

Ritual Killings, Badoo Phenomenon, and the Socio-Economic Consequences in Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria

Faruq Idowu BOGE

Abstract

This article is a microcosmic study of crimes and criminalities in Lagos State, Nigeria. In the lights of the contemporary social problems and criminalities bedevilling the global space, the article examines the emergence and peculiar modus operandi of a notorious ritualist's gang known as "Badoo" within the Ikorodu Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State. It investigates the impacts of the activities of the dreaded group on the social and economic fabrics of Ikorodu LGA in the face of the prevailing security challenges in Nigeria. The study adopts the historical and qualitative research methodologies where media reports, internet materials, interviews, personal observations, and extant literatures are collated for critical analysis. In conclusion, the study asserts that the activities of the ritualist gang were seemingly unprecedented in nature and character. It affected the socio-economic and security frameworks of the Ikorodu LGA and Lagos State, during the period of the rampage.

Keywords: Ritual Killings, Badoo, Insecurity, Socio-Economic Constraints, Ikorodu LGA.

Introduction

Crimes and criminalities have become inevitable aspects of human existence. Even the so called economically advanced societies of the world are confronted with different shapes of crimes and social problems. These range from immoral activities such as rape, sexual violence, and deviant behaviours to dire criminal activities such as man-stealing, kidnapping, human sacrifice, murder, armed robbery, vandalism, and a host of others. Within the space of the last few decades, however, the

global space has witnessed the emergence of a number of terror groups which have rained devastating havoc on different parts of the world (Rourke 2005, 200-201). This development has affected the nature, dimension, and severity of criminalities across the world, Africa and the West African sub-continent in particular are not shielded from these criminal occurrences and manifestations. Nigeria, the most popular and populous African nation, has had to consistently grapple with numerous forms of criminalities including pipeline vandalism, terrorism and insurgencies, ritual killings, kidnapping, banditry among others. Lagos State, which is the economic capital of the country, is even more prone to various crimes and criminalities. To this end, some scholars have asserted that the massive rate of commercial and industrial activities which bring about a continuous increase in population is a contributing factor to the spate of crimes and criminalities in Lagos State (Olukoju, 1994:34-38). This rising rate of crimes, nonetheless, covers the lengths and breadths of the state, especially since the re-introduction of civilian administration in 1999.

The Ikorodu LGA is an emerging industrial and commercial hub which is strategically located within the north-eastern part of Lagos State. The LGA is engrossed with ravaging crimes and violence criminalities which have assumed destructive dimensions since the closing years of the twentieth century. These criminalities include secret cults rampage, land grabbing activities (*ajagunbale* in local parlance), pipeline vandalism and oil bunkering, kidnapping, ritual killings, bank robbery, public transport robbery (popularly called “one chance”), among others. The outburst of these criminal activities seriously constrained the existing security apparatus within the suburban area. In the light of the foregoing, this study interrogates the emergence, manifestation and impacts of the Badoo phenomenon within Ikorodu LGA of Lagos State. It endeavours to situate the phenomenon within the pre-existing and emerging global crimes and security challenges. The unique modus operandi of the gang and its target victims are therefore carefully examined. In addition, the study takes into cognisance the factors that prompted and promoted the evolution and escalation of the Badoo phenomenon and some of the socio-economic consequences. It further suggests some of the ways by which this sort of dire criminal activity could be eradicated in Ikorodu LGA, Lagos State, and Nigeria.

Ritual Killings: The Reality and Myth

There seems to be no argument about the reality of the reoccurrence of ritual killings in annals of human history (Omoarelojie 2005). This could be gleaned from the fact that its incidences and manifestations are ubiquitous; it happens across the continents of the world as would be substantiated shortly. The phenomenon of ritual killings has entrenched historical antecedents because the precursors of contemporary ritual killings are located in history. Ritual killings or human sacrifice may simply be described as the act of murdering (human) lives in order to appease the deities or for spiritual and magical benefits. The deities are therefore expected to proffer solutions and succour to the yearnings and aspirations of the perpetrators with such benefits as transformation, immortality, healing, and societal cleansing. However, criminologists and psychiatrists have ascribed that the motivations for ritual killings are viewed from different perspectives (encyclopedia.com 2020). In this regard, mention have been made about the cultural and psychological perspectives to ritual killings.

With respect to cultural perspective, ritual killing is said to have been influenced by the belief system and practices of a particular group or community. Some occultist groups adopt ritual killing as a prerequisite for their membership and a tangible means of achieving their goals. For example, in 1997, Luke Woodham, a sixteen-year-old Mississippian, was said to have murdered his own mother and two of his classmates (encyclopedia.com 2020). His motive for this act was specifically influenced by his membership of an occultist group which incorporated ritual murder as part of its institutional activity. Another example of cultural perspective to ritual killings is vampirism. Vampirism, which is a notorious cult in the Europe and America, believes that blood sucking and cannibalism could make members to obtain influence and immortality. For instance, a seventeen-year-old vampire, Michael Hardman, murdered a ninety-year-old Mabel Leyson in Anglesey (Wales) and drank her blood in order to achieve immortality (encyclopedia.com 2020).

