

The Role of Youth in Eradicating Electoral Violence in The Nigeria's Forthcoming 2019 General Election

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Abstract:

The study was undertaken to ascertain the role of youth in eradicating electoral violence in the Nigeria's forthcoming 2019 general election. It was discovered that electoral violence has brought a lot of conflicts in Nigeria among ethnics, religions tribes, nations and also the youth as the key actors of electoral violence suffered a consequences of involvement in the violence as many are wounded and even killed, their future growth is negatively affected and their leadership inheritance is destroyed by destroying themselves and the system, the youths are costing Nigeria both present and future credible leadership. In core, the main objective of democracy and good governance is defeated. The study suggested that Part-time employment for youth, through support to income generation and cash for work activities, existence of peace dialogues, through training community leaders in peace building skills and funding of the dialogues, which were found to be connected with greater freedom of movement, participation in self-help groups, via training in leadership and group management skills, collective action among youth, such as community reconstruction projects. The several influential factors emerged from the study that warrant greater consideration. Political inequality: Youth who believe that their group has less influence in politics than others are more likely to approve of and engage in electoral violence, civic engagement: Youth who take action to try to address governance problems are less likely to engage in or be disposed towards electoral violence. The forms of civic engagement measured comprise joining with others to raise issues, calling in to radio shows, and making

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complaints to government officials. Governance: Nigerian youth's perceptions of national and local government performance are consistently low, but were not found to directly influence their likelihood to condone or participate in electoral violence. Rather, the main factor related to risk of engagement in violence appears to be their access to established channels to voice their grievances regarding governance issues. These findings reinforce the points consistently raised by youth Nigerian that their exclusion from political processes and marginalization from having a say in decisions affecting their lives are major sources of their alienation and anger, and potential push factors toward electoral violence but by the recent signed of not too young to run bill such issues will be minimal.

Keywords: Youth, Political and Electoral Violence, Eradicating Electoral Violence,

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INTRODUCTION

Electoral violence is defined as an acts or threats of coercion, intimidation, or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process or that arises in the context of electoral competition. When perpetrated to affect an electoral process, violence may be employed to influence the process of elections – such as efforts to delay, disrupt, or derail a poll – and to influence the outcomes: the determining of winners in competitive races for political office or to secure approval or disapproval of referendum questions.

As Timothy Sisk (2008) points out above this is considerably broader than the presence of physical violence: it is the range of activities aimed at subverting the will of ordinary citizens to freely exercise their choice.

Electoral violence is a sub-type of political violence in which actors employ coercion in an instrumental way to advance their interests or achieve specific political ends. Similarly, societies prone to experiencing election-related violence are normally vulnerable to broader kinds of political violence.

Electoral violence includes acts, such as assassination of opponents or spontaneous fistcuffs between rival groups of supporters and threats, coercion, and intimidation of opponents, voters, or election officials. Threat and intimidation is a form of coercion that is just as powerful as acts of violence can be. Indeed, one purpose of acts of terrorism such as tossing a grenade into a crowd of rival supporters is an act diabolically designed to induce fear and to intimidate (e.g., to suppress mobilization or voting by that group).

Violent acts can be targeted against people or things, such as the targeting of communities or candidates or the deliberate destruction of campaign materials, vehicles, offices, or ballot boxes.

The youth are induced to threaten or unleash violence as a means to achieve electoral and political success. The elites are responsible for arming the youth, who mostly are political thugs to manipulate electoral outcomes, kidnap or kill political opponents, threaten and intimidate electorates, destroying lives and properties, as electoral processes are disrupted.

In 2007, Nigeria Watch, a research group, produced the first Annual Report on public violence, (2006-2007) in Nigeria. The research was based on data collated between 1st June 2006 and 31st May 2007. The report stated that 6,556 deaths out of the 1,721 incidents occurred. The report highlighted accidents, crime, economic issues, political clashes and ethno-religious fighting as the main causes of the deaths in Nigeria. The statistics were graphically presented. Some of these would interest us here today. However, the focus would remain on the topic of the day – electoral violence. Politics from the first graph is the third (3rd) as one of the major causes of public violence in Nigeria. However, the incidence of political violence is much greater as depicted by the subsequent graphs. A sharper analysis shows that political fighting is the leading cause of public violence.

In contemporary democracies, elections are acceptable means of electing leaders, an important process that strengthens democratic institutions and facilitate peaceful transition of power(Ugiagbe, 2010). However, in Nigeria all elections conducted since her independence in 1960 have been characterized by widespread violence, intimidation, bribery and

corruption. Muhammed (2010) reported that the prevalence of one political violence or the other has been the mainstay of elections in Nigeria with youths as the major actors in the theatre of electoral violence and that such violence have assumed a serious dimension.

