

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE ON DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Emmanuel Ugbedeojó Ameh, PhD

Department Of Peace Studies And Conflict Resolution, NOUN
omaiyeameh@gmail.com / eameh@noun.edu.ng

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Yusuf A. Usman, PhD

Institute Of Governance And Development Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi
alyusuf79@gmail.com

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Abstract

The study looks into the security implications of electoral violence on democratic development in Nigeria from the people's perspective and the wider consequences for electoral integrity and governance. According to the data, 64.6 percent of respondents think that there is a high level of violence during elections and 74.8 percent noticed an increase in violence in recent electoral cycles. Furthermore, 68.9 per cent consider electoral violence to be more prevalent in particular areas, reflecting the wide public perception of this issue's regional concentration. Its findings emphasize the negative implications of electoral violence on electoral security by showing that electoral violence threatens voter safety with an extremely substantial threat to 85.0 percent of the respondents and that voting is insecure for 65.0 percent of the respondents. But these perceptions are also connected to broader democratic concerns, as 80.1 percent of respondents argue that electoral violence undermines democratic institutions, erodes the public's trust and hinders the progress of a solid and peaceful democratic society. Second, the study examines roles of socio demographic that is, age, marital status, and geographical origin in perception of electoral violence. Individuals aged younger; respondents from South West report higher levels of violence, and married people and respondents from North East report less they perceive high trends of violence. Age and marital status turn out to be significant predictors of experiences of electoral violence through logistic regression analysis. However, in this study, political corruption, ethnic tensions, inadequate security and voter education were found to have been unrelated to perceived violence. Further giving rise to regional disparities in electoral violence, there is a pressing need for targeted, context specific interventions to curtail electoral violence and its effects to Nigeria's democratic development.

Keywords: Security Challenges; Elections; Electoral Violence; Electoral Participation

Introduction

The electoral process in many developing African democracies, including Nigeria, faces challenges in achieving legitimacy through peaceful, fair, and credible elections. The violent nature of Nigeria's democratic endeavor has led to a negative impact on voter participation, leading to poor turnout or even abstention. Voter turnout in both developed and emerging democracies has attracted more scholarly attention, with concerns about the reduction in citizen involvement in political activities and the poor level of faith in democratic institutions. Violence during elections has occurred in Nigeria on many

occasions since the country gained its independence in 1960. Ambitious politicians have orchestrated and encouraged violent events in every election, sowing seeds of fear among voters and lowering the threshold for participation. This has impeded the pursuit of a genuine electoral process and the strengthening of democracy in Nigeria.

Nigerians are wary of voting due to widespread suspicion and anxiety about the safety of both people and their possessions. Since 1964, there have been several violent incidents and contentious issues surrounding the conduct of elections, raising concerns about potential abuses of citizens' rights. Elections in Nigeria have devolved into a circus managed by corrupt politicians and party officials, potentially destabilizing the government and cutting short its corporate existence. The ruling class in Nigeria is still working its way out of the authoritarian era and into the more democratic, people-oriented era, where the focus of government is on serving the public interest. However, the political and electoral process in Nigeria has been impacted by instability and violence, with violence occurring in every election since 1999.

Conceptual Framework

Electoral Participation

Conservative academics in the field of political science have studied voter turnout primarily in relation to two groups: the Glasgow and Alvarez(2005) and Alechenu (2012). Citizens' legal activities in accordance with existing laws enable them to pick representatives and, to a certain degree, influence their actions in government; this process is known as electoral participation (Fawole, 2005; Glasgow & Alvarez 2005). Citizens' efforts, both direct and indirect, to choose representatives and to back or impact governmental institutions at all levels have also been defined as electoral involvement (Braddy, 1999; Van Deth 2001). Not only do citizens actively participate in the political system when they cast their ballots, but they also engage in other significant political activities in the run-up to elections in an effort to shape government policies and actions in their favor (Höglund, 2009). This perspective on public engagement in the electoral process encompasses not just voting but also other forms of political action including demonstrations, boycotts, strikes, etc. (Norris, 2002a).

