



THE EFFECTS OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION: AN OVERVIEW OF THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

IBITEYE, Olugbenga Kunle (Ph.D)

Olugbengaibiteye(at)gmail.com

Federal University of Technology, Niger State, Nigeria Department: Technology Education

AWOMOYI Morayo Emitha

Ma8l6ib(at)american.edu

School of International Service, The American University, Washington DC

Corresponding author: *IBITEYE, Olugbenga Kunle
Email: olugbengaibiteye(at)gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Violence and human right violation are a phenomenon in every society and every sphere of social life. It is not restricted to the political sphere alone. Nigeria is violent-prone and undermines attempts at institutionalizing a democratic tradition. It cuts across every aspect of human existence. This means that political violence is just a subset of violence. One of the main attributes of liberal Democracy is the periodic and regular competition for political power with the governed as free agents exercising their free and unfettered choice among competing platforms. Elections are therefore a significant and crucial pillar in the Democratic process since they underscore the principles of political participation, accountability, and legitimacy. The people in this circumstance are the Legislature. A survey design was employed in this study where the response of the respondents from questionnaires administered to them was used. In addition to that, the average mean score was calculated. Having administered the questionnaires among politicians, party chieftains, INEC officials, and members of the electorate in three, it has been discovered that the 2015 general election was characterized by violent activities which no doubt marred the electoral process. Indeed, the 2015 general elections reignited the hopes of many Nigerians who believe in the enormous potential of the country as a leader in Africa. This will serve as deterrence to the financiers and foot soldiers that use violence to promote their political objectives. Secondly, Nigeria must improve on its existing security apparatuses in order to combat the dynamic and sophisticated 21st-century security challenges. Recruitment of security personnel ought to be based on merit. It is however recommended that the current electronic register needs to be updated due to the fact that some of the voters on the register are dead; many permanent voters' cards are yet to be collected while issues of multiple registrations have not been fully resolved. Trying to clean the register further may be very expensive and may not eventually yield the desired results.



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INTRODUCTION

Background

Violence and human right violation is an phenomenon in every society and every sphere of social life. It is not restricted to the political sphere alone. It cuts across every aspect of human existence. This means that political violence is just a subset of violence. It takes many forms including kidnapping, assassination, arson, thuggery etc. This shows that we are in a violent world and the tendency to be violent increases by the day. Violence has no territorial boundary. It is as universal as it predates modernity. For instance, Ekiran (2006:286) notes that both the Biblical and Quaranic accounts of creation and the events that followed in the Garden of Eden particularly Adam and Eve's refusal to obey God's simple instruction, amounts to violence of a sort.

Rejection of a superior's injunction is tantamount to violent behavior; because the word violence has its roots from violation or infringement (Ninalowo, 2004; 18). So when one violates or infringes on a laid down principle, it amounts to violence. Therefore violence can be described as an unruly behavior perpetrated to express anger and dissatisfaction over some social issues which the perpetrators felt have affected or likely to affect them in one way or another (Ekiran, 2006:285). It is an aggressive behavior which more often than not involves physical combat which could inflict bodily injuries on both perpetrators and innocent people. It is an ill wind that blows no one any good.

In Nigeria, violence is commonly used as a political tool to achieve the perpetrators' selfish ends. This usually occurs during elections when one government is about to hand over power to another. The use of violence during elections has become a common feature of the Nigerian electoral process.

These conflicts orchestrated by political elites and their allies, have been for selfish actualization of primitive accumulation anchored on regional sentimentalism, ethnic chauvinism, religious bigotry, economic materialism, political domination of the State. To achieve their inordinate interest, these politicians manipulate the youth to accepting them as the corner stone for their survival in the State. They arm these youths with dangerous weapons to prosecute the elections in their favour. Ekiran (2006:286).

Those already in government use the men of the Nigeria Police to chase their opponent and protect them in order to use the youths to unleash mayhem against their perceived enemies. These youths are hardly arrested nor detained for the havoc they may have caused. The youths therefore, are at the heart of most violent conflicts in the country. A recent study suggests that the youths are prosecutors of 90-95% of violent conflicts in Nigeria. Commenting on the forgoing, Human Rights Watch, noted: 'Many of Nigeria's ostensibly elected leaders obtained their positions by demonstrating an ability to use corruption and political violence to prevail in sham elections. In violent and brazenly rigged polls, government officials have denied millions of Nigerians any real voice in selecting their political leaders. Ekiran (2006:286).