Examples abound in Africa to demonstrate the reality of ritual killings. Some Africans, either individually or collectively in their communities, really engaged in ritual killings or human sacrifice.

These were carried out to obtain solutions and favours from the ancestors, spirits, goddess, and gods (Asiwaju 1997, 22-42). For instance, Robert Smith reported the narration of a British representative at the Lagos Consulate during the mid-nineteenth century who reported a horrid tradition of annually impaling alive a young female by the community for ritual purpose. This was done to propel the goddess of the sea for a favourable raining season (Smith, 1978:9). Jeffery Boadu (2019) added credence to this when he asserted that “in certain parts of sub-Saharan Africa, slaves were used for human sacrifice in annual rituals, such as those rituals practised by the denizens of Dahomey.” In addition, many African communities engage in traditional festivals by which the bloods of the non-indigenes are spilled to appease the gods. In some parts of Ethiopia, youths in their teens can only be circumcised into manhood or adulthood when they were able to fulfil certain cultural dictate by which they must kill an enemy to demonstrate bravery (ezega.com 2009). Vital organs of the victim such as ears, noses, and toes were chopped and later presented as a sign of bravery. As parts of the cultural beliefs of the Omotic Speaking Karo and Hamar tribes of southern Ethiopia, children with deformities including those born out-of-wedlock, twins, those with chipped tooth, and those who cropped the upper jaw tooth before that of the lower jaw are considered impure and evil (Ngugi 2071). These children are referred to as “mingi” and are condemned for ritual sacrifices or for other very harsh treatments such as abandonment in the wilderness or drowning in the river.

Apart from the cultural interpretation for the perpetuation of ritual killings, the psychological perspective is also deployed to explain the motive behind the phenomenon. The emphasis of the psychological perspective is that ritual killing is motivated by decaying conscience and morality of the perpetrators. It is further asserted that socio-economic problems such as unemployment, poverty, psychiatric disorder, and substance addiction could influence the decision of people to involve in ritual killings. To substantiate this argument, some cases could be sighted. In 1978, for example, Richard Trenton Chase murdered a woman and drank her blood in the United States (encyclopedia.com 2020). After investigation, it was discovered that Trenton was not only undernourished but had been

unemployed. He was further observed to have some mental illness and personally did not see anything wrong in his act. In Nigeria, Clifford Oji was allegedly a notorious cannibal during the 1990s (Dickson 2012). He was accused of human parts merchandise where he got his patronage from the influential people in the society. These parts were supposedly further used for rituals. Public opinion acclaimed that he was insane and psychologically unstable (Dickson 2012). Most of the youths that are used as foot soldiers for ritual killings in Nigeria fall prey for this act majorly because of unemployment and lack of opportunities.

Most prominent among the reasons why people engage in ritual killings nowadays are for power and affluence. There are examples of situations where albinos, hunchbacks, and other special type of human beings are hunted for ritual killings in Nigeria, Kenya, and Tanzania (bbc.com 2015). Albinos were reported to be subjected to series of attacks in many African countries with Tanzania, DR Congo, Malawi, Mozambique and Burundi recording the highest numbers (Pereira 2019). The report averred that these attacks were with respect to the increasing search for the body parts of people with albinism for ritual purposes. This is because the hair, bones, genitals, and thumbs of albinos were believed to possess magical powers that could spring affluence, influence, and successes. This believe was staunchly held to the extent that graves of albinos were exhumed in order to get hold of their body parts for fortune rituals. This demand is usually towards electioneering periods as wealthy and educated elites running for offices consult traditional healers for success potions.

Furthermore, special parts of human beings such as the heart, the female genitals, female breasts, male spermatozoa and organ constitute some of the ingredients used for money-making rituals in Nigeria. In recent time, many dens of the ritualists where people were murdered in cold blood for political and financial fortune were uncovered in various parts of Nigeria. Typical example of these was the Soka forest in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State, Nigeria. The forest of horror was discovered in March 2014 where living and parts of human bodies including hundreds of human skulls meant for ritual purposes were uncovered (Atoyebi 2014). The Okija shrine in the

south-eastern part of the country was another typical example. It was generally opined that the perpetrator ritualists derived their patronages from wealthy and influential people, both in and outside government, within the country (newtelegraphonline.com 2015). In Yoruba land, there are rituals that were carried out to produce a number of charms for such occurrence as *ase* (command), *awure* (good luck), *owo* (respect), *igboya* (confidence), *ayeta* (shield from gunshot), and *okigbe* (shield from cutlass or dagger attack) amongst others. The ingredients used in concocting these medicines sometimes include body parts or whole parts of animals such as lizard, frog, and wall-gecko. Human parts are sometimes added (Informant A).

