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Effects of Political Crimes in the Benue Valley

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Abstract: *Crimes perpetrated in search of power are common features of many practicing democracies such as Nigeria. Therefore, political crimes are quite disturbing phenomena in contemporary Nigerian society. This is confirmed by obvious cases of cancelation of results by the electoral body and nullification of elections by various election tribunals owing to evidence of rigging, ballot box snatching, intimidation, harassment, killings and assassinations among others. Considering the foregoing, the study examined the effects of political crimes in the Benue Valley. Conflict theory is utilized as the theoretical postulation in the study. The research utilized both primary and secondary sources. The data were analyzed using simple percentage and statistical tables while it adopted the Yaro Yomene's formula to arrive at the sample size. Findings show the devastating effects of political crimes in the all spheres of Benue State of Nigeria and hence recommend stiffer penalties and religious enforcement by the law agents to any form of political offender, education and sensitizing as well as reconstruction of societal values from the family level to all agents of socialization, government commitment to addressing the perennial problem of unemployment as well as commitment in the side of the criminal justice system and other security agents among others through which political crimes can be solved.*

Key words: politics, crimes, political crimes

1. Introduction
1.1. Background to the Study
Politics is a common feature of every society that has been with us from time immemorial. The general conduct of the people in the society is regulated by the art of politics. The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language defines politics as the art or science of the state relating to public affairs or the opinions, principles or policies by which a person orders his participation in such affairs. Ujo (2003:1) sees politics as the process of reconciling interest in an organised group. Central to politics is the idea of governance aimed at directing and reconciling human affairs in the society. Human needs are insatiable but it is believed that with governance as a core to politics, individuals would at best utilize the dividends. This is the reason why politics since its inception, many believed would serve as a reprieve to the pains and sufferings of the people in all societies of the world. Ironically, practitioners of politics in developing societies like Nigeria have failed to embrace the genuine tenets of politics thereby turning it to a do or die affairs under which all kinds of criminality and manipulations are perpetrated. Asiegbu,

(2010) posited that the manner in which the 1999, 2003 and 2007 political campaigns and elections were conducted and as well as the aftermath of these elections clearly justified criminality. Hundred of precious lives and property worth millions of naira were lost in almost every state of the federation during each of these elections as political parties, individuals, group clashed with one another in what could be defined as 'gun boat political campaigns' or 'cut-throat politics' Asiegbu (2010). The way and manner elections are conducted in Nigeria in which people employ all kinds of criminal measures to attain power; one would imagine what the performance of such people would be, considering the questionable process they use in getting to power as averred by Asiegbu (2010). Criminological speaking, this is yet another dimension of criminality that search light need to be beamed on if we are to address holistically crime problem in Nigeria.

Studies on Nigeria's crime problem as Odekunle (1978) and Iwarimie –jaja (2005) observed began since middle of the 1970s. The situation of crime problem as Odekunle (2006) in Iwarimie-jaja (2010:11) opined has been serious and recalcitrance to control and has passed from the normal or tolerable level of pathological to become a social problem. It severe nature includes assassination, armed robberies, big-time fraud, corruption, money laundering, drug trafficking and computer or hi-tech crimes among others. It character has become cult-like, gang-like, syndicate-like, and conspirational, Iwarimie-jaja, (2010:11).

Similarly, Soyombo (2009) rightly observed that a major socio-economic problem in contemporary Nigerian society is crime. It has for over the years attracted a considerable attention from all members of the society and stakeholders, including individuals, citizens, groups, corporate organizations, and the government at various levels as well as the international community. Various efforts, as Soyombo (2009) again observed have been made to solve the problem of crime however, the efforts have not yielded any desired results. The crime problem had persisted and people continue to suffer the consequences. While it may be said that peace and security is desired by all, crime has denied people in Nigeria this cherished peace and security as people can hardly sleep with both eyes closed. There is virtually no day that there is no crime report in the media as affirmed by Soyombo (2009), Dambazau (2007: 118-123). Affirming the dangerous effects of Political crimes, Collier (2010:1-2) stated that Political violence is both a curse in itself and an obstacle to accountable and legitimate government. It is an obstacle because where power rests on violence (crimes) it invites an arrogant assumption that government is there to rule rather than serve, Collier (2010:2). Political crimes are quite disturbing phenomena in contemporary Nigerian society. It is a multifaceted area of criminality that needs to be x-rayed.

