




An Evaluation of the Cost of Youth Gang Violence on traders and residents of selected Local Governments in Lagos, Nigeria



Ogunmefun Muyideen Folorunsho ¹ , Ogunnowo Ruth Oore-ofe ²  & Awojobi Bilikis Temitope ³ 

¹ Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

² Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

³ Department of Political Studies & International Relations, North West University, Mafikeng, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

The prevalent nature of youth violence in Nigeria undermines the growth of residents and traders in Lagos state, thereby posing a threat to human and economic development. This study inquired into the evaluation of the socioeconomic cost of youth gang violence on traders and residents of selected local governments in Lagos state, Nigeria. The Broken Windows and Strain Theories were adopted for the study. The extant literature was reviewed to justify the research inquiry. Qualitative method and exploratory research design were used to collect data for the study. The study was conducted among the community residents and traders in three market zones (Awolowo/Ojuwoye, Aswani market and Egbede modern market) located at three different local government areas (Alimosho, Mushin and Oshodi/Isolo). The study adopted snowballing techniques for the identification of the residents and traders, while a purposive technique was adopted to interview (15) traders and an accidental sampling technique for the collection of data from (15) community residents. The findings revealed that the prevalence of youth gang violent activities results in civil unrest, regressive economic conditions, loss of lives and properties, vandalism, trauma, among other vices. It is recommended that the use of closed-circuit television be considered, vehicular and police patrols should be stationed where needed, and the government should fully separate the protection and operation of the market from the National Union of Road and Transport or the Road Employees Association of Lagos State, Nigeria. The outcome of the study is expected to enlighten community residents and traders on the proactive process of reporting criminality and delinquent activities to the authorities.

Correspondence

Ogunmefun Muyideen
Folorunsho
Email:
folorunshoogunmefun@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Violent crime is a global danger that affects the social, political, and educational growth and development of societies that face it. All over the world, the negative consequences associated with youth involvement in gang-violent activities cannot be underrated across the spectrum. This is evident across the globe, considering the detrimental impact that violent crimes have had on the developmental conditions of the people who are subjected to the menace. The crime statistics compilation in various journals, essays, and other pertinent publications represents the view of various scholars around the globe. This assertion

corroborates the view of Paranjape, who asserts that criminal activities may be at a high level in a certain continent at a particular point in time, but then later, in another year, it may be at a low level due to the presence of developmental measures such as good leadership quality and governance.¹

In addition, Thapa et al. argue that violent crime has a negative influence or impedes growth in developing and developed nations when international and domestic investors encounter persistent violent activities in regions where their enterprises are located.² This is the case regardless of whether the countries are developing or already developed. To put it in another way, a rise in the number of gang violent acts might have a bad impact on the likelihood of investors (whether they be businessmen or women) investing in businesses in an area that is prone to gang violence activities. In a similar vein, the fear of being violent is a barrier to development. For example, Muyideen et al. explain that the prevalence of gang violent activities can prevent businessmen and women or residents from traveling to their various destinations, such as markets, workplaces and schools.³ This contributes to the prevalence of retrogressive economies among traders and brain drain among the educated citizens who will need to vacate troubled areas for a more peaceful region in search of a more comfortable lifestyle in the country.

In Nigeria, several scholars justify the reason for the ever-increasing involvement of youths in gang violent activities. For Omede and Odiba, one of the key elements contributing to the growth and development of youth involvement in thuggery or vandalization is anchored on the limited amount of time parents invest in the moral and academic upbringing of their kids.⁴ Also, Muyideen and Okuneye assert that other factors are poor family income, status, and prestige, which have a direct impact on the behavior that their children exhibit at all levels.⁵ Therefore, it can be said that a child's attitude toward receiving a high-quality education is positively correlated with the educational level of their parents. According to Muyideen et al, social class is determined by factors like behavior, money, occupation, education, and lifestyle, all of which have significant effects on parents' ability to raise their children in any given culture.⁶ However, rather than getting involved in a criminal act or crime scene, children of illiterate parents may come to grips with themselves and create circumstances that will positively change their living situations, especially as it concerns education.

Petersen et al. assert that most young people who join gangs experience a variety of detrimental outcomes, including physical harm, incarceration, and untimely death.⁷ The repercussions also affect their family and other neighbors in their immediate neighborhood. Children of gang members who are incarcerated are said to struggle with mental health, depression, and attention disorders. They are also at risk of being placed in foster care homes, becoming homeless, receiving inadequate social assistance, and dropping out of school.

It is common knowledge that some young people end up in the juvenile court system. According to the data, there is a direct correlation between the number of risk factors, such as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and the possibility that a young person will engage in adolescent crime.⁸ The empirical data demonstrate that a disproportionate number of young people from dysfunctional households tend to feel considerably less connected to their community and are more likely to take advantage of its residents to fulfill their unfulfilled wants or ambitions.