Badoo: The Emergence and Manifestations

The actual emergence of the Badoo Phenomenon in Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State is shrouded in uncertainties (Interactive Session with Honourable S. O. Agunbiade on Television Continental, titled “Badoo Rampage in Ikorodu” July 6, 2017), though it evolved as a typology of the prevailing criminal dimensions and manifestations in Nigeria. However, the peculiar modes of operations were unique in the historical records of the Ikorodu LGA and Lagos State. Literarily, Badoo used to be a household sobriquet which was used to qualify young socialites, particularly those whose names start with letters b, a, and d consecutively (such as *Bade* or *Bada*). The term became popularised after a young popular musician, Olamide, adopted it as a stage-name. Its popularity gathered further momentum when a famous Nigerian dating website adopted it as its handle. At this stage, nothing mythical or mysterious was associated with the appellation. But suddenly around 2015, Badoo began to be recounted for negativities within Ikorodu LGA, Lagos State, and Nigeria. It suddenly assumed an active subject of national discussions and assumed a registered trade mark in the annals of global crimes. The dreaded activities resounded panics and trepidation across the lengths of Lagos State throughout the years 2015, 2016, and 2017.

The first incidences of the Badoo criminal activities started in Ibeshe, an outskirt of Ikorodu Township (Akojede, 2017). At this stage, the general impression was that Badoo was a “one-man-show” that moved around in order to wreck havocs. During this period, Badoo was

interested in raping female victims and using a white handkerchief to wipe their genitals for further ritual processes. The name Badoo became attached to these acts of terror as perpetrators began to inscribe the statement “I am Badoo” at the doors of the victims after operations (NANS, 2018). This inscription clearly demonstrates a terror group wanting to launch its brand of terror into national and global spaces. This is the way international terror groups such as ISIS and Al-Shabab christened themselves in order to win global recognition; they even go on the internet to lay claims to their terror activities. Badoo occultist or gangster nature became entrenched after the June 2016 episode when a perpetrator was apprehended in Ibeshe. The reoccurrence of the very similar terror activity in various other parts of the LGA, however, made people to come to term with the reality that Badoo was not a one-man-show. Many houses were broken into and families were wiped out of existence during the three years’ rampage.

Different terror groups and criminal syndicates across the globe have their peculiar mode of operations; the Badoo gang is no exemption as it had its unique peculiarities in this regard. In the first place, the instruments of operation were similar everywhere it occurred. While national and international terror groups such as Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda adopted bombs and ammunitions for their operations, the Badoo gang’s major implements for operations included mortar, grinding stone, pestle, white handkerchief, and oily lotions (Informant B). This was unique when considered with other cases of ritual killings scenes in Nigeria and Africa where charms and deceits were adopted to lure victims to unknown destinations for the ritual murder activities. In the case of Badoo, terrors were brought to the door steps of the victims rather than luring them to forests. The grinding stone or mortar, which was given to the gangs during initiation at the Badoo shrine, was used to smash the heads of the victims. Specifically, the mortar was used to suppress the victims to forestall retaliations or breaking of alarm. Also, it provided opportunity for the perpetrators to obtain the needed blood which would be presented at the shrine for money-making rituals. But why mortar and other stony objects, why not iron or other material objects? Perhaps there was a spiritual purpose for sticking to the stony objects alone.

The essence of the white handkerchiefs was to wipe the blood of the victims for later presentation at the shrine for the ritual purpose (NANS 2018). Like what was obtainable in Tanzania where albino parts mongers could earn as much as \$75,000 for the harvests (Pereira 2019), there were reports that the blood or semen saturated handkerchief could earn the perpetrators of Badoo terror acts as much as N500,000 (approximately \$1,400 during the period of rampage) when a successful ritual examination is carried out on the handkerchief (Usman and Sessou 2017). Though this amount is definitely in the realm of speculation and outrageous, it is very certain that financial compensation was a huge motivating factor for the perpetrators. Furthermore, the white handkerchief, which seems to be the most symbolic object of the Badoo phenomenon, is used for money-making rituals, rituals for political influence, immortality, crowd pulling, among others. This mythical belief is deeply rooted in African traditional socio-cultural system no matter how unscientific it may sound. The purpose of the oily lotion on the other hand is for escape, perpetrators are said to always saturate their naked bodies with engine oil or other oily lotions in order to enhance their escape in case of eventuality (Informant C). However, this is not peculiar to Badoo ritual murders alone, there were occasions when armed robbers usually wet their bodies with oily lotions during operations in order to perpetuate easy escape. Another unique feature of Badoo activities is that the instruments of operation such as the mortar and oily lotion were usually left behind after operations. This is probably to further establish a trade mark and demonstrate that the crime is an organised one, worthy of recognition. On the other hand, these instruments could be easily acquired unlike the costly ammunitions that were used by other criminal gangs.

Another peculiar thing about Badoo was that the terror activities were mostly carried out during the dead silence of the night. There were suggestions that the gang adopted hypnotising chemicals in order to captivate its victims before the attacks. There were other suggestions that mystical powers were deployed in order to gain invisible entrance to houses. However, it is important to emphasise that the mid-night operation period seems to be the most suitable, especially judging by the reality of intermittent supply of electric power within the

environments coupled with unavailability of street/security lights during this period. It even goes along to substantiate the Yoruba aphorism which says *oru la'n se ika* meaning “evil things are done in the night;” though the basic philosophy behind the aphorism seems to be untenable considering modern realities. Related to this is the fact that about ninety percent of the dastardly acts were carried out within the suburbs and in uncompleted apartments where there were absence of burglaries including absence of basic amenities such as accessible roads and security posts that could generate prompt responses from security machineries. Furthermore, the buildings in these suburbs apart from lacking burglaries were haphazardly constructed that bushes where criminals could hide were predominant.

