

## SOCIOLOGICAL APPRAISAL OF POLITICAL CRIMES AMONG POLITICAL ACTORS IN BENUE STATE

**Comment [F11]:** It is difficult to really understand and estimate the degree of heterogeneity among respondents for this study. A study must have clearly defined target population.

### Abstract

*Crimes perpetrated in search of power are common features of many practicing democracies such as Nigeria. Therefore, political crimes are quite disturbing phenomena in contemporary Nigerian society. This is confirmed by obvious cases of cancelation of results by the electoral body and nullification of elections by various election tribunals owing to evidence of rigging, ballot box snatching, intimidation, harassment, killings and assassinations among others. Considering the foregoing, this study gives a sociological appraisal of political crimes in Benue State especially among the political actors. Conflict theory is utilized as the theoretical postulation in the study. The research utilized secondary sources of data while data was descriptively analyzed using mean, variance, standard deviation with the aid of tables and charts. Findings show the devastating effects of political crimes in the all spheres of Benue State of Nigeria and hence recommend stiffer penalties and religious enforcement by the law agents to any form of political offender, education and sensitizing as well as reconstruction of societal values from the family level to all agents of socialization, government commitment to addressing the perennial problem of unemployment as well as commitment in the side of the criminal justice system and other security agents among others through which political crimes can be solved.*

**Key words:** politics, crimes, political crimes, political actors

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Politics is a common feature of every society that has been with us from time immemorial. The general conduct of the people in the society is regulated by the art of politics. [1] defined politics as the process of reconciling interest in an organised group. Central to politics is the idea of governance aimed at directing and reconciling human affairs in the society.

Human needs are insatiable but it is believed that with governance as a core to politics, individuals would at best utilize the dividends. This is the reason why politics since its inception, many believed would serve as a reprieve to the pains and sufferings of the people in all societies of the world. Ironically, practitioners of politics in developing societies like Nigeria have failed to embrace the genuine tenets of politics thereby turning it to a do or die affairs under which all kinds of criminality and manipulations are perpetrated.

According to [38] the current spate of crime and violence in Nigeria dates back to the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970 when arms began to filter through into unauthorised hands. The situation was exacerbated by prolonged military interregnum, its brute force and the violence that characterised it. The sacredness, with which human life used to be held until the early 1970s, was soon thrown to the winds by miscreants and other criminals. The situation was further compounded by Nigerian media's romance with foreign films which were generously laced with crime, violence and sex. The Nigerian home video, currently in vogue, is not better in that it thrives on similar themes – crimes, violence and sex.

The manner in which the 1999, 2003 and 2007 political campaigns and elections were conducted and as well as the aftermath of these elections clearly justified the above assertion, [2]. Hundred of precious lives and property worth millions of

naira were lost in almost every state of the federation during each of these elections as political parties, individuals, group clashed with one another in what could be defined as ‘gun boat political campaigns’ or ‘cut-throat politics’, [2]. Since the return of power in Nigeria in 1999 to date there has been one form of political crimes in Benue state. Some of the political crimes in the state include reported cases of ballot boxes snatching at gun point by some youths in favour of their candidates in Ukum Local Government areas leading to loss of lives and property worth millions of naira. In 2003 general elections similar of such cases sprang up in areas of the state such as kwande, Ukum, Gwer East and Agatu among others. On December 11, 2007, the election petition tribunal in Benue State nullified the election of the speaker of the State House of Assembly, Mr Terseer Tumba from Buruku state constituency on account of electoral irregularities. Also apart from rigging they have been wide outcry of imposition of candidates by some political elite against the wishes of the people. Political killings and kidnappings is not left out, in July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009 Pastor Gideon Adoor of NKST Iortyer a cousin to former Chief of Army Staff, General Victor Malu was assassinated in Makurdi. An associate Professor of Law at Benue State University Makurdi, Gwadue Jande was murdered by gun men on 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2009, also in 2010 Chairman of Trade Union Congress; Comrade Tony Udu was killed in cold blood. In July, 2015 a Second Republic Member of Benue State House of Assembly Chief Atoza Hinda and Chief Executive Officer of Labeth Pharmacy, Mr Ternenge Labe and most recently on 20<sup>th</sup> of May, 2016 Senior Special Assistant to Governor Samuel Ortom on Special Security Matters Mr Denen Igbana had their lives gruesomely terminated. Kidnapping which was uncharacteristic in Benue has also found it way as in 2009 a political stalwart Mr Simon Shango who hails from Tarka Local Government Area was kidnapped only for the intervention of well meaning sons and daughters