As a result, neighborhoods lose their feeling of community and degenerate into social shambles and hotbeds of violent crime.⁹ The prevalence of gang violent activities poses a threat to the

¹ N.V.Paranjape, "Criminology & Penology with Victimology," *Central Law Publication* 16 (2014): 479.

² Amrit Thapa et al., "A Review of School Climate Research," *Review of Educational Research* 83, no. 3 (2013): 357–85.

³ Ogunmefun Folorunsho Muyideen, Olawunmi Kunle, and Aluko Tolulope, "Indicators of Incidence of Criminality in Mushin, Lagos; Role of Community Policing," *Randwick International of Social Science Journal* 3, no. 3 (2022): 605–19.

⁴ J Omede and P Odiba, "Youths Restiveness Across the Globe: Where the Adults May Have Gone Wrong," *Higher Education and Global Challenges*, 2010.

⁵ O. F. Muyideen and M Y Okuneye, "Youth Employment Insecurity and Development in Nigeria," *Randwick International of Social Science Journal* 1, no. 2 (2020): 94–106.

⁶ Muyideen, Kunle, and Tolulope, "Indicators of Incidence of Criminality in Mushin, Lagos; Role of Community Policing."

⁷ Kai Petersen, Sairam Vakkalanka, and Ludwik Kuzniarz, "Guidelines for Conducting Systematic Mapping Studies in Software Engineering: An Update," *Information and Software Technology* 64 (2015): 1–18.

⁸ C. Consulting and C. Bright, *The Relationship between Family Violence and Youth Offending* (London: Local Government Association (LGA), 2018).

⁹ G. Chesterton, "Effects of Family Structure on Crime," Maffipedia, 2020, <http://maffipedia.org/effects-of-family-structure-on-crime>; José M Alonso, Rhys Andrews, and Vanesa Jorda, "Do Neighbourhood Renewal Programs Reduce Crime Rates? Evidence from England," *Journal of Urban Economics* 110 (2019): 51–69.

socioeconomic, political and psychological development of Nigerians, thereby leading to civil unrest, trauma, retrogressive economic growth, untimely death, vandalization of properties worth millions, among others. It is on this background that this research is designed to inquire into the social cost of gang violent activities on traders and community residents in Lagos state, Nigeria and to offer strategies to combat this menace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study extant literature was reviewed in line with the aim of the study to justify the outcome of the inquiry. Several literature sources show clear corroboration between the theories and the literature reviewed. For example, Dellinger and Gilchrist and the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention assert that violence has been prevalent and detrimental to societal advancement over the years.¹⁰ This is because potential lives are lost as a result of unreported violent activities. Likewise, Hastings et al. explain that the effects of actual violence on gang members and their families appear to be a significant motivator for disengaging from gang activities. They further envisage that teenage or youth involvement in violent activities negates societal norms and values, leading to an increase in antisocial behavior.¹¹

Compared to what is available in developed countries, gang culture and the violence that goes along with it have increased among Nigerians over the past few decades.¹² Violent gangs are typically made up of younger people who are highly engaged in deviant or violent activities, which typically cause chaos in their geographic territories. Youths are also responsible for an increase in gang-related deaths of young people, particularly a number of high-profile murders reported in Nigeria. The scenario undercuts the nation's ability to develop and grow. For instance, over the past ten years, Nigeria's national and local governments' failure to take decisive action on the youths' gradual integration into the economy has increased the likelihood that one will belong to a gang in some of the underprivileged neighborhoods or communities, with a high number of them continuing criminal activities in Nigeria.

The reason for youth involvement in the civil unrest is that they are looking for alternative ways or procedures for making life in a different dimension. This was in line with what the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) asserted, that it is impossible to quantify the amount of attention given to the issue of young people participating in violent activities.¹³ Every culture has a high-visibility and top-tier worry about the youth population since they are perceived to be more likely to be involved in violent acts. Also, Iwuama and Ekwe explain that it is better to visualize rather than describe the effects of violence and social unrest in Nigeria. They note that the prevalence of young gang violent activities in the nation keeps many Nigerians alert, causes them to sleep with one eye open, and harms Nigeria's reputation abroad.¹⁴ According to Erinze and Elaigwu, in addition to the number of people killed by violent acts, many more have suffered permanent disabilities, and homes worth millions of naira have been vandalized and destroyed.¹⁵

According to Lambert et al., the effects of violent activities include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, aggressive behavior, suicidal thoughts, decline in academic performance, and failure to graduate from high school.¹⁶ While Boynton-Jarrett and Zuckerman envisage that experiencing violence as a victim can also result in emotions of hopelessness about living a happy or long life, as well

¹⁰ Ann Dellinger and Julie Gilchrist, "Leading Causes of Fatal and Nonfatal Unintentional Injury for Children and Teens and the Role of Lifestyle Clinicians," *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine* 13, no. 1 (2019): 7–21.; CDC, "Leading Causes of Non-Fatal Injury Reports 2001-2013," 2015.