Another peculiarity about the Badoo phenomenon is the mode of recruiting its membership. In this regard, it was suspected that the membership of the cult is sourced through the plethora of employment adverts that were usually placed in various parts of the LGA (Informant C). It is therefore submitted that the innocent and desperate job seekers who were later invited to unknown destinations were lured and initiated into the cult of Badoo. Apart from these adverts, many unsolicited and anonymous text messages were usually sent to potential job seekers inviting them for job interviews. The socio-economic situation of the country whereby a great number of able bodies (graduates and non-graduates alike) roam about aimlessly made it easy for the ritualists to play on the helpless intelligence of these young persons. Upon recruitment, the new gang members were initiated through oath making and training in the acts of Badoo which took place in the Badoo shrines (Nseyen 2018).

Another aspect of the Badoo phenomenon which demands adequate intellectual rumination is the issue about sponsorship. There were speculations that the gang was engineered by the natives of the LGA (*the omo oniles*) in order to recover the landmass which had been initially sold to the non-indigenes (Informant B). It was therefore projected that Badoo was introduced by the autochthons to force the land-buyers to abandon their parcels of land in order to resell the land to other prospective buyers. It was even further asserted that most of the Badoo casualties were non-indigenes. Though the natives clearly debunked this proposition, the correctness of these speculations seem

inefficient. This is because scaring people away through Badoo may be counter-productive in the sense that it would also prevent prospective buyers from venturing into land acquisition within the areas. In an emerging commercial and industrial hub like Ikorodu LGA, there is every possibility that the population would be increased by preponderance of non-indigenes, especially within the new sites. This may be the reason why the non-indigenes constituted the major victims of Badoo activities.

On the other hand, there is another speculation that members of the Badoo gang were sponsored by the elites in the society. In fact, this seems to be the view of Mr. Akinwunmi Ambode, the governor of Lagos State during this period, when he said *inter alia* “as far as Badoo case is concerned, I don’t believe that rituals can be taking place without some people being behind it. So, I challenge all our Kabiyesi, Balees, and traditional rulers to arrest this situation. We will support you” (Akojede 2017). Some residents also pointed accusing fingers at the elites within the area. The head of the Odua People’s Congress (OPC), Otunba Gani Adams supported this view. Meanwhile, Honourable S. O. B. Agunbiade during the interactive session with Television Continental, debunked the accusation against the traditional rulers using their pedigrees to substantiate his argument. However, public opinion seems to support the view that Badoo was a group of unemployed youths who were enticed into the cult of ritual killings by the influential and wealthy people (Akinferon 2017). Summarily, Badoo criminal perpetrators included the youths who were enticed to carry out the ritual killings; the sponsors who provide the weapons and emolument for executing the acts; and the ritual killing herbalists who supervised the shrines and carry out the rituals for money making. A number of Badoo shrines were discovered in Ikorodu, Agbowo, and some parts of Ogun State. The then Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Fatai Owoseni, was of the opinion that the gang usually rape, remove vital organs of the victims, and remove foetus of pregnant women during the period of rampage (Akojede, 2017).

Its exceptional peculiarities apart, one of the manifestations of the Badoo phenomenon was that it generated series of reactions and protestations from the populace. At different occasions, palaces of the paramount kings such as that of the Ayangburen of Ikorodu,

Adeboruwa of Igbogbo, and Olubeshe of Ibeshe were visited by disenchanted people on peaceful demonstrations. In the case of the Adeboruwa palace, a group of women in their hundreds launched complaints at the doorstep of the king about the Badoo menace (Adelabu 2017, 21). In another vein, on the morning of a brutal occurrence of Badoo act in the Odogunyan suburb, in the northern hemisphere of the Ikorodu LGA, a mob in their hundreds from Odogunyan and adjoining communities trekked a distance of about 15 kilometres to the palace of the Ayangburen of Ikorodu to register their displeasure about the menace of Badoo cult (Adelabu 2017:21). The import of these mob protestations is that Badoo terror activities generated tensions and trepidation across the LGA. Another manifestation of the dreaded phenomenon was that it spurred some kind of migration. Some residents, particularly those who reside within the vicinities where Badoo was very active, had to relocate for the fear of fallen victim of the terror activities (Adelabu 2017, 21). This movement, however, is a normal characteristic of crisis ridden environments. During the rampage of pipeline vandals within the western hemisphere of the LGA, many residents relocated to other parts of the LGA in 2014 and 2015.

