence. Very few, however, recognized suicide as a form of youth violence.

"If somebody decides to take his or her own life because he or she feels life is not worth it, is there any violence in that?" (Male, 21 years, tertiary institution student).

"I think taking one's life is a form of youth violence, irrespective of whether somebody is looking at you or not; for example, intentional ingestion of poison is a form of youth violence" (Female, 24 years, tertiary institution student).

It is, however, interesting to find out that majority of the respondents agreed that media/cybercrime is a form of youth violence and that the prevalence is on the increase.

"Duping an unknown person/group especially white people on internet is a form of violence. Most youth go into that now to make a lot of money". (Male, 24, tertiary institution student).

"Watching pornography and violent films are common among our youth, this is not good, they are forms of violence". (Female, 30years, artisan).

Perpetrators of violence

There was a general consensus that all age groups are involved in violence and that violence is however, perpetrated most by the youth.

"Violence is not limited to the youth alone, I know of a 70-year-old man that sexually violated a 15-year-old school girl, having deceived her that he would sponsor her school education." (Male, 60years, educator).

"Most times the youth are perpetrators of violence because they are bold, agile and energetic to carry out any act; that is why most politicians prefer to use these youths for their evil operations." (Female, 42years, law enforcement agent).

DISCUSSION

Majority of the respondents (70.3%) were below the age of 30years and single (70.8%); which probably supports the claim that Ekiti State is largely dominated by the youth. The study showed that a greater proportion of the population had tertiary education (83.3%); with a larger percentage of unemployed people (68.8%). This picture is a pointer to the fact that unemployment remains a big burden in the environment. This finding is strongly in line with the result obtained under the influence of economic/financial power on youth violence; as unemployment was cited as the commonest economic determinant of youth violence in the study, 159 (39.8%). This finding is in consonance with Lannoy et al 's work (De Lannoy et al., 2018).

The statistically significant association between gender (female) and experience of youth violence is not surprising because of the preponderance of females in the population surveyed (59.8%); and that the commonest forms of youth violence identified in the study were physical fighting, bullying and sexual assault in which females, being weaker and more susceptible, were more likely to be victims/targets; this is in line with Elgar et al's findings (Elgar et al., 2015). In addition, male perpetrators of violence are less likely to meet with high resistance when females are victims of target. When gender was subjected to a multivariate regression model female gender came out to be an independent predictor of experience of youth violence.

There was a statistically significant relationship between unemployment and experience of youth violence. Unemployed youth are mostly not gainfully employed, cosmopolitan, idle; and therefore, prone to being targets of bullying/fighting and sexual assault especially if they are females.

Studies have also revealed a strong link between economic/financial power and youth violence (Evans and Kelikume, 2019; Ikuteyijo, 2020). Strongly implicated factors under economic power include the impacts of poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption and poor governance. All these give rise to various socio-material conditions causing economic deprivation and survival challenge; culminating in deflation of individual economic value in the youth (Evans and Kelikume, 2019). Continued struggle for survival in the face of little or no hope results in violent tendencies like school riots, cultism, street fight, cybercrime, homicide or suicide (Kurtenbach and Rauf, 2019). Central to economic/financial power is unemployment which is of greater burden in developing countries like Nigeria. In Nigeria, for example, multitudes of promising youths are being turned out of tertiary institutions without being employed (Allen, 2020; Ikuteyijo, 2020). Majority of those that are employed are not even in the right places. Therefore, those that are supposed to be at a higher social class remain at a lower level with its attendant negative effects on quality of life. Poor quality of life results in aggression, frustration, loss of hope and violent acts. A survey in Nigeria linked poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption and poor governance with youths' involvement in Niger Delta Militancy, Boko Haram, terrorism and Fulani herdsmen attack (Evans and Kelikume, 2019).

This study is strengthened by the fact that it would be the first work in the environment of study adopting a mixed method approach to explore the area of youth violence and would also be part of the few available data on youth violence in southwestern Nigeria. A major limitation encountered during the course of the study was the difficulty encountered in getting both questionnaire based and deep in-depth interview information on youth violence probably for fear of unknown, possible police arrest, inversion of privacy and so on. In addition, as it was self-sponsored research conducted on just a fraction of the Ekiti State, interpretation of the result with a view to generalizing it should be done with caution; a larger study on youth violence in the state may, therefore, produce a new more objective and a new set of findings.

The level of awareness of the implications of youth violence should be heightened. There should be more enlightenment programmes by the government, health and health-related institutions, civil society organizations, emphasizing that youth violence is inimical to nation's growth and development. Provision of employment and improving the welfare of the general populace will go a long way in the prevention of youth violence

CONCLUSION

The study revealed youth unemployment as a strong determinant of youth violence; with a female gender being an independent predictor of youth violence. There is, therefore, an urgent need to mount result-oriented strategies for its prevention. Central to these strategies are, teaching of youth violence prevention skills in schools/communities, advocacy on gender equality and alleviation of poverty level partly by job provision for the youth.

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