¹¹ R. Hastings et al., "Campylobacter Genotypes from Poultry Transportation Crates Indicate a Source of Contamination and Transmission," *Journal of Applied Microbiology* 110, no. 1 (January 2011): 266–76, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2672.2010.04883.x>.

¹² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Victims of Organized Gang Division of International Protection," UNHCR (Geneva, 2010).

¹³ USIP, *Why Youth Join Al-Qaeda and How to Prevent It* (Washington, DC.: USIP, 2010).

¹⁴ B.C Iwuama and A.O. Ekwe, "Counselling Strategies for Addressing Military and Social Restiveness in Nigeria," *A Paper Presented at the International Conference of the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) Held at the International Conference Centre, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun, State, 2012*.

¹⁵ I. Erinze and I. J. Elaigwu, *Violence: An Achilles Heels in the Attitude of the Nigerian Insurgent Youths as a Threat to National Security; Counseling Strategies as Panacea* (Ibadan: West Book, 2009).

¹⁶ Sharon F Lambert et al., "Relationship Proximity to Victims of Witnessed Community Violence: Associations with Adolescent Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors.," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 82, no. 1 (2012): 1.

as sentiments of being unwanted, as a result of family and societal failure.¹⁷ For instance, Iwuama and Ekwe contend that the academic calendar and programme have been disrupted or jumbled, and many Nigerians are reluctant to attend services at mosques, churches, or schools due to the level of insecurity in various regions or states of the country. They further stated that the security of lives and property was no longer assured, and that this undermined the stability, unity, and trust among the inhabitants. They continued by saying that in order to hire or keep more workers in Nigeria's Niger/Delta region, certain international corporations, including Shell and Chevron, are no longer functioning at full capacity.¹⁸

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, two major theories were adopted for the justification of the inquiry, namely the Broken Windows Theory by Wilson and Kelling and the Strain Theory by Robert King Merton. The Broken Window theorists explain that when minor problems of the whole are not repaired at the first point of notice, they will degenerate into compounded or complex problems that will negate the developmental process of the nation. Wilson and Keiling explain that crime should be reported to the security agents at an early stage so that such crime can be curbed at an early stage before it grows to the stage that it will affect the entire community.¹⁹ Merton opines that the reasons for the ever-increasing nature of crime or delinquent activities are associated with the failure of the government to distribute the resources of the society equally to its members. He also stated that legitimate means of achieving legitimate goals or successes are hard work, dedication, commitment, and investment in quality education.²⁰

Merton opines that criminal or delinquent activities increase because the same government that establishes legitimate means of achieving goals has failed to distribute the resources of the society equally among members of the societies.²¹ The situation will therefore degenerate to the formation of five sets of groups, which are (1) Conformists, (2) Innovators, (3) Ritualists, (4) Retreatist and (5) Rebels. In relation to this study, the reason for the ever-growing nature of youth involvement in violent activities is rooted in the failure of the Nigerian government to provide security to its citizens. It is believed that Nigerian youths who engage in gang violence do not have access to basic needs such as employment, good housing, insurance, basic education, and health insurance, among others. It was on this ground that the youths decided to choose deviance to satisfy their basic needs. These deviant activities negate innovation or increase criminal activities at the expense of the societal members.

The study is also guided by the Broken Windows theory to evaluate the cost of gang violence among the community residents and traders in Lagos state, Nigeria. The fundamental assumption of the Broken Windows Theory explains that when a crime committed at an early stage is not reported to the security personnel, it degenerates to a larger or more serious crime. This will then affect the general development of the larger society. In relation to the Broken Windows Theory, the citizens are expected to report suspicious activities and hideouts of youths who perpetrate criminal activities in the community before it escalates. Wilson and Kelling further explain that when criminal activities are reported early enough to the security agencies within the location of the crime scene, it aids the work of the security officers to address the situation from the elementary stage before it degenerates.²² It is expected that the responsibility of securing a given area is not solely that of the security personnel. It should be a collaborative effort of both the community residents and the security officers charged with the responsibility of securing the lives and properties of Nigerians. It is known that most of the youths who are involved in gang violent activities are well known in their various community. The residents and traders should develop the mindset of reporting the hideout to the security personnel to make security work easier for the security agents.

¹⁷ Renée Boynton-Jarrett, Elizabeth Hair, and Barry Zuckerman, "Turbulent Times: Effects of Turbulence and Violence Exposure in Adolescence on High School Completion, Health Risk Behavior, and Mental Health in Young Adulthood," *Social Science & Medicine* 95 (2013): 77–86.

¹⁸ Iwuama and Ekwe, "Counselling Strategies for Addressing Military and Social Restiveness in Nigeria."