Electoral violence according to the International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES) is any act or threat of physical or psychological harm to a person or damage to property, directed at anyone directly involved in an electoral process (voters, candidates, party officers, election workers, election monitors, journalists, etc.) which may disrupt or attempt to disrupt any aspect of the electoral process (Fischer, 2002).

Electoral violence could therefore be described as a pre- meditated act that intends to influence the electoral process using foul language, verbal intimidation, blackmail, dangerous weapons, arson and assassination. (Bamfo 2008).At the receiving end of political violence are human beings, place or thing or data. Ugiagbe (2010) submits that acts associated with electoral violence include physical harm, (homicide, torture, assault), threats (physical, verbal, intimidation; destruction of property), arson, damage from dangerous objects, forced displacement and ballot box snatching.

Usman (2009) identified five major common grounds of electoral violence; these are during registration, during political campaigns, on election Day, when results are announced, winner takes all syndrome. In their own study, Onwudiwe & Bernard (2010) describe the pattern of electoral violence in Nigeria as intra party feuding, interparty clashes, electoral events, violence and community unrest while Ugbaigbe (2010) opines that electoral violence do manifest in the three electoral stages namely, pre-election, during election and post election stages.

The objective of electoral violence is to influence the electoral process with the sole aim to win political competition or power through violence or subverting the ends of the electoral and democratic process through intimidation and disempowerment of political opponents. The increased involvement of Nigerian youths in electoral violence should be of concern to all. Defining youths has been a little bit controversial, different authors define it in the context in which the word-youth is used.

United Nations Children Education Fund UNICEF (1972) sees youth as those within age bracket 15-25years Johnson cited in Abhuere (2000) asserts that while leadership programs have no upper age limit, their membership covers people of over 35-45years old, and for the purpose of this study youth refers to anyone between the ages of 18 and 45 years. Several reasons have been given for electoral violence in Nigeria. Ugbaigbe (2010) is of the view that poverty, ignorance, unemployment, inequitable distribution of natural resources, arms proliferation as well as lack of political will power to prosecute perpetrators of electoral violence are some of the major causes of electoral violence in Nigeria. Gilmore (2007), identified poverty as one of the causes of electoral violence. Usman (2009) reported that electoral violence is paid for by godfathers and politicians. In another report by Onwudiwe and Berwind (2010), they identified factors that promote electoral violence in Nigeria to include dissatisfaction with government performance, competition for resources, inter and intra group distrust, joblessness and unscrupulous attitude of politicians with little or no respect for the rule of law.

In another study by Adeoye & Muhammed (2005) confirm that the alarming rate of youth violence between 1999 and 2004 arose from problems such as poverty, economic frustration, resulting especially from widespread of unemployment among young people, political conflicts as well government's failure to punish perpetrators of violence. Without any doubt, electoral violence has negative impact on the individual, family, the polity and the nation as a whole. Salvetti (2009) opines that development cannot take place where there is no peace while to Obateru (2008), violence leads to loss of lives, loss of property and displacement of people.

Electoral violence also impacts negatively on human development; destroys social relationships, scares away investors and retards all ramifications of development in the country (Muhammed 2010). Ugbaigbe (2010) affirms that electoral violence leads to political instability, insecurity and a cycle of violence while Usman (2009) concludes that electoral violence affects the credibility of the democratic system, erodes the credibility of the rule of law and threatens the continued existence of Nigeria as a nation. In view of the negative consequences of electoral violence and the increase in the involvement of youth it therefore becomes imperative to identify the various factors that predispose Nigerian youths to electoral violence and ways of eradicating the violence in the forthcoming 2019 general election.

Understanding the Youths

Youth is a difficult concept to explain; many people see it quite differently. However, the United Nations' Organisation defines "youth as persons between the age of 15 and 24" (Obebode, 2011). On the economic rating and production within the system, Professor Akpan H. Ekpo, an economist defined youths as persons between the ages of 17 and 35 years. In this connection, they are supposed or in fact are strong as well as being able to give and take the best society can offer. The Nigerian Constitution defines youths as people between the ages of 18 and 30 years. That explains the fact that at 18 years, one can contest or vote for or file for an elective position or office in governance. In the areas of interaction, the World Football Body, Federation of International Football Association FIFA defines youths as people between the ages of 17 and 20 years (Niyi, 2011; Ekpo, 2011; FIFA, 1985; Nigeria Constitution).