2. Conceptualization
2.1. Concept of Political Crime
Defining political crime will be problematic and one is left by the mercy of contextual restriction. As Borgatta and Montgomery (2000: 2142) argue that political crime has been more often of partisan assertion than of independent research. Many sociologists and classical criminologists especially those of the western societies most at times tend to limit political crimes only to crimes committed against the state like treason, sedition, sabotage, terrorism, espionage, subversion and conspiracy ,Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia (2010). But an in-depth and critical analysis in to the concept would make one agree that there is more dimensions of political crimes if we are to broaden it to other politically motivated crimes in search of power

just like in the case of economic crimes committed in search of wealth. Political crimes in form of electoral crimes or malpractice like rigging, snatching of ballot boxes sponsored by men and women in control of power which sometimes armed the youths with dangerous weapons in fulfillment of these criminal ambition remains unchecked and unpunished.

2.2. Benue Valley in Perspective

Benue state created on February 3rd, 1976 by the then military administrator General Murtala Mohammed is located at the middle belt zone of Nigeria and shares boundaries with five neighbouring states namely: Nassarawa to the north, Taraba to the east, Cross River to the south, Enugu, Ebonyi to the south-east and Kogi to the south-west. The state also shares a common boundary with the Republic of Cameroon on the south-east. Benue state lies roughly between latitude $6^0 1/2$ north and longitude 7 $1/2^0$- 10^0 east Lyam (2005: 73). Presently, the state has 23 local government areas which include in alphabetical order: Ado, Agatu, Apa, Buruku, Gboko, Guma, Gwer, Gwer-West, Katsina-Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Logo, Makurdi, Obi, Ogbadibo, Ohimini, Oju, Okpokwu, Otukpo, Tarka, Ukum, Ushongo and Vandeikya with Makurdi as the state capital, Lyam (2005).

Benue state is one of the populous states in Nigeria with population over four million. According to the 2006 population census, the state has a total population of 4,219,244, a break down shows that 2, 164,058 are males, and 2,055, 186 are female. United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) put the state population in 2013 at 5,287,129. The state also occupies a land mass of about 30, 955 square kilometers, Nigerian Population Commission (2006). In terms of ethnic composition, the state constitute of several ethnic group namely Tiv, Idoma Igede, Etulo, Abakpa (Abakwariga), Jukun, Hausa, Akweya and Nyifon. The Tiv are the majority dominant group accounting for over half of the entire population, Lyam (2005: 98-101).

The people of the state are famous for their cheerful and hospitable disposition as well as rich culturally heritage. Characteristically, the state is rich and diverse in cultural heritage; this can be expressed in language, arts and artefacts, the mode of dressing, music and captivating dances among others. The dances include *Ingough, Ange, Anchanakupa, Kpatu and Swange* among the Tiv; and *Anumowo* and *Odubaru* among the Idoma. The *Kwagh-hir* puppet theatre also provides memorable entertainment in its dramatization of the Tiv folklore and offers social commentary aimed at social correction, Shaminja (2010: 15).

The socio-religious festivals and rituals like *Adzov Akombo,* among the Tiv which are respected traditionally and celebrated occasionally sometimes serve as agent for checkmating aberrant behaviours. The *Alekwu* ancestral festival of the Idoma for instance is an occasion when ancestors re-incarnate from the spirit world to re-establish contact with the living in form of masquerades, Lyam (2005), Torkula (2006), Shaminja (2010). Marriage, funerals and other rites provides occasions for display of people's cultural heritage. Fishing festivals and communal hunting expeditions are among other memorable and remarkable social events amongst various communities in the state. The *Igede Agba*, a new yam festival is the most important social occasion among the *Igede* and *Igumale/Agila* people in Otukpo local government area of the state Lyam (2005: 101).

