



Counseling Youths Against Political Criminality And Its Amelioration In Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This paper was aimed at sensitizing youths against political criminality. The paper identified the counselling obligations such as redirection of unstructured behaviour and implementation of social values. The paper highlighted the aims of political criminality such as swerving the will of the people and hijacking electoral materials attached with gaining unmerited political advantage. The paper stressed on the functions of criminals in an election such as brutalizing of voters and manipulation of results against the will of the people. The paper went further to discuss the cause of using criminals which aimed at diverting electoral materials and writing of results to their advantage. The discussion was rounded up by drawing pointers to the way out such as providing job opportunities for the youth. It is hoped that political criminality can be avoided based on sensitization and job creation by the Government.

Keywords: Youth, political criminality, counselling, amelioration.

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian political system is nothing to write home about, because of policies and implementation of laws that cannot be strictly adhere to or obeyed by the youths and the political class in Nigeria. Nigerian laws and policies regarding electoral regulations is in shamble today because of interest and eagerness among the political elites and youth. The interest and eagerness of our people had resulted using future leaders known as “youths” to cause violence and unnecessary intimidation to the people during election. Our leaders ignored complying to the directives of the laws and policies that will better the lives of the citizens and choose to use the youths for destructions killings and instigations of ill-actions that is tantamount to unsafe environment, fear of voting during election because of their inordinate ambitions and selfishness. The acquisition of political seat in Nigerian today is do or die affairs” not by masses choice (Agi, C. 2002).

Some of our political leaders have chosen to be a beacon of disgrace instead of hope. Some of them do not value the lives of the youth and citizens because of high hope and expectations which has resulted using youths as a sacrificial lamb to gain unmerited positions. The citizens expect effective representation, good governance and respect to rule of law. Political class in Nigerian should eschew rancor and acrimony and place the interest of the masses above theirs (Elizabeth, 2014).

Our leaders should learn how to encourage the youths to be hardworking through engaging on meaningful skills; our political class should preach unity, love and peace among the youths. Our political leader should take job creation and development of the society as their priority. Youths of our time should avoid

killing themselves because of “money from devilish politicians and try to see themselves as future leaders of tomorrow.

In this development various election criminal offence practices become the order of the day. It has been observed that several election malpractices take place during election. They are as follows:

(1) Rigging, intimidation of the voters, stealing or hijacking of ballot boxes, evil associations, kidnapping, disengagement of political opponents through killing, harassment and assault. These devilish activities are carried out through trained thugs to witch hunt or threatened perceived political opponents geared frustrating their views against their political ambitions. In the light of the foregoing, during campaigns, they employ them to instill fear into political rivals and even during election proper. The criminals are used to cause havoc and other social menace during election. The criminals deny many persons opportunity to exercise their franchise during election. The thugs are used to pervert justice and ensure political opponents’ aims are defeated. These act by the youths need to be condemned and appropriate measure need to be taken to Jettison this ugly happenings in the political circle of Nigeria.

Apparently, politicians in Nigerian should shun violence and embrace due process during election. Politicians in Nigerian have forgotten that power comes from God and God alone. Politicians should desist from using the youths to cause mayhem and allow the will of God to take place during and after election. Politicians should understand that politics is not a “do or die” affair.

These inhuman situation, that has characterized political activities, need to be corrected and the youths agitation for fairness, equity and justice in the political space had metamorphose to assassination, kidnapping, youth militancy and killing of innocent opponents in the election. The struggle for political power among the politicians has become a yardstick for exposing youths into all forms of criminal activities. The politicians have employ means of paying their thugs, such as making them personal assistants, advisers and through cash settlement.

Callistus (2016) asserts that thug and cult groups exist very well in Rivers politics in which politicians use to cause problems: such as arson, election rigging and other electoral offences. The fear of intimidation has forcefully restricted people’s movement in all parts of the state. The criminal activities by thugs and cult groups are given a negative symbol for any meaningful development. Many investors had been demoralized because of the ugly trend occurring in the state and Nigeria at large. Many also have deserted the state because of the social menace.

Jackson (2015) states that, government and other well meaning agencies have kept silent towards the ugly development. Nigerian politics have introduced what we call political Godfatherism with selfish and shallow reasoning thereby, resorted using innocent youths to get victory by introducing them to risk and condemnable act. Political Godfathers in Nigerian politics are too egocentric and cannot deliver the dividends of democracy.

Paul (2014) asserted that the 2015 re-run election in Rivers State is a case study of what the researcher was analyzing. The re-run occasioned by PDP and APC kept the state in war of words and shooting that has claimed many innocent lives in Rivers State. These development should be condemned to its entirety and politicians should re-trace their step and allow free and fair election to come to stay in Rivers state and Nigeria at large.

Above all, youths should exhaust their power and talents, through engaging on meaningful activities such as learning and handiwork.

CONCEPT OF YOUTHS

Youthful periods are period of intellectual, talents, and continuous search for meaningful manifestation of life. Agada (2014) asserts that youths are known for acceptable contributions, justice and equity. He opined that any youth that fails to work hard is not a youth rather than good for nothing youth. He advised every youth to uphold the tenets of truth by ensuring that the right thing is done at every given point in time. He advised the youth to shun activities capable of truncating their future and also engineer them to be eloquent of good testimony to their generation. He also frowned at the activities of some politicians who exposed their children to serious academic study in overseas and decided to useless the future of other less privileged person in the society.