The quest for security of lives and properties, particularly during the period of severe security challenges, has been one of the major yearnings of man. Owing to the temerity of the Badoo terrorist activities, security vigils became the duty of almost every resident within the LGA. Usually coordinated by the Community Development Associations (CDAs), people organised themselves into vigilante groups in order to forestall Badoo attacks. There was instruction that residents and visitors must always carry means of identification, especially during the night hours to avoid being mistaken for Badoo. Whistles, torch lights, machetes, and burn-fires became the necessary ingredients of night life in many communities (Informant D). However, the security mechanism was confronted with the problem of improper coordination as some hoodlums began to hijack the process to unleash untoward characteristics such as extorting money from road users particularly during the late hours of the night (Informant E). Another manifestation of the Badoo phenomenon was the issue about jungle justice. As the spate of the terror continued unabated in face of flagging

security architectures, people began to adopt the instrument of jungle justice (Informant E). This was particularly influenced by the fact that people began to suspect that the Police was compromised by the sponsors of Badoo. There were allegations that the Police released apprehended suspects after collecting bribe from the sponsors.

Lynching and burning alive of suspects became the next resolution of some people and there were occasions when suspects were either mobbed or burnt to deaths (Akojede, 2017). Though hasty in their reactions, lack of update from the Police in the aftermaths of arrests was a major factor that prompted people into jungle justice. Truly, the Police was supposed to exercise due diligence in the investigation of suspects, but there was the need to keep the public updated. Moreover, the populace had lost some trust in the Police based on its antecedents of sometimes abetting crimes. Cases abound in Nigeria where security personnel are found culpable of conniving with criminals to perpetuate unlawful activities. The jungle justice resulted in a number of deaths. A popular comedian, Paul Chinedu, was mistaken for Badoo during the wee hours and was burnt to death with his Sports Utility Vehicle. Popular opinion acclaimed that he was innocent but even at that he was not completely blameless. Having understood the prevailing security circumstance of the period, it would have been better for the victim to avoid late hour journey. Secondly, the materials found in the vehicle including engine oil and stones made the assailants to prematurely conclude that he was on a Badoo mission.

Among the factors that promoted the emergence of Badoo phenomenon in Ikorodu LGA was greed and the get-money-quick syndrome among the people. Many people are bent on becoming very rich without minding whatever it would take to achieve this, particularly among the youths. The society aids the situation by its glorification of quick-money-getters. The greed of wanting to continue to dominate the political and socio-economic spaces by some individuals also immensely contributed to the factors that prompted people into ritual killings for wealth, affluence, and popularity. The exponential rate of unemployment resulting from the continued economic doldrums within the country was also a contributing factor. The growing number of unemployed youths constituted the army of criminals that were used in perpetuating nefarious activities including

Badoo. The traditional belief system which admits that charms and the performance of ritual sacrifices can enhance fortunes in business and politics also enhanced the emergence and escalation of the Badoo phenomenon. The poor and corrupt policing system also contributed to the outbreak and spread of Badoo. This is because the perpetrators and their sponsors were assured of protection and escape because of the corrupt policing system.

Another major factor was the inadequate housing plan or what could be termed as urban sprawl. Majority of the Badoo activities occurred in areas that were lacking in adequate development plans and necessary social facilities such as good road networks. With routes for escape, the criminals enjoyed orchestrating their activities within these vicinities. Apart from the huge amount of unoccupied lands and forests within the adjoining areas of Ikorodu, the relative cheap value of lands served as incentive for land speculators to massively move into these areas without adequate development plans. The weakened and overwhelmed security architecture within Nigeria and Ikorodu LGA also contributed to the emergence of Badoo within the LGA. The lack of prompt responses to distress calls from the security apparatus also encouraged the Badoo gangs to engage in their devilish activities.

The Security Architecture in the Face of Mounting Insecurity

The geography and demography of the Ikorodu LGA during the closing decades of the twentieth century were drastically penetrating and burgeoning. Conversely, the extension of habitation to suburb and rural areas was unattended with necessary infrastructural facilities including official security outfits. With regard to security, the constitutional responsibility to prevent and curb social menaces in Nigeria primarily lies within the purview of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). The NPF has some physical presence within Ikorodu LGA with an Area Command at Ijede and several police stations. The Nigerian Civil Defence Corps is another security mechanism established by the federal government to monitor and support the security needs of the people. Branches of this Corps are located within Ikorodu LGA. In addition is the presence of the barrack of the 37 battalion of the Nigerian Armed Forces at Odogunyan-Ikorodu. In Nigeria, the military is often mobilised to assist in caging some civil unrests. The Operation Sweep

and OP MESA that were established by past administrations in Lagos State to curtail armed robbery and other social crimes for example, were majorly drafted from the military personnel. The Lagos State Government also established some security architectures which assisted in promoting security within Lagos State. The Lagos State Neighbourhood Watch which later became the Lagos State Neighbourhood Corps (LSNC) was established with branches and operations across every part of the state. The LSNC mostly delves into intelligence gathering and tip-off activities for the Police.

