

Quest For Wealth and the Upsurge in Ritual Killings Among Nigerian Youths: A Policy and Morality Check

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Abstract: *This study performed policy and morality checks on the relationship between the quest for wealth and the upsurge in ritual killings among Nigerian youths. As a basic qualitative research, data were generated from key informants and textbooks, journals, internet materials and related legislations to draw conclusion on the upsurge in ritual killings among Nigeria youths within the frame of unguarded quest for wealth and material possessions in contemporary time. Those data generated were analyzed using descriptive analysis technique; where those data were subjected to critical examination based on Nigerian condition. The study is anchored on Social conflict theory that sees the society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and social changes, sometimes, adverse changes. This is because the society is structured in a way that benefits a few individuals at the detriment of the majority, and factors such as class and age are linked to social inequality. The paper found the government and parents culpable for the upsurge in ritual killing among youths. While the government is blamed of running political system that is iron-gated manned by mean and supercilious politicians whose purpose is to perpetuate personal and clannish interests, at the detriment of the masses who have been treated as expendables; parents are blamed for watching their children become extravagantly rich through illegitimate means without reprimand for implications. In tandem with the findings, the study recommended the restructuring of the political system to inclusive governance where the youths and their needs such as job opportunities, entrepreneurship supports and conducive environment to live and thrive are paid attention to. Again, parents should bring back the African morality imbedded in family values and use them on their children so that while the government restructures the political system, the family remolds their children for the good of the society such that ritual killings and other atrocities that many youths are involved for the purpose of quick money making will subsided and gradually fizzle out.*

Keywords: *Quest for wealth, Ritual Killings, Policy and Morality checks, government and families.*

Introduction

This paper examined the moral and policy lacunas that have warranted the recent upsurge in quest for wealth among Nigerian youths and the consequent resurgence of ritual killings in Nigeria. In the time past, the rich and wealthy were usually grown men and women who had paid the price by being an apprentice and serving your master before being settled and run business for a time long enough to have made concrete investments that yield profits overtime or gone to school, graduates, got a job and have worked long enough to climb through the promotional ladder to the point of executive where his or her salary is admirably consequential.

Today, what we have are young lads of adolescent age “living large”. They are usually spotted in expensive Lexus Sedan, Mercedes 4matic sedan, ML 33 and GLK 450 SUVs. In ceremonial events, they are seen throwing money and living expensive lifestyle without visible business that can be said to be yielding such wealth of monumental status or decent job with handsome pay. What is troubling is the fact that they have successfully won the heart and soul of many youths (boys and girls alike) and the trend is ever-growing such that there is hardly a week that passes without news of a youth engaging in blood money rituals coming up for discussion (Uroko, 2022). In fact, through their acts and lifestyle, Nigeria has, unfortunately, earned an undeserved notorious reputation of a nation full of carnivores, fraudulent and unpatriotic young citizens (Eze, 2022). With the lives of many Nigerian youths at stake, the future of Nigeria at stake and the image of Nigeria at stake, a study on the ways of curbing the duo of “get rich quick syndrome” and ritual killing stands this study on a path of reckoning relevance

While “get rich quick syndrome” and ritual killing is not nascent in the annals of Nigeria, the upsurge of quest for wealth among youths and the resurgence of ritual killing has engaged scholars lately who have perused the menace from different angles. While some have examined it from the religious angle (Uroko 2022), there are those who have looked at it from the standpoint of threatening the peace and security of the nation (Oluwatoye, 2022). There are also those who are concerned about its impact on the reputation of a nation and the citizens (Eze, 2022). Generally, the debate around the upsurge of quest for wealth among Nigerian youths and its consequent ritual killing is on value (Akerle, 2022). Authors are unanimous on the role of erosion of value as the leading cause of this menace, albeit from different perspectives. While huge attention is paid to value erosion, the role of gaps in public policies have been largely neglected or relegated hence this paper zeroed in on the aspect of public policy while also giving credence to the value erosion narrative by expanding the space for discourse.

To effectively engage a discourse on the moral and policy checks of the upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killing, research questions and specific objectives are identified to guide the study.

Research Questions

- i. How true is the much-talked about quest for wealth and ritual killing among Nigerian youths?
- ii. What are the abandoned moral checks that are responsible for the upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killing among youths in Nigeria?
- iii. What are the abandoned public policy checks that can be blamed for the upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killings in among Nigerian youths?
- iv. What are the basic consequences of the upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killing among Nigerian youths?