Violence

Having defined youth, it is pertinent to define violence and restate what in specific constitutes youth violence. The word violence like youth lends itself to different interpretations. To avoid confusion in defining and reviewing the term 'violence' in this study, we shall use the use of Corsini's (1999) definition which sees violence more as "the expression of hostility and rage through physical force directed against a person or property".

Election

Election is an integral part of a democratic process that enables the citizenry determine fairly and freely who should lead them at every level of government periodically and take decisions that shape their socio-economic and political destiny; and in case they falter, still possess the power to recall them or vote them out in the next election. This was why Rose (1978) and Dye (2001) aptly defined election thus: Election is a major instrument for the recruitment of political leadership in democratic societies; the key to participation in a democracy; and the

way of giving consent to government (Dye, 2001); and allowing the governed to choose and pass judgment on office holders who theoretically represent the governed (Rose, 1978).

Political violence

Political violence are a sum total of violence that are associated with the political process. It could come from within or outside the country, and manifests in various forms. A summation of the array of definitions in the literature see political violence as the use or threat of physical act or a considerable destructive use of force carried out by an individual or group of individuals within a political system against another individual or group of individuals and/or property, with the intent to cause injury or death to persons and/or damage to property, and whose objective, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances implementation and effects have political significance, that is intended to modify the behaviour of others in the existing arrangements of a power structure; or directed to a change in the politics, systems, territory of government and hence also directed to changes in the lives of individuals within societies (Honderich, 1989; Anifowose, 1982; see Edigin and Obakhedo, 2010).

Electoral Violence

Electoral violence, while not a Nigeria or an Africa-specific phenomenon, is more pronounced on the continents. Globally, it is estimated that violence occurs in roughly 19 percent of elections, with riots and protests accompanying approximately 14 percent of elections. In contrast, violence and intimidation occur in approximately 58percent of elections in Africa which Nigeria is included.

The persistence of electoral violence, even in less deadly forms, may have a significant effect on the development of democracy on a continent and a country where democracy as we know it is a relatively new phenomenon. Complicating things even further, democracy advocates often encourage the adoption of multiparty elections as a means of reducing conflict and promoting political stability.

Democracy is often believed to present a peaceful alternative to autocratic rule. Whereas in autocracies there are no mechanisms for the population to influence government behavior short of rebellion or an overthrow of the government, democracy allows individuals periodic opportunities to communicate their preferences to their leaders through regularly scheduled elections. As such, many argue that democratic regimes should be more stable and less violent than autocratic regimes. In the early 2000s, however, researchers such as Snyder (2000) and Fischer (2002) began to take note of the propensity for new democracies and postconflict countries to experience significant violence either as part of a nation-building exercise or as a consequence of fraudulent and untrusted processes. In 2009, Paul Collier concluded that pseudo democratic countries, ones in which elections are held but without any of the other substantive features of democracy such as a free press and adherence to the rule of law, often experience more generalized political violence than some of their autocratic counterparts.

Electoral violence is a subset of political violence but it has several distinct features that differentiate it from other forms of political violence. It differs in terms of its timing and intent namely, influencing electoral outcomes. Coups, rebellions, and repression all take place with no regard to electoral processes. In a 2009 article, Höglund makes this particular distinction,

arguing that differences in motive, timing, actors, activities, and targets allow us to separate electoral violence from these other forms of political violence. This point is not trivial as the motivation and means of electoral violence are unique to its ends. Electoral violence intends to affect the outcome of an election; political violence intends to affect a variety of political outcomes ranging from specific policy decisions to outright regime change. Additionally, the timing and motive of electoral violence is tied to scheduled elections and as such is inherently more predictable but also potentially more persistent since elections are by nature recurring.

Electoral violence encompasses any intimidating or harassing action that is directly related to the electoral process. It may take place prior to an election, on Election Day, or immediately after an election has taken place, often as a result of the announcement of the outcome. The definition of electoral violence includes a range of behaviors that includes: the distribution of hate-speech leaflets, the forced displacement of specific groups of voters, political assassinations, and targeted violent attacks. It also encompasses protests and riots that occur as a direct result of elections. Although seemingly disparate acts, these behaviors have one thing in common they are meant to affect the outcome of an election through force.

