UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY

TOPIC:
THE INCIDENCE OF RITUAL KILLINGS AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA

ATERM PAPER
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THE INCIDENCE OF RITUAL KILINGS AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God, my siblings and parents and to all knowledge seekers that will come across this work.
PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This term paper topic “The Incidence of Ritual Killings and Security in Nigeria” is meant for every Nigerian. It was painstaking written after series of research to ensure that quality information is provided.

This work is presented in four chapters. Chapter one deals with the definition of terms and origin of ritual killing. The second chapter summarizes the causes and effects of ritual killings. Chapter three discusses security in Nigeria and its relationship with ritual killings and chapter four relays the possible way forward.

I am greatly indebted to a number of persons whose contributions facilitated the production of this work. My special thanks goes to my supervisor, Dr. A. O. Uzuegbunam (Mrs.) who through her assistance and supervision, I was able to commence this work.

I remain specially indebted to Engr. Emeka Ugonabo at whose fact I gained so much during this work. My sincere gratitude goes to my parents for the mental, financial and emotional assistance they showered on me, I pray God to preserve and bless them.

Above all, I owe everything to Almighty God whose ever present guidance and protection made this work a success.

Ugonabo Uchechukwu J.
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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The incidence of Ritual Killings and Security in Nigeria is an interesting topic. It was written to enlighten Nigerians on the alarming rate of ritual killings in our society.

The main objective of this study is to unravel, review and sort solution to the sordid act of ritual killing in our society. At the end of the work, the reader should be aware of the origin of ritual killings, the causes and effects of ritual killings and the security in Nigeria and its relationship with ritual killings in Nigeria.

If at the end of this work, the reader is aware and properly educated on the incidence of ritual killings and security in Nigeria and the way forward then the objective of this study is achieved.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Some technical terms used in this work such as ritual killings and security are defined thus:

MEANING OF RITUAL KILLINGS:

Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary described 'ritual' as a series of action that are always carried out in the same way, especially as part of a religious ceremony.

Therefore, ritual killings is the slaughtering of human beings or cutting off of some parts of the body for ritual purposes. According to Bremmer, human sacrifice
which is synonymous to ritual killing is the act of killing a human being for the purposes of making an offering to a deity or other normally supernatural power. The practice has varied between different cultures, with some like the Aztecs being notorious for their ritual killings, while others have looked down on the practice as primitive. Victims are typically ritually killed in a manner that is supposed to please or appease gods or spirits. Victims range from prisoners to infants to vestal virgins, who suffer such fates as burning, beheading, disembowelment, and being buried alive.

MEANING OF SECURITY

According to Microsoft Encarta®, Security implies being safe from harm, a term that has different dimensions in psychology, public safety, defense and military matters and information access. Security as would be used in this work would be strictly used in the context of the Nigerian Security Forces.
CHAPTER ONE

ORIGIN OF RITUAL KILLINGS

The origin of ritual killings cannot be exactly stated because it existed a way back in time. However, in different contexts, ritual killings has existed in different places. It existed in ancient Egypt, among the Aztecs, Celts, North and South America, India and even in Nigeria. This work however views the incidence of ritual killings as well as the origin as regards to Nigeria.

In Nigeria, ritual killings which was seen as human sacrifice was common in most West African States before and up to the nineteenth century. The annual customs of Dahomey was the most notorious example. Sacrifices were particularly common after of a king or Queen and there are many recorded cases of hundreds or even thousands of slaves being sacrificed at such events. Sacrifices were particularly common in Dahomey, in the Benin Empire in the small independent states in what is now Southern Nigeria. In the Northern parts of Nigeria, human sacrifice had become rare early as Islam became more established in these areas such as the Hausa States.

The last major centre of human sacrifice was the Benin Empire in Nigeria. The Benin Empire agreed with the British to prohibit human sacrifice in the 1890s. However, for five years, the rulers continued human sacrifice on a large scale. After an incident in which British observers were killed in order to prevent them witnessing human sacrifice. After a brief campaign by the British authorities, the Benin Empire was conquered and human sacrifice suppressed.
CHAPTER TWO
CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF RITUAL KILLINGS

2.1 CAUSES OF RITUAL KILLINGS

There are lots of factors that encourage the atrocious crime of ritual killings. Some of them include:

2.1.1 Greed:

Man's resources are scarce but his wants are unlimited that is why in economics, man applies alternative uses, where the most pressing choice is chosen first. Unfortunately, some people have failed to understand this and they desire to have everything they want. These extreme desires lead to greed. In a bid to satisfy their avaricious wants, they fall prey to the crime of ritual killing believing they will get satisfied with unending wealth.

2.1.2 Unemployment and Poverty:

Ritual killings may be caused by frustration due to unfulfilled dreams and disappointments. In a country, like Nigeria, with millions of its graduates roaming about due to unemployment, when individuals lack finance and yet the cost of living is so high, they take to crimes which include ritual killing.

Poverty is yet another major factor if not the most important factor why ritual killings still prevail. Poverty can be of physical or spiritual origin. That of spiritual is worst because an individual suffering from it has lost all his conscience and can stoop so low to indulge in any form of idolatry. The poor economic situation in Nigeria has led to unemployment and high rates of drop-out. These circumstances have created a
large pool of inactive and unengaged youth who are much more vulnerable to indulge in the crime of ritual killing. A recent investigation conducted by the United Nations concluded that 48.5 percent of the Nigerian population are poor that is over 55 million Nigerians of which 45 percent live in absolute poverty. The wide disparities in life style between the advantaged and disadvantaged segments of society for their fuels the incident of ritual killings in Nigeria.

2.1.3 Cultism and Peer Pressure:

According to Microsoft® Encarta, the word cult refers to religious practices that emphasize ritual devotion to a god or gods or the idolization of a person or object. Cultism was originated for the benefit of man, but man’s life has been eaten deep by evil that if one is not careful, there must be evil in every aspect of his life. The youth indulge in cult activities for some reasons which include protection, provision of financial assistance and merely to have the essence of those who ‘belong’. Most cultists lead an extravagant life and they indulge in different crimes which include ritual killing to re-establish their purse. They go any length to kill innocent citizens and sacrifice them to their gods in exchange for protection, power and prosperity.

Many people can easily be influenced by their friends through brainwashing. A person whose friends are very wealthy is usually not satisfied with his wages. He might be looked down on by his ‘friends’ who drive flashy cars and are very comfortable. In most cases, where the friend indulged in ritual killing before he got rich, the poor friend is normally introduced to this sordid act of ritual killing.
2.1.4 Superstitious Beliefs:

Nigeria, being a country in the Dark Continent cannot be excluded in their belief in magical powers, witchcraft and superstition. Nigeria being a deeply religious society and most Nigerians believe in supernatural forces, ritual making, therefore, becomes the traditional religious practice and observance which is the only way the forces and entities can be effective. They believe strongly in gods and appease them in different ways by making sacrifices with human body or parts for different purposes.

According to Igwe, ritualists through ritual killings, they seek numerous supernatural favours and to ward off misfortunes. Most Nigerians believe in the existence of ghosts, juju, charm and witchcraft. They believe that magical portions prepared with human body parts can be very effective in improving one’s political fortune, protection against failure, sickness, and accident and spiritual attack. Igwe argued that lack of basis in science, reasoning and ‘common sense’, Nigerians are driven by ignorance to perform ritual killings.

2.2 EFFECTS OF RITUAL KILLINGS

The effects of ritual killings are bountiful ranging from loss of labour force, social and psychological effects which are the trauma felt by the victim of ritual killings and the ritualists. Some of the effects of ritual killings are:

2.2.1 Increase in Mortality Rate:

According to Mack, six thousand people died between 1992 and 1996 in Nigeria as a result of ritual killing. Losing such a large number of lives is an effect of ritual killing in Nigeria. Though, ritual killing does constitute the major cause of
death in Nigeria, yet it constitutes a very significant figure of mortality rate. Mortality rate being the number of deaths per thousand is increased as a consequence of ritual killing. Most deaths are attributed to a particular form of ritual killing. In villages, the wicked ones use magical powers to eliminate the successful individuals. This has resulted to an increase in the number of orphans and widows in the society.

2.2.2 High Rate of Kidnapping:

Kidnapping, according to the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, is a noun of the verb kidnap which means, to take somebody away by force and illegally, especially in order to obtain money in return for releasing them*. Some individuals have been missing for a very long time and their people have tried their best to find them without success. Such individuals are suspected to be victims of ritual killers and such incidence increases with the proliferation of ritual killings in Nigeria.

2.2.3 Insecurity and Lack of Trust:

The incidence of ritual killings in Nigeria has brought about a feeling of insecurity and lack of trust among individuals. There is a feeling of insecurity which lingers around an environment where incessant ritual killings occur. The ritualists always go scott free without being apprehending by the security agents. This puts the citizens at a constant feeling of anxiety and insecurity.

Lack of trust among individuals even among close relatives is heightened by the incidence of ritual killings. Relatives fear each other because of lack of trust which is as a result of ritual killing. In such a case, the children are restricted from going to some areas which is viewed as a den for ritualists. Using the Okija Shrine
incidence as a case study, individuals and students living around the area where at constant panic and where restricted movement into some places or at different time.

2.2.4 Illustrated Stories on Ritual Killings:

The probability of picking any national dailies especially the Saturday Sun editions of the Sun Newspaper with at least a story on the incidence of ritual killing in Nigeria is very high. Therefore, there are lots of stories on ritual killings which illustrate the proliferation of ritual killings in the Nigerian society.

In fact, the Guardian has on several occasions published stories alleging that incidences of disappearances and extrajudicial murders, including ritual killings, are on the increase.

Between October 1999 and mid January 2000, in Lagos State, approximately 15 people disappeared 'under mysterious circumstances'. In one instance, the Newspaper suggests that "90 percent of victims are female with their sexual organs and breasts being particularly targeted".

In the summer of 1999, the beheading of a young boy in Ondo State, apparently for ritual purposes, led to the arrest of between thirty and fifty men, prompting complaints that the Police were using the investigation as an attempt to arrest innocent individuals and extort money from them.

Another case of ritual killing was the case in June, police discovered six human skulls and several small armaments at the home of an alleged native doctor, leading to the supposition that the home might have been used as a sales outlet for human skulls. Police posited that the skulls might have been used in rituals by men of the underworld to evade the law.

CHAPTER THREE
SECURITY IN NIGERIA AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH RITUAL KILLINGS

There is an obvious relationship between security and the incidence of ritual killing. The high level of ritual killings in Nigeria, is directly as a result of low level of security. According to Kenneth, Nigerian Security Forces contribute substantially to levels of violence. The more they intervene, the bloodier the fighting. As a matter of fact, the security forces and the police in particular are also responsible for many killings on a daily basis.

3.1 REDEFINING NIGERIA’S NATIONAL SECURITY

The purpose of National Security is to safeguard National values. The fundamental value of any nation is survival, self preservation and self perpetuation. In this regard, the national security goal has always been to expel external aggression and contain internal upheavals. While the rest of the world has improved in their security, Nigeria continues to stick to a timing mode of national security.

National security once meant military power, but now, it encompasses international economies. Global development has suggested the need for another broad and analogous definition of national security which includes resources, environmental and demographic issues.

There is a false safety in Nigeria when it comes to ritual killings. There is no official policies to thwart the offenders of such crime. The poor security outfit in our society is as a result of neglect of the national security and intelligence agencies by
the government. The successes and failures are shrouded in secrecy. Even so, it is assumed that there has been more failures than successes because most criminals and ritualists escape without being caught. The sources of negative relationships between the police and the public are not limited to police corruption and brutality. A contribution of Etanibiti O. Alemika, Associate Professor of Criminology at the University of Jos is as follows, the Nigerian Police are generally ineffective and inefficient in the areas of crime prevention, crowd and riot management, detection and investigation of crime and criminals, recovery of lost property and response to distress call. It is the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the police in these areas that amplify public resentment of police misconduct.

3.2 THE CHALLENGES OF RITUAL KILLINGS TO NATIONAL SECURITY

A critical and objective assessment of police ineffectiveness and inefficiency must be as a result of low level of infrastructural development especially telecommunication and transportation, in society. Therefore, the challenges posed by ritual killings to national security could be as a result of the poor quantity and quality of human resources available to the police. Some of the reasons include:

3.2.1 Inadequate Training and Motivation of the National Security Agents:

The security agents are ill motivated and poorly trained to checkmate crime. Some of the security agents, actually do not know their function because of inadequate training. They brutalize citizens, take bribe and demand for token at road blocks instead of checking vehicles. Some also are accomplice to ritual killing. Obi
added that, the physical and psychological training which they receive is poor and as a result, most of the investigations carried out are fruitless.