Abayomi (2016) advised the youth to come up with a defined perception aimed at education or handwork. He advised the youth to make use of their senses by ignoring calls beckoned on political thuggery and killing. He opined that youths are leaders of tomorrow with a subsisting act that a youth can be a leader of tomorrow when the person have decided to work round the clock with the aim of averting poverty by engaging on a meaningful task such as education, or handwork etc.

Michael, (2016) stated that many youths today use poor parental background as a yardstick towards their evil act. He stressed that poor parental background cannot be a reason for evil act rather laziness and lack of vision towards the youths. He advised the youths to take their studies serious and avoid been a school drop-out. He said that the name school drop-out is like a person who is a stack illiterate. He appealed to the youth to avoid been ruffians, street boys, area boys which constitute a demeaning character in the society.

CONCEPT OF CRIMINALITY

Criminality is an act that is demeaning, condemnable, unacceptable and uncalled for, being perpetrated by certain persons, while political criminality are act instigated by politician to snatch ballot boxes, perverting justice, hijacking of electoral materials which is against the electoral law.

Since 1960, Nigerian gained her political independence know era can claim to be innocent of political thuggery or criminality because Nigeria has been x-rayed as country of electoral malpractices that increase in a monumental scale every day, Rivers State is one of the harbinger of political criminality and violence.

COUNSELLING OBLIGATIONS

Chiletex, (2019) listed the following counseling obligations. Counselling as an instrument for human change, re-direction of unstructured behaviour and implementation of social values, oriented behaviour and change that is acceptable. (Nda, 2016).

Counselling according to Dokubo, (2015), can be seen as an assistance given to people who are facing difficult challenges in the society. It is also an interpersonal assignment done in relationship with the person involved. Ajajio (2015) opined that counselling is the only panacea to address political criminality and ameliorate subsequent vices in Nigeria. Counseling is the only avenue to encourage the youth to do the needful by conducting themselves very well and also instill youthful values, willingness, hard work, organized attitudes, respect for constituted authorities, total avoidance of engaging on electoral fraud and willingness to uphold the tenets of electoral constitution.

AIMS OF POLITICAL CRIMINALITY

Adiele (2017), highlighted the following aims of political criminality:

- (i) The aim of political criminality is anchored on the instigation of hijacking election materials and gaining unmerited political advantage.
- (ii) To ensure winning political opponents.
- (iii) To be at the helm of political power.
- (iv) To pervert justice
- (v) For disallowing credible candidates to emerge.
- (vi) To swerve the will of the people.
- (vii) To infringe upon the rights of the people.
- (viii) To cause undo advantage to people.
- (ix) To circumvent political administrative justice.

FUNCTIONS OF CRIMINALS IN AN ELECTION

Mala (2018) listed the following as the functioning of criminals:

- (i) Hijacking of ballot boxes in an election
- (ii) Kidnapping and assassination of political opponents.
- (iii) Creating difficulties and mixed perception in an election.

- (iv) Transfer of election materials to unknown place.
- (v) Causing riots
- (vi) Forceful declaration of election results
- (vii) Manipulation of results against the will of the people.
- (viii) Brutalizing of voters in an election
- (ix) Instilling fear in the minds of the voters

ETIOLOGY OF USING CRIMINALS

Rudu (2019) highlighted the following as the causes of using criminals:

The reason was as a result of room for God-fatherism in Nigerian politics which has crippled the Nigerian internal political democracy. God-fathers in Nigerian politics are the harbinger of youth restiveness, kidnapping, killing and other related social vices witnessed today in our country. God-fathers do not allow choice of credible candidates to emerge again in Nigerian politics which comes as a result people's choice. God-fatherism in Nigerian politics does not value peoples ideology rather their own because of selfish interest. God-fatherism encourages all forms of political activities. Internal party democracy has been a taboo in Nigeria system of politics because of putting men and women of questionable characters as leaders. These outlined reasons are very repugnant to administrative political justice.

This is the height of travesty of justice I have witnessed just to mention but a few. It is the focal point of this paper to x-ray the preventive measure to political criminality or thuggery in Rivers politics.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study state that government should help and establish measures in tackling political criminality in Nigeria. The youths after receiving counselling believed that changing their thought about what life is all about can make them handle issues regarding to election with prudence and diligence.

CONCLUSION

The political scenario in Nigeria is evident of what the study was analyzing. Politicians are known as harbinger of arms procurement to the youths and also encourage the youth to maintain culture of political criminality in Nigeria. This act of lawlessness among the Nigerian politicians and youth has become a canker-worm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation and the only panacea to it, are strict adherence to counselling awareness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Hardship is in alarming rate and our leaders should as a matter of urgency, make meaningful move to address issues bordering on job opportunities for the youth:
2. Political education should be encouraged among the youths for a better living.
3. The political criminality in Nigeria should be avoided completely among the youths and political class.
4. Internal democracy should be allowed to play in all political parties in Nigeria to avoid crisis and misfortune.

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