¹⁹ James Q Wilson and George L Kelling, "March 1982. Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety," *The Atlantic Monthly* 249, no. 3 (2015): 29–38.

²⁰ Merton R. K., "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Actions," *American Sociological Review* 1, no. 6 (1963): 894–904.

²¹ Merton R. K., "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Actions."

²² Wilson and Kelling, "March 1982. Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety."

While the Strain theory explains the causes of youth involvement in gang violence, the Broken Windows theory emphasizes the growth of youth gang violence and its negative effects on community residents and traders in their various locations. Both theories are therefore adopted to explain the causes of youth involvement in gang violent activities, and their cost implications, which pose a threat to both human and economic development.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted qualitative methods with the use of an exploratory research design. The study was conducted in Lagos state among three selected local government areas, namely Alimosho, Mushin and Oshodi/Isolo in Lagos state, Nigeria. Within the purview of the research, fifteen (15) participants (community residents) were interviewed in three selected local governments using unstructured questionnaires to collect data through in-depth interviews. Also, in the three (3) major market zones, fifteen (15) Traders were interviewed on the socioeconomic costs of gang violent activities in Lagos State, Nigeria. Non-probability (snowballing and purposive) techniques were adopted for the study. The snowballing was used for the identification of the participants to be interviewed (Community residents and Traders) in the selected study locations using the face-to-face method of interview. The thematic method of data analysis was adopted for the interpretation of the verbal data collected in the field from various selected participants in the study. All ethical conditions were factored in, such as informed consent from the local government, community leaders and market head known as Iyaloja, before the research was conducted in Lagos state.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The research method adopted for this study is centred on the use of a qualitative method with exploratory research designs. During the data collection process in the field, an unstructured questionnaire was designed from the research questions, which was used to carry out interviews (In-depth and key informant) among the traders and community residents of the affected communities and marketplaces in Lagos state. Thirty participants were purposely selected for the study because of the peculiar nature of the research, but after screening, coding and editing, twenty-six (26) verbal data collected through interviews from the participants in the field were used as the element or unit of analysis for the study.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

Several questions were directed to the participants in their various locations and market zones in the selected local government areas of Lagos state, Nigeria. The purpose of collecting verbal data from the participants is to cover the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants to include the community residents and the traders selected for the study. 18(60%) of interviewed participants are community residents from Alimosho, Mushin and Oshodi/Isolo local government areas of Lagos, while 12(40%) of other participants are traders from various market zones in Lagos (Aswani market at Oshodi/Isolo, Ojuwoye Market at Mushin and Alimosho modern market at Alimosho) respectively.

The age distributions of the participants shows that 15(50%) of the participants are within the ages of 31yrs to 40yrs, 10(33.3%) are within the ages of 20yrs to 30yrs, 3(10%) of them are within 41yrs to 50 yrs, while 2 (6.7%) of the participants are less than 20yrs as at the time the research was conducted. The ethnic distribution of the participants deciphers that 17(56.7% of the participants are from the Yoruba ethnic group, 10 (33.3%) are from the Igbo speaking ethnic group, while 3(10%) are from the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group. The result on educational attainment of the participants shows that 11 (36.7%) of the participant have secondary school certification, 10 (33.3%) of them have primary school certification, 4 (13.3%) of them were tertiary graduate, 3 (10%) of them have vocational skills while 2 (6.7%) of them have professional certification as at the time the research was conducted.

The result of marital status indicates that 13(43.3%) of the participants are married, 9 (30%) of them are single, 3 (10%) of them are separated from their partners, 2 (6.7%) of them are divorced, while 1(3.3%) of them is recorded under 'others'. The result of the religion-affiliated characteristics shows that 14(46.7%) of them are Christians, 13(43.3%) of them are Muslims, while 3(10%) are recorded under other religions such as traditional religion, Buddhism and Hinduism. The result of community of residence

shows that 18(60%) of the participants live within the community where their various businesses are located, while 12(40%) of the participants live outside of the places where their businesses are located.

Data Analysis

This section of the data analysis and interpretation is structured around the collection of verbal data from participants (community residents and traders) in local government areas of Lagos state, Nigeria. The questions are established in a simple manner so as to be communicable to the participants, and responses are gathered from both community residents and the traders along the axis of the study, selected locations in Lagos state, Nigeria. The following submissions are gathered from various sections of the field of study.