Violence

Violence According to Kolawole (1988), Hoglund (2006), and Keane (1996), the use of force in an unlawful manner to compel another person to do something against their will is one definition of violence. This leads us to the following definition of violence: the intentional use of physical force or power to cause bodily harm, psychological harm, deprivation, injury, or death to oneself, another person, another group or community (WHO 2002). There are three common classifications for violent acts: physical, structural, and psychological. Assaults or other forms of physical violence that cause bodily harm or death are known as violent acts. The unjust and prejudiced treatment of individuals within society is at the heart of structural violence. All types of abuse, harassment, indoctrination, and brainwashing fall under the umbrella term "psychological violence" (Jinadu 1980, Galtung 1985, 1991; Schröder & Schmidt 2001). There has been a disturbing trend in Nigeria's electoral trajectory toward the use of violence to intimidate political opponents, election stakeholders, and voters, as well as to influence and disrupt election outcomes.

The Impact of Insecurity and Electoral Violence

Electoral violence and insecurity are threats to democratic stability and stability more generally, especially in developing countries where political processes remain weak and fragile. Electoral violence includes violent intimidating, physical harm, or coercion directed against voters in order to influence the outcome of elections and insecurity is the state of fear or threat that generally magnifies such violence. Both phenomena are severe threats to the legitimacy of elections, threaten destabilization of political systems and democratic advance (Ake, 2001). Electoral violence is not limited to the day of the vote, it can happen prior to or after the vote. Intimidation, suppression of opposition parties, destruction of campaign materials and media restriction during an election cycle are common features of pre election violence (Collier & Vicente, 2012). Typically, these tactics are meant to decrease voter participation or reinforce public opinion in the favoring of one particular candidate or party. During voting, the violence might be realized in attacks on polling stations, snapping of the ballot boxes, intimidation of voters at the polls and obstruction of electoral ones (Höglund, 2009). It can partly lead to distorted election results and weaken trust in the democratic process. That post electoral fighting typically stems from allegations of electoral fraud or rigging or a disenchantment with the outcome, and manifests itself in the form of protests, clashes between political groups, and in serious cases armed confrontations.

For example, Nigeria's most violent electoral period, including post-election violence during which more than 800 people died from a perception of rigged elections, and alienation with the results, occurred in 2011 (Human Rights Watch, 2011). These constitute cases that depict the great extent to which electoral violence can have on political stability, particularly on nations with weak democratic institution. The causation that exists between insecurity and electoral violence cannot be overlooked in as periods of political instability often embolden criminals elements, militant groups and ethnic factions to violence for political gain (Bekoe, 2012). As this cycle continues, insecurity perpetuates itself, increasing electoral violence that solidifies instability making the restoration of peace and order even harder. In Kenya and Zimbabwe, electoral violence has been an important contributor to political instability and the realization of full democracy (Cheeseman & Tendi, 2010). Electoral violence and insecurity is not just detrimental to the electoral process but to the overall socio political context of an economy that is at risk of loss of investment due to murderous elections, forced displacement of masses of people, and lost trust from the populace on governance. Since electoral violence is so prevalent, addressing whatever causes electoral violence (political corruption, ethnic tension, or weak institutions, for example) is essential to any effort to ensure free, fair, and peaceful elections.

Theoretical Framework

Political Instability

Political Instability Theory states that frequent or ongoing political violence, civil disease undermine what is essential for stable or functional governance. The point is that political instability occurs when the processes which allow for peaceful transition of power (elections) are broken, resulting in social unrest and governance collapse. Political instability weakens democratic institutions, damages economic development and reduces effectiveness of the rule of law.

Within the realm of electoral violence, the theory contends that violence impairs electoral trust, and that, in turn, political actors resort to violence or coercion to achieve power. This instability of the political environment and lack of legitimacy of the elected governments fuels it. Political Instability Theory also helps make sense of violence created in countries such as Nigeria where electoral violence is common, and how this violence affects the long-term democratic development of the state.

Frustration-Aggression Theory

The primary tenet of the Frustration-Aggression hypothesis put forward by Dollard et al. (1939) is that aggressive behavior follows frustration. According to this view, violent behavior stems from a person's inability to pursue their goals because of external factors that prevent them from doing so. An aggressive person may shift their animosity onto a helpless bystander when they are unable to address the aggressor directly. Relative deprivation is an alternate explanation to this one that proposes a discrepancy between desired and achievable outcomes. Angry outbursts and violent actions are more probable the wider the gap.

Some have argued that the frustration-aggression approach is flawed because it focuses too much on the victim's inner workings. According to Lupsha (1971), political violence is intricate and interrelated, involving the concept of deprivation and the subsequent action or reaction to that deprivation. He argues that angry outbursts do not necessarily lead to physical violence, that people can feel upset without resorting to violence, and that violent acts can happen in any community. A lot of people have problems with the frustration-aggression paradigm, yet it helps a lot when trying to figure out why people get violent during elections. When considering that aggressive or frustrated behavior might lead to violent acts, the theory's value becomes clear. People are more likely to respond violently in order to defend themselves when they are pushed beyond their limits by excessive pressure.

Conflict Theory

Conflict Theory, by George Ritzer, is associated as the theory of the work of Karl Marx, which states the competition for power and resources as the main cause of social and political will. Electoral violence can be regarded as symptoms of eternal struggle among political elites and ethnic or regional groups in the context of Nigeria. Electoral violence is not merely the consequence of such immediate electoral grievances, however; it simultaneously arises from deeper systemic inequality and social tensions. Understanding electoral violence within this framework then allows us to see how it exacerbates already existing social divisions and works to undermine long term security and democratic fragility.

Social Contract Theory

Whether it's the work of philosophers such as John Locke and Thomas Hobbes proposing Social Contract Theory or the Igor I. Schegolef's argument regarding Positive State Theory and concepts of social deviance and order, the fundamental idea involves the relationship between the state and its citizens, where the state is charged with maintaining security and protecting rights. Electoral violence undermines this social contract as it cuts off a vital promise made by the state, namely to provide security during elections and it is precisely this promise that has citizens doubt in the state's capacity to provide the

security needed to enable free and fair elections. The theory in Nigeria accounts for the disillusionment of citizens with democratic processes and a lack of election security that erodes trust in the government and all democratic institutions.

The Influence of Violence and Insecurity on Electoral Participation

In democracies, the importance of having an election is paramount. One of the most important parts of the representative democracy form of government is the election. By resolving the problem of leadership succession within a democratic framework, recurrent elections help keep governments running well. Voters choose their representatives in government and can then hold them to account through the electoral process. A sense of purpose, value, and self-worth are enhanced when citizens actively participate in the voting process. Voting or staying home during an election can be a reflection of how you feel about the current political climate and the process. A well-established political party system, an impartial and competent electoral management body, an independent judiciary, and the endorsement of basic electoral principles by the broader political community were the four conditions listed by Mackenzie (1964) as necessary for the conduct of free and fair elections. In order to ensure that elections are conducted in accordance with the set legal criteria for electoral procedures, the electoral system provides a framework. All aspects of the election process, including voter registration, fall under this umbrella (Roberts, 1971). A nation's voting system plays an essential role in shaping and sustaining the political conduct of its inhabitants (Okolo, 2002). Polling center delimitation, voter registration, political party registration, candidate nomination, campaign processes, media engagement, and voter education are all part of the pre-election phase. On election day, secret balloting, ballot boxes, ballot papers, election materials, vote counting, and election monitoring are all part of the election-day phase. Finally, post-election activities include result announcement, post-evaluation, and disputes pertaining to the electoral conduct. The extent to which a society's political culture, participation, and governance shape election behavior and competition is substantial.

Methodology

In this survey-based investigation, 412 participants were chosen at random from a stratified random sample. We used descriptive statistics (such as percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (such as chi-square and logistic regression) to examine the data that we gathered from the structured questionnaires. Quantitative research methods known as "survey research designs" include researchers polling a subset of the community or the whole populace in order to glean information about their thoughts, feelings, and actions. The research population will consist of the residents of the three most impacted local government areas in Kaduna State. For this study, a mix of basic random and selective selection methods will be utilized to pick participants. The questionnaire will be administered to respondents using a simple random selection approach.

Using a well-structured questionnaire, researchers in six states across six geographic zones gathered data on the correlation between election violence and electoral security. The five parts of the survey include both multiple-choice and free-form questions. A different part of the investigation was covered in each section. Using SPSS version 17, the study goals informed the analysis and computation of the primary data gathered.

Participants' traits and answers were described using descriptive statistics, which include percentages, averages, and standard deviation. To determine the associations between demographic variables and dependent ones, inferential statistics were used, such as logistic regression analysis and chi-square testing. We used these statistical methods because we wanted to show how much of an impact election violence had on democratic government in Nigeria, and we wanted to do so with statistical precision.

Data Analysis and Result

The study used stratified random sampling to select 412 respondents from three impacted local government areas in Kaduna State. The research methodology involved structured questionnaires, which were analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics. The questionnaire was divided into five parts, including closed- and open-ended questions. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 17, and descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant characteristics and responses. 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

The purpose of this research was to examine electoral violence in Nigeria and its effects on election security by surveying 427 people. The response rate was 96.5%, with 412 questionnaires being returned out of the total.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

V a r i a b l e s	F r e q u e n c y = 4 1 2)	P e r c e n t a (%)
G e n d e r		
F e m a l e	1 4 6	3 5 . 4
M a l e	2 6 6	6 4 . 6
A g e g r o u p (y e a r s)		
1 8 2 8	1 4 3	3 4 . 7
2 9 3 9	1 6 1	3 9 . 1
4 0 5 0	6 1	1 4 . 8
5 1 a n d a b o v e	4 7	1 1 . 4
M e a n ± S D	3 4 . 2 1 ± 1 0 . 5	
M a r i t a l s t a t u s		
S i n g l e	1 8 6	4 5 . 1
M a r r i e d	2 0 2	4 9 . 0
S e p a r a t e d	2 4	5 . 8
H i g h e s t L e v e l o f E d u c a t		
N o f o r m a l e d u c a t i o n	2 1	5 . 1
P r i m a r y l e v e l	4 0	9 . 7
S e c o n d a r y l e v e l	1 4 4	3 5 . 0
T e r t i a r y l e v e l	2 0 7	5 0 . 2
O c c u p a t i o n		
E m p l o y e d	2 0 3	4 9 . 3
S e l f e m p l o y e d	1 4 2	3 4 . 5
U n e m p l o y e d	6 7	1 6 . 3

Table 4.1a refers, the study involved 412 respondents, with the majority being male (64.6%), while females made up 35.4% of the participants. The respondents' ages ranged widely, with the largest group (39.1%) being between 29 and 39 years old. Those aged 18 to 28 years constituted 34.7% of the sample, while 14.8% were aged between 40 and 50 years, and 11.4% were 51 years or older. The mean age of the respondents was 34.21 years, with a standard deviation of 10.50 years. In terms of marital status, nearly half of the respondents were married (49.0%), while 45.1% were single, and a small proportion (5.8%) were separated. Educational attainment among the respondents varied, with over half (50.2%) having completed tertiary education. About 35.0% had completed secondary education, 9.7% had primary-level education, and 5.1% had no formal education. Regarding employment status, nearly half of the respondents were employed (49.3%), while 34.5% were self-employed, and 16.3% were unemployed. This data provides a comprehensive overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of the study's participants.

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

Other tribes: The study's participants were from a diverse range of ethnic and regional backgrounds, with the largest ethnic group being Hausa (34.5%). A significant portion (25.7%) identified with other ethnic groups. The North West region had the highest representation, followed by the North Central region (19.4%) and the South West (18.9%). This data highlights the geographical and cultural diversity of the participants.

Table 3: The Security Implications of Electoral Violence on Democratic Development.

Variables	Frequency (n = 412)	Percentage (%)
Do you believe that electoral violence weakens the democratic institutions in Nigeria?		
Yes	330	80.1
No	82	19.9
Do you think that recurring electoral violence can lead to a decline in public trust in the democratic process?		
Yes	289	70.1
No	123	29.9
In your opinion, does electoral violence hinder the development of a stable and peaceful democratic society in Nigeria?		
Yes	309	75.0
No	103	25.0
Do you believe that electoral violence has long-term consequences for Nigeria's democratic development?		
Yes	329	79.9
No	83	20.1

Discussion of Findings

The research surveyed a diverse population, with men comprising 64.6% and females 35.4%. The majority were in their prime earning years, with a higher percentage of respondents having completed postsecondary degrees. The study revealed a concerning rise in election violence in Nigeria, attributed to political atmosphere, regional inequality, and geographical inequity. Ethnic and political rivalry significantly affect the incidence of violence. Voter security is also a significant concern, with 85.0% of respondents believing that violent elections compromise voting credibility. This violence undermines faith in democratic institutions and threatens the safety of voters.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the data revealed a pronounced perception of heightened electoral violence among the respondents, with 64.6% indicating that the level of violence is high. This perception is further supported by the fact that a substantial majority (74.8%) observed an increase in electoral violence over recent elections, and 68.9% believe that the violence is more prevalent in certain regions. This widespread awareness underscores the severity of the issue and its significant impact on the electoral process and community well-being. The study also shows the detrimental effects of electoral violence on electoral security and democratic development. With 85.0% of respondents acknowledging that electoral violence poses a severe threat to voter safety, it is evident that the violence undermines the integrity of elections and affects voter participation. The fact that 65.0% of respondents feel unsafe participating in elections highlights how deeply these concerns affect voter behavior. Moreover, the broader implications for democratic governance are significant, as 80.1% believe that electoral violence weakens

democratic institutions, erodes public trust, and impedes the development of a stable and peaceful democratic society. The analysis of socio-demographic factors provides additional insights into how electoral violence is perceived across different groups. The findings indicate that age, marital status, and regional origin significantly influence perceptions of electoral violence. Younger individuals and those from the South West region report higher levels of violence, whereas married individuals are less likely to perceive high trends of violence. These demographic variations highlight the importance of considering socio-economic and regional contexts when addressing electoral violence.

The logistic regression analysis further identifies age and marital status as significant predictors of high levels of electoral violence. Specifically, older individuals and married respondents are less likely to report high levels of violence. This suggests that these demographic factors are crucial in shaping how individuals perceive and experience electoral violence. In contrast, other factors such as political corruption, ethnic or religious tension, inadequate security measures, money in politics, and inadequate voter education were not found to be significant predictors in this study. This indicates that while these factors may play a role, they are not as central to perceptions of electoral violence as previously assumed. The regional disparities in perceptions of electoral violence are particularly striking. The South West reports the highest levels of violence, whereas the North East reports lower levels. This regional variation points to the need for targeted interventions to address the specific challenges faced by different regions. Tailoring strategies to regional contexts can enhance the effectiveness of efforts to mitigate the impact of electoral violence.

Recommendations

1. The federal and state governments must reduce the occurrence of violence in elections. The purpose of this is to inspire people to get involved in the voting process. A sufficient number of security guards assigned to watch over voter registration, campaign events, and polling places would accomplish this.
2. The security professionals are expected to diligently fulfill their duty in preventing violence, with a particular focus on preventing any activities that undermine the electoral laws, which are known to trigger violent outbursts during elections.
3. Throughout the Nigerian elections, there has to be a sufficient intelligence and monitoring staff to keep tabs on all polling places. In order to prevent election security officers from going beyond, this group should also be tasked with overseeing their actions.
4. It is important to deter incumbents and most politicians in Nigeria from adopting the bad mindset of winning at any costs.
5. In order to have credible primaries and general elections, as well as to accommodate opposing political parties, the political parties should establish and strengthen internal party democratic institutions.
6. Encouraging the INEC to hold free and fair elections that are both transparent and credible is everyone's responsibility

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