Objectives of the study

- i. To ascertain the true picture of the taunted upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killing among Nigerian youths;
- ii. To identify the abandoned moral checks that has resulted in the upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killing among youths in Nigeria;
- iii. To pinpoint the abandoned public policy checks that has resulted in the upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killings in among Nigerian youths; and
- iv. To discover the consequences of the upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killing among Nigerian youths

Literature Review on the quest for wealth among young Nigerians

To be rich, wealthy and famous is not a bad ambition. In fact, it is the dream of every parent to see their sons and daughters doing well. Everybody wants to be able to afford decent living and three square meals per day. Everybody wants to be able to take care of his or her wants without necessarily depending on someone else especially when the people responsible for you are not financially stable and capable to provide decent life for you. The problem however, is the “how” these wealth and fame are acquired and the future consequences.

It was in line with the above that Wisdom (2017) wrote that many youths of nowadays in a quest to get rich quick have indulged in many atrocities, ranging from fraudulent acts, rituals, drugs, lies, prostitution, kidnapping and even armed robbery etc. Time was in Nigeria when becoming a Medical Doctor, Engineer, Accountant, Lawyer and the rest was a big deal among the youth. Those days, young people did not mind sitting for multiple JAMB exams just to secure university admission and study a professional course. That time, even parents were more interested in having a doctor son or a lawyer daughter; it was a thing of pride. Today, all that has changed. Unlike days when young people clamoured for professional careers that would earn them good paying jobs, quest for fame and fortune has become the order of the day. In fact, even those who had acquired professional certificates from both Nigerian and foreign universities have abandoned them to pursue a line of trend that makes them wealthy overnight (Nwanne & Anazia, 2019).

Discussions on quest for wealth among Nigerian youths have become zeroed on money rituals where youths go to the extent of killing their fellow youths and children to make sacrifices to their presumed god of wealth. Before now, the discussion was on the upsurge in the quest to travel out relocate to any country outside Nigeria) in search of a better opportunities. These youths are heard of sending money and gifts to their parent and sending money to buy houses and properties, but the truth about what they do over there is not usually available to the public. In fact, in many instances, reverse in better opportunities have always been the case because, they always discover that the sound of the bitter Kola to the ear is not actually how it tastes in the mouth. But in other not to return to a blessed country sapped by greedy few, many of them will turn fraudsters, the ladies will go into prostitution, just to put food on their table and send money back home, so that their parents will praise them. What we normally here from such parents is- my son or daughter is doing well outside the country without knowing the source of their income. What they are

interested in is money not how the money is being made. In many instances, it could be a case of because poverty has so tortured them that they no longer care again what their son or daughter does for a living, all their reasoning is let their son or daughter make money quick and send it to them (Wisdom, 2017).

Today, while it has become difficult for many of these youths to travel out, considering the rate of poverty and hunger in the land, seeing those who have graduated from the universities selling handkerchief on bus stops, operating POS stand, working in BetNaija shops with a lot of them roaming the street in search of jobs that has been declared non existing by the president, they, in a bid to survive, have joined yahoo yahoo (internet fraudsters). According to Chukindi (2022), Yahoo Yahoo is a popular name for internet scammers, most of whom operated with laptops. It was easy to see someone with a laptop being referred to as a Yahoo Boy. Several ways by which Yahoo Boys operate were identified. "It is either you are into love scams, or you pose as a business magnate, with the aim of defrauding some greedy white people, through bogus proposals. The one I have seen a lot of guys do is love scams, where young boys go into dating sites, search for white women, some of them widows, some rich and unmarried. Some just have a craving for black guys, and as the relationship blossoms, the boys look for a way to rip off the women, before closing their accounts on the site and moving on." However, as more people became alert about internet scams, young boys started engaging native doctors to make charms for them to hypnotize and defraud their victims. The involvement of the native doctor it was gathered is what makes their activities 'Yahoo Plus'. According to Okino (2022), for those in the know, Yahoo is the regular internet scam, but Yahoo Plus involves rituals and the use of human parts for metaphysical purposes, as engendered by the harvesting of human organs. Chukindi (2022) further stated that "Some of these boys are told by their native doctors to call the names of their victims a specified number of times, and perform incantations before going to them for business, or making phone calls to them. Some are asked to perform sacrifices by assembling children and buying them gifts before engaging in the activity. Sometimes, they have to buy things, put them in a plate and drop them in a crossroad at midnight, just to ensure that their victim parts with money," However, those who engage in these practices may have found that it is becoming increasingly tough to get victims to part with money, so, they have resorted to other means, and sticking to the name – yahoo plus. This is the scenario of the upsurge in the quest for quick wealth among Nigerian youths and the upsurge in ritual killings in Nigeria.