In terms of occupation, the people of the state are predominantly farmers while the inhabitants of the riverine areas engage in fishing as their primary or secondary occupation. However, with the acquisition of western education, some inhabitants of the state engage in civil service, business and politics to earn their livelihood Lyam (2005: 114). Benue state offers many

fascinating scenes for its tourists. These are scattered all over the state meant for leisure and educative purposes. Prominent among them include the enchanting scenery of Ushongo, Selagi, Harga and Kashimbilla hills. The river Benue is another attractive site for tourist attraction. Others include the historical monument of the Tiv trench fortification of the 18th century in Turan, Kwande local government area which were defensive bulwarks against the invading Chamba horsemen, the Gbeleve trade post near Katsina-Ala, one of the earliest colonial trade post in Tiv land, the Akata fishing festival in Katsina-Ala, the tombs of the early missionaries at Sai and Harga in katsina-Ala local government and the palaces of the Tor –Tiv and Och' Idoma in Gboko and Otukpo respectively, which are veritable museums containing important artefacts of the people. The traditional annual festivals including the one organized by the Benue State Arts Council and Culture is also packaged and promoted for cultural delight Shaminja (2010: 16).

Visitors in the state are assured of adequate accommodation facilities like Benue Hotel, Plaza Hotel, Royal Choice Inn, Half Haven, Doo Palace and others too numerous to mention. The state capital Makurdi is accessible by roads, rail, air and water with network of roads connecting the major towns with neighbouring states while rural roads links the state up. Postal services are available in the state while telephone services are operational in Makurdi, Gboko, Katsina-Ala and Otukpo. The introduction of mobile telecommunication services by the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, almost all the local government areas in the state are connected by mobile network providers which eases communication Shaminja (2010: 17).

2.3 Theoretical view: Conflict Theory

Although, several structural theories may be relevant to the discussion of political crimes, many scholars as Ross (2003: 23) observed regards conflict theory as the most valuable or useful to it explanation. To make matters more complicated, there are varieties of different conflict theories ranging from conservative to radical perspectives, but they all agree that conflict is a naturally occurring social phenomenon. Special attention as Ross (2003: 24) rightly observed should be given to the variety of radical and critical theories including but not limited to, Marxist, neo-Marxist and conflict approaches.

The conflict theory was initially attributed to Karl Marx. Today many criminologists view the criminal law as a device made by the ruling class to preserve the existing order Nkpa (1994: 278). The conflict theory is also supported by Quinney (1974) who opined that although law is supposed to protect all citizens, it starts as a tools of the ruling class and ends by maintaining the dominance of that class Nkpa (1994). Marxist criminology in a nutshell claim that what is responsible for crime is the power resulting from the exercise of capitalism due to the polarization of the 'haves' and the 'haves not' Jones (2006: 222).

Radical conflict theory, some theorists suggest explain the roots of much political crimes that are situated in and emanates from social political and economic process Roebuck and Weeber (1978) in Ross (2003: 24). Radzimowicz and king (1975: 22) summarized the major tenets of radical criminologists as follows:

> *The assumption that the root of crime lie in the very nature and structure of capitalism…….crimes and delinquencies, and the downtrodden as maladies and maladjustment as passive symptoms of degradation imposed upon them more often*

> *than an active protest against it…….they have stressed that criminal law can be used destructively and oppressively by ruling cliques or class Radzimowicz and king (1975).*

Radical criminologists believe that crime as a legal definition of human conduct is created by agents of the dominant class in a politically organized society Nkpa in Otite (1994: 279). Some of the leading radical criminological scholars include Taylor, Walton and young who in 1973 published *the new criminology*; it was intended to provide a radical alternative to the existing theories of crime and deviance Haralambos and Holborn (2008: 343). They summarized their views as similar to those of the Marxist writers as follows:

(1) They accept that the key to understanding crime lies in the material basics of society. Like Marx, they see economy as the most important part of any society
(2) They believe that capitalist societies are characterized by inequalities in wealth and power between individual and that these inequalities lie at the root of crimes.
(3) They support a radical transformation of society; indeed; they suggested that the sociological theories of crime are of little use unless they contribute in a practical way to the 'liberation of individuals from living under capitalism' Haralambos and Holborn (2008).