Good day, Mr. Lecturer, please help us tell the government if you were sent by them to interview the market men and women. We are tired of these boys. They are very young, in fact, small in age. Most of them are meant to be in school learning or in a carpenter workshop to be learning. We know them, but we cannot say anything because they will come back and destroy our businesses. How long are we going to protect them? Even the police are tired because it seems these boys have people who are very rich who bail them out any time they are arrested. They know themselves, but any time they want to fight, it is the market men and women who will face the problems because they steal our wares and carry away our money. They have made us lose interest in the business. As the Iyaloja of Ojuwoye market, I know how many times I have run for my dear life, leaving my shops behind when I cannot stand the shooting and the guns in the hands of these small boys. They are largely not indigenes of the community, surprisingly; nobody can trace them to any family. People are equally losing interest in the business in our market, but what can we do?
IDI/Iyaloja/Ojuwoye Market/65yrs

Investigating this issue further, another interview was conducted with the market secretary, who submits that.

I am the current secretary to Women Leaders Market in Lagos. I am a graduate of Lagos State Polytechnic, and I bagged my HND at Yaba College of Technology in Lagos State. The rate at which these boys destroy the market and steal our money is getting out of control. We purposely held meetings and hired special security (Vigilantes) to secure the market. But these boys are very dangerous, especially when they are fighting for supremacy among themselves. We are not connected to them, but at the end of the day, any problems with them will surely affect our markets or business transactions. We have been reporting to the Nigerian police, and even the vigilantes have been trying, but all have proved abortive. As a researcher, is there anything you can do to assist the market people? Please help us tell the government that we need help urgently. During election season, we all know that anything can happen. The most unimaginable thing is that you will see them, but within seconds, everything can scatter, and people will start moving with fear, and this might paralyse business activities for the day.
IDI/Secretary/Ojuwoye/41yrs

Also, the same question was asked of the Iyaloja of Oshodi/Isolo LGA in Lagos, and this is what she has to say.

My son, you are welcome. Please hope I am safe. Please, these boys are very troublesome. I don't want to say anything that will make them come back and attack me. We are at Oshodi/Isolo market, known as the Aswani market. We are part of Lagos, and we cannot deny the bad behaviour of these boys, and the painful part of their actions is that innocent people fall victim. For example, during the last fight, a stray bullet killed one Igbo boy, and two

*were taken to the hospital for treatment. But we thank God that those boys did not die with the help of market men and women. They know themselves. Another fight we experienced that was brutal was when the union boys (NURTW) fought. It is not our business, but the market men and women were affected. We lost properties worth millions despite not being involved in the fight. Please help us tell the government to help us build walls around our market area or arena so that when these boys are fighting, they will not invade our market. **IDI/Iyaloja/62yrs***

The opinion of the Aswani market man is similar to that of the market woman at Ojuwoye market, as this indicates that most of the women are grounded and well-educated. This is her submission.

My mother is one of the oldest Igbo women in this market, so I know the market and the area very well. The Yoruba boys are very lazy. They don't want to work, but they want to spend money. It will not work like that. They need to work and make money before they can spend money. All they do is beg for money, but the moment you refuse to give them, you become their enemy. As for me, I do fight with them a lot, and they know me very well. If not for Iyaloja, I would not give those boys kobo. They need to work because I work for my money. They can fight or start a fight for a reason and even vandalize properties. The next thing is to create tension for market men and women that will collapse the market activities for the day. This cannot be done in the eastern part of Nigeria.

IDI/Secretary/Answani Market/45yrs

At the Ladipo market, a market woman was interviewed on the cost of gang violence on the social and economic activities of market men and women. She asserts that,

*We have lost money and valuable properties to these problems created by these boys. We will never get tired until it is over. So, if the Lagos state government cannot control them, Igbos should be looking at them and waiting until we run out of business? That was then, but now when they come, we are always ready for them, and this is the reason for the reduction in their gang violence in our market compared to other market areas in Lagos State. I am not lying, you can do your market survey in Lagos state, you will find out that gang activities are not common in our market. The greatest battle we contend with is the fight between the Igbos and the Yoruba in the Ladipo market, and not all these gang activities. They know that Ladipo is an international market, and it is an ethnic fight that is used to break down the market cooperation. **IDI/Secretary/47yrs***

Another market leader interviewed submits that,

*Although our network of security is more cordial compared to others. We don't usually face violence in our market, but the common form of fights or disorder we see is from the members of NURTW. Although it is not common, we see these boys once in a while. The one that affects our market, business and lives is commonly caused by the members of NURTW in Lagos. The violent activities mainly affect the movement of businessmen and women to the customers who are coming to do business with us. Sometimes market men and women have to close their business activities on time to avoid loss of properties, lives and durable items. **IDI/Iyaloja/64yr***

The submission of the secretary to Egbeda/Idimu Local Area supports the submission of one of the market leaders.