including the then State Governor Gabriel Suswam[41]. Criminological speaking, this is yet another dimension of criminality that search light need to be beamed on if we are to address holistically crime problem in Nigeria. Political crimes are quite disturbing phenomena in contemporary Nigerian society especially among political actors. It is a multifaceted area of criminality which factors responsible for it needs to be unearthed. Benue State has over the years witnessed various forms of crimes including those relating to politics such as rigging, political violence and assassination among others [3]. Crime statistic from Nigeria Police Command in Benue State from 2010-2015 indicated that only a total of 9 persons were arrested for kidnapping and 84 persons for breach of public peace. Inferring from the police statistic on crime in Benue state pointed a glaring picture that most of crimes relating to politics are not speedily given prompt attention. [4] while assessing Violence between and within Political Parties in Nigeria: Statistics, Structures and Patterns from 2006-2014 in Nigeria named Benue State as one of the states in Nigeria to have an average of 40 fatalities of electoral violence. Since electoral crimes with concomitant effect had been the bane of Nigeria's democratic and socio-economic development including Benue State, there has been the need to set in machinery to sociological investigate and curb this dimension of criminality which formed the problem of this study.

## 1.2 Conceptual Clarifications

Attempt to define political crimes is problematic and one is left by the mercy of contextual restriction. As [5] argue that political crime has been more often of partisan assertion than of independent research. In classifying criminals, [6] identified eight (8) types of criminals including: legalistic, moralistic, psychopathic, institutional, situational, habitual, professional and political criminals. He defined political criminals as those who commit crimes in order to

gain political power or achieve other political motives [6]. Actors in world politics, states and non-state actors, according to Osiba cited by Hideki [37] can be defined as the entities which have the following three features: (a) They should have the autonomous capacity to determine their own purposes and interests; (b) They should also have the capability to mobilize human and material resources to achieve these purposes and interests; (c) Their actions should be significant enough to influence the state-to-state relations or the behavior of other non-state actors in the global system. Many sociologists and classical criminologists especially those of the western societies most at times tend to limit political crimes only to crimes committed against the state like treason, sedition, sabotage, terrorism, espionage, subversion and conspiracy [7]. But an in-depth and critical analysis in to the concept would make one agree that there is more dimensions of political crimes if we are to broaden it to other politically motivated crimes in search of power just like in the case of economic crimes committed in search of wealth. Apart from economic crimes, political crimes are spreading like wild fire especially in a struggling democracy like Nigeria at it nascent stage. [8] affirmed that it appears crime of all types are on the increase in Nigeria. To buttress this point, the spate of political crimes in Nigeria like rigging, thuggery, assassination, violence, kidnapping, double dealing, imposition of candidates against the public will amongst host of other crimes show the increasing rate of political crimes in Nigeria. These are crimes executed by the people to get political power or wax stronger in the corridors of power which seems to be having deleterious effects on the larger society whereas the perpetrators goes unpunished. In affirming this [8]posited that the state, armed with its oppressive apparatus such as the army, secret service agents, and the police are not always responsive to combating various crimes.

### **1.3 Electoral Offences and Punishments stipulated by Independent National Electoral Commission**

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as established by section 153 of the constitution is constitutionally empowered to conduct democratic election processes, set up guidelines for that as well as prosecute political offenders among other functions. Section 150(1) and (2) of the Electoral Act, 2010 as amended gives the Independent National Electoral Commission the responsibility for the prosecution of electoral offenders while such offenders can be charged to the High Court or the Magistrate Court. Part seven of the constitutional and legal framework for the Nigeria General elections of INEC 2011 spate out some of the electoral offences or crimes to include offence in relation to registration, nomination, disorderly behaviour at political meetings, improper use of voters cards, improper use of vehicles, impersonation and voting when not qualified, bribery and conspiracy, threatening among others. For example the section 131 under the electoral offence which deals with matters relating to violence and snatching of votes states that:

- a) a person who directly or indirectly, by himself or by another person on his behalf, makes use of threat to make use of force, violence or restrain;
- b) inflicts or threatens to inflict by himself or any other person, any minor or serious injury, damage, harm or loss on or against person in order to induce or compel that person to vote or refrain from voting, or on account of such person having voted or refrained from voting; or
- c) by abduction, duress, or a fraudulent device or contrivance, impedes or prevents the free use of the vote by a voter thereby compels, induces , or prevails on voter to give or refrain from giving his vote,

d) by preventing any political aspirant from free use of the media, designated vehicles, mobilization of political support and campaign at an election commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N1,000,000 or imprisonment for 3 years[9].

However, good as such punishments are it seems the Independent National Electoral Commission is overburdened with the responsibility of conducting elections, monitoring the activities of political parties and defending issues before Election Petitions and this has prevented the Commission from paying close attention to the issue of electoral offences and offenders.

The nullification of various elections in some states in Nigeria since the return of democracy in 1999 to date like Benue, Adamawa, Anambra, Cross Rivers, Edo, Ekiti, Imo, Kogi, Sokoto, among others by the various Election Tribunals proved that the electoral conduct in the country is not free from criminality [10]. The 2007 election in Nigeria for instance was adjudged by both international and national election observers as the worst election in human political history because it was flawed [10]. According to [11], election violence in Nigeria has acquired more dangerous dimension wherein other traditional fault-lines like ethnic animosity, religious dichotomy and social discontent find convenient violent expression during election that are characterized by the desperation of politicians to win at all cost. The summary of the NERV report indicated that beginning February 14 and as at June 30, 2011, a total of 424 incidents were reported with 655 persons killed and 211 persons wounded.

#### **1.4 History of Political Violence before 2011 Elections in Benue State**

According to [41] Benue has a history of relatively low levels of political violence, although this is marked by at least one wave of high-intensity violence (as reflected in high rates of reported fatalities) in the 10 years preceding the 2011 elections. Historical conflict events have tended to centre on dynamics such as:

- Inter-communal clashes ethno-linguistic livelihood groups (including semi-nomadic pastoralists and settled agricultural populations, and between Fulani and Tiv communities);
- Intra-communal clashes in which rival factions or lineages within communal groups have resorted to violence to settle disputes;
- Clashes between local communities and security forces, particularly where security have been deployed to restore order, such as during the October 2001 rioting in Makurdi, in which over 200 people in total were reported killed;
- The escalation of demonstrations into riots, particularly those concerning protests or dissatisfaction over police or military activity, such as deaths in police custody or at police checkpoints, as recorded in February 2005, or in February 2011;
- Targeted attacks on political leadership in ambushes and assassination attempts, such as those which occurred in an apparent wave of attacks on political figures in the months following the 2011 elections;
- Violent disputes over land ownership.

Other historical violence as chronicles by [41] includes the attempted assassination of then-Benue Governor in March 2004, In February 2003, rival supporters of the PDP and ANPP clashes in Makurdi. In March 2007, there were clashes between rival political supporters in the state.

### **1.5 Key Violent Incidents of 2011 Elections**

Violence in the period surrounding the elections which explicitly involved electoral institutions, candidates or workers as cited by [41] included:

- January 2011, reports that one candidate in the PDP primaries engaged thugs to intimidate and disrupt the polling process in Buruku constituency. Security forces – deployed in the area to provide security – shot in the area to disperse the would-be assailants.
- 18 January 2011, violent protests were held in Makurdi by PDP youth supporters who were angered by the outcome of the party’s presidential primary, in which President Goodluck Jonathan emerged as the party’s candidate for president. The youths reportedly blocked traffic and burned their registration cards in public.
- 11 February 2011, supporters of the rival ACN and PDP parties reportedly clashes in Yandev, Gboko LGA, resulting in five injuries. However, a PDP spokesperson denied any party supporters were involved in the clash, and alleged the opposing party had staged the violence to instigate unrest and generate sympathy.
- 23 February 2011, Benue State Chairman of the CAN and two other party officials were shot at by unknown gunmen, leading to one hospitalization,

and the release of a statement by the party which described political tensions in Benue as ‘heating steadily to a boiling point.

- 28 February 2011, a House of Representatives candidate and his entourage were attacked in Katsina-Ala LGA by unknown assailants, resulting in the death of one of the candidate’s supporters.
- 3 March 2011, then-Benue Governor Gabriel Suswam’s convoy was shot at by unidentified assailants on the Gbajimba-Makurdi road, resulting in at least one injured person.
- 5-6 March 2011, the ACN deputy gubernatorial candidate reported his home was attacked by would-be assassins over the weekend, wounding some supporters in the process.
- 19 March 2011, unknown assailants attacked the convoy of PDP Senate President in Igumale; three PDP supporters sustained injuries.
- April 2011, an aide of the Gboko Tarka MP, was shot dead by unknown assailants in Adekaa, Gboko LGA.
- 26 April 2011, two people were shot dead in Makurdi while trying to steal ballot boxes at the opening of the gubernatorial election.

The puzzling question one often asks is what are the factors responsible for these crimes? Who are the perpetrators and what is role of law enforcement agencies and government’s political will to tackle the crime.

One may be right to say that political crimes in form of electoral malpractices like most other crimes keep recurring in Nigeria because people are never arrested, not to talk of being tried for these breaches of law or act of criminality [12]. Political crimes in form of electoral crimes or malpractice like rigging, snatching of ballot boxes sponsored by men and women in control of power which sometimes armed

the youths with dangerous weapons in fulfillment of these criminal ambition remains slowly unchecked and unpunished which forms the problem of this study.

## **2.1 Theoretical view: Social Conflict Theory**

Although, several structural theories may be relevant to the discussion of political crimes, many scholars as [7] regards conflict theory as the most valuable or useful to its explanation.

The conflict theory was initially attributed to Karl Marx. Today many criminologists view the criminal law as a device made by the ruling class to preserve the existing order [6]. The conflict theory is also supported by Quinney (1974) who opined that although law is supposed to protect all citizens, it starts as a tools of the ruling class and ends by maintaining the dominance of that class [6]. Marxist criminology in a nutshell claim that what is responsible for crime is the power resulting from the exercise of capitalism due to the polarization of the 'haves' and the 'haves not' [18]. Radical conflict theory, some theorists suggest explain the roots of much political crimes that are situated in and emanate from social, political and economic process Roebuck and Weeber (1978) in [7].

The social conflict theory therefore, can be applicable in explaining the causes and consequences of political crimes in Benue state in particular and Nigeria in general because the vast majority of political crimes are traced to historical, material and dialectical nature of the political economy [8]. Political crimes like all other disturbing social phenomenon in a class society like Nigeria in general and Benue to be specific is seen as the by-product of a conflict of interest between the classes within the society, and that the class that is superior in economic and political power tends to define what is politically accepted which is the characteristics of its

class, and to stigmatize the behaviour of the lower class as irresponsible, delinquent and criminal [14],[6], [7]. Furthermore, majority of the political crimes in a society like Benue and Nigeria at large are rooted to the materialistic nature and structural imbalance owing to the disconnection between the rich and the poor characterized by factors such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy and greed among others. As such, people see politics as the only lucrative avenue to “get-rich-quick” thereby indulging in all kinds of political manipulations and criminality which the conflict theory explained.

The conflict theorists advanced for a radical transformation of the existing structures of capitalism which breeds crimes of all kinds as the only possible way of solving the problem of crimes [15]. Considering the problem of political crimes in the present day Benue in particular and Nigeria at large with the explanation given so far, the conflict theory served as a good theoretical postulation in sociologically understanding and appraising the effects of political crimes in Benue State.

## **2.2 Factors Responsible for Political Crimes in Nigeria**

From centuries human beings have tried to find out what is responsible for crime in society. At one time some believed that it was the devil that moved a man to commit crime, and also that those who were insane were possessed by the devil (Moran, 1978 in [6], [16], [17]). But scientists as [17] observed rejected the theory of demonology, claiming that the existence of the devil has not been scientifically demonstrated. Social scientists further rejected two other schools of thought that were propounded by some Italians during the nineteenth century [17]. For instance, Beccaria (1804) argued that criminals commit crime using their free-will believing that crime would bring them more pleasure and less pain [17], [16], [18], [19], [6].

This was the argument been put forward by the classical criminology. The second school of thought was the positivist initiated by another Italian scholar Lombroso (1876) who based his idea on the theory of biological evolution. He stated that criminals were those who had not fully completed their biological evolution regarding criminals as a throwback to a more primitive form of human being [6], [17]. Lombroso believed that criminals are born and he compiled a list of criminal characteristics such as individuals with large ears, extra chromosome, extra toes and so on [17], [20]. The contemporary sociologists believe that social factors greatly contribute to crime in society. However, they accepted that in some cases, crime could be caused by biological, psychological and psychiatric factors [6], [17], [16]. Similarly, in dealing with the causal explanation of crime in social sciences, [13] in a lecture on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 to Post Graduates Students (PGS) of University of Abuja, Criminology class entitled “*the causes of crime in Nigeria*” explained that in giving explanations to the causes “we should be wary of multi-factor approach”. The general theorists he said explained the causative factor of crime which includes the orthodox functionalist and Marxist while the multiple factor deals with the correlation of so many factors focusing not only on poverty but other factors like unemployment, biological, group influence amongst others.

### **3.1 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.2 Study Area**

This study was carried out in Benue state which was created on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1976 by the then military administrator General Murtala Mohammed. Benue State is located in the middle belt zone of Nigeria and shares boundaries with five neighbouring states namely: Nassarawa to the north, Taraba to the east, Cross River to the south, Enugu, Ebonyi to the south-east and Kogi to the south-west.

The state also shares a common boundary with the Republic of Cameroon on the south-east. Benue state lies roughly between latitude  $6^{\circ}1/2$  north and longitude  $7^{\circ}1/2^{\circ}$  -  $10^{\circ}$  east [21]. Presently, the state has 23 Local Government Areas<sup>1</sup>. Benue state is one of the populous states in Nigeria with population over four million. According to [22], the state has a total population of 4,219,244, a break down shows that 2, 164,058 are males, and 2,055, 186 are female. [23] put the state population in 2013 at 5,287,129. The state also occupies a land mass of about 30, 955 square kilometers, [22]. In terms of ethnic composition, the state constitute of several ethnic group namely Tiv, Idoma Igede, Etulo, Abakpa (Abakwariga), Jukun, Hausa, Akweya and Nyifon. The Tiv are the majority dominant group accounting for over half of the entire population, [21]. The state has over the years witnessed various forms of crimes including those relating to politics such as rigging, political violence and assassination among others [3]

### 3.3 Source of Data

In collecting data for this study, the researcher utilized secondary sources of data. From Benue State Police Command from 2010-2015. These data were purposively selected based on high record of political crimes relating to election matters. Data was descriptively analyzed using mean, variance, standard deviation with the aid of tables and charts.

**Comment [F12]:** This paper did not utilize any secondary data. That you consulted secondary sources does not mean you used secondary data. What you have in Table 2 is never used or mentioned anywhere in the paper. Hence it is not a data since it was never analysed or processed in any way.

<sup>1</sup>Local Government Areas in Benue State Nigeria: Ado, Agatu, Apa, Buruku, Gboko, Guma, Gwer, Gwer-West, Katsina-Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Logo, Makurdi, Obi, Ogbadibo, Ohimini, Oju, Okpokwu, Otukpo, Tarka, Ukum, Ushongo and Vandeikya with Makurdi as the state capital (Lyam et al, 2003, p. 73).

## 4.1 Data Presentation

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

| CRIME STATISTICS FROM NIGERIA POLICE FORCE, BENUE STATE COMMAND |                            |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| S/N                                                             | OFFENCE                    | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | MEAN  | VAR   | STD   |
| 1                                                               | Murder                     | 8    | 15   | 15   | 36   | 29   | 5    | 18.0  | 146.4 | 12.1  |
| 2                                                               | Attempted Murder           | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 1    | 0.2   | 0.167 | 0.408 |
| 3                                                               | Manslaughter               | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0.0   | 0     | 0     |
| 4                                                               | Suicide                    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 2    | 0    | 0.3   | 0.667 | 0.816 |
| 5                                                               | Grievous Hurt              | 47   | 34   | 94   | 402  | 155  | 12   | 124.0 | 21144 | 145.4 |
| 6                                                               | Assault                    | 52   | 32   | 94   | 322  | 104  | 10   | 102.3 | 12866 | 113.4 |
| 7                                                               | Child Stealing             | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 1    | 0.2   | 0.167 | 0.408 |
| 8                                                               | Slave Dealing              | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0.0   | 0     | 0     |
| 9                                                               | Rape and indecent Assault  | 0    | 1    | 1    | 4    | 6    | 2    | 2.3   | 5.067 | 2.251 |
| 10                                                              | Demand with Menace         | 0    | 2    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0.3   | 0.667 | 0.816 |
| 11                                                              | Kidnapping                 | 1    | 1    | 2    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0.7   | 0.667 | 0.816 |
| 12                                                              | Armed Robbery              | 20   | 18   | 24   | 44   | 62   | 14   | 30.3  | 351.1 | 18.74 |
| 13                                                              | Theft and other Stealing   | 96   | 20   | 138  | 292  | 132  | 20   | 116.3 | 10109 | 100.5 |
| 14                                                              | Burglary                   | 0    | 0    | 2    | 4    | 0    | 1    | 1.2   | 2.567 | 1.602 |
| 15                                                              | House Breaking             | 33   | 8    | 50   | 75   | 42   | 6    | 35.7  | 689.1 | 26.25 |
| 16                                                              | Store Breaking             | 0    | 2    | 12   | 24   | 0    | 1    | 6.5   | 94.3  | 9.711 |
| 17                                                              | False Pretence             | 10   | 3    | 27   | 112  | 46   | 3    | 33.5  | 1755  | 41.89 |
| 18                                                              | Unlawful Possession        | 12   | 22   | 62   | 34   | 52   | 6    | 31.3  | 495.5 | 22.26 |
| 19                                                              | Breach of Public Peace     | 30   | 6    | 44   | 0    | 0    | 4    | 14.0  | 342.4 | 18.5  |
| 20                                                              | Receiving Stolen Property  | 0    | 2    | 0    | 32   | 11   | 6    | 8.5   | 150.3 | 12.26 |
| 21                                                              | Escape from Lawful Custody | 0    | 0    | 0    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 0.2   | 0.167 | 0.408 |

**Source:** Authors computation, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016

## 4.2 Discussion of Result

The table shows that, highest criminal cases occurred in the form of grievous hurt, assault and theft and other stealing with means of 124, 102.3 and 116.3 respectively. Their variations around the means are 145.5, 113.4 and 100.5 for

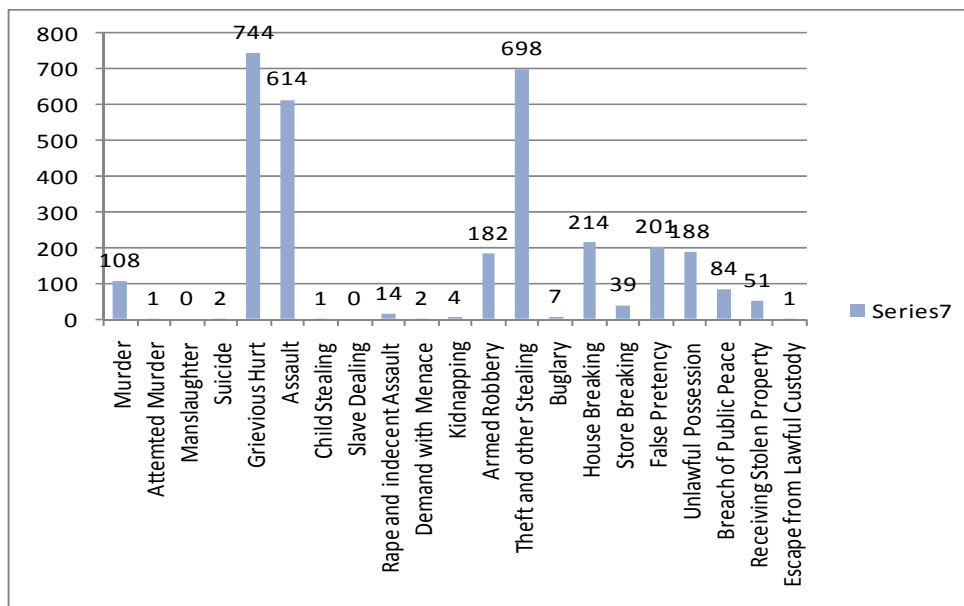
grievous hurt, assault and theft and other stealing respectively. This shows that, even though they were highly committed within the study period, the rate they committed varied from year to year. This is in line with studies by [32] who argued that since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, transitional elections in 2003, 2007 and 2011 were won and lost under conditions in which electoral malpractices, rigging and violence were pronounced.

Next on the line of offences committed are armed robbery, house breaking, false pretence and unlawful possession with means of 30.3, 35.7, 33.5 and 31.3 respectively. Statistically, their variations within the period as shown by standard deviation are 18.74, 26.25, 41.89 and 22.26 which show moderate variations. This agrees with [39] that armed robbery in Nigeria is fast becoming an epidemic. It is being blamed on the dwindling economic fortunes of majority and the widening gap between the affluent and the poor in the society leading to violent crimes. Other crimes like murder and breach of public peace have means of 18.0 and 14.0 within the period with standard deviations of 12.1 and 18.5 rate of variation around the mean. The commitment of crimes whose averages are in single digit include rape and indecent assault, burglary, store breaking and receiving stolen property with means of 2.3, 1.2, 6.5 and 8.5 respectively for the study period. Their variations are 2.251, 1.602, 9.711 and 12.26 respectively and indicate low variations. This is in line with [20] that violent crimes such as robbery, murder, rape, cultism, Kidnapping, sea piracy and terrorism in Nigeria grew from minor offences to thus generating a state of insecurity and threat to National security. Crimes that were rarely committed within the period include attempted murder, suicide, child stealing, demand with menace, kidnapping and escape from lawful custody. Only two crimes manslaughter and slave dealing were not reported in the period under investigation.

This generally shows that major crimes committed are grievous hurt and assault as well as theft and other stealing. The research has also shown the highest rate of committing these crimes falling between 2013 and 2014, with drastic reduction in 2015. This could be attributed to drastic security measures put in place by our various tiers of government to ensure security of lives and property of the citizens.

The rate at which these offences were committed within the study period as shown in column bar chart in figure 4.1 to further illustrate what descriptive statistics has revealed.

#### 4.1 PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION OF CRIME STATISTICS FROM 2011-2015



## 4.2 Conclusions

The findings of this study have raised certain pertinent issues concerning the problem of political crimes in Benue state of Nigeria. On the basis of this, the study concluded as follows: that political crime exists in Benue state in particular and Nigeria at large and indeed poses a serious danger to the actualization of peace and development goal. The common among as the findings of the study suggests is grievous hurt closely accompanied with theft and other stealing as well as assault while some social factors like the quest for power and wealth, corruption, greed, unemployment and poverty are responsible for political crimes. This is in line with the studies by [42] [30] [35] that One of the greatest challenges facing the Nigeria economy is unemployment and crime which has maintained a rising trend over the years. That political crime is perpetrated through rigging/ vote manipulation and ballot boxes snatching, it is also carried out through political violence, killing/ assassination (murder) of political opponents and through imposition of candidate to acquire various gratifications. That political crime are carried out most during electioneering period while the political actor's such as elites/political class are the perpetrators aided by the youths are often used as executors of political crimes. More so, that lack of proper upbringing is responsible for political crimes in the society while the executors of political crimes are the unemployed. That political crime affects the peace of the general public. This agrees with [40][34] [32] [27] that the history of political development in Nigeria has recorded the growth of multidimensional forms of violence as a major political behaviour in the quest by political-minded individuals and groups to attain state power and keep it. That political crime is retrogressive to the socio-economic and political development of any society in Nigeria that required aggressive efforts of the criminal justice

system, security agents and the government in addressing the problem of political crimes in Benue state and Nigeria at large.

### **5.0 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the study recommended that stiff penalties, education/sensitization, and provision of employment as well as reduction of poverty levels be prioritized as measures in combating political crimes in Benue State and Nigeria at large.

### **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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