IMPACTS OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE ON ELECTORAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

EMMANUEL UGBEDEOJO AMEH, PhD
Affiliation: DEPARTMENT OF PEACE STUDIES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION, NATIONAL OPEN
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, ABUJA, NIGERIA
Phone: +2348036604888 / +2348124203688
Email: omaiyeameh@gmail.com / eameh@noun.edu.ng
and
ASSOC. PROF YUSUF A. USMAN
Affiliation: INSTITUTE OF GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, NASARAWA STATE
UNIVERSITY, KEFFI, NIGERIA
Phone: +2348065654526
Email: alyusuf79@gmail.com

Abstract
Election-related violence and unstable procedures have plagued Nigerian politics throughout the years. Negative effects stemming from these problems include poor economic development, low living standards, voter apathy, property and life loss, and stagnant political advancement. The frequency and effects of violent elections in Nigerian politics are examined in this article. The main goal is to address the reasons why, ever since Nigeria gained its independence, electoral violence has regularly impacted almost all of its municipal, state, and federal elections. The theoretical framework of this qualitative study is based on elite theory, and it uses primary and secondary data sources, such as a questionnaire that was given to different respondents to get their opinions on the causes and effects of election violence. Poverty, unemployment, the high financial stakes of elected office, poor governance, and a lack of proper security infrastructure are some of the main causes of election violence in Nigeria. The results show that violent elections deter voters and politicians from taking part, which hinders peaceful cooperation, good government, and political advancement. The study suggests actions to address this problem, including improving political literacy, increasing public awareness, putting government programs into place to help citizens, and giving jobless youth employment possibilities.

Keywords: Electoral violence, good governance, poverty, unemployment, security, political education.

Introduction
Moving from one democratic government to another necessitates voting in some elections. This implies that during political transitions, there are a lot of activities geared towards getting ready for elections to select representatives to fill various leadership roles. Politicians and political parties can participate in this process in many ways to improve their chances of winning elections. Politics in Nigeria has proven to be highly profitable and appealing to politicians, who have resorted to using whatever methods necessary to win elections. They resort to using young, jobless people as pawns in their illegal businesses to ensure that their goal of winning the election at whatever cost is met. To intimidate, threaten, harass, and assault political opponents, these youths resort to using aggressive weapons. Put simply, they resort to violent means to achieve their goals, leading to deaths and electoral violence. Any form of violence perpetrated within the time frame of an election is referred to as electoral violence. In his 2010 definition of electoral violence, Igbuzor included thuggery, the use of force to interrupt political gatherings or voting units, and the use of hazardous weapons to scare voters as examples of political violence. Nigeria has had violent elections every time it has held an election since independence. There has been no letup in the prevalence of election violence in Nigeria, according to the data and trends. In light of the foregoing, this article uses the following research questions to investigate electoral violence in Nigerian politics. When does violence during Nigeria's elections occur? For what reasons has the unbroken pattern of election violence persisted in the Nigerian political system? How does violence during elections affect Nigerian politics? In Nigeria, how often is election violence, and what can be done to stop it?

To examine the realities of a political system, elite theory is a useful tool. Mosca, Vilfredo, Pareto, and Michel's well-known works served as the theoretical foundation. This idea has its roots in political sociology and seeks to explain the social and political dynamics of societies by analyzing the allocation of resources, the dynamics of power, and the decision-making processes inside them. Elites in Nigeria are defined by Kayode (2008) as ordinary persons with a

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vested interest in governmental affairs due to their occupation or profession. He went on to say that elites include those who have been educated about democratic governance and who work in and with the government, the media, NGOs, and educational institutions. The findings of this study will provide light on the causes and solutions to electoral violence in Nigerian politics, making it an important and relevant piece of research.

Conceptual Clarification

Violence
The term "violence" lacks a universally agreed-upon meaning. That is to say, several authorities throughout history have offered competing definitions of violence. Violence is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the deliberate and harmful use of physical force or power, whether threatened or actual, against an individual, another person, a group, or a community, with the goal of causing or likely to cause harm, death, psychological harm, stunted development, or deprivation. The use of physical force with the intent to cause harm, abuse, damage, or destruction is known as violence. Victims of violent acts may suffer emotional as well as physical harm. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), there are three distinct types of violence: self-inflicted, interpersonal, and collective.
Violence can take many forms beyond those already mentioned, including physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual violence, domestic violence, emotional abuse, cultural violence, and spiritual violence. As well as halting economic, social, and political progress, violence often leaves victims with physical and psychological scars that last a lifetime.