The only problem we sometimes see is the problem of NURTW in Lagos, which I think is general. The strategies adopted by the leaders and the followers to uphold the markets are working. We are setting examples, and I think other market men and women can learn from us **IDI/Market Secretary/45yrs**

The position of the community elders cannot be underestimated in their various communities concerning the issue relating to the social cost of violence in their communities. Thus, several community elders were interviewed to know their individual opinions on the social costs of gang violence in their communities. These are their submissions;

Mushin LGA is known as a notorious area in terms of gangs' violent display regularly. Even if you don't live in Mushin, you must have heard of the rate at which people indulge in gang or street cultism. Mushin is not left out of this trouble. Several police officers in the past and recently have still fighting the problem. I believe God, in His mercy, will intervene and change the evil minds of our youths. As community leaders, we have warned parents and advised them to train their children in a God-fearing manner, but what we still see is the acts of destruction by these same sets of youths. Some are the children of the landlords and landladies. Some have been killed, some arrested, despite all these, and they still grow from time to time. I don't know what they gain from joining bad gangs which cannot turn them into future millionaires. Gang activities have come to stay; it takes the intervention of God to solve this problem. In my community, it is not gang violence. **KII/Community Elder/67yrs**

In another interview conducted among community elders at Oshodi-Isolo Local Area, this is what the elder asserted;

Most of the boys who indulge in gang violence are used by the political leaders to carry out their evil thoughts toward retaining power. The situation in the country is good enough for us to see what else the country should expect from the Nigerian youths in the near future. Let hopeless people (youths) keep killing themselves; the good ones will continue to develop the country. If they are sensible, how many of the sons or daughters of people who ask them to kill each other are involved in the killings? It is time for them to start thinking ahead about what they want to do in the future, because anyone who dies among them will become the end product of the government's property. **KII/Community Elder/64yrs**

The third interview conducted at Alimosho LGA in Lagos on the social cost of gang violence shows that the submissions of the three selected community elders are of the same value to the outcome of the research inquiry. This is what the elder interviewed at Alimosho submits;

The official statistics of Lagos and our local government show that gang violence cannot have a good impact. We all know that the social cost of violence is always destructive to the community because when they are fighting themselves in the community, this will result in mayhem, such as the loss of valuable things, their cars will be destroyed, and they will face many problems, like fear, which can lead to death. Some will take advantage of the period to rob people coming from their places of work, some will break into shops and carry away goods and other items that are worth good money. It is wrong to say that violence has a good impact unless you have never faced such a situation before. What about the market men and women in our area? Most times, I feel sorry for them, even when they borrow money to start their businesses again because of insurance. Are we saying insurance companies

*will not take back their money? What about those who borrow money from banks? I know banks will take back their money because they lend people the money to run their businesses for a gain. **KII/Community Elder/59yrs***

Some of the youths who reside in the local government areas selected were interviewed, and some of them submitted that.

*Well, some youths in Mushin are known for their notorious actions. But I am 100 percent sure of myself, my friends and my mates that we are not notorious. I know the bad eggs have destroyed the good eggs. It is not all youths who were born and raised in Mushin who joined bad gangs. Some are from good homes, and they don't want to spoil their family names. For those youths who are cultists in Mushin, I still don't know what they gain from joining bad gangs. We grew up in Mushin, and we mostly see the activities of these boys daily. I have my name to protect. A fight occurs when they snatch each other's girlfriends or the money to be shared by the political leaders. They face one themselves and kill one another. The painful part of it is that innocent people are also affected by these sporadic shootings. Most times, they take advantage of the situation and steal from people. Some people are robbed sometimes on their way back home. **KII/Youth/25yrs***

One of the youths interviewed at Oshodi-Isolo (LGA) opines that.

*This is Oshodi-Isolo, the gangs here don't play. They can easily destroy anything at any time, especially when they are fighting for positions. I pray you never experience their fights. Ask the market men and women, as they are more affected. My area is still protected compared to areas that are closer to the market. On the major road, when people are coming back from their work, they are easily attacked on the road. At the end of the fight, these gangs will steal and sometimes kill innocent people. **KII/Youth/27yrs***

Finally, the last interview was conducted at the Alimosho Area of Lagos. This is what she submitted;

*The youth who indulge in violence have a bad mindset; if not, how will they kill, destroy and rob people of their belongings? I can't do that because I have the fear of God. I know a large number of them. Some of them are educated, but this does not reflect in their way of living. You will be surprised that some of them are from good homes, but never behave like one at all. They look like quiet people naturally, but during contests, they turn into lions that kill others who were once their friends, all in the name of positions or monetary rewards. **KII/Youth/23yrs***

The level of insecurity in Nigeria has eroded the economic progress of the nation, as insecurity perpetrated by the youths has hindered the influx of foreign investors in Nigeria, thereby hampering economic development in the nation.²³ More so, the World Bank reports that insecurity in Nigeria has negatively affected the investment climate in nine African countries, affecting 29 percent of business operators.²⁴ More so, 36 percent of business investors in Nigeria perceive insecurity as a major constraint on investment in the country. The situation indicates that the Nigerian business environment is midwived and business performances are negatively affected due to an increase in the number of youths who indulge

²³ Muyideen and Okuneye, "Youth Employment Insecurity and Development in Nigeria"; Ogunmefun Folorunsho Muyideen, "Predictors of Violence among Drug Abusers in Selected Drug Joints in Mushin, Lagos Metropolis," *Randwick International of Social Science Journal* 1, no. 2 (2020): 60–70; I C Achumba, O S Ighomereho, and M O M Akpor-Robaro, "Security Challenges in Nigeria and the Implications for Business Activities and Sustainable Development," *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* 4, no. 2 (2013).