Statement

Elections are the central processes of democratic representative government because in any democracy the authority of government derives solely from the consent of the governed. The principal mechanism for translating the consent into governmental authority ideally is by holding free and fair elections. In Nigeria, elections have become an avenue for legitimization of bad governance. This assertion hinges on the fact that incumbent government holds on to power at all cost while opposition parties in a bid to capture state power, resort to all manner of irregularities. The result of this is usually violence of one sort or the other.

Presently the problem in Nigeria Elections seems to have assumed a different dimension. For instance, one group of politicians have continued to accuse the other on various issues. One of such issues is about the legitimacy of the present crop of leadership. Presently, the ruling party has two factions which has separated the party as to who will assume 8th senate president and the speaker of house of representative. One group blames the other for lack of transparency in the electoral process as their reason for emergence. The overall consequence of these developments is that the political atmosphere in Nigeria remains tense. Politically, 2015 General Elections is like a ticking time bomb and a political catastrophe waiting to be unleashed.

In order to salvage the nation from collapsing into precipice and engender political instability, Full autonomy for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). This autonomy would engender administrative efficiency and professionalism of the Body. Also, the appointment of INEC Chairman should reside in the people and not Mr. President. The people in this circumstance are the Legislature. The Constitution should be restructured to make the office elective through an electoral college that would be composed of Members of the National Assembly, State Houses of Assembly and all serving Judges of the Supreme and Appeal Courts in Nigeria. Respect for rule of law. The establishment of Election Offences Commission as suggested by the Justice Uwais Committee to try those who flout the Electoral Law by committing offences such as violence and right violation, falsification of documents and election results, thuggery, etc be implemented. Implementation of the report of the National Constitutional Conference, 2014. Setting up of alternative dispute resolution mechanism. Job creation for the army of unemployed in the State.

The scope to the study is to highlight the constraints which electoral malpractice poses on the electoral system and the political system in the 2015 General Election, as matter of fact a study of the factors which made this elections rough will contribute to better understanding of the problems posed by malpractice in free election in the new nations.

Aim and Objectives Of The Study

The central objective of this study is to evaluate the correlation between electoral violence and human rights violation in Nigeria with emphasis on 2015 General Election the objectives are as follows;

- i. To examine the causes of electoral violence in Nigerian's Democratic Space
- ii. To investigate factors responsible for the outbreak of violence in the 2015 General Elections

- iii. To identify and discuss the reasons why politicians in Nigeria resorted to Violence and human right violation in the quest for any political seat

To appraise the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria with a view to identifying its challenges to Nigeria's electoral process.

Research Questions

- i. What are the causes of electoral violence in Nigerian's Democratic space?
- ii. How can human rights violation in electoral process be protected in our modern electoral setting?
- iii. What are the factors that generated violence during the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria?
- iv. The Ethnic and Religious considerations influence the electoral process in 2015 General Elections?
- v. What are the ways of reducing electoral violence in Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The following are designed to test these assumptions

H01: Political Violence and the Electoral Process in Nigeria can be improve as a way of tackling electoral malpractice in Nigeria

H02 Political Violence and the Electoral Process in Nigeria cannot be improve as a way of tackling electoral malpractice in Nigeria

Methodology

A survey design was employed in this study where the response of the respondents from questionnaires administered on them was used. In addition to that, the average mean score were calculated.

Results

This chapter deals with the presentation and the analysis of primary data obtained by the researcher through the administration of structured questionnaire. The data are presented using tables, mean and standard deviation to enhance quick understanding of the result achieved. The questionnaires were segmented into two sections; sections A and B. the section A was concerned with the bio-data of the respondents. The section B was centered on the questions raised in the questionnaire to elicit the respondents' responses. It therefore follows that the presentation based on the responses of the respondents will be done in two sections in this chapter.

Thus, section A will involve the presentation and analysis of the biographic data of the respondents, while section B is on the presentation and analysis of the respondents' responses. From the one hundred (100) questionnaires distributed to the respondents, 100 copies were retrieved. This represents 100% response rate.

4.1 Section A

Table 4.1.1: Sex of respondents

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Male	59	59.0%
Female	41	41.0%
Total	100	100%

Source: *Researcher's field survey, 2019*

The above table shows that 59 persons representing 59% are male while 41 persons representing 41% are female. This result indicated that the number of male respondents is more than that of the female.

Table 4.1.2: Educational Qualification of Respondents

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Primary	7	7.0%
Secondary	11	11.0%
Tertiary	63	63.0%
Others	19	19.0%
Total	100	100%

Source: *Researcher's field survey, 2019*

Table above shows the educational qualifications of the respondents. It indicates that 7 persons who represent 7% of the respondents are Primary school certificate holders; 11 persons representing 11% have Secondary school certificate; 63 respondents representing 63% have acquired the tertiary level of education while only 19 persons representing 19% of them have other qualifications.

Table 4.1.3: Age of the Respondents

Age range	Number of respondents	Percentage
18-25	6	6.0%
26-35	31	31.0%
36-45	34	34.0%
46 and above	29	29.0%
Total	100	100%

Source: *Researcher's field survey, 2019*

The above table shows the age range of the respondents who are the party members of PDP and APC. 6% of the respondents are between 18-25 years of age, 31% are between the age of 26-35 years old, 34% are between the ages of 36-45 years and 29% of the respondents are age 46 years and above.

Table 4.1.4: Level of participation of respondents in Politics

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Active politicians	60	60%
Non-politicians	40	40%
Total	100	100%

Source: *Researcher’s field survey, 2019*

The table above revealed that not all the respondents that participated in this study are active politicians.

Table 4.15: Political parties of the respondents

Political parties	Number of respondents	Percentage
PDP	35	35%
APC	55	60%
APGA	10	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: *Researcher’s field survey, 2019*

The table above revealed that unequal numbers of PDP, APC and APGA responded to the necessary questions during the course of this research

Analysis of Research Questions

Table 4.2.1 Do you think electoral violence can be harnessed in Nigerian’s Democratic space?

FREQUENCY	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Yes	55	60%
No	35	35%
Maybe	10	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: *Researcher’s field survey, 2019*

From table 4.2.1 whether or not electoral violence can be harnessed in Nigerian’s Democratic space, 55 of the respondents represent 60% of the total respondents is of opined that electoral violence in our political system can be drastically be harnessed, 35 of the respondents represent the total 35% of the total responses indicate that political violence has envelope our electoral system while 10 of the respondents representing 5% of the total respondents indicate that maybe the electoral violence in the Nigerian’s Democratic space can be controlled. From the analysis above, it all indicated that the electoral violence in the Nigeria democratic system can be drastically harnessed.

Table 4.2.2 Can human rights violation in electoral process be protected in our modern electoral setting

FREQUENCY	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Yes	50	60%
No	45	35%
Maybe	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: *Researcher's field survey, 2019*

Table 4.2.2 above, whether or not human rights violation in electoral process can be protected in our modern electoral system, 50 of the respondents representing the total number 60% of the total respondents indicated that yes, the human rights violation in our electoral process can be protected 45 respondents representing the total of 35% indicated no that the level of human rights violation in the modern electoral sitting cannot be minimized while 5 of the respondents representing the total number of 5% is of opined that maybe with time the human rights violation in the 2015 electoral process can be minimized.

Table 4.2.3 The factors that generated violence during the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria?

FREQUENCY	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Political Interest	60	60%
Self-centeredness	35	35%
Thuggery	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: *Researcher's field survey, 2019*

From analysis above, i.e. table 4.2.3; what are the factors that generated violence's during the 2015 general elections, 60 of the respondents representing the total number of 60% of the total respondents is of opinion that political interest is one of the main factors that generation electoral violence and human rights violation in the 2015 general election, however, 35 of the respondents represent 35% of the total numbers of respondents indicated that self-centeredness is one of the major courses of human rights violation in the electoral process while 5 of the respondents representing 5% of the total respondents is of opinion that political thuggery is another major factor that generated violence during and after the 2015 general election.

Table 4.2.4: What are the ways of reducing electoral violence in Nigeria

FREQUENCY	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Electoral awareness	70	60%
Mass Education	22	35%
Training	8	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: *Researcher's field survey, 2019*

Table 4.2.4 above: i.e. ways of reducing electoral violence in Nigeria, 70 of the respondents representing the total numbers of 60% of the total respondents is of opinion that electoral awareness can be seen as ways of reducing electoral violence in the electoral process, 22 of the respondents representing the total number of 35% of the total respondents indicated that mass education that will cut-across the length and breadth of the federation will ensure the reduction in the electoral violence while 8 of the respondents representing 5% of the total

respondents indicated that training on voters on the value of election is another way of reducing electoral violence in Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis

H01: Political Violence and the Electoral Process in Nigeria can be improve as a way of tackling electoral malpractice in Nigeria

H02 Political Violence and the Electoral Process in Nigeria cannot be improve as a way of tackling electoral malpractice in Nigeria

Table 4.3.1: Political Violence and the Electoral Process in Nigeria can be improve as a way of tackling electoral malpractice in Nigeria

Option	Male	Female	
Strongly Agreed	70	10	80
Agreed	44	50	94
Disagreed	15	5	20
Strongly Disagreed	3	3	6
Total	132	68	200

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

X^2 = Chi-Square
 O = Observed values
 E = Expected values
 $E = \frac{\text{Row total} \times \text{Column total}}{\text{Grand Total}}$
 \sum = Summation

When employing the chi – square test, a certain level of confidence or margin of error has to be assumed. More also, the degree of freedom in the table has to be determined in simple variable, row and column distribution, degree of freedom is: Degree of freedom, f = (Number of row – 1) (Number of column – 1)

Observed	Expected	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
70	52.8	17.2	295.84	5.60
10	27.2	-17.2	295.84	10.88
44	62.04	-18.04	325.44	5.25
50	31.96	18.04	325.44	10.18
15	13.2	-1.8	3.24	0.25
5	6.8	1.8	3.24	0.48
3	3.96	-0.96	0.92	0.23

3	2.04	0.96	0.92	0.45
				33.32

$$X^2 = 33.32$$

The hypothesis formulated is tested by means of Chi-Square.

The chi-square is 33.32, which shows that the chi-square calculated is greater than the chi-square tabulated (2.89)

As a decision rule, if the computed value of Chi-square is less than the critical value of X^2 at 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted, while the alternate hypothesis (H_1) is rejected. The reverse is however the case if the computed value of X^2 is greater than the critical value at the chosen level of significance.

Conclusion: since the computed value of Chi-square (33.32) is greater than the critical value (2.89), therefore the alternate hypothesis (H_1) "Political Violence and the Electoral Process in Nigeria can be improve as a way of tackling electoral malpractice in Nigeria" is accepted.

Table 4.3.1: Political Violence and the Electoral Process in Nigeria cannot be improve as a way of tackling electoral malpractice in Nigeria

Option	Male	Female	
Strongly Agreed	70	10	80
Agreed	44	50	94
Disagreed	15	5	20
Strongly Disagreed	3	3	6
Total	132	68	200

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

X^2 = Chi-Square

O = Observed values

E = Expected values

E = Row total x Column total

Grand Total

\sum = Summation

When employing the chi – square test, a certain level of confidence or margin of error has to be assumed. More also, the degree of freedom in the table has to be determined in simple variable, row and column distribution, degree of freedom is:

Degree of freedom, $f = (\text{Number of row} - 1) (\text{Number of column} - 1)$

Observed	Expected	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
70	52.8	17.2	295.84	5.60
10	27.2	-17.2	295.84	10.88
44	62.04	-18.04	325.44	5.25
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15	13.2	-1.8	3.24	0.25
5	6.8	1.8	3.24	0.48
3	3.96	-0.96	0.92	0.23
3	2.04	0.96	0.92	0.45
				33.32

$$X^2 = 33.32$$

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Conclusion: since the computed value of Chi-square (33.32) is greater than the critical value (2.89), therefore the alternate hypothesis (H_1) "Political Violence and the Electoral Process in Nigeria cannot be improve as a way of tackling electoral malpractice in Nigeria" is Rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Having administered the questionnaires among politicians, party chieftains, INEC officials and members of the electorate in three, it has been discovered that the 2015 general election was characterized by violent activities which no doubt marred the electoral process. It was also found out that the causes of the electoral violence include unwillingness on the part of politicians to accept defeat, poor implementation of electoral laws, lack of internal democracy in the political parties lack of discipline among politicians, greed, ethno-religious intolerance, etc. These factors were brought to bear on the electoral process in Plateau State. The result of this being that peace and security which was part of the beauty of the state, have now eluded the entire state due to the frequent cases of molestation, assassination, killing, humiliation, etc. This means that the indigenes and residents of Nigerian are now obviously at daggers drawn. It has been noted that this development will not augur well for the conduct of free and fair elections in Plateau state and also for the peace and economic development in Nigeria electoral setting hence the need for urgent measures to address the situation.

In addition, Ejikemejombo N. (2015), Collection of voters' cards were be tracked online to ensure the cards get to the owners and to allow INEC to keep proper record of those who have collected their cards up to date. Voters who refuse to collect their cards before any major election should not be included in the register for such election. Since no one is allowed to vote without a permanent voter card; anyone whose card is with INEC some weeks to any

general election is definitely not ready to vote and should be removed from the register to minimize cases of inconclusive elections.

Conclusions

Indeed, the 2015 general elections re-ignited the hopes of many Nigerians who believe in the enormous potential of the country as a leader in Africa. In order to ensure to institutionalize true democracy in Nigeria, the paper has come up with recommendations. Firstly, government at all levels should ensure that electoral offenders before, during and after the elections are arrested and made to face the court of law. This will serve as deterrence to the financiers and foot soldiers that use violence to promote their political objectives. Secondly, Nigeria must improve on its existing security apparatuses in order to combat the dynamic and sophisticated 21st century security challenges. Recruitment of security personnel ought to be based on merit. Government should ensure that the funds made available to the security agencies are judiciously utilized for the acquisition of skills and the procurement of up to date equipment. Thirdly, the Government should form a platform that will accommodate all stakeholders such as the politicians, the media, civil society organizations and religious institutions at the local, state and national levels in order to sensitize and re-orientate Nigerians on peaceful co-existence and the consequences of electoral violence. This enlightenment programme should be sustained in order to help Nigerians inculcate democratic norms and values.

The electoral process in much of Africa has been marred by electoral fraud and violence in diverse ways. This paper has reflected on these ways, accounted for them as well as teased out their implications for democratic consolidation. It has been revealed that electoral violence, irrespective of diverse motives, actors, targets and forms, has been counter-productive in Africa's new democracies. Both in the short and the long run, violence threatens the democratic foundations of competition, participation and legitimacy. It also brings about the marginalization of the people in politics. The paper identifies some of the predisposing factors of electoral violence – the traditional context where issues of military cum authoritarian overhang of previous regimes and a prevailing culture of political violence feature prominently; the nature of the African state and its politics; the weak economic foundations of the democratization process, including pervasive poverty; and the weak institutionalization of democratic architectures, particularly political parties, EMBs and the judiciary.

The foregoing revelation has both research and policy implications. At the policy level, official and unofficial interventions should be geared towards redressing the conditions that make the shallow rootedness of democratic infrastructures possible. So far, this is not yet the case. In Nigeria, some of the main steps taken so far include an attempt to reform the electoral process through constituting an electoral reform panel and providing an election petition tribunal.

In Nigeria engagement has leaned more on power brokerage between the ruling party and opposition party. In both instances, the desired result is still far from crystallising (Omotola 2008). This is because these interventions do not speak directly to the heart of the problem. If anything, it has only been palliative. For example, it is not yet clear how electoral reform will alter the prevailing culture of impunity among the political class – with little or no regard for the rule of law – or how power sharing will reflect the popular wishes of the electorate in Nigeria. Their failure is exemplified by recurrent post-election violence in these countries. At

the level of research, more focus should be on the political economy of electoral violence, including its democratic pay-offs over and above compliance with the electoral laws.

Recommendation

It is believed that INEC would overcome the challenge of delay in the final collation of results if the use of electronic collation is fully implemented with all necessary legal frameworks. It will save collation officers the risk of travelling in the dead of the night to get results submitted for final collation. It would also save INEC some costs. Some of the recommendation from the research are as follows:

- The current electronic register needs to be updated due to the fact that some of the voters on the register are dead; many permanent voters' cards are yet to be collected while issues of multiple registrations have not been fully resolved. Trying to clean the register further may be very expensive and may not eventually yield the desired results.
- The weak business rule adopted which requires at least two fingerprints for inclusion in the register needs to be reviewed. Also, the high number of card readers' authentication failures calls for serious concern. In the light of all these issues raised, the call for outright abandonment of the current voters' register is imperative. It is recommended that the current register be discarded while a fresh voter's registration is conducted with more sophisticated electronic machines that would easily capture potential voter's fingerprints in a jiffy just as the ones used for the recent banks verification numbers (BVN) exercise. A licensed AFIS should be procured to rid the new registers of any occurrences of multiple registrations.
- The ICT staff of INEC should be made to undergo certification courses and training both in Nigeria and oversea. This will reduce the cost of outsourcing ICT-related tasks to consultants. It will also minimize security risk. It is also recommended that the operating system on card readers should be upgraded or another set of devices should be procured which will be able to detect and authenticate fingerprints easily.
- Furthermore, the fight against corruption, which has eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian society, should be given top priority by successive governments in Nigeria. As long as public office holders and their acolytes continue to live in stupendous wealth, political violence will remain a central feature of Nigerian politics. Again, it is high time successive governments in Nigeria invested in rapid socio-economic transformation through diversification of the economy, increase in foreign direct investment and proper management of the vast wealth of the country. Once Nigeria can attain appreciable economic development, the struggle for political power will experience a sharp decline.
- Finally, this paper has attempted to review the trends in electoral violence in Nigeria. It identified the economic interests of politicians as the major force behind electoral violence using Dialectical Materialism as its theoretical standpoint. The outcome of the 2015 polls in Nigeria is considered as the beginning of a new chapter in Nigeria. Nigeria only needs to build on the good legacies left behind by Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's administration and INEC under the chairmanship of Prof. Attahiru Jega for a brighter future.

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