Electoral Violence
Electoral violence is a common issue during elections and transitions to democracy, with no universally agreed-upon definition. The primary goal of electoral violence is to influence the outcome of the election, but it can also express outrage, disappointment, or indignation. Violent interference in elections is a type of political violence with the goal of influencing the result of the vote and the allocation of power in the government. Electoral violence encompasses any intentional or unintentional act of physical or psychological aggression, intimidation, blackmail, verbal abuse, violent demonstrations, psychological manipulations, or any other form of coercion that takes place between the dates of voter registration and the inauguration of a new government. It includes acts committed by political gladiators, party supporters, electoral umpires, voters, and any other actors involved in the electoral process. Electoral violence can be driven by a desire to influence election outcomes via tampering with voting behavior or challenging the validity of the results. Possible outcomes include rioting, illegal attentions, death, assaults on property, forcible relocation, and intimidation of voters and candidates. Electoral violence is considered a kind of political violence, defined as the use of physical, psychological, social, or economic coercion or pressure to control or oppress an individual's or group's right to participate in political processes or institutions. It can occur in various settings, including homes, neighborhoods, social media, or with the blessing of the state. Kehailia (2014) categorized electoral violence into eight distinct types according to the motivations and identities of the perpetrators: intra-party violence, intra-state violence, party-to-party violence, voter-to-voter violence, state-to-state violence, state-to-party violence, and state-to-state violence.

Violence During Elections in Nigerian
Political violence in Nigeria has been a significant issue since the country's independence in 1959. Electoral violence has been present in all previous elections up to 1960, and it has been a feature of Nigerian politics since then. The country has experienced a zero-sum mentality, deep differences, and a history of violence in the elections since independence. Widespread corruption and election fraud marred the 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011 elections, resulting in multiple fatalities and injuries. Even the president at the time acknowledged the electoral process's shortcomings, making the 2007 election the most rigged in the country's history. Serious violence also tainted the 2011 presidential election, leading to numerous fatalities and forced relocation in a number of northern states. Notably, there was also a lot of electoral violence during the 2007 election, including the burning and vandalization of a police station in Rivers State. The 2015 election, on the other hand, was different since it was comparatively less violent and the incumbent president admitted loss before the final vote count was revealed (Ashindorbe, 2018)
.

Electoral Violence as a Security threat
In nations like Nigeria, where violence around elections is common, it poses a significant risk to the integrity of the voting process. Physical assaults on voters and candidates as well as the vandalisation of election materials are only two examples of the many manifestations of this kind of violence. Höglund (2009) asserts that altering the vote count

or threatening voters are two ways in which electoral violence is employed to impact election outcomes. Not only can violence dilute the credibility of elections, but it also discourages people from casting ballots, which might tip the scales in favour of the violent candidates.

Factors Influencing Political Violence in Nigeria

No Nigerian political process is complete without the use of electoral violence by various political players. According to Gboyega (2004), those who are eager for power find thuggery and political violence indispensable tools. The term "electoral" has grown to mean everything having to do with the political change and processes in Nigeria. Among the many possible explanations for the prevalence of violence in Nigerian elections are
1. **Corruption**: One of the biggest concerns impacting nearly every aspect of Nigerian society is the pervasive corruption that has recently emerged. In Nigeria, corruption continues to elude attempts at control. Corruption, in Nigeria, is so pervasive that it evades efforts to eradicate it. It has had a detrimental impact on the lives of Nigerian citizens and on the country's political culture. Olaniyi (2017) argues that corrupt officials can incite organised violence, which in turn can drive individuals to resort to violent tactics in their quest for vengeance against those in power. Corruption in Nigeria's arms trade has led to the proliferation of small and light weapons. The easy availability of guns gives political thugs the confidence to engage in criminal actions, such as violence during election procedures. Corruption and electoral violence go hand in hand in Nigerian politics. Among the many issues confronting Nigeria, the country's high unemployment rate stands out. The alarmingly high rate of unemployment shows no signs of abating.
2. **Unemployment**: Overly ambitious politicians in Nigeria might take advantage of the vast number of jobless people to woo young, physically capable people for their own ends. To scare their opponents in the election, politicians enlist the help of the jobless, particularly young people, who they use as ad hoc workers in acts of political violence. The financial incentives offered by politicians keep the youth naive and willing to carry out the electoral violence that politicians commission them to accomplish. Among the factors that contribute to political thuggery, as pointed out by Mbaya (2013), are unemployment, illiteracy, and poverty. There is nothing more dangerous than having millions of young educated people without jobs; they can organise, they are easy prey for those who would promote political violence, and they can even topple a government (Olaniyi, 2017). A key contributor to election violence in Nigerian politics is undoubtedly youth unemployment, which turns them into pawns for ardent politicians.
3. **High poverty rate**: When people are unable to provide for their most fundamental needs, we say that they are living in poverty. Providing for one's most fundamental requirements—food, clothing, and a safe place to live—is a struggle for the majority of Nigerians. They are unable to send their kids to school because of their financial situation. This is in line with the assertions made by some research that Nigeria is the global epicentre of poverty. Most people can't make ends meet since they don't have a means to support themselves. Both the young people who are unemployed and their parents, who are financially unable to support them until they find work, are living in poverty. Lacking employment opportunities, recent college grads continue to live in poverty and are more likely to resort to violent tactics during elections
4. **Sit-tight syndrome** — After experiencing power for themselves, most Nigerian politicians struggle to let go because they fail to remember that power is meant to be temporary. Instead, they will use whatever means necessary to ensure their continued rule, regardless of how sick the voters are of them. The majority of impoverished countries suffer from this condition, known as sit-tight syndrome. On occasion, they even set out to establish a line of succession for future generations of leaders. The vast majority of elected officials hope and work for their descendants to carry on the legacy of their ancestors. In order to enforce term elongation in violation of constitutional rules, they enlist the help of thugs, which often leads to violent elections.
5. **godfatherism** in politics: Ever since Nigeria gained her independence, this political ideology has had widespread support. Politicians who have had their lawful administrations terminated by constitutional requirements have organised themselves into a legion of king makers and political decision-makers. When these selected political leaders receive the rewards that were agreed upon initially, they become pawns in the hands of the previous leaders. When seen through the lens of Nigeria's election procedures, the adage "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts" rings true. The godfatherist political system replaces meritocracy with mediocrity as the criterion for selecting political leaders. Electoral violence occurs when political thugs are hired as agents by the leaders and their godfathers to do what they want. Since the return of democratic government in Nigeria in 1999, the godfathers have continued to be influential, as stated by Okolue (2011). Without their support, no political office candidate could realise his ambitions. In order to appease their sponsors, political thugs resort to electoral violence, and it is the godfather who enables, finances, and

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recruits   them   (Alieyu,   2018).
6. **Lack of sufficient security**: the state has an obligation under the law to ensure the safety of its citizens and their possessions. Thugs and violence flourish in communities where people do not feel safe. It is plain to see that Nigeria's law enforcement and security forces are severely lacking. During elections, political thugs commit acts of electoral violence with minimal or no pushback from law authorities. The police either cover up the many crimes perpetrated by political thugs and their employers or they work hand in hand with the people who hire them to conduct electoral violence. Since no one has been comprehensively prosecuted for election violence in the country, the perpetrators and organisers of such acts are often not held accountable, as pointed out by Omojolomoju (2003). This has only served to entrench the problem. According to HRW (2011), those involved in orchestrating and carrying out acts of electoral violence often enjoy full protection because to the intimidating capabilities they possess and the implicit approval of their behaviour shown by law enforcement and government officials at all levels. The election violence that plagued Nigerian politics was a product of political gladiators taking advantage of the country's weak security infrastructure to assemble   political   thugs.
Political divisions based on ethnicity: There are more than 250 distinct ethnic groupings in Nigeria. Ethnic politics in Nigeria have become more regionalised due to the preexisting connections between the country's majority and minority communities. Regional lines, which are usually characterised along religious lines to a certain extent, have often run through Nigerian politics. In Nigeria, the political system is deeply divided along ethnic, tribal, and religious lines, which has led to high levels of election violence as different factions vie for control of the country.

Methodology
The study used stratified random sampling to select 412 respondents from three impacted local government areas in Kaduna State. The research utilized a hybrid approach of simple random and purposive selection methods. The questionnaire gathered data on the correlation between election violence and electoral security in six states across six geographic zones. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant responses, while inferential statistics investigated the associations between sociodemographic characteristics and dependent variables. The aim was to accurately show how electoral violence impacts democratic governance in Nigeria in relation to election security.

Data Analysis and Result
In this study, a total of 427 questionnaires were administered to participants to assess various aspects of electoral violence and its implications for electoral security in Nigeria. Out of these, 412 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 96.5%.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency (n = 412)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	146	35.4
Male	266	64.6
Age group (years)		
18-28	143	34.7
29-39	161	39.1
40-50	61	14.8
51 and above	47	11.4
Mean ± SD	**34.21±10.50**	
Marital status		
Single	186	45.1
Married	202	49.0
Separated	24	5.8
Highest Level of Education		
No formal education	21	5.1
Primary level	40	9.7
Secondary level	144	35.0
Tertiary level	207	50.2
Occupation		

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Employed	203	49.3
Self-employed	142	34.5
Unemployed	67	16.3

The study included 412 individuals, with 36.4% being female and 64.6% being male (see to Table 4.1a for details). The ages of the respondents were all over the map, with the biggest age bracket (39.1%) falling somewhere between 29 and 39. Of the whole sample, 34.7% were in the 18–28 age bracket, 14.8% were in the 40–50 age bracket, and 11.4% were 51 and over. Respondents' ages ranged from 34.21 (the mean) to 10.50 (the standard deviation). The following percentages represent the respondents' marital status: married (49.0%), single (45.1%), and separated (5.6%). Over half of the respondents (50.2%) had finished some sort of postsecondary education, however the level of education differed among them. Nearly 35.0 percent had finished high school, 9.7 percent had just completed elementary school, and 5.1 percent had never attended school at all. Nearly half of the respondents were employed (49.3%), while over a third were self-employed (34.5%) and around a quarter were unemployed (16.3%). This information gives a thorough synopsis of the study's demographics and socioeconomic status.

Table 2: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (Cont..)

Variables	Frequency (n = 412)	Percentage (%)
Ethnicity		
Hausa	142	34.5
Igbo	96	23.3
Yoruba	68	16.5
Others	106	25.7
Region of Origin		
North Central	80	19.4
North East	62	15.0
North West	84	20.4
South East	44	10.7
South-South	64	15.5
South West	78	18.9

Included in this group are several additional tribes such as the Tiv, Gbagyi, Idoma, Gade, Alago, Igala, Etulo, Margi, Jaba, Efik, Ibibio, Igede, Urhobo, Kanuri, Tarok, Yala, Gommi, Yala, Calabar, Eggon, Sayawa, Nupe, Gwandara, Isoko, Igede, Oron, and Ebira.

The respondents' sociodemographic characteristics are continued in Table 4.1b. A wide variety of racial and geographical origins were represented among the study's respondents. Of the 412 people that took part, the Hausa made up the biggest ethnic group, with 34.5 percent of the total. Next on the list were the Yoruba, with 16.5% of the population, and the Igbo, with 23.3%. A considerable number of respondents (25.7%) claimed membership in other ethnic groups, encompassing numerous others such as Tiv, Gbagyi, Idoma, Gade, Alago, and Igala. The North West had the most representation in terms of regional origin, with 20.4% of the respondents being from that area. Next on the list with 19.4% was the North Central area, while 18.9% came from the South West. The remaining responders were from the South-South (15.5%), the South East (10.7%), and the North East (15.0%). The statistics presented here highlight the cultural and geographical variety of the study's subjects.

Table 3: The Impact of Electoral Violence on Electoral Security in Nigeria.

Variables	Frequency (n = 412)	Percentage (%)
Do you believe that electoral violence poses a significant threat to the security of voters in Nigeria?		
Yes	350	85.0
No	62	15.0

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Have you felt unsafe participating in elections due to the threat of electoral violence?		
Yes	268	65.0
No	144	35.0
Do you think electoral violence undermines the integrity of the electoral process in Nigeria?		
Yes	309	75.0
No	103	25.0
In your opinion, does electoral violence lead to the disenfranchisement of voters?		
Yes	288	69.9
No	124	30.1

Table 4.4 presents the impact of electoral violence on electoral security in Nigeria based on responses from 412 participants. A substantial majority of respondents (85.0%) believe that electoral violence poses a significant threat to voter security in Nigeria, highlighting the widespread concern over safety during elections. Additionally, 65.0% of respondents reported feeling unsafe participating in elections due to the threat of electoral violence, indicating that these fears are affecting voter behavior. Furthermore, 75.0% of respondents think that electoral violence undermines the integrity of the electoral process in Nigeria, suggesting that such violence has a detrimental effect on the fairness and credibility of elections. In line with this, 69.9% of respondents believe that electoral violence leads to the disenfranchisement of voters, pointing to the potential suppression of voter participation due to safety concerns.

Discussion of Findings
The study found that electoral violence in Nigeria has increased significantly, with 74.8% of respondents reporting a significant increase. This is attributed to the political climate and regional disparities. The majority of respondents were between 29 and 39 years old, with over half holding tertiary education. The perception of regional concentration in electoral violence suggests a pattern of geographic disparity, influenced by ethnic and political rivalries. Higher education levels are associated with increased awareness of political processes and perceptions of electoral violence.

Conclusion
The study reveals a high perception of electoral violence among respondents, with 64.6% stating it is high. The majority (74.8%) observed an increase in violence over recent elections, and 68.9% believe it is more prevalent in certain regions. This perception highlights the severity of the issue and its impact on the electoral process and community well-being. The study also highlights the detrimental effects of electoral violence on electoral security and democratic development, with 85.0% acknowledging it poses a severe threat to voter safety. Socio-demographic factors, such as age, marital status, and regional origin, significantly influence perceptions of electoral violence. However, other factors like political corruption, ethnic tension, inadequate security measures, money in politics, and inadequate voter education were not found to be significant predictors.

Recommendations
1. Strengthening the Legal Framework and Enforcement: The Nigerian government ought to strengthen the legislative framework controlling elections, especially by enforcing stronger punishments for these crimes. Offenders, regardless of their political background, need to face the consequences for their actions, and these laws need to be enforced more strictly. According to Ibrahim and Ibeanu (2019), this would encourage a culture of following election rules and prevent such infractions in the future.

   2. Capacity Building for Security Agencies: Police and military personnel, as well as other security personnel, should undergo specialised training in electoral security in order to maintain objectivity and professionalism during the voting process. Voter and election official safety, dispute resolution, and legal compliance should be the primary goals of training. If members of the security detail are found to have engaged in election fraud, they too must be investigated and punished (Okoye, 2019).

3. Adopting Robust Technological Solutions: The use of technology in elections may assist decrease fraud and increase security, thus it's important to use robust technological solutions. To avoid manipulation and guarantee transparency, the Nigerian election system should implement cutting-edge technology like blockchain for vote counting and biometric voter identification. Simultaneously, safeguarding electoral infrastructure from cybercriminals and data breaches should be a top priority (Norris, 2015).

4. Promoting Voter Education and Awareness: Increasing Knowledge and Participation in Voting It is critical to inform the public of their voting rights and the significance of participating peacefully in the democratic process. It is crucial to raise public awareness about the risks of electoral violence and voter intimidation through initiatives that encourage individuals to report incidents of this kind. Aniekwe and Kushie (2011) argue that educating voters can help curb manipulation and encourage an accountability culture.

5. One important suggestion is to set up independent electoral dispute resolution committees that can impartially and quickly settle complaints pertaining to elections. These bodies should be transparent and provide fair resolutions. To avoid violence following elections, there should be well-defined processes for resolving disputes, so that all parties may use lawful means to challenge the results (Birch, 2011).

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