²⁴ World Bank Reports, "Nigeria's High Rate of Unemployment," 2013, www.thisdaylive.com%3EHome/NEWS.

in thefts, assassinations, kidnapping for ransom, blockading of business installations, pipeline destruction and bombing.²⁵

DISCUSSION

For the purpose of the study, thirty (30) participants are interviewed at three selected local government areas in Lagos (Mushin, Oshodi/Isolo and Alimosho), Nigeria. Unstructured questionnaires were designed to collect verbal information from fifteen (15) community member across the three local government areas in Lagos while twelve (12) traders were also interviewed verbally across market zones in the three selected local government areas (Aswani at Oshodi/Isolo, Ojuwoye market at Mushin and Alimosho modern market at Alimosho respectively) The research work was carried out with the use of qualitative method while In-depth and key informant interviews were used to collect verbal information on the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants and the question on the evaluation of cost of gang violence on the residents and traders in Lagos State, Nigeria. Having established the survey method as an appropriate method for the collection of verbal data in the field through field notes, all the verbal data collected were analysed through the use of the content method of data analysis.

The outcome of the results indicates that over 80% of the participants are between the ages of 20 and 40 years, compared with less than 30% that fall under less than 19 years and 41 years to 50 years and above. Also, 60% of the participants were community residents in the three selected areas in Lagos State, compared with 40% who were traders in the research analysis. The ethnic group distribution shows that over 56% of the participants are from the Yoruba ethnic group compared to other groups such as Igbos and Hausa/Fulani that shared the remaining 43.3% as at the time the research was conducted. 90% of the participants in both community and market zones where the data were collected are elite who can read and write in order to advance their various businesses and the community. Over 50% of the participants are recorded under single, divorced, separated and others compared with over 43% that are married as at the time the research was conducted in the field. The result of the religion affiliation of the participants shows that 90% of the participants believed in modern forms of religious practices, such as Christianity and Islam, compared with 10% who are traditional worshippers. A research work reviewed, titled Sociodemographic and ecological push/pull as sustaining factors into gang violence in Lagos, Nigeria, in 2024, explains that most of the people indulged in violent activities are products of crime and delinquent-oriented values. The community supports their interest in carrying out violent actions as a form of indirect security.

The result of the second stage is discussed based on the evaluation of the costs of gang violence on residents and traders in the selected local government areas in Lagos state, Nigeria, namely the Mushin, Oshodi/Isolo and Alimosho. The discussion of this section shows the cost implications of violence demonstrated by gang members on the community residents and the traders in the selected market zones. The result of the verbal submission of the community members shows that while the community members focus on environmental challenges, the traders' focus is on the economic implications of the violent activities. For example a large number of the community leaders explains how they faces civil unrest in their community, the religious leaders also explain physical injuries experienced by some of their innocent church members on their way to worship their God, some of the individuals interviewed explained that lack of trust, poor educational background, poverty, religious beliefs peer pressure others were the causes of the prevalence of youth engagement in violent activities. The outcome of this result is supported by Robert King Merton's Strain theory, which explains that strain occurs when the government authority fails to distribute the resources of the society equally among its members in spite of the established means of achieving legitimate goals in any country. It is said that the failure of the Nigerian government to educate, provide recreational centers, and support family systems increases the rate at which individuals interpret their level of achieving their legitimate means of sustenance in Nigeria. Muyideen and Okuneye aver that most of the groups that engage in violent actions are people who are extremely facing abject

²⁵ Moruf Akanni Adebakin and Lanre Raimi, "National Security Challenges and Sustainable Economic Development: Evidence from Nigeria," *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2012); Muyideen, Kunle, and Tolulope, "Indicators of Incidence of Criminality in Mushin, Lagos; Role of Community Policing"; Sunday Idowu Oladeji and Benjamin Ayodele Folorunso, "The Imperative of National Security and Stability for Development Process in Contemporary Nigeria," *European Journal of Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2006): 66–79.

poverty, especially those who have no clue what jobs to engage in each day. These individuals form delinquent or criminal groups to meet their daily needs.²⁶