Chambliss in Haralambos (1980:450) argues that greed, self interest and hostility generated by the capitalist systems motivates many political crimes on all levels of society and members of each stratum use whatever means and opportunities their class position holds to commit crime.
The conflict theory therefore, can be applicable in explaining the causes and consequences of political crimes in Benue state in particular and Nigeria in general because the vast majority of political crimes are traced to historical, material and dialectical nature of the political economy sa'ad (1994: 25). Political crimes like all other disturbing social phenomenon in a class society like Nigeria in general and Benue to be specific is seen as the by-product of a conflict of interest between the classes within the society, and that the class that is superior in economic and political power tends to define what is politically accepted which is the characteristics of its class, and to stigmatize the behaviour of the lower class as irresponsible, delinquent and criminal Odekunle (2009), Nkpa in Otite (1994: 279), Ross (2003: 24). Furthermore, majority of the political crimes in a society like Benue and Nigeria at large are rooted to the materialistic nature and structural imbalance owing to the disconnection between the rich and the poor characterized by factors such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy and greed among others. As such, people see politics as the only lucrative avenue to "get-rich-quick" thereby indulging in all kinds of political manipulations and criminality which the conflict theory explained. The conflict theory also explained the laxity of the criminal justice system in prosecuting political crimes perpetrated by the elite in the society. Onselen (1976) in Sa'ad (1994: 27) averred that:

> *…..the whole political process of law making, law breaking and law enforcement becomes a direct reflection of deep-seated and fundamental conflict between interest groups and their more general struggles for the control of the police power of the state. Those who produce legislative majorities win control over the police power and dominate the policies that decides who is likely to be involved in violation of the law.*

The conflict theorists advanced for a radical transformation of the existing structures of capitalism which breeds crimes of all kinds as the only possible way of solving the problem of political crimes Haralambos and Holborn (2008: 343). Considering the influx of political crimes in the present day Benue in particular and Nigeria at large with the explanation given so far, the conflict theory served as a good theoretical postulation in understanding and explaining the effects of political crimes in Benue State.

3. Methodology

3.1. Method of Data Collection and Analysis

In collecting data for this study, the researcher utilized primary and secondary services of data collection. The primary source involved personal visit to the area of study and also through hired assistants in all the three senatorial zones in Benue state which include the Benue North east, Benue North west and Benue south zone with each zone equally represented based on the sampling procedure. The methods of data analysis involved quantitative and qualitative methods. The former includes the use of tables, simple percentages, frequency distribution and other necessary statistical methods, while qualitative involved descriptive analysis of data collected through questionnaire the instrument of the primary source involved questionnaire administration. Areas visited by the researcher include Ukum, Katsina-Ala and Kwande in Benue north east, Gboko, Buruku and Makurdi in Benue North West, Otukpo, Agatu and Ohimini in Benue south. The questions that were asked bother on the socio-demographic information of respondents and the issues relating to causes and consequences of political crimes in Benue while the secondary source comprised books, journals, newspapers, magazines and internet sources.

3.2. Population of Study

The population of study is restricted to Benue State with an estimated population number of 4,219,244 people according to National Population Commission 2006.

3.3. Sample Size

Given the population number of 4,219,244, the sample size for study is 400. The study adopted the Yaro Yomene's formula to arrive at the sample size. Thus,

$$S = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where, S = sample size (to be determined)

N = population of Benue State = 4,219,244

e = margin of tolerable error = 5% (0.005)

Therefore,

$$S = \frac{4,219,244}{1 + 4,219,244 \, (0.005)^2}$$

$$S = \frac{4,219,244}{1 + 4,219,244 \times 0.0025}$$

$$S = \frac{4,219,244}{1 + 10,548.11}$$

$$S = \frac{4,219,244}{10,549.11}$$

$$S = 399.9 \approx 400.$$

3.4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Data collected from field work through the instruments of questionnaire and oral interview guide as well as focus group discussion is as follows:

Table 1:   Distribution of the Respondents by Sex

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Male	184	57.5
Female	136	42.5
TOTAL	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

According to Table 1, it is evidently clear that 57.3% of the respondents are   males and 42.5% are female. The relevance of sex in this study cannot be over emphasized. The higher numerical strength of males in this study may be attributed to the fact that male dominates the political scene in the state which attracted their interest hence, their higher coincidental sample size.