Apart from the federal and state government security outlets, a number of local security mechanisms were established to galvanise security within the Ikorodu LGA. The quest for ensuring adequate security is located in antiquity as many African societies including Ikorodu and environs fortified their communities with hunters and the military caste prior to colonial rule (Olowosago 1992). Establishment of vigilante group within the Ikorodu LGA is traced to the colonial epoch when the people sought for official permission to launch vigilante groups owing to increasing crime rates (Gibbon 1937). This trend continued during the post-colonial period to the extent that the Ikorodu Local Government Council promulgated a bye-law that mandated each community to organise its vigilante group (Olowosago 1991). The law also incriminated any residents who refuse to pay the monthly security levy. Numerous communities keyed into this and various CDAs within the LGA employed security guards to secure lives and properties.

During the moments of the Yoruba-Hausa ethnic clashes in Lagos and Ogun States in the 1990s, the Odua People's Congress (OPC) was formed as a Pan-Yoruba socio-cultural security outlet with membership and branches across the south-western geopolitical zone (Akinyele 2001, 623-640). With the emergence of OPC, attention was shifted to the group for the provision of security services. Private individuals, schools, companies, and communities within the LGA began to use members of OPC for security services. The Ikorodu version of the OPC later cropped up due to the dwindled reputation of the OPC and owing to the peculiarity of the LGA. This local security group was christened *Onyabo* with a mode of operation similar to that of the OPC. They were to curtail crimes and handover any suspect to

the recognised security outfits. They also prioritised African juju mechanisms (e.g. *igbadi*, *oruka*, and *on'de*) as means of curtailing crimes and social menace within the society (Informant F). One of the major strengths of *Onyabo* is that its members understand the terrain of the region very much.

Even with the presence of the above identified security mechanisms, criminal activities continued unabated within Ikorodu and environs. In fact, as the area continued to witness expansion and development, it kept witnessing various dimension of crimes and criminalities. Cultism and internet fraud found their convenience within the domain. Armed robbery, man-stealing, kidnapping, car theft, bank robbery, drug addiction, and “419” among others became very ripe within the LGA. However, ritual killings have its historical antecedent within the LGA (Oderemi 1990), but got to its apogee during the Badoo phenomenon. In the face of all the aforementioned security apparatus, the Badoo phenomenon reigned for almost three years. The summary of public opinion, however, was that the NPF lacked adequate capacity both in terms of personnel and investigative prowess to provide appropriate security for the populace. In the first place, the ratio of its personnel drastically falls short of the United Nation’s benchmark of one police to four citizens. Apart from the ratio, a close observation of the activities of many of the NPF personnel shows a massive lack of capacity, integrity, and character. These ineptitudes and insufficiencies throw the security of various communities in Nigeria into abysmal failures. In particular reference to the activities of Badoo, the lack of proactive measures from the police at the initial stage through intelligence gathering and prompt action had been found culpable of actually propelling the menace. In the real sense, however, little should be expected from a less supervised and unmotivated force with grossly inadequate policing gadgets. Lack of trust in the police force is another major factor militating against effective policing services and festering of criminal activities like Badoo. Due to its antecedents, people were not comfortable to give necessary information which could assist the efficiency of the police. This situation made the NPF to be almost absolutely overwhelmed with the level of insecurity.

It was in order to complement the efforts of the NPF in curtailing crimes that the OPC and the *Onyabo* emanated. In the face of

burgeoning criminal activities, these supplementary mechanisms also failed to address the issue of crimes and ritual killings within Ikorodu LGA. Lack of official recognition and limited operational capacity were parts of the factors that militated against the effectiveness of these groups. In fact, the OPC was proscribed during the Obasanjo civilian administration. Members of these groups were not permitted to use weapons like the police thereby limiting the rate at which they could combat crimes. Though the *Onyabo* achieved some successes in curbing the menace of “street cultism” within the LGA, it was completely found wanting with respect to Badoo. Socio-political interference and consideration were among the factors that constrained the efficiency of the OPC and the *Onyabo* group. At a point, the pioneer leader of *Onyabo* was said to have been suspended for issues relating to local political interference and leadership tussle, just as there was leadership tussle and fractionalisation within the ranks of the national OPC. The recruitment mechanisms of both the NPF and the local security group was another major problem abetting insecurity in Nigeria and Ikorodu LGA in particular. Those that were most readily available for recruitment into these establishments were those with criminal inclinations and antecedents. Sometimes, members of the *Onyabo* were alleged to be former cult members who were using the opportunity of their new assignments to witch-hunt opposing cult groups (Informant F). The implication of this situation is that the complementary security outlets also lacked the capacity to provide common fronts to withstand the menace of Badoo giving it the necessary strength to exist for such a protracted period.

Socio-Economic Impact of the Badoo Phenomenon

Situations of insecurity are always attended by consequences ranging from loss of lives and properties, disruption of peace and tranquillity, interruption of economic activities, destruction of social co-existence, and invocation of fears and trepidation amongst other negative impacts. The Badoo phenomenon within the Ikorodu LGA clearly was no exemption to this general situation because its unleashed series of dire socio-economic impacts. Prominent among the negative impacts of Badoo was that a number of lives amounting to hundred plus were directly or indirectly killed (Akojede 2017). This number included the

people who were murdered in cold blood by the Badoo; in some cases, an entire family was wiped off. A number of suspects were also either lynched to death or burnt alive. Another negative consequence of the Badoo phenomenon within the Ikorodu LGA was the destruction of some social fabrics such as restrictions of movements. As far as religious activities were concerned, people were unable to observe their religious activities such as late-night vigils, early night congregations, and early morning devotions.