As Marie-Therese (2022) puts it, the misadventure of young people to 'get rich quick,' is fast gaining momentum in Nigeria as People as young as 17 years old have been seen to engage in yahoo yahoo, drug peddling and suspected ritual killings. These young people chase after ill-gotten wealth at the expense of building an enduring future and the society seems to be applauding them (Marie-Therese, 2022). As Okion (2022) noted, in some state capitals in Nigeria, internet fraud flourishes such that those who toil in normal work are derided for not being achievers. The common motivational story out there has been how Yahoo boys display the latest cars and live in mansions in state capitals. In such big towns like Benin, Asagba, Ado-Ekiti, Osogbo, besides the existing big cities of Lagos, Port Harcourt, Abuja, Enugu, Ibadan and others, cyber criminals live in upscale apartments to the glamour of other youths (Okino, 2022).

Theoretical framework of analysis

This study is anchored on the social contract theory whose main proponent is Thomas Hobbes as espoused in his work “Leviathan” in 1651. Social contract theory, nearly as old as philosophy itself, is the view that persons' moral and/or political obligations are dependent upon a contract or agreement among them to form the society in which they live. Socrates uses something quite like a social contract argument to explain to Crito why he must remain in prison and accept the death penalty. However, social contract theory is rightly associated with modern moral and political theory and is given its first full exposition and defense by Thomas Hobbes. After Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are the best known proponents of this enormously influential theory, which has been one of the most dominant theories within moral and political theory throughout the history of the modern West. In the twentieth century, moral and political theory regained philosophical momentum as a result of John Rawls' Kantian version of social contract theory, and was followed by new analyses of the subject by David Gauthier and others.

Applied to the upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killings among Nigerian youths, social contract theory, the morality and policy checks assumes that if both politics and administration which derive their authorities from the social contract can ensure effective public service delivery for better living standard of the people, chances for moral decadence emanating from the home will be very low and government will be firm in handling those involved in activities that are contrary to the laws of the land and the moral values that guides our society.

The implication is that the get rich quick scourge and the upsurge in ritual killing is a fallout of systemic failure that has become endemic and extricating hence the government has failed to provide basic essentials of life to the people while they are providing and enjoying such luxuries of life at the public glare which may have influenced the young members of the society to aspire to live such luxurious life. Sometimes, such young people have watched their parents lead a decent life, do decent jobs and observed societal moral values yet lack the ability to provide for themselves and their families the basic needs of life. Such parents are easily convinced by their children to damn moral values and enjoy life when they are alive. Such kids may have been convinced to say in that line of business as they not seen anybody jailed or publicly executed for being involved in ritual killings. Currently, the national dailies are awash with tales of youths killing fellow youths and sometimes innocent children for money ritual and none of such tales ended with government's decisive and deterring punishment for the offender, hence the need for government to take its social contract serious by providing and protecting its citizens who have willfully surrendered majority of their rights to the government in exchange for government's provisions of basic life amenities that makes life cozy and protect them against internal and external aggression hence any act of taking a life deserves capital punishment, but in this instance, capital punishment has not been seen taken its course on people killing their fellow citizens for money rituals and the citizens are living in perpetual complaints of the increasing economic quagmire where price of everything in the market including rent has double or tripled while salary remained the same and unemployment data is increasing. This is the woeful situation of Nigeria which calls for a review of the Nigerian social contract to reflect the theory of justice it is also known as (Rawls, 1971)hence the moral and policy checks dictum of this paper.

Method of the study

The study is primarily qualitative as it sets out to determine the relationship between upsurge in quest for wealth among Nigerian youths and the observed consequential resurgence in ritual killing in Nigeria. The qualitative–descriptive research design which lends itself to the use of a plethora of raw data in answering the how and what questions was adopted in describing the menace of “get rich quick syndrome among Nigerian youths and the observed resurgence of ritual killings in Nigeria. Data for the study were generated primarily through key informant interview and six 6 students were purposively selected for unstructured interview. The choice of students is because of their age and closeness to the youths involved in this lifestyle and criminal activities. These students were very cooperative in their responses and the unstructured interview yielded great result as it enabled the researchers to ask probing questions that begot interesting and revealing responses. Complementary data were generated through the secondary sources from journal articles, newspapers, magazine and online news where reports of and documentations on the spate of ritual killings on the heels of quest for massive wealth among adolescents abound. These data were analyzed using the thematic method of data analysis. The thematic analysis helps to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns in qualitative data. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set. Therefore, for data analysis, discussions are presented thematically using the four research questions within which inferences shall be made.