Electoral violence is distinct from other forms of politicized violence in that actors use the existing electoral framework in order to achieve their goals. For example, a coup d'état, a common form of political violence, is focused at the elite level and involves the forced removal of a party or individual from political power. Actors generally have no regard for existing laws and as such it is an unpredictable and extrajudicial act. Electoral violence, however, works within existing and established timelines to achieve the acquisition of political power. Electoral violence also shifts the focus from elite level actors to include voters as potential targets of violence.

History of electoral violence in Nigeria

The nation's political history is replete with instances of electoral violence.

Since Nigeria became independent on October 1, 1960 with pomp and pageantry, the history of elections has been written in violence. The Human Rights Watch (2007) in its follow up of post-independence events describes the nation's post-independence history as being overshadowed by the depredations of a series of corrupt, abusive, and unaccountable governments. This description is apt because it appeared that Nigerians seem to have acquired a culture of electoral violence as eight of the nine general elections conducted since independence in 1960 have been violence-ridden – 1964/1965, 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 (Malu, 2009). For example, at independence, the country adopted a parliamentary system of government akin to the British type.

The first post-independence election organized by that government led by Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa \ President Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1964 and 1965 were characterized by widespread complaints of fraud, violence and intimidation (Osaghae, 1998). Protest in the wake of the regional elections, which in some areas degenerated into a violent exercise in competitive rigging, led to widespread violence and inter-communal rioting that claimed more than 200 lives (Anifowose, 1982; HRW, 2007), and later in January 1966, the military struck and the fledging Nigerian democracy was thwarted by the action of its very own practitioners.

From 1966, the military held sway until 1979 when they handed over to another civilian government headed by Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). The Shagari-led government organized a civilian to civilian transition election but again like its First Republic counterparts repeated history and massively rigged the 1983 general elections through very violent means in connivance with the election management body, Federal Election Commission (FEDECO) and security forces.

That again set the stage for the second wave of military intervention in the nation's politics on December 31, 1983. The military from then remained in power until May 29, 1999 after several attempts to democratize. Suffice it to say that between independence in 1960 and 1999 when civilian rule was restored, Nigeria produced only two elected governments and both were overthrown in military *coup de'tats* before completing a second term in office. All told, Nigeria's military ruled the country for nearly 30 of its first 40 years of independence, excluding the three months of short-lived Interim National Government (ING) (HRW, 2007).

Since the restoration of civil rule, attempts have not been made by politicians to deepen and strengthen democracy. Instead, Nigeria has only added to its history of fraudulent and violent elections. The 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 general elections that brought President Olusegun Obasanjo, late President Umaru Yar' Adua, Good luck Ebele Jonathan and president Muhammad Buhari to power were marred by such widespread violence and fraud. For example, this was how the US-based Jimmy Carter Centre for Democracy which monitored the 1999 election as an international observer concluded its report on the outcome of the presidential election like the others before it: It is not possible for us to make an accurate judgment about the outcome of the presidential election (HRW, 2007). In the same vein, the 2003 elections were more pervasively and openly rigged than the flawed 1999 polls, and far more bloody.

These events set the stage for the 2007 elections which both domestic and foreign observers succinctly described as the worst in Nigeria's history ranking among the worst conducted anywhere in the world in recent times (HRW's interviews with voters and observers on the April 2007 elections). For instance, the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) stated in its post-election statement that the electoral process "failed the Nigerian people" (NDI, 2007). The Human Rights Watch (2007) which monitored the election in its report said the Nigeria's failed April 2007 polls cast a harsh and very public light on patterns of violence, corruption and outright criminality that have come to characterize Nigeria's political system and on the extent to which officials and institutions at all levels of government accept, encourage and participate in those abuses (HRW, 2007). The 2007 general elections had come and gone with some cases still in courts, Nigerians are afraid of future elections especially the 2011 elections that are a stone throw away.

Types of Electoral Violence

Electoral violence can be subdivided into its different forms based on intent, method, timing, target, and actors. Table 1.1 outlines a basic typology of electoral violence. Assuming the likely motivation of the actors, we can separate electoral violence into two distinct categories: incidental and strategic and the strategic is also divided into suppressive or mobilizing and Disruptive.

Table 1.1 Types of Electoral Violence

Type	Methods	Timing	Perpetrators
<i>Incidental</i>	Protests, Riots	Before, Day of, After	Opposition members, Protesters, Security forces
<i>Strategic: Suppressive or Mobilizing</i>	Threats, Physical attacks, Assassinations, Bombings, Forced displacement	Before, Day of	Politicians and their agents
<i>Strategic: Disruptive</i>	IEDs, Bombings, Riots	Before, Day of, After	Actors excluded or marginalized from the electoral process

Incidental electoral violence occurs as a product of protest around electoral events, either before or after an election. It takes place when tensions are heightened and groups from opposing sides.