Apart from the religious activities, people lived in perpetual panic during the Badoo rampage to the extent that night social activities became drastically deserted. Night clubs, beer parlours, and eateries where people relax during the early night periods completely became shadowy as socialites deserted these places under the damning level of insecurity as a result of Badoo. A prominent Night Club (popular called F1) within the Ipakodo area of the LGA where youths (young and advanced) cohabit daily during the night hours became drastically deserted owing to Badoo rampage. F1 was unable to completely regain its activities even some periods after the Badoo phenomenon had subsided (Informant G). The people of the LGA who were generally known to be massively endeared with weekly *owanbe* social parties were forced to limit the number of parties and hours spent at these occasions.

Sporadic arrests and harassment of innocent residents by security personnel also became rife and incessant within the LGA as a consequence of the Badoo phenomenon. Mutual suspicion became the order of the day as a chunk of the citizenry began to point accusing fingers towards the traditional rulers, political elites, successful businessmen and women, and other influential people as the brains behind the unpalatable experience. In addition, the image of the LGA during this period was so battered that people from different parts of the globe began to see it as a primitive den of ritualists. The negative socio-economic impact of this notion cannot be overemphasised as it had high tendency of scaring away prospective industrialist, commercialist, investors, and land speculators.

Apart from the social constraints that attended the Badoo experience, there was a number of economic retrogressions that evolved owing to Badoo incidents. Transporters and motorists were

majorly hit by the Badoo phenomenon. Public vehicle operators and commercial motorcyclists were seriously affected by the situation because their activities were restricted to few hours as a result of the reigning insecurity. Many of these people were bread winners of their families. Vehicle owners were also affected by this scenario because of the seizure of the daily “deliver” from the operators. Hoteliers and hospitality industry suffered huge losses as they recorded low patronage because very few socialites, tourists, and businessmen were interested in coming to the LGA during the period of rampage. Those who engaged in small scale businesses were affected by the menace of the Badoo experience. For example, those who engaged in airing European football matches (popularly called Viewing Centres) encountered very low patronage during this period because many football lovers could not afford risking their lives for ‘mere’ football shows. Petty traders such as food vendors, recharge card retailers, provision shops owners and others who usually carry out their trading activities during the wee hours of the night and early hours of the morning were unable to do business due to the Badoo rampage.

Some of the industrial outlets within the LGA were also affected by the activities of the Badoo gang. This was because the occasion restricted the movements of their personnel who needed to move during the early mornings and late nights for their night and morning shifts. This led to absentees which definitely affected productions. People in the construction industries were also affected by the menace of the Badoo experience (Informant H). Due to the rampage, particularly within the suburbs, many people who were developing their houses had to abandon them. Many bricklayers, labourers, sand and granite suppliers, the block moulders, the water suppliers, the carpenters, the electricians, the plumbers, architects, civil engineers and a host of others who relied on this sector for their socio-economic survival were prevented from carrying out their activities during the Badoo rampage. In addition, the spate of land speculations within the LGA was drastically reduced as the news that flittered out of the area during the period of rampage completely discouraged prospective land speculators. Though it was very difficult to quantify the amount of economic loss because of the predominantly informal nature of the LGA’s economy, that there was huge economic

lost during and immediately after the period of Badoo rampage is incontrovertible.

Conclusion

This study unravels the misery behind the evolution of the Badoo ritual killings within the Ikorodu LGA of Lagos State, the commercial capital of Nigeria. Though the phenomenon spread to other areas in Lagos and Ogun States, this study concentrated on Ikorodu LGA which was a rapidly growing urban setting. The Badoo experience virtually rendered the security contraption within the LGA ineffective and inefficient. This prompted the people into taking laws into their hands by engaging in jungle justice. Many lives were lost and economic activities were virtually thrown into shambles. Badoo generated trepidation, mistrust, and lack of social cohesion among the people during the storming period. The security challenge was surmounted through concerted efforts from the government, the community people, and the security outfits. However, Badoo and the spate of other forms of ritual killings that were bedevilling the country could be reduced through a number of mechanisms. These include creation of public awareness about the heinous activities of the ritualists, introduction of strong legislation against ritual killings, incorporation of mechanism against ritual killings into the education curriculum, disabusing the minds of the populace about the efficacies of ritual sacrifice, curtailing youth unemployment, and keeping the police and other security personnel up-to-task on the general insecurity in the country, efficient policing system that would ensure effective intelligence gathering and provision of modern policing gadgets, regulating indiscriminate employment adverts, and strict adherence to modern town planning and infrastructural development.