Findings and Discussions

Analysis of data is done thematically using the research hypotheses

Research Question One: How truth is the much-talked about quest for wealth and ritual killing among Nigerian youths?

Asking of the truism of the act of ritual killing for enhanced money making among Nigerian youths, is like asking of the truism of the terrible state of Nigerian economy under this dispersion. From the literature, it has been reported as a tragedy of monumental proportion, with far reaching domino effects, what has hit us as a people. To be sure, 419, internet fraud, cybercrime, advance free fraud, deception, scam emails, false marriage to foreigners, etc., used to be isolated crimes, but it is all around us now, threatening to consume our teenage and youth demographic. Scavenging for body parts through ritual killing is not new, but for four teenagers to carry out such an act, in which they cut off a young lady’s head and cooked it on fire, is to take barbarism too far. This horror story occurred in real life, in Ogun State, sometimes in January, 2022. According to Chikundi (2022), recently, there have been cases of such fetish practices by youths in various parts of Nigeria. In Imo State, news broke about a young man who was visited by his mother in a hostel. The poor woman who probably was coming to visit his son who (maybe) is in school bought fruits to be presented to him, but he ended up attempting to kill her, for money ritual. Also, in Ogun State, the news of the killing of a certain girl, identified as Rofiat by her boyfriend and his friends is still fresh too. The case of Rofiat was pathetic because she did not survive. Her head was cut off by the teenagers, and was being roasted in a clay pot, when they were apprehended by the police. In Imo, another incident, which has been dismissed as a comedy skit has still not convincingly been expunged from the memories of the people, as some youths sat in a popular roundabout in

Owerri, excreting and using bread to dip in it as sauce before eating. From the key informants, the truth about the much-talked about quest for wealth and ritual killing among Nigerian youths are obvious and within us. The recent display of money by graduating students spraying money on the air is a clear sign that they are here among us.

Research Question two: What are the abandoned moral checks that are responsible for the upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killing among youths in Nigeria?

At the very heart of the debate on the quest for wealth among youths and resurgence of killing for ritual purposes, is the issue of moral value. According to the key informants as validated by literature, moral decadents in the family were mothers accept gifts and money from their young children without asking where these gifts and money are coming from. The religious houses are far more blamed as they are fond of accepting donations from youth people who have no known source of wealth with preaching such as God loves a cheerful giver, the more you bring the more your blessing, whereas it is the religious leaders that are expected to help parents instill discipline, patience and other moral characters in the young ones. The schools and learning institutions were also indicted because of the peer pressure and the fact that that the first point of call of the display of the flamboyant lifestyle of the young guys who have made it big. Flamboyant lifestyle of politicians and those of celebrities are critical to the peer pressure and quest to meet up. Therefore, family values, social ethics and general morals are some of the abandoned moral checks that has resulted to the upsurge in quest for wealth and resurgence of ritual killings among Nigerian youths;

Research Question three: What are the abandoned public policy checks that are blamed for the upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killings among Nigerian youths?

In Nigeria of today, human life has lost value. The national dailies are on daily basis rift with tales of killing and maiming of Nigerians. If it is not deaths as a result of road mayhem as a result of terrible condition of the road, it is as a result of violent groups such as Boko Haram and bandits. There was a time; Nigerians were greeted daily with tales of death by the violent Fulani herder and farmers clashes. From there it migrated to killing from kidnapping and today it is killing for money rituals by young Nigerians who are today regarded as the happening guys, living soft life. Unfortunately, despite the numerous reports of killings for rituals, it is not in the public domain the capital or consequential punishment the perpetrators of evil of such high magnitude meted out to them. One author has suggested instant death by hanging or public execution to serve as deterrent but none of such has been heard of. This was also the position of those we interviewed who however believed that such punishment should first and foremost apply to the politicians who are the brain behind ritual killings and lead luxury lives that attracted the youths whose future is not assured given the policies of the government. Hence the position of this paper that policy gag on ritual killing and illegitimate wealth acquisition is the abandoned policy check that has led to the recent upsurge in quest for wealth and resurgence of ritual killings among Nigerian youths

Research Question four: What are the basic consequences of the upsurge in quest for wealth and ritual killing among Nigerian youths?

There is a plethora of the consequences of the involvement in ritual killing for quick money in the literature. However, from our key informants, premature death, sudden madness, apathy for

apprenticeship and schooling, misplacement of priority, consequential loss of human parts, dent on the nation's image and on the citizens outside the shores of this country are the consequences of the recent upsurge in ritual killing for quick money making. According to the key informants, it is already happening as the tales of young people who have made huge money and suddenly died of unidentified ailment abound but given the upsurge in the number of young ones getting involved in ritual killings for money making, the rate of death of such persons in the near future will be mind-blowing. What is currently in trend is the sudden madness of these guys popularly known as G-boys. All over the countries, the social media has revealed many of such cases including young girls who are usually dropped by a fancy car driven by a young guy and within a twinkle of an eye, the girl starts displaying lunacy. One of the key informants said that the lasted in stock is the loss of the womb. According to him, these guys sleep with some girls who lose their womb afterward and it is believed to have been spiritually invoked for money ritual purpose. Within the context of consequential loss of human vital parts, we have read in the traditional and social media of people who are killed and their vital parts are removed. In fact, pictures have surfaced online of young guys who killed the girl friend of one of them and beheaded her for money ritual. It was also revealed that because of the flair for the soft live of these guys, there is this apathy on apprenticeship and even schooling. This is because as Nwanne & Anazia (2022) said, time was in Nigeria when becoming a Medical Doctor, Engineer, Accountant, Lawyer and the rest was a big deal among the youth. Those days, young people didn't mind sitting for multiple JAMB exams just to secure university admission and study a professional course. That time, even parents were more interested in having a doctor son or a lawyer daughter; it was a thing of pride. On the larger scale, Nigerians are stigmatized outside the shores of this country for the shady deals her youths do for money.

Conclusion and recommendations

Indeed, time were in Nigeria when becoming a Medical Doctor, Engineer, Accountant, Lawyer and the rest was a big deal among youths. Those days, young people do not mind sitting for multiple JAMB examinations just to secure university admission and study a professional course. That time, parents were more interested in having a doctor son or a lawyer daughter. It was a thing of pride then. Today, youths are more concerned with making quick money without foundation. In virtually all the cities and towns in Nigeria, the sight of flashy cars and mansions is everywhere for everybody to see and relish.

Soft guys with soft life style are the unfortunate recent role model of Nigerian youths. We dare say it is unfortunate because the evil that are committed in the process of making these monies that facilitates this soft lifestyle are no longer reckoned with. In fact, it is seen as one of that thing to do and make money. Vice such as brutal taking of life and the silent stealing of human vital organs has become a general norm and the repercussions are starring us in our face.

Authors have written on this menace and suggestions for solutions made, but as expected, this paper makes the following recommendations:

1. Reinvigoration of family value system where parents police their children from cradle through adolescence, to adulthood. This was the original state of Nigerian homes when parents were seen as custodian of societal value systems.
2. Imbibing of discipline as a life principle by the Nigerian youths. Discipline has been revealed as one character that can stand the hot pressure from peers and friends to join the moving trend and live large. Without discipline, youths have lost chances of being able to stay and live decent even in a crooked society.
3. The governments are expected to show value for human life. There are too many deaths in Nigeria that has gone unreported, those reported gone unpunished. For one to deliberately cause a loss of life, the act should be treated as capital offence and serve capital punishment. We make bold to suggest public execution of anyone found in deliberate killing of human being or in an obvious attempt to take human life for ritual purposes.
4. There is need to cut down on the money that goes into the pockets of Nigerian politicians. To be fair to Nigerian youths, it is the politicians that opened their eyes to living luxury lifestyle amidst poverty and hunger. Imagine living in a society where the custodian of your health facilities travels abroad for medical attentions and the custodian of education has his children all in universities outside Nigeria. If the flamboyant lifestyle of politicians are not curtailed, no form of punitive public policy can deter the young guys from living the kind of life the Nigerian political are living.
5. The Nigerian censor board should guide our celebrities on their flamboyant lifestyle display. Many youths simply want to live like these guys and except the celebrities are stopped, the youths will not stop. This is simply because, they have found that it is possible to live this life style notwithstanding the consequences.

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