Strategic electoral violence, on the other hand, is pre-planned. It is deliberately employed to affect the outcome of an election. Strategic electoral violence can be used for a multiplicity of electoral purposes including suppressing voter intention, mobilizing voter support, or disrupting an election altogether. The first two types of strategic electoral violence, suppressive and mobilizing, can be conceived as part of a larger electoral strategy a candidate or party employs in an attempt to deliberately affect an outcome. Although some argue that electoral violence is primarily meant to suppress voter turnout, I present evidence that shows that violence has been used to suppress turnout as well as to mobilize voters. Both activities can achieve the same goal: the distortion of citizen preference so as to reduce the competitiveness of an election and win office.

Disruptive violence is meant to prevent a vote from taking place or to change an already-announced outcome. The perpetrators may be marginalized electoral actors seeking to expand their influence beyond the agreed upon electoral arena.

Actors outside of the electoral process, such as rebel groups or terrorist organizations, also perpetrate disruptive electoral violence. In Nigeria the terrorist organization Boko Haram

was accused of engaging in electoral violence as a means of discouraging voters from participating in the 2011 and 2015 and also the forthcoming 2019 elections.

Grounds for Electoral Violence

There five grounds in which electoral violence can be perpetrated. (Usman 2009)

- T. During registration
- U. During campaigns
- V. On Election Day
- W. When results are announced
- X. Winner take all syndrome

- 1) During registration, when both the ruling or opposing parties attempts to hijack the voter registration to enable falsification or double registration as pre-rigging mechanism
- 2) During campaigns, electoral violence can occur as rivals seek to disrupt the opponents' campaigns, intimidate and threaten candidates, party officials or/and supporters. This has been the most common venue of electoral violence.
- 3) During balloting on Election Day, threats and violence at the polling station might be use as tactics to influence participation in the voting or to steal ballot boxes.
- 4) Electoral outcomes, disputes over election results might trigger violence in protests
- 5) Winner take all syndrome in Nigeria elections. Loser might resort to violence to disrupt, delay or influence representation to avoid "zero sum" where "losers" are completely excluded in governance, despite their 'huge investments'.

Actors of Electoral Violence

1. Political godfathers
2. Aspirants
3. Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) (electoral officials, civil servants, judiciary and technocrats used during elections)
4. Ethnic militias
5. Area boys
6. Students
7. Vigilante groups
8. Criminal gangs
9. State security agencies

Stages of electoral violence

The electoral violence can be perpetrated in three stages, namely: Pre-election, during election and post-election.

In theory, strategic pre-election violence is meant to influence voter behavior (namely vote choice and/or voter turnout) before an election. Displacement, intimidation, and targeted political assassinations are the most frequent tactics used to influence an electoral outcome through suppression or mobilization; however, if pre-election violence were to become too

pervasive, too obvious, and perhaps too deadly, it could derail an election altogether as the government or even external actors would be expected to intervene. If the goal is electoral disruption, this is not a problem but if the goal is to strategically influence voter behavior and hence, an outcome in favor of one candidate or party over another, violence entrepreneurs must find an equilibrium that achieves influence but does not require immediate attention or intervention.

In contrast, post-election violence occurs after an election and is used as a way to either punish victors and their supporters or, if strategically employed, used to force victors into negotiations with losers to share political power. Because this method is extra-judicial and outside of the purview of the accepted rules of the electoral game, levels of violence must reach such a level that it forces action on the part of the winning party. As such, election violence after the fact should be significantly more intense than violence that takes place before an election.

The inherent desire to evade punishment, even if it is a remote possibility due to weak criminal justice systems, often makes the exact measurement and quantification of electoral violence difficult. Thus it is necessary to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches in the study of electoral violence.

Thus the postelection violence can be considered disruptive as it resulted in the use of extra-judicial means to force a change in the outcome of the elections and how elections are conducted in the future. All of these types and stages of electoral violence can take place within a single election,

The Models of Youth Participation in Electoral Violence

Murphy's four models of youth participation in political violence illuminate the argument further.

The first is the **Coerced youth model** which views youth as being brutally coerced into violence and thus as being passive victims. This model has very little applicability to the electoral violence conundrum in Nigeria, but it can mostly be used to explain youth engagement in political instabilities like civil wars and other protracted conflicts, for instance, when young people are abducted as child soldiers and forced to commit heinous war-time acts like murders