Table 2:   Distribution of the Respondent by Age

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
18-24 Years	20	6.2
25-31 Years	50	15.6
32-38 Years	162	50.6
39 Years and Above	88	27.5
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

The age distribution of the respondents according to the data in the table 2 reveals that 6.2% are between the ages categories of 18-24 years of age, 15.6% are between the age categories of 25-31 years old, 50.6% are between the age category of 32-38 years while 27.5% are 39 years and above. The relevance of age in this study has to do with the fact that age can enable people to make an informed decision base on wisdom knowledge and understanding about issues in the society like political crimes.

Table 3:   Distribution of Respondents by Educational Attainment

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
No Formal Education	20	6.2
Primary School	55	17.2
Secondary School	133	42.6
Tertiary Institutions	112	35.0
Others Specify	-	-
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

The educational distribution of the respondents in table 3 shows that 6.2% of the respondents have no formal education, 17.2% have attained only primary school and 42.6% have attained

secondary school while 35.0% have attained Tertiary institution such as colleges of Education or Agriculture, polytechnics and university.

Education being an important agent of socialization is crucial to this study because, it influences people's decision on issues in the society. Therefore, it can enable people to have a sound assessment on social problems like political crimes.

Table 4: **Distribution of the Respondents by Religion**

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Christianity	202	62.1
Islam	88	27.5
Traditional	30	9.4
Others specify	-	-
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

According to table 4, majority of the respondents of this study who form 62.1% of the sample are Christians, the Islam counterpart represents 27.5% while the Traditionalists have 9.4% with 0% indicating no response from any other religion apart from the three. The data from the table also reveals that majority of the respondents are from Christian homes. The importance of religion to this study has to do with the fact that religion being a belief enshrine on the doctrine of morality could influence their perception on the moral or other wise of issues such as political crimes in the society.

Table 5: **Distribution of the Respondent by Marital Status**

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Married	198	61.9
Single	107	33.4
Divorced/Separated	10	3.1
Widowed	5	1.6
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

The data in table 5 reveals that 61.9% of the respondents of this study are married while 33.4% are single. Also, 3.1% of the respondents are divorced/separated while 1.6% are windowed. What this data entails is that majority of the respondents of this study are married.

Marital status is also important to this study because the status confers people in the society with responsibility that may influence their reaction on such issues like political crimes.

Table 6: **Distribution of Respondents by Occupation**

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Civil/Public Servants	92	28.7
Skilled Workers	28	8.7
Unskilled Workers	51	15.9
Farmers	102	31.8
Unemployed	38	12.8
Students	8	2.1

Total	320	100

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

The above table 6, revealed that 28.7% of the respondent are civil/public servants, 8.7% are skilled workers, 15.9% of the respondents are unskilled workers 31.8% are farmers while the unemployed and students constitutes constitute 12.8% and 2.1% respectively.

One important indication from the above table is that majority of the respondents in this study engaged in farming which explained the agrarian nature of Benue society.

Table 7:   Distribution of Respondents According to Income Level

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
N7,000-N14,000	162	51.6
N15,000-N22,000	88	27.5
N23,000-N30,000	38	11.9
N31,000 and Above	32	10.0
Total	320	100

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

The data in table 7 above clearly shows that 51.6% of the respondents earn between N7,000 – N14,000 per month, 27.5% earn between N15,000-N22,000 per month while 11.9% earn between N23,000-N30,00 and 10.0% earn between earn N31,000 and above monthly.

By implication, it is evidently clear from the above table that majority of the respondents of the study are from low income background who earn between N7,000-14,000 every month and engage in other activities like farming, fishing to earn their living.

