



Role of education in electoral violence in Nigeria

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Abstract

Elections are one of the most important cornerstones of democracy, and they are now widely regarded as a means of legitimizing government. When an election is tainted, it invites anarchy and bloodshed in the state, which can lead to political instability. Nigerian elections had been held for almost sixty years. Despite its goal of providing for a peaceful transfer of power, Nigerian elections have a long history of significant violence. This article examined how election violence differs from other forms of organized violence, as well as how it affects citizens' educational pursuits, particularly among teenagers. This article examined the roles of educational institutions and stakeholders in reducing violence and how this will benefit the electoral system in particular, as well as Nigeria in general. In addition, the research looked at the causes and effects of election violence in Nigeria, as well as the impact of education. The impact of post-election violence on democratic stakeholders' perceptions was examined in the study. The research, among other things, recommended that strict respect to the rule of law be a crucial step toward ensuring electoral stability in Nigeria.

Keywords: education, violence, electoral violence

Introduction

Many elections, particularly those in newly formed democracies, are marred by large levels of violence throughout the campaign season, on election day, and in the aftermath. If care is not taken, electoral violence can culminate in casualty tolls that reach the threshold of civil war within days or weeks. When this happens, it has the potential to undermine years of peacekeeping and development efforts. It has the potential to sabotage educational investments and other democratic institutions, as well as spark civil conflict. Education is the cornerstone of any country's development efforts. It is a process by which all people of the state acquire the skills, information, and attitudes necessary to function as productive members of society. Education, according to Adogbeji & Oyovwe-Tinuoye (2013) ^[1], is considered as a cornerstone to individual and national development transformation. To back up this claim, the Federal Republic of Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2013) declares that education in Nigeria is a "par excellence" instrument for national development. According to Azu (2016), education is designed to help people develop their skills and abilities and reach their full potential in order to live meaningful lives. Civic education is a close notion of education that has a direct influence on citizens' education to become excellent players and law abiding citizens in the political arena, which is rounded up with election administration.

The official process of selecting a person for public offices or adopting or rejecting a political position is known as an election. According to Omotola (2007), election is a technique for selecting people to fill particular political offices through the choices of an electorate; citizens who are eligible to vote under the electoral system's rules and procedures. Elections are a well-organized mechanism of expressing people's wishes and transferring authority of mandate. When elections are performed properly, they become peaceful and non-violent.

Violence has been perceived through the eyes of several researchers from various perspectives. The use of physical force to cause injury, damage, or death is known as violence. According to Trickett, Duran, and Horn (2003) ^[38], violence is defined as behavior that is meant to harm or kill. Violence can also refer to the use of physical force with the intent of injuring or abusing someone. In another definition, violence is any act against humanity that causes or inflicts pain, whether physical, mental, psychological, or psychosocial, in order to humiliate, demean, or belittle people or structures. Violence may or may not be physical, but it usually begins as an unspoken line that is progressively drawn boldly by events. Fighting in elections, for example, begins with verbal attacks that may appear unimportant to the electorate at first.

Intra-personal, inter-personal, and mass/social violence are the three categories of violence that have been identified. Violence is destructive aggressiveness, according to Gilula and Daniels, as mentioned in Wikipedia (2010) ^[17]. The use of physical force to hurt people or property is implied by this definition of violence, which is at the heart of most definitions of violence. Any act of hostility or aggression committed before, after, or during the election process is referred to as election violence. Physically or verbally threatening those who will be voting, forcibly interrupting the election process, or even harming anyone involved in the elections are examples of these behaviors (Egobueze & Ojirika, 2017) ^[19]. Igbuzor (2009) ^[24] defines electoral violence as "any act of

violence perpetrated in the course of political activities, including pre-, during, and after election periods, and may include any of the following acts: thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations, or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral process participants, or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person involved in electoral processes."

Electoral violence can take many forms and have many varied effects, but it all has one thing in common: coercion. According to research from Africa, harassment and intimidation are more widespread than serious violence (Straus & Taylor, 2012) ^[36].

Though, in the media-based sources that underpin many of the cross-country sources capturing election violence, deadly violence is generally covered and less vulnerable to underreporting (Von-Borzyskowski & Wahman, 2019). Electoral violence is increasingly being viewed as one of the tactics elites might employ to influence electoral outcomes (Birch, 2011; Daxecker, Di-Salvatore, & Ruggeri, 2019; Van-Ham & Lindberg, 2015; Mares & Young, 2016; Norris, Frank, & Martnezi, 2015) ^[6, 15, 28]. Elections as a trigger for civil war and the possibly destabilizing repercussions of elections after a civil war were investigated further in subsequent study (Brancati & Snyder, 2013; Cheibub & Hayes, 2017; Matanock, 2017) ^[10, 12, 27], the short- and long-term electoral consequences of civil war (Costalli & Ruggeri, 2015) ^[13], and the link between political violence patterns and election cycles (Costalli & Ruggeri, 2015) ^[13]. (Goldsmith, 2015; Harish & Little, 2017) ^[18, 21]. Scholars of elections from outside the Western world have long been interested in how clientelism, vote-buying, and intimidation can be used to subvert electoral processes (Birch, 2007)

Electoral violence is distinct in that it is perpetrated by political actors with the intent of influencing the process and outcome of elections, and it includes coercive acts against people, property, and infrastructure (Bekoe, 2012; Harish & Toha, 2019) ^[22]. It can occur at any point during the electoral cycle, including election announcements, party primaries, and voter registration (Seeberg, Wah-man, & Skaaning, 2018) ^[35], and it can be facilitated by both state and non-state actors (Seeberg, Wah-man, & Skaaning, 2018) ^[35]. (Taylor, Pevehouse & Straus, 2017). Election-related violence, on the other hand, can result in considerable casualties and serve as a catalyst for civil unrest (Laakso, 2019) ^[23]. Election violence can be defined operationally as any act of violent behavior committed in the course of supporting activities, such as the use of force to disrupt political meetings and voting at polling stations, or the use of hazardous arms to threaten voters and other electoral actors, or to cause bodily harm or injury to any human being involved in the electoral process.

According to a review of relevant data sets, at least some violence occurs in a significant proportion of elections around the world (Birch, Ursula, and Höglund, 2020) ^[8]. According to data from the Countries at Risk of Election Violence (CREV), over three-quarters (78%) of elections in countries deemed to be at risk of violence have at least ten violent events (Birch & Muchlinski, 2017), whereas the Electoral Contention and Violence (ECAV) data show that more than three violent events occur in over 50% of elections, with deadly violence occurring in approximately 30% of elections (Birch & Muchlinski, 2017). (Daxecker, Amicarelli & Jung, 2019).

Nigeria's Election Background

Nigeria is a country in western Africa that is currently one of the largest countries in Africa where democracy is practiced, as well as the continent's most prosperous country by GDP. Its capital city, Abuja, has approximately 500 spoken languages and a population of 190, 9 million people in 2017. (McKenna, 2017) ^[29]. Nigeria was colonized by the United Kingdom in 1901 and became independent on October 1, 1960, making it the world's fourth-largest democracy. Nigeria's first democratic elections were held in 1999, after the country's constitution was approved (Tersoo, 2018) ^[37]. Nigerian elections for the second republic were held in July 1979. While preparing for democracy, a new constitution was established in 1989, but it was only marginally different from the previous constitution, which had been in place since 1979. Then, in July 1992, federal elections were held, with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) coming out on top. Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria's president from 1985 to 1993, has stated that he supports the country's transition to democracy, but in August, he handed over control to an interim government. This temporary government lasted only three months before being replaced by General Sani Abacha, the defense secretary. Before Nigeria could become a democracy, Abacha made it a priority to eliminate all previous political acts (Nasiru, 2014) ^[30]. Nigeria, which had previously been ruled by a military state, was commanded by Gen Abdulsalam Abubakar and handed over to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who was democratically elected by the people, on May 29, 1999. Maintaining Nigeria's stability has never been simple since its independence.

Nigeria's Electoral Violence History

The promulgation of Clifford's Constitution in 1922 marked the beginning of Nigerian elections. In 1964, the first electoral violence in post-colonial Nigeria was documented. In sections of Northern Region, Egobueze, and Ojirika, there were also violent clashes, particularly between supporters of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and supporters of other parties, primarily the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and Action Group. The United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) has decided to abstain from voting. Between the NNDP, NPC, and AG-UPGA, the Western Region became a "theater of conflict." The First Military Coup took place on January 15, 1966, as a result of the events. The First Republic came to an end with this coup.

The President of the Second Republic, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, was elected in 1979 and 1983, while the Legislators of the Second Republic were elected in 1979 and 1983, respectively. The elections were once again marred by irregularities and corruption, resulting in a wave of post-election violence. In 1993, with Babangida's

transition plan on track, a general election was held. The 1993 elections were widely regarded as the most free and fair ever held in Nigeria. The election was considered to be won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola of the Social Democratic Party. The Military Junta's annulment of the election was met with strong opposition, resulting in political upheaval. Chief Abiola declared himself President as part of the post-election unrest. This action heightened tensions and deepened instability in Nigeria until Chief MKO Abiola died and General Sani Abacha, the then-Head of State, dissolved the Interim Government led by Chief Shonekan. On the 29th of May, 1999, General Abdulsalami Abubakar assumed command and returned the country to the 4th Republic, with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as President of the Federal Republic and Commander in Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces. In practically every State of the Federation, his government orchestrated the 2003 election, which was marked by irregularities and fighting. He was turned over to President Umaru Ya'Adua, who openly denounced the 2007 election that put him in power, calling it a "flaw." President Jonathan presided over the 2015 General Election, which, like the previous one, was marred by violence.

Electoral violence, which occurs during most, if not all, elections in Nigeria, prevents good government and its ability to maintain sustainability (Gberevbie, 2014) ^[16]. Several incidents of election violence occurred in 2007. There were a slew of murder cases in the run-up to the 2007 elections. The general elections in 2011 were managed better than the general elections in 2003 and 2007, which occurred during the fourth republic. However, violence continued to occur before, during, and after the 2011 elections (Egobueze & Ojirika, 2017) ^[19]. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo stated that the elections were a "do or death" situation at the time. In other words, this incited his supporters and the rest of Nigerians to indulge in violence, which they did (Bekoe, 2017) ^[5].

Electoral Violence In Nigeria: Causes and Consequences

Bribery and the lack of a fair, lawful, and legitimate system in Nigeria could lead to electoral violence. For example, political figures who were previously involved for electoral violence have been judged not guilty and continue to live freely. They refused to accept responsibility for their crimes, and as a result, the justice system in Nigeria is failing Nigerian citizens, resulting in violence during elections (Ukwu, 2016) ^[39].

Furthermore, Nigeria is currently Africa's wealthiest country, with oil and gas accounting for the majority of its income. The rate of growth in the country is being slowed by corruption, while many people continue to suffer and government leaders live lavishly (Ani, 2014) ^[2].

In Nigeria, poverty and unemployment are other factors that contribute to electoral violence. In Nigeria, hardly many individuals live comfortably, and even fewer do so because of poverty and unemployment. Political leaders take advantage of the public's neediness and can thus easily influence them by presenting false promises in order to secure their support. Because poverty begets desperation, political leaders can take advantage of this. People are not getting what they expected in exchange for their votes, which could lead to them being beastly and aggressive. Furthermore, because unemployed young people have nothing to do at home, politicians recruit them to participate in election violence (Ukwu, 2016) ^[39].

Political transgressions are caused by a lack of adequate awareness of what politics entails. The outbreak of violent acts during elections has become the norm in Nigeria. Politicians influence the majority of young people enlisted for military service to adopt a mindset of inciting violence during electoral procedures (Ukwu, 2016) ^[39]. During election activities, they are required to intimidate voters, harm property, kill individuals, and so on. As a result, Nigerians are beginning to consider violence during election procedures. This could be due to the fact that Nigeria experienced a military coup prior to embracing democracy. It had to adjust to working in a democratic environment (Ukwu, 2016) ^[39].

The incumbent administration is responsible for electoral rigging. The executive is attempting to sway election results by utilizing state government equipment such as police, radio stations, television stations, and other government officials. In addition to the difficulties raised above, the electorate may be under-informed about topics or candidates due to a lack of press freedom or neutrality due to state or corporate domination. The state may restrict freedom of expression by favoring specific perspectives or spreading propaganda.

Gerrymandering is when a specific party or group is favored in the process of drawing electoral districts by changing district borders to gain partisan advantage from the public. The structure of an election can be modified to favor a single faction or candidate by excluding opposing candidates from running for office and changing electoral success requirements. Interfering with election campaigns is another way to instigate electoral violence. This is a situation in which those in power have the authority to arrest or assassinate candidates, suppress or even criminalize campaigning, close campaign employees, or use violence to scare voters.

One of the reasons of election violence is tampering with the electoral system. This involves falsifying voter rolls, moving polling units/booths to a remote location or in front of a favorite politician's home, mosques, or churches. Other examples include misinforming or deceiving voters about how to vote, violating the secret ballot, falsifying results, and using physical force or verbal intimidation at polling stations. People in Nigeria have an attitude that any election held in the country will be rigged. This is owing to their painful experience with rigging in party primary elections and elections run by various electoral commissions at the state and federal levels. This idea has had a significant impact on the acceptability of any election results.

Controlling election violence through political education

The inability of society to distinguish between good and bad options, as well as right and incorrect moral decisions, results in a consensus for political violence (Ikoya, 2007; Omoteso, 2010) ^[25, 10]. Coleman (1968) ^[11] saw political education as a process through which people develop attitudes and feelings about their roles based on what they know, feel, and sense. The educational system is one of the units involved in the inculcation and induction of political beliefs and behavior, which begins at birth but is most prominent during formative years and continues far into adulthood. Political education, according to Freire (1985) ^[20], is political indoctrination that promotes human rights, participation, and the rule of law, as well as accountability, responsibility, and transparency government. He went on to argue that democracy and political education are critical for social growth because they ensure that the democratic process is dependent on the state-society interaction.

Parents and guardians must model positive attitudes for their children, particularly in the areas of love, security, acceptance, and positive reinforcement. Parents must urge their children to speak up if they see or hear something that is wrong or could endanger others. This is linked to the issue of parents monitoring their children's behavior to ensure that they are not imitating the wrong models. Children who have been exposed to aggression, for example, are likely to be in the forefront of political/election violence. School administrators must respond quickly to student complaints and maintain discipline, particularly in the areas of truancy, cultism, and bullying, as these behaviors can escalate into violence if not appropriately addressed. Parents and teachers must monitor their children's financial management, leisure activities, social interactions, and many other aspects of their lives to ensure that they are doing the right things and are not exposed to a violent environment. Counseling services for youths with psychological and behavioral issues must be created across the country.

Nigerian electoral violence resolutions

Electoral violence in Nigeria has been continuing since before the country transitioned to a democratic administration and continues to this day. There are a few methods that could assist Nigerian election violence be entirely eradicated, and they are as follows:

1. Nigeria's judiciary must gain independence in order to function more efficiently and effectively. Because the executive branch of government financially supports the judicial branch, its ability to make decisions is limited or regulated to some extent. As a result, if the judiciary acquires independence, it will be able to take action against those who perpetrate electoral violence during elections.
2. Another method to cope with electoral violence in Nigeria is to give our teeming youths job possibilities, not necessarily white collar jobs. People would be able to engage in farming, petty commerce, and other small-scale commercial operations with the support of soft loans. The majority of the military commanders committing election violence in Nigeria are unemployed young (Nathan, Winderman, Brooke, Ezemenari, & Reitzel) (2017) ^[30]. As a result, even if they had jobs, they would be preoccupied with other matters rather than focusing on or participating in violent activities during electoral procedures. Political leaders must also be educated and well-versed in the areas of elections and politics (Kalu & Gberevbie, 2018) ^[26].
3. Another strategy to reduce violence in Nigerian politics is through political education. Students would receive instruction in citizenship education at school, allowing them to learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Nigerians need to educate themselves about politics as one of the most important answers to election violence in the country. They must realize that violence is not the solution to all of their political problems. This education could start as early as elementary school, so that the youth can grow up knowing how to deal with political procedures. Political education is critical for everyone in Nigeria to gain information of how to improve the way elections are conducted in order to promote peaceful coexistence. People should be informed about the roots and origins of politics, as well as the rising inclinations and drifts of politics within and around them, not to mention political methods of social integration. Nigerians who educate themselves on such topics contribute to democratic stability and effective government (Obakhedo, 2011) ^[33].
4. Continuous monitoring and instruction are required. Election-related violence frequently occurs before the polls open. Politicians are always possible targets of political violence in some locations. Citizens may feel compelled to express their political opinions openly and freely, participate in public debates, and organize themselves politically. The repercussions of such an unstable climate include problems in holding officials accountable, in addition to constraints on political rights.

Conclusion

Political authorities must boost up efforts to promote open and honest discourse, particularly in areas where ethnic divisions are particularly deep. Women and young people must be encouraged to run for office in fair and transparent elections. Youth activism and the promotion of social justice must be seen as a rallying cry for politicians to remember why they are running and fighting for. Youth programs with a wide range of goals must be pursued so that youngsters participate in civic processes, academic enrichment, and community-based youth organizations, all of which contribute to their development and empowerment. When youth activism is used correctly, it produces beneficial benefits and minimizes political violence.

Recommendation

The following ideas are given in order to keep Nigeria's progress going.

1. The government should take all necessary precautions to prevent all types of electoral violence, and police and other law enforcement agencies should attempt to handle the situation when it occurs.
2. Political education should be prioritized in order to educate voters on what it takes to hold free and fair elections.
3. To provide education that respects the rights of others, the educational system should incorporate citizenship education in school curricula at all levels of education.

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