The result gathered from traders is different from the submission of the community residents; the major focus of the traders is on economic implications. To some, once violence erupts, it affects their finances or the capital invested in the business. Some explain how it has resulted in physical injury and sudden death of their apprentices. Others explain how violence affects and reduces the rate of customers that patronize their businesses, leading to a poor image of their businesses since violent activities have been uncontrollable in Lagos. In a literature review by Muyideen et.al., the authors note that there are several indicators that increase the ways by which youths engage in violent acts, which include poverty, state of political failure to activate family support programmes, and drug abuse among the youths in Nigeria.²⁷ To advance the study, a research work conducted in Ogun state correctional facility by Akinpelu et al. indicates that large numbers of the incarcerated gang members in custody are a result of poor upbringing and peer pressure from friends and role models.²⁸ Ogunmefun and Aborisade also explain that the lack of a proper relationship between the community and the police increases the prevalence of gang violence activities in Lagos state.²⁹

Discussion Summary

The study has revealed that there are several negating factors that hinder the growth and development of socioeconomic activities of traders and the living conditions of the community residents of Lagos, Nigeria. It is discovered from the submission of the interviewed participants that the prevalence of poverty, unemployment, poor parenting, nonchalant attitude, and lack of institutional support to the family and youths contribute immensely toward the ever-increasing nature of violent activities experienced by the community residents and traders in Lagos state, Nigeria. Once the family and institutionalized frameworks fail to fight against the activities of the gangs in violent activities, the situation will degenerate to other social vices such as trauma, civil unrest, loss of lives and properties worth millions, vandalization of valuable goods, and retrogressive economic conditions, negating international and national images among others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To this end, the following recommendations are made;

1. There should be a proactive surveillance technique or cameras around all market zones in Nigeria to guarantee the safety of individuals.
2. Youth employment programmes should be developed around the communities for students. Activities such as crewing, track and field or football pitch for the youths, should be developed for the discovery of their hidden talents.
3. Market men and women, including community leaders, should develop public police environment or strategies to guide against violent activities.
4. The youths should purge themselves from being labeled as lazy and embrace the power of creativity and positive innovation.
5. Non-governmental organizations and multinational companies should assist by creating basic social amenities such as drinkable water, employment, security of lives and properties, and developing a youth empowerment programme for both youths, community elders and market traders through their corporate social responsibility.
6. The communities and market safety should be a collective responsibility of both the government and community members.

²⁶ Muyideen and Okuneye, "Youth Employment Insecurity and Development in Nigeria."

²⁷ Muyideen, Kunle, and Tolulope, "Indicators of Incidence of Criminality in Mushin, Lagos; Role of Community Policing."

²⁸ Akinpelumi Daminola, Ogunmefun Folorunsho Muyideen, and Ogunnowo Ruth Ooreofe, "Indicators of Youth Involvement in Internet Fraud: An Inquiry Among Detained and Convicted Internet Fraudsters in Ogun State Correctional Facilities, Nigeria," *Integration: Journal Of Social Sciences And Culture* 2, no. 4 (2024): 334–42.

²⁹ Ogunmefun Folorunsho Muyideen and A Richard Aborisade, "Sociodemographic and Ecological Push/Pull as Sustaining Factors into Youth Gang Violence in Lagos, Nigeria," *African Journal For The Psychological Studies Of Social Issues* 27, no. 2 (2024).

7. The traders should develop another network of security agents that will help them ensure the safety of their lives and properties in their various business environments.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the cost implications of violent activities among the residents and traders in the study areas result in environmental challenges and economic consequences among the participants. The prevalence of gang violence has negative effects on the growth and development of the locations. The result of the gang violence includes physical injuries, sudden death, a retrogressive societal and business image among investors, and retrogressive economic development, among others. Lagos State is known as one of the commercial hubs of Nigeria. Gang violence has negatively affected the peace and economic growth of the country. The situation warrants collective efforts of the Nigerian government and the community members in fighting the menace to ensure the safety of the environment and the economy of Nigeria. The result derived from the study shows that the Lagos state government and the community residents or traders have the responsibility to ensure the safety of the state. This can be done when there is a collective effort to ensure the security of lives and properties in the state.

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ABOUT AUTHORS

Ogunmefun Folorunsho Muyideen is a sessioned scholar and a Fellow of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), a Fellow of the Forensic Investigation Society of Nigeria, and a Fellow of the National Association of Sociology and Anthropology of Nigeria. He is a lecturer at the Department of Criminology and Security Studies at Chrisland University, Ogun State, Nigeria. He has extant publications in local and international journals.

Ruth Oore-ofe Ogunnowo holds a PhD in International Relations from North-West University, South Africa. She has an appreciable knowledge of French with the DELF B1 Certification. Ruth is a member of the Canadian Association of African Studies (CAAS) and the African Association for Japanese Studies (AAJS). She has made significant contributions to knowledge through well-researched works published in accredited books and journals. Her areas of research interest span human security, comparative politics, modern history, international relations and the politics and governance of natural resources. She currently lectures in the Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria.