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Impact of Youth Violence on Security: An Analysis of Political Vigilantism, Kidnapping and Violent Protests in Ghana

Augustina Adzo Bansah^{1*}

¹ College of Liberal Arts, Shanghai University, Shanghai, China



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ABSTRACT

“When we talk about youth violence, I believe we're talking about kids who do not have opportunities, and as a result, they're engaging in some form of lawlessness because we, as a society, have failed them.” – Matt Gonzalez

Because one of the most necessities of any human community is peace, stability, and a secure environment, the topic of violence has received much attention in world politics. Leaders of countries spend huge budgets annually maintaining security in their countries and the world as a whole, but the fact remains that global violence is at a high record. With a majority of the world's population being young people, they are the largest group of people affected by violence, either as victims or perpetrators. Young people are at the heart of social change, technological advancements, and globalization, but their engagement in conflicts, violence, and wars presents a major threat to human life and property, obstructs business operations, and discourages both domestic and foreign investment. Several attempts have been made to understand the reasons why and how violence occurs to find solutions to reduce its occurrence. Ghana's population is primarily made up of young people aged 15 to 35 years. Even though the country is praised as a haven of peace located in a region characterized by large-scale violence, violence among young people engaging in political vigilantism, kidnapping, and violent protests tends to distract peace and could pose future security threats if not properly addressed. This is in light of the past and recent happenings in its neighbouring countries within the West African subregion. Thus, the research aims to qualitatively review the literature on youth and violence in analyzing the impact of youth violence on the security of the country. In proposing a conceptual framework to explain youth violence in Ghana, this research uses the relative deprivation and frustration-aggression theories. The findings of the study reveal that unfilled campaign promises by politicians, the widening poverty gap, and the high unemployment rates in the country make young people feel deprived and suitable prey to commit violent acts. Political vigilantes or party foot soldiers take the law into their own hands before, during, and after elections to

cause havoc to citizens and destroy public properties. They use guns and machetes to carry out their activities of assault, shooting, and destruction of property. The kidnapping of citizens and foreigners in the country, which has been on the rise, has also brought about deaths and fear and reduced foreign direct investments. Violent protests have caused the lives of innocent citizens and debt to the state. To protect national and human security and its international image and improve the socio-economic wellbeing of citizens, youth violence in Ghana needs significant attention from all stakeholders involved to minimize its occurrence.

Keywords

Youth violence, Ghana, Political vigilantism, Kidnapping, Protests

Introduction

The discussion on violence has attracted attention in world politics because peace, stability, and a secure environment are among the most basic prerequisites of any human community (Chris et al.,2012). Since the state of nature outside society, according to Thomas Hobbes, is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (Cyril, 2015), & maintaining social order and peace is paramount in socio-economic development (Reinhard, 2017; Douglass et al.,2000; David, 2012). The state does not exist with the primary aim of maintaining law and order but also to protect and defend national integrity (Cyril, 2015). It is in light of this that the "The State shall maintain and safeguard Ghana's independence, unity, and territorial integrity, and shall pursue the well-being of all her citizens," according to Chapter 6 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana” (Ghana’s Constitution with Amendments, 1996). Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan defined security as "the protection of property and lives against internal violence". This is a paradigm shift from the traditional view that threat to the state originates from external influence (Jedidiah et al., 2020). Internal threats to societies can be in the form of violent conflicts, protests, political instability and economic crises (Peterside, 2014). Globally, it is estimated that 1.37 million people lost their lives in 2011 as a result of varied forms of violence (World Health Organization, 2014a). This figure increased when the Institute for Economics and Peace estimated that 408 million youth (aged 15–29) lived in areas afflicted by armed conflict or organized violence in 2016. This means that over 23% of the worldwide youth population – roughly one in every four young people – is affected in some manner by violence or armed conflict (Graeme,2018). Some scholars have argued that people resort to the use of violence in settling disagreements or punishing wrongdoing when they do not have access to legal dispute resolution mechanisms (Richard et al., 2013). In recent years, as the United Nations General Assembly has called on member states to increase the budget allocated to violence prevention programs and support and empower young people to take up the cause of peace (Georgia,2018) many developing countries have initiated programs to curb violence as part of their mainstream policy and budgeting (Catherine et al., 2013). Africa has seen an increase in the involvement of young people in violent conflicts, and unless this is addressed, we will continue to see the next generation resort to violence as the only way of

solving problems (Obediah et al., 2019). Because young people are the backbone of any society, their constructive contributions are critical to the general growth of society. On the other hand, when they do not contribute meaningfully to society, violence and its resultant effects are likely to be felt inhibiting socio-economic growth and development (Catherine et al., 2013).

Ghana is one of the few African countries that has never experienced large-scale slaughter or civil conflict since obtaining independence in March 1957. The country has been so peaceful that even people from the crisis-plagued neighbouring countries regard it as a haven where they may pick up the pieces of their shattered life. This is why, in the conflict-torn West African subregion, the country is referred to as an oasis of peace and stability (Abdul, 2017). One area that has received praise is the country's track record of organizing seven successful elections in a row without large-scale violence (Mariam, 2021). Even though Ghana's discovery of oil in 2008 brought about the potential to change the socio-economic conditions of the country, the country's economic difficulties over the years coupled with the government's failure to provide a secured and safe environment have posed significant difficulties to citizens, especially youth, in all aspects of their lives (Franklin, 2010). Lack of adequate social amenities, high cost of living, and high unemployment rates have left many young Ghanaians with no option but to engage in activities that are hostile to the state. As a result, the increased rate at which youth in Ghana engage themselves either as victims or perpetrators of violence is alarming, although not of a disturbing magnitude (Kwesi & Mustapha, 2013). The country remains vulnerable to sporadic communal violence and interethnic disputes that endanger its governance and security structures (Ken & Boni, 2011). According to recent media reports, there has been an increase in attacks on police officers, civilians, journalists, lawyers, and chiefs, as well as kidnappings, lootings, and violent protests (European Union Annex, 2020). The electoral process in Ghana has also seen an increase in vigilante violence by young people after the country transitioned to democracy in 1992. These young people are being recruited and trained by politicians as campaign machines and vigilantes to win elections through violent means (Kwame, 2019 p.3). These mainly school dropouts or unemployed youth are exploited by the politicians due to their disappointments and frustrations of unmet expectations in exchange for money, political posts, or lucrative government tenders (Kwame, 2019 p.4). Ghana is thus exposed to the risk of large-scale political violence if such groups are not confronted and their activities stopped.

Materials and methods

Research Statement

In comparison to other African countries, Ghana is regarded as one of the continent's most peaceful and stable countries (Kwadwo, 2021), but its internal security is not immune to varied acts of violence, notable among them being ethnic tensions, chieftaincy disputes, students unrest, political vigilantism, cyber fraud, Landguardism, kidnapping and violent protests. The focus of this research is on youth violence because young people are easily affected by violence either as victims or perpetrators in the world and Ghana. Even though

the magnitude of violence in Ghana, especially among young people, is relatively low compared to its neighbouring countries, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Nigeria, the country's youthful population makes the phenomenon important. While this factor of the population continues to increase, any threat they pose to the country's security will have a long-term negative impact on the country's image, as well as that of Africa and the rest of the globe. In light of this, the purpose of this study is to investigate youth violence in Ghana and its impact on security. Using incidents of political vigilantism, kidnapping, and violent protests, the purpose of this study is to assess how these youth violence manifestations influence Ghana's security.

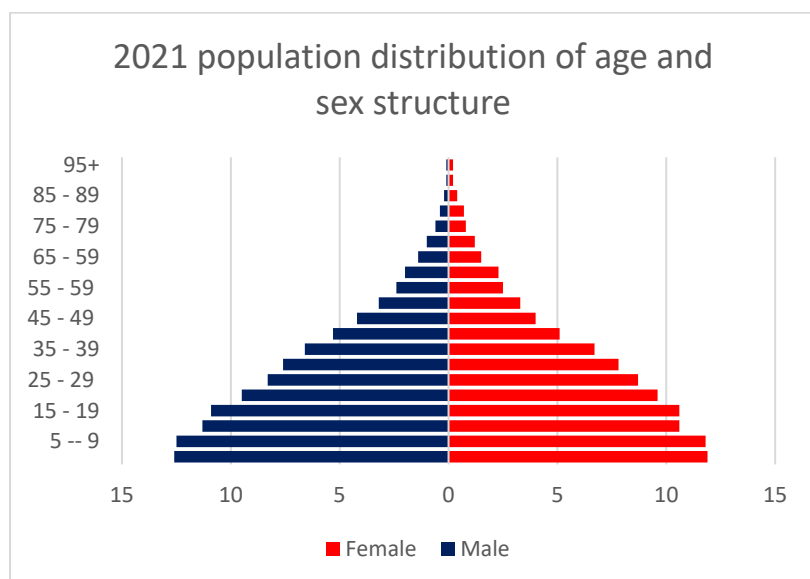
Literature Review

The importance of young people and the consequences of violence have resulted in a conduit of numerous studies on the subject from a variety of academic disciplines. The literature on young people, violence, and security is examined in this chapter. The first section explores the relevant conceptions of youth, violence, and security. This is followed by the theoretical frameworks that are used to explain the phenomenon. The last section reviews past research that were reviewed based on their contributions in definitions, theory, case studies, etc., by different scholars.

Defining Relevant Concepts

Youth: Young people are the primary target of violent acts around the world regardless of country, religion, social or educational background, and this has had a profound impact on their social, cultural and emotional lives. Their vulnerability is due to their constant need for identity, purpose, and a sense of living and belonging in society. Their daring nature also contributes to their constant involvement in violent activities (Georgia, 2018). The term youth used differently in different countries generally denotes the period from childhood into adulthood when an individual is in the preparation stage of contributing meaningfully to society. According to the United Nations General Assembly and World Bank, youth refers to the person(s) between the ages of 15-and 24 years. This age gap varies with the age bracket of a youth in Ghana who is persons between the ages of 15-and 35 years (Republic of Ghana, 2010) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). This term corresponds to the African Youth Charter's concept of youth, which is defined as people aged 15 to 35 (African Union, 2006). For this research, a youth would be defined as a young person between the ages of 15 and 35, as recognized by the country of study. This age group comprises young people at different stages of their lives, including school-going children, young adults still living under the guidance of parents, the unemployed, and those starting families (Graham et al., 2010). Ghana's population since independence has remained youthful, as a significant number of the population are young people. Ghana's population age structure is dominated by young people within the age bracket of 15-35 years, as seen in the increment from 34.6 per cent in 2000 to 38.2 per cent in 2021 out of the 30,832,019 people (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). This is reflected in the country's high youth unemployment rate, which is among the highest in the world (Martin, 2016).

Table 1



Source: Based on data from the 2021 Population and Housing Census

Violence: The issue of violence is prevalent in the literature due to man's curiosity in understanding the core of human nature (Joseph, 2014). "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or a group or community, that either result in or have a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation," according to the World Health Organization. A broader explanation of this definition could include self-directed, interpersonal and collective violence (World Health Organization, 2002). Since violence is heterogeneous, it affects and is perpetrated by people of all ages and genders with outcomes ranging from homicide, attempted murder, and severe injuries that cause harm to the body (Obediah et al., 2019). Violence can happen in a solitary instance or can occur repeatedly over some time (Kathryn, 2012; Patrick, 2013). Youth violence in this study would therefore be termed the phenomenon whereby young people within the age bracket of 15-35 years become involved in episodes in which physical force is threatened or used in the context of interpersonal, intercommunal, or other conflicts, whether as victims or perpetrators (Patrick, 2012 p.5). In expanding the discussions on the biological correlation of violence, a review on violence: Reflections on a national epidemic by James Gilligan showed that age (youth) and gender (male) are the only two biological characteristics that are potential drivers of violence, and this is attributed to the increase in testosterone as children begin to mature (Jennifer & Bryn, 2012).

Security: Human life revolves around the value of the security. Being safe means being free of danger or fear. Without security, as Thomas Hobbes reminds us, "there is no place for work... no arts, no letters, no society; and, worst of all, perpetual terror, and the threat of violent death; and man's life, which is lonely, impoverished,

nasty, brutish, and brief" (Jennifer, 2011). Security is a nebulous social science notion that encompasses both human and national perspectives (Cyril, 2015). It is used in contrast to danger, risk, disorder, and terror when there is the presence of safety, certainty, reliability, trust, and confidence; thus, "in an objective meaning, security refers to the absence of threats to acquired values; in a subjective sense, it refers to the lack of dread of such values being attacked" (Hans, 2008). The classic definition of security is the absence of risk or threat to the state system and citizens' daily life within a country's borders, whether from political or military disturbances (Czeslaw, 2008). Having evolved, today's security requirements have not only broadened to include the protection of communities and individuals against internal sabotage but could mean a shared responsibility across different sectors of society (Cyril, 2015). Security has become multifaceted and varied in structural practice partly due to the change in the international order to include physical and socio-economic needs such as protection from hunger, diseases, poverty, unemployment and natural disasters (Sissel, 2019; Paschal, 2009; Cyril, 2015). The growing perception of global environmental change as a "threat" to humanity's survival has resulted in a broader, deeper, more sectionalized security concept that increasingly reflects existing cultural and religious diversity, both in political and scientific discourses (Hans, 2008). Wherever and whenever men and women do not threaten or hurt one another, security is attained (Jennifer, 2011 p.15). The three main paradigms of security in international relations are national, international and human security. The state is given moral primacy in the first two theories as an essential precondition for humans to flourish, while in the third approach, human security prioritizes human beings and the human community over the interest of the state or the international society to which they belong. Realists are proponents of national security. These believe that we live in a world where nations are both the primary source of security and security threats (Jennifer, 2011 p.19). Human security entails more than "the absence of violent warfare but also encompasses free access to basic needs and services, absence of violent crime, loss of livelihood or authoritarian rule." (Hans, 2008). Proponents of human security are also known as "solidarity" or "revolutionaries" (Jennifer, 2011 p.21). The concept of human security is founded on the idea that the individual's security is linked to the state's security, and the security of the society of states are all fundamentally intertwined — you cannot have one without the other. If one human in the world is in danger, then no one else can be safe. Tolerance of personal insecurity in one country risks spreading insecurity to other countries and international society as a whole (Jennifer, 2011 p.22). Food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, economic security, and political security are the seven pillars of human security acknowledged by the United Nations in 1994. Security brings about a functioning society that is reasonably safe from would-be attackers. No one can ever be entirely safe in society, but that is why governments formulate security policies that are carried out by security agencies to maintain security (Jennifer, 2011 p.16). This study focuses on how violence among young people impacts the national and human security of Ghana.

Relative Deprivation, Frustration Aggression Theories and Youth Violence in Ghana

By using relative deprivation and frustration theory, the research argues that the phenomenon of youth violence thrives in Ghana due to young people's dissatisfaction with the status quo (Tope, 2020). Unfilled campaign promises, a widening poverty gap, and high unemployment rates in the country make young people feel deprived and suitable prey to commit violent acts. Approximately 3.57 million Ghanaians live in extreme poverty in 2021, the majority of whom reside in rural areas. A total of 3.3 million Ghanaians who live in these rural areas live on less than \$2 per day, while 278,000 people in urban areas are considered to be extremely poor (Doris, 2021). Ghana's high unemployment rate, which is among the highest in the world, encourages young people to engage in violent activities (Kwame, 2020 p.11). A World Bank report on unemployment in Ghana revealed that 48% of 14–24-year-olds do not have jobs in the country. The general rate of unemployment in Ghana has continued to increase over the years. Successive governments over the years have failed to create jobs for the country's youthful population and provide a conducive economic environment for businesses to thrive in the country (Kwame, 2020 p.12). Relative deprivation theory depicts the grievances variable as a variable that might develop at several stages leading to violence, especially when the grievances are strong enough. For instance, frustrated young people in Ghana started the #FixGhana nationwide protest in May 2021 due to high fuel prices, unemployment and corruption. Often in Ghana, after elections are held, the interests of members of vigilante groups who provide valuable help to politicians are not met. This makes them use force or violence to express their anxiety and frustration, as shown in 2019 research conducted on members of vigilante groups in Kumasi and Tamale (Justice & Lidewyde, 2020). Party leaders have been accused of neglecting the concerns of their young organizations, often known as foot soldiers, after seizing the castle (George, 2012). Media reports on post-2016 violence by party vigilante groups took the form of seizure of public properties such as toll booths, toilet facilities, hospitals, schools, courts to set criminals free, assault on police officers, government workers, etc. They were agitated because their party after winning the elections failed on their promises of providing them with jobs (Citi Fm, 2016). Aside from unemployment being a major cause of political vigilantism, some scholars have also argued that idle young people tend to engage in nefarious activities. A cash-strapped jobless individual may assume that by kidnapping someone wealthy, he will be able to become wealthy himself (Noble et al., 2020 p. 486). Unemployed youth who were recruited by political party leaders to cause mayhem, steal voting boxes, and even kidnap viable political members from competing parties have now turned their seasonal work into a full-time enterprise (Noble et al., 2020 p. 487).

Past research on the topic by different scholars was reviewed based on their contributions in definitions, theory and case studies.

Different research conducted on youth violence has come with varied yet similar conclusions. Bushman et al posit that issues such as parental neglect, child abuse, antisocial behaviour and exclusion, poor parental

supervision, family violence and substance abuse can trigger young people to engage in violence (Brad et al., 2013). In her paper 'Youth Violence in South Africa,' Janine Natalya Clark claims that exposure to violence in schools, homes, and communities is the primary cause of violence among young people in South Africa (Janine, 2012). Another study that looked at the frequency of physical fighting among boys and girls in 27 countries rated Ghana third in Sub-Saharan Africa, behind Djibouti and Egypt, with 53.5 per cent of teenagers claiming a history of physical fighting (Monica et al., 2013). Glorifying Ghana's allegedly calm atmosphere in a largely restless and unpredictable West African subregion may have an ironic effect in the future if youth violence is not adequately addressed (Martin, 2016 p. 55). In a study conducted by Martin, it was found that the activities of youth groups in Ghana, especially in urban areas such as sociopolitical and religious-induced youth violence, Landguardism and "stowaway", threaten peace in the country and challenge the credibility of law enforcement agencies (Martin, 2016 p. 51). Young people living in violent prone areas such as Asawasi and Oforikrom who engage in violent behaviour are often those who have been strained by resources at the household, community, or national level, according to a study by Jonas et al (Jonas et al., 2017). They further added that burdened with family responsibilities, young people in Kumasi are influenced by peer pressure, poverty, street survival, and unemployment resort to violence and take out their frustrations on society. A similar sentiment was noted by Kwaku Oppong after his study on street children and adolescents in Ghana that the living condition of young people compels them to either engage or become victims of violent behaviour (Kwaku, 2016). This demonstrates that young people who are unskilled and illiterate are not just a financial burden but also a public health and national security risk, as they are more prone to become radicalized (Jonas et al., 2017). Jennifer's study found that violence against women is an acceptable norm in Ghana. Given the socio-cultural make-up of the country, such issues may be heightened (Jennifer, 2012). More than 30% of senior high school students who were interviewed as part of a risk and protective factor study of physical and sexual violence indicated that they had been physically attacked more than once during the past year (Sally et al., 2015). Political vigilantism has also received significant attention in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ishmael Mugari contends that vigilantism undermines rule of law in Zimbabwe, as many politicians sort the help of mostly unemployed young people to organize vigilante groups to compel citizens to vote in their favour during elections (Martin et al., 2015). The situation is no different in Ghana, where political vigilantism has become a defining feature of the country's Fourth Republic, tarnishing its democratic credentials. Several well-intentioned Ghanaians have expressed their displeasure with the country's rise in political vigilantism, particularly during and after elections (Kwame, 2020). This is in line with the views of George M. Bob-Milliar, who identified political vigilantism by party youth organizations as one of the causes of low-intensity electoral violence in Ghana (George, 2014). When asked if they approved of political vigilante groups' activities such as the takeover and destruction of state properties such as offices, toll booths, public toilets, and car parks, as well as attacks on government appointees with whom they disagree and locking up government offices because their expectations of getting employment with them were dashed during an

Afrobarometer survey in 2017, more than 80% of Ghanaians said yes (Afrobarometer, 2017). Nonetheless, the literature on political vigilantism has not been limited to violence. Some vigilante groups are seen to be providing services in the areas of political mobilization and participation that are beneficial to citizens and the democratic process as a whole (Owusu, 2020 p. 322). Owusu Kyei's past research supported the claim that these vigilante groups do not create violence but rather present the voices of citizens who have been excluded or marginalized in the political arena. He further goes on to say that these youth groups try to increase their access to resources through the state's social contract with citizens (Owusu, 2020 p. 324). In his study on Political Party Youth Wings and Political Violence in Ghana, Sebastian Angzoorokuu Paalo verified that these youth groups play a significant role in political mobilization and participation before, during and after elections in the country (Sebastian, 2017). Some scholars believe that their presence in elections brings about fairness and transparency as they act as watchdogs (Mariam, 2021).

Impact of Political vigilantism on National and Human Security

In the context of Africa, we cannot overlook the link between vigilantism and state failure (Kwame, 2020). The general term vigilantism is multifaceted depending on the field of its occurrence. It is defined as an organized effort by a group of citizens to enforce standards, frequently via the use of force and violence, in the lack of effective law enforcement authorities in this study (Kazuya, 2021). According to some experts, when the state fails to meet the general expectations of the people, vigilante groups made up of private citizens or state actors use force and violence to show their dissatisfaction with the government's ineffectiveness (Kwame, 2020 p. 457). Political vigilantism is thus described as the use of force or violence by youth organizations linked with political parties in Ghana's political system, particularly before, during, and after elections. The growing number of political vigilante organizations with military elements poses a significant threat to democracy and national security (Mawusi & Mildred, 2020). Political Vigilant groups have existed in Ghana since the struggle for independence as they were used by past leaders to form and strengthen political parties. They were termed "Veranda Boys" and "Action Troopers" and acted as youth groups in their respective parties (Justice & Lidewyde, 2020). With their nationwide operations, Ghana's two largest political parties, the New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Party, are recorded as the principal perpetrators of political vigilantism in the country. As of 2019, more than 20 vigilante groups linked to these two political parties were found to be actively operational in Ghana (Mariam, 2021). They are termed in the various regions as the "Azorka Boys", "Aluta Boys", "Bawumia Fan Club", "Samira Fan Club", "the Invincible Force", and "the Delta Force", among others (Justice & Lidewyde, 2020). These political vigilantes are also known as foot soldiers. Both terms would be used interchangeably to describe the phenomenon. The term foot soldiers appeared in the public domain in 1996 after some supporters of the New Patriotic Party described themselves as gaining popularity in the political space (George, 2012). Consequently, as George M. Bob-Milliar pointed out, young people in Ghana are constantly available to be recruited as foot soldiers to work for political elites'

political interests (George, 2014 p. 132). Party foot soldiers want to be paid for their involvement in securing state power for political elites through activism, and they become enraged when these unmet electoral promises are ignored or denied (George, 2014 p. 677). The negative impact of political vigilantism on Ghana's security cannot be overemphasized. Over the years, political vigilantes who work for political parties have been reported to cause threats to stability and violent riots in the country, especially before, during and after elections (Mariam, 2021 p. 21). They have threatened, harassed, and assaulted opponents with the support of party representatives. They have also assaulted election officials and vandalized voter registration centres (Mariam, 2021 p. 23). The Ghana Peace Council has called on all stakeholders to confront political vigilantism, which is a threat to the country's safety and security, on several occasions (Ghana Peace Council, 2021). For example, vigilante groups in the Talensi constituency clashed among members in 2015, which led to sporadic shootings (Mariam, 2021 p.24). In 2017, vigilante groups belonging to the NPP stormed into a government office to attack the manager because they did not agree with his appointment (Mariam, 2021 p.25). In 2019, a by-election in one of the constituencies left at least six people critically injured from gunshots that were fired at them after clashes between vigilante groups affiliated with the two major political parties. Investigations after the incident brought to light the country's security challenges with the activities of party foot soldiers. These violent activities directly impact human security because no society or state can thrive in a violent or unstable state. Violent groups in a state can metamorphose into militant, extremist and terrorist groups. The activities of vigilante groups also lead to the destruction of public properties and resources and sometimes the loss of lives. When these foot soldiers perceive that vote is not going in favour of their party, they seize ballot boxes and burn and loot public property, which is supposed to be a public good (Kwesi & Kwaku, 2016). The activities of these foot soldiers cause fear and panic among people. During elections, well-built men who are also known as 'macho men' are hired and dispatched to the various polling stations to cause panic and insecurity. They intimidate voters, opposition supporters and even polling staff with warning gunshots and their arms to disrupt the polling process in their party's favour (Mawusi & Mildred, 2020 p.17). A respondent interviewed in a study on political vigilantism in Ghana disclosed how macho men who came to his polling centre on voting day fired warning shots and prevented voters from casting their voters because they were afraid of being killed (Mawusi & Mildred, 2020 p.18).

Impact of Kidnapping on National and Human Security

Another emerging security case to point out in terms of youth violence perpetrated in the country is the surge in abduction and kidnapping. Kidnapping is a worldwide issue that affects various countries. As a result, governments all over the world are working hard to minimize its occurrence (Noble et al., 2020 p. 484). Kidnapping occurs when a human being is forcefully abducted to extort money as ransom. Recently, kidnappings have become a preferred strategy, and indiscriminate targeting of civilians is a common feature. In 2019, between January and May, there were 13 reported kidnapping cases of women and girls in the urban

cities of Takoradi, Accra and Kumasi (Noble et al., 2020 p. 485). This figure includes the 504 kidnapping cases that were reported in the country between 2011 and 2019. This means that on average, 56 kidnapping cases are reported annually to the rightful authorities (Yahaya, 2019). As a result of these kidnapping occurrences, everyone is at risk of being a victim sooner or later, leading to widespread anxiety and fear (West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, 2019). The kidnapping of the Takoradi Girls, which made headlines with the hashtag #BringBackOurTaadiGirls, has brought the attention of the general public to this menace (Abdul, 2019). Between August and December 2018, four young girls between the ages of 18 and 21 were kidnapped by unknown individuals in Takoradi, Ghana's capital city (Abdul, 2019). In the initial stages, the kidnappers demanded a ransom to release the girls, but the parents of the girls were unable to meet the demand (Yahaya,2021). Despite assurances from the Ghana Police Service to bring back the girls, a raid from the home of a suspect retrieved body parts suspected to be the remains of the missing girls a year after they were kidnapped. Kidnappings in the country have not been limited to citizens but also foreign nationals. Before the disappearance of the 3 Takoradi girls, two Canadian charity volunteers, aged 19 and 20, were also kidnapped outside a hostel on the 4th of June 2019 in Ghana's second-largest city, Kumasi (VOA News, 2021). The previous case, which happened in April, saw an Indian man abducted, but he was later rescued by the police. Vladimir Antwi-Danso, a security analyst in Ghana, is of the view that the increase in kidnapping cases in the country is problematic for security and shows the deteriorating nature of the country's internal security (VOA News, 2021). The kidnapping of foreign citizens undoubtedly hampers the country's image as a tourist destination, thereby reducing accrued from the tourism industry and foreign direct investments. For instance, when the two Canadian charity volunteers were kidnapped in 2019, foreign diplomatic offices in Ghana issued travel advice and terror alerts to their nationals both inside and outside the country, increasing anxiety and panic (West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, 2019). Noble et al. all carried out related research that investigated the influence of kidnapping on the hotel business in Ghana. They found that kidnapping in the country decreased the revenue of the hotels, created mistrust among staff members and increased expenditures allotted to security. In the case of Ghanaian girls kidnapped and allegedly killed in Sekondi - Takoradi, the country lost potential future leaders who could have contributed meaningfully to society. The kidnapping of expatriates affects foreign direct investments and slows revenues, which ultimately reduces employment in the sector. The adverse effect on the economy is invariably negative (Noble et al., 2020 p. 484). Fear limits people's lives and actions in a society where kidnapping is a common occurrence. They will constantly be cautious since they never know who will be the next target (Noble et al., 2020 p. 487).

Impact of Violent protests on National and Human Security

However, another case in point in terms of youth violence is the recent violent protests taking place in many parts of the country. Violent protests, which led to the shooting of the protestors by the police, began as a result of the death of Ibrahim Mohammed, a well-known social media activist in the town and country.

Mohammed is alleged to have been beaten to death by unknown men while returning home on the dawn of the 28th of June 2021. The youth in the area were unsatisfied with the progress of investigations by the police and took to the streets to destroy personal and public properties. As the police and military attempted unsuccessfully to calm the protestors, a conflict erupted, resulting in the deaths of two protestors and the injury of four others, including a military officer (Kingsley, 2021). Two youth groups in Ntonso, a community in Kumasi on the 5th of July 2021, engaged in violent clashes attacking people in their homes and vandalizing properties, burning vehicles and shops. This resulted in severe injuries and the closure of schools and property worth millions of cedis being destroyed in the area. It took the deployment of the Ghana Police personnel who fired warning shots to disperse irate youth to bring the situation under control and restore calm (Hafiz, 2021). Residents reported that this wasn't the first-time youth in the area had vandalized their shops and attacked them in their homes (Ohemeng, 2021). The Western Togoland border strife is also another cause of security concern in Ghana (West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, 2019). Western Togoland, through plebiscites held on May 9, 1956, became a part of Ghana (formerly known as the Gold Coast) (David,2021). In September 2020, members of an armed youth group in the area invaded two police stations in the town, attacked officers who were on duty, freed cell inmates and held officers hostage (Ghana Web, 2020). This was the second time the western Togoland region had claimed independence after a failed attempt in 2017. Before the protests, approximately 500 young people were trained in militia style by the separatist group in secret locations as part of their goal to implement their separatist motives (Robert Lansing Institute for Global Threats and Democratic Studies, 2017). The political instability in neighbouring Togo, as well as the porousness of the Ghana-Togo Aflao border, could enhance the proliferation and smuggling of arms, drugs, and mercenaries (West Africa Network for Peacebuilding,2019). In May 2021, a dramatic movement that began as a social media campaign on popular social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook with the hashtag #FixTheCountry evolved into a national protest in Accra, Ghana's capital, in response to rising fuel costs (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) in the country (Cristina,2021). High unemployment rates, especially among young graduates, and the high cost of living for the average Ghanaian were some of the concerns of the protestors (Audrey,2021). Several similar protests took place in most sections of the country in the months after that to put pressure on the government. Even though fatal casualties were recorded, these protestors blocked major roads in the country and halted economic activities across several places (Ann-Shirley,2021). This shows the frustration of most young people in Ghana who have lost hope in the country and the leaders who promise 'positive' change before national and parliamentary elections (Edwin,2021). The destruction of public and private properties through protests means that citizens are deprived of the benefits they might have otherwise derived from these facilities. Society thus loses income that could have been used to improve the socio-economic lives of citizens. Violence robs people of their livelihoods, either directly by killing people and destroying property or indirectly by restricting their freedom of choice and adaptive behaviour. Violence contributes significantly to the cycle of insecurity.

Conclusion

Even though Ghana is one of the few African countries that has never experienced large-scale bloodshed or civil conflict, the country's economic problems, combined with the government's failure to provide a secure and safe environment, have posed significant challenges to citizens, particularly youth, in all aspects of their lives. Ghana, with its youthful population, needs to realize and maximize its economic potential and resources. Since young people comprise the majority of the population, ignoring their demands and aspirations in the development agenda is very detrimental to the national and human security of the country. The qualitative research to analyse the impact of youth violence in Ghana and explore some of the interventions made by civil society organizations to address the issue discovered that the rising rate of violence in Ghana was caused by a lack of adequate social amenities, high cost of living, and high unemployment rates, leaving many young Ghanaians with no choice but to engage in anti-state activities. Even though Ghana has discovered oil, unemployment persists in the country and has been rated as one of the highest in the world. With no jobs and a source of income, young people in Ghana fall prey to various violent activities. Using the relative deprivation and frustration-aggression theories to conceptualize the phenomenon proved that as youth are deprived of their expectations, they become frustrated and release their aggression toward society as a whole by engaging in activities hostile to the state. Even though the magnitude of Youth violence in Ghana is relatively low compared to its turbulent neighbouring countries—Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Ghana—can learn from these countries and take the necessary steps in preventing these forms of violence from escalating. Violence in any form turns back the clock on development and drives away potential resources needed for the development of the country. A secured environment is thus very significant in achieving socio-economic development.

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