3.2.2 Negligence and Poor Funding of National Security Agents:

The Nigerian Security and intelligence agencies are seldom discussed in the political arena. Even though crime prevention needs a lot of money and commitment, the government, poorly fund it. all important items of resources required by the police are inadequate in terms of quality. Policemen are poorly accommodated, remunerated and are also denied dignity. Consequently, they are unable to accord others dignity and tackle the perpetrators of ritual killings. The police are poorly equipped with vehicles, forensic laboratory, investigation technologies etc. therefore, they are unable to tackle squarely, the incidence of ritual killings in the nation.

3.2.3 Sacred Cow Syndrome Phenomenon:

This is the phenomenon that believes that some people are above the law. It views that some individuals are to be exempted from any criticism or interference. The police public relations committees established throughout the country are often staffed by the influential members of the society who use them to compromise justice, intimidate the security agents and in the process perverts the course of justice. Some politicians are the masters of ritual killing. They kill in order to retain their high positions or attain higher offices. These group of politicians are mostly among the members of the influential people in the society. This sordid act of ritual killing can be eradicated if the influential politicians wash their hands off it. this is among the major challenges facing the security agents in the fight against ritual killing.
3.2.4 Non Enforcement of Law:

Section 3.9 of Nigeria Criminal Code provides punishment for the offence of murder which ritual killing is. These laws are not enforced by the Law Enforcement Agencies because our national security is handicapped. The enforcement of these laws is the secondary guide for human conduct and failing will lead to quasi-anarchy. The increase in bribery and corruption is a terrible evil in our society which is destroying our national security, when the security agents apprehends a criminal especially the influential ones, they bribe their way out and the law is not enforced. The security agents rather work in tandem with the criminals.

3.2.5 Poor Public Relations between the Citizens and the Security Agents

The citizens have a role to play in security and policing, by giving useful information, but this is lacking in the country. The security agents are harsh to the citizens. They make themselves unsociable, therefore, there is little or no police community relation. This is why a person who has witnessed a crime will be scared to report to the police for fear of being implicated.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE WAY FORWARD

The fight against the incidence of ritual killings and security in Nigeria should be a joint actions of the government, Law Enforcement Agencies and the citizens.

4.1 EFFORTS TO BE MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT

In July 2003, the Trafficking in Persons and Administration Act, was passed in Nigeria, a legislative framework that prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons and protects children and adults against criminal networks. As a result of the law, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters, NAPTIP was established to fight human trafficking through investigation of cases, prosecution of criminals, rescue and rehabilitation of victims.

NAPTIP working closely with Police, Immigration and Civil Society Organisations has achieved a lot of credible results. If the government should make policies that would see to the eradication of ritual killing and promulgate laws that would govern and bind National Security Agencies to carry out their duties like patriots, Nigeria will become a ritual killing free zone. The government should also look into the funding of the National Security Agencies. Their standard should be upgraded. They should also be monitored properly to prevent them from deviation.
4.2 CAMPAIGN AGAINST RITUAL KILLINGS

Movements be formed NGO's in Nigeria. Such movement should hold seminars, lectures and conferences in regions where ritual killing is prevalent. They should be enlightened and beware of the negative consequences of ritual killing. A good example of this happened in a town in Enugu-Ezike where the villagers came out en-masse and tore down all the shrines used for ritual killing when they had a crusade.

4.3 EFFORTS TO BE MADE BY THE CITIZENS

All these out cries of ritual killings are not committed by aliens, but by our fellow citizens. If we want a crime free zone in Nigeria, we must never allow our selfish desires lure us into murder. Moreso, religious practices or traditional practices that support ritual killing should be abolished.

The Nigerian youths should not depend on government solely for employment but should endeavour to be self employed. The citizens should always bear in mind the “Millennium Development Goal”, to reduce poverty by half by the year 2015. As poverty is a major cause of ritual killing in the nation, if the citizens bear that in mind and work towards that, definitely, the incidence of ritual killing would reduce drastically.
4.4 CONCLUSION

There is an urgent need for man to understand that no one is an island therefore, the death of any person affects the society in one way or the other. All the traditions that support using humans for ritual should be abolished. The issue of poverty and unemployment should be addressed if the incidence of ritual killing is to stop. Nigerians must stand up and fight this monstrous practice in her country. We must not allow ourselves to wallow in ignorance forever. All hands must be on deck to fight ritual killings as unity is the determining factor of the progress level of a place. Let us stop enjoying false wealth at the expense of our fellow citizen's life.
END NOTES


5. The Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey 1990.


8. L. Igwe p.15