References

- Adelabu, Kunle. 2017. "Badoo: Olu-Odo, Odugbose Residents Desert Homes, Appeal for Govt Intervention" *The Impact Newspaper*, Ikorodu, Lagos, January 2017, p. 21.
- Akinferon, Dapo. 2017. "Inside Badoo Cult" *Vanguard Newspaper*, 9 July 2017 Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/07/inside-badoo-cult-by-gani-adams-opc-leader/>
- Akinyele, R. T. 2001. "Ethnic Militancy and National Stability in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Oodua People's Congress" *African Affairs*, 100:623-640.
- Akojede, Olanrewaju. "Grindstone Murderers put Ikorodu on edge" *Vanguard Newspaper*, 7 July 2017 Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/07/grindstone-murderers-put-ikorodu-edge/>
- Asiwaju, A. I. 1997. "The Evolution of Nigeria Culture." In *Nigerian Peoples and Culture*, edited by Akinjide Osuntokun and Ayodeji Olukoju, 22-42, Lagos: Department of History and Strategic Studies, University of Lagos.
- Atoyebi, Olufemi. 2014. "Ibadan horror: Soka forest yet to be cleared" *The Punch Newspaper*, 3 March 2014 Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20150531084317/http://www.punchng.com/metro-plus/ibadan-horror-soka-forest-yet-to-be-cleared/>
- bbc.com. 2015. "Tanzania Albino Murders: More than 200 Witchdoctors Arrested" 12 March 2015 Retrieved from www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31849531.
- Boadu, Jeffery. 2019. "Transformation of Slave Recruitment in Africa from the Mid-16th Century and Major Implications on Cultural Development" Retrieved from www.independent.academia.edu/Jeffery-Boadu.
- Boge, F. I. 2014. "An Administrative History of Ikorodu." *Lagos Historical Review* 14:135-145.
- Dickson, Charles. 2012. "Clifford Orji" Retrieved from saharareporters.com/2012/09/09/dont-you-know-clifford-orji-mad-man-prince-charles-dickson.

- encyclopaedia.com. 2020. "Ritual Killings" In *World of Forensic Science*, 16 April 2020 Retrieved from <https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/ritual-killings>.
- ezeqa.com. 2009. "Two Killed, Dozens Wounded at Ritual Killing at Kenyan-Ethiopia Border" 18 June 2009 Retrieved from <https://www.ezeqa.com/News/NewsDetails?Page=news&NewsID=1565>
- Gibbon, E. J. 1937, "Intelligence Report on the Ikorodu, Ijede, and Addo Areas of the colony" *National Archive Ibadan* (NAI), CSO 29664/S.1 (Appendix III, p. 19), November 1937.
- News Agency of Nigeria, (NANS). 2018. "Badoo killings sent shock waves across Lagos State" *Vanguard Newspaper*, 2 January 2018 Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/01/badoo-killings-sent-shock-waves-across-lagos-state-2017/>
- newtelegraphonline.com. 2015. "Forest of horror that throws Ibadan into confusion" *New Telegraph Newspaper*, 4 July 2015 Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20150704194736/http://newtelegraphonline.com/forest-horror-throws-ibadan-confusion/>
- Ngugi, Fredrick. 2017. "Who Will End Horrifying Baby-Killing Rituals in Africa" 28 November 2017 Retrieved from <https://facetofafrica.com/article/will-end-killing-rituals-africa>.
- Nyesen, Nsika. 2018 "Badoo: Police uncover oath taking shrine in Ogun" *Daily Post*, 2 January 2018 Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2018/01/02/badoo-police-uncover-oath-taking-shrine-ogun/>
- Oderemi, Kunle. 1990. "Taxi Driver Ojo Bello Killed for Ritual" *Oriwu Sun Newspaper*, Ikorodu, Lagos, October 1990.
- Olowosago, Monzor. 1992. "Ewu Elepe Village, A Predominantly Community of Hunters and Famers" in *Oriwu Sun Newspaper*, Ikorodu, Lagos, October 1992.
- . 1991. "Refuse to Pay Your Vigilante Levy and go to Jail" *Oriwu Sun Newspaper*, Ikorodu, Lagos, January 1991.
- Olukoju, Ayodeji. 1994. "Population Pressure, Housing and Sanitation in Metropolitan Lagos: c. 1900-1939." In *Urban Transition in Africa: Aspects of Urbanisation and Change in Lagos*, edited by Kunle Lawal, 34-38, Ikeja, Lagos: Pumark Nigeria Limited.

- Omoarelojie, Ernest. 2005. "Rage of Ritualists - Corpses without genitals, eyes and other organs litter the streets as ritualists run rampant" *Humanists International*, 12 November 2010, Retrieved from <https://humanists.international/2010/11/ritual-killing-and-human-sacrifice-africa/>
- Pereira, Bimpe. 2019. "The Trade in Body Parts of People with Albinism is driven by Myth" Retrieved from <https://greatnessinalbinism.blogspot.com/2019/05/the-trade-in-body-parts-of-people-with.html>
- Rourke, J. T. 2005. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in World Politics*. Iowa: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin.
- Smith, Robert. 1978. *The Lagos Consulate, 1851-1861*. London: The Macmillan Press Limited
- Usman, Evelyn and Sessou, Ebun. 2014. "Horror: Ritual killings everywhere in spite of civilisation" *Vanguard Newspaper*, 12 July 2014, Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/07/horror-ritual-killings-everywhere-inspite-civilization/>