3.5. Responses Relating to Political Crimes

Table 8: Respondents Perception on their Understanding of the Concept of Political Crimes

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
They are crimes committed against the common will of the people in search of power in the society	114	35.6
They are crimes committed against the state in search of wealth	106	33.2
They are crimes committed to the state in pursue of higher economic well being	82	25.6

They are crimes committed in a bid to secure good governance to the people	18	5.6
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey September, 2010

Efforts by the researcher to sought the respondents' view on what they understand by the concept political crime yields as 35.6% agreed that they are crimes committed against the common will of the people in the society in search of power while 33.2% said they are crimes committed against the state in search of wealth. 25.6% of the respondents viewed political crimes as those committed to the state in pursue of higher well being and 5.6% sees as crimes committed in a bid to secure good governance to the people. From the information above, one may be right to say that political crimes are crimes committed against the common will of the people in the society in search of power going by the sample opinion of majority of the respondents in this study.

Table 9: Respondents Perception on whether they think Political Crimes Exist in Benue State

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Yes	225	71.4
No	51	15.9
No Comment	44	13.7
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

According to the respondents of this study as shown in table 8, 71.4% agreed that political crimes exit in Benue state while 15.9% did not agree and 13.7% did not comment on it. On this basis, it is clear that indeed, political crimes exist in Benue state which calls for concern in this study.

Table 10: Respondents Perception on the Types of Political Crimes that are much common in Benue State

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Rigging	106	33.2
Political violence	98	30.6
Killing /assassination	62	19.2
Imposition of candidates	54	16.8
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

Efforts made by the researcher to find out from the respondents the types of political crimes that are common in Benue state yielded as 33.2% identified rigging, 30.6% said it is violence while 19.2% pointed political killings/assassinations and 16.8% said it is imposition of candidates. Table 10, therefore revealed that electoral rigging is the most common type of political crimes in Benue state closely followed by electoral violence, killings/assassinations and imposition of candidates respectively.

Table 11: Respondents Perception on the Causes of Political Crimes

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Quest for power and wealth	96	30.0
Corruption	96	30.0
Greed	61	19.0
Unemployment	61	19.0
Poverty	06	1.9
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

From table 11, one may see that 30.0% of the respondent identified quest for power and wealth as the factor responsible for political crimes, 30.0% again said it is corruption, 19.0% identified greed and unemployment as a factor while 1.9% recognized poverty as the causative factor to political crimes. From the above data, one can infer that the above identified factors as closely related together which causes political crimes.

Table 12: Respondents Perception on how Political Crimes are perpetrated

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Through rigging/ votes manipulation and snatching of ballot boxes	100	31.2
Through political violence to take undue advantage of the chaotic situation	90	28.2
Through killing/ assassination of political opponents	71	22.2
Through imposition of candidates to acquire various gratification	59	18.4
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

Efforts made by the researcher to find out how political crimes are perpetrated yielded as 31.2% said it is through rigging/ votes manipulations while 28.2% opined it is through violence being made to take undue advantage of the chaotic situation. 22.2% of the respondents said political crimes are perpetrated through killing/ assassination of political opponents and 18.4% said it through imposition of candidates to acquire various gratifications.

Table 13: **Respondents Perception on when Political Crimes occurs**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
During the period of elections	156	48.8
After elections	62	19.4
Before elections	102	31.8
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

Table 13 above depicts that 48.8% of the respondents said political crimes occurs during the period off elections while 19.4% said it occurs after the elections and 31.8% said it occurs before election period, from the data above it is obvious that political crimes occurs most during the electioneering period.

Table 14: Respondents Perception on who are the People that perpetrate Political Crimes

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
The elites/political class	168	52.5
The youths	107	33.4
The electorate	45	14.1
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

From table 14 above, 52.5% of the respondents said the elites/political class are the perpetrators of political crimes while 33.4% said the youths are the perpetrators and 14.1% identified the electorate. From the above table one can deduced that the elites/political class are the major perpetrators of political crimes aided by the youths.

Table 15: Respondents Perception on whether those who perpetrate Political Crimes are from poor Background

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Yes	86	26.9
No	194	60.6
No comment	40	13.5
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

Attempt by the researcher to inquire if political crimes are perpetrated by people from poor background materialized as 26.9% of the respondents agreed to the claim that political crimes are committed by people from poor economic background while 60.6% of the respondents said that political crimes are not perpetrated by people from the poor economic background and 13.5% of the respondents did not comment on either of the proposition. From the above analysis, it can be infer that those who perpetrate political crimes are not from the poor economic background.

Table 16: Respondent Perception on whether lack of proper upbringing is Responsible for Political Crimes

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Yes	171	53.4
No	109	34.1
No comment	40	12.5
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

The effort made by the researcher to find out whether lack of proper upbringing is responsible for political crime also yielded as 53.4% of the respondents agreed that lack of proper upbringing is responsible for political crimes while 34.1% of the respondents did not agreed and 12.5% of the respondents did not commented on either of the proportion.

Table 17: Respondents perception on whether those that execute Political Crimes are the Unemployed

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Yes	196	61.3
No	111	34.6
No comment	13	4.1
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

Attempt by the researcher to find out if those that execute political crimes are the unemployed worked out as 61.3% of the respondents agreed that those who execute political crimes are the unemployed while 34.6% of the respondents did not agree and 4.1% of the respondents did said anything either on both proposition.

Table 18: Respondents perception on the category of People that Political Crimes Affect

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
The ruling class	42	13.2

The working class	84	26.2
The masses or the lower class	194	60.6
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

Attempt by the researcher to inquire from the respondents the category of people that political crimes affects materialized as 13.2% of the respondents said are the ruling class, 26.2% said the working class while 60.6% of the respondents said it does affects the masses or the lower class.

Table 19: Respondents perception on the effects of Political Crimes on the Individuals

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
It enhances illegal power and wealth of the individual	183	57.2
it demotes the individual status	127	39.6
It entrust power and wealth to the individuals for a collective well being of the society	10	3.2
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

Information gathered from the respondents on the effects of political crimes on the individuals worked out as 57.2% of the respondents said it enhances illegal power status and wealth of the individuals while 39.6% of the respondents opined that it demotes the individual status and 3.2% of the respondents said it entrust power and wealth to the individuals for a collective social well being of the society at large.

Table 20: Respondents perception on the Consequences of Political Crimes in the Society

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
It retards socio-economic development	147	45.9
It breed bad governance	103	32.2
Brings political instability	70	21.9
Total	**320**	**100**

Sources: Researcher's Field Survey, September, 2010

The efforts made by the researcher to find out from the respondent the consequences of political crimes in the society yields as 45.9% believe it retards socio-economic development of the state while 32.2% said it breed bad governance and 21.9% of the respondents said it brings political instability. One can then infer as demonstrated from the above table that political crimes

are retrogressive to the socio-economic and political development of any society which Benue state is not exempted.

4. Conclusions

The findings of this study have raised certain pertinent issues concerning the problem of political crimes in Benue state of Nigeria. On the basis of this, the study concluded as follows: that political crime exists in Benue state in particular and Nigeria at large and indeed poses a serious danger to the actualization of development goal. The common among as the findings of the study suggests is rigging of election closely accompanied with political violence, killing/assassination and imposition of candidates while some social factors like the quest for power and wealth, corruption, greed, unemployment and poverty are responsible for political crimes. That political crime is perpetrated through rigging/ vote manipulation and ballot boxes snatching, it is also carried out through political violence, killing/ assassination of political opponents and through imposition of candidate to acquire various gratifications. That political crime are carried out most during electioneering period while the political elites/political class are the perpetrators aided by the youths who are often used as executors of political crimes. More so, that those who perpetrate political crimes are not from poor background. That lack of proper upbringing is responsible for political crimes in the society while the executors of political crimes are the unemployed. That political crime affects the masses or the lower class. That political crime enhances illegal power and wealth of the individuals. That political crime is retrogressive to the socio-economic and political development of any society. That political crime is also rampant in Nigeria and the criminal justice system, the security agents and the government are not active in addressing the problem of political crimes in Benue state. The study also suggests stiff penalties, education/sensitization, and provision of employment as well as reduction of poverty levels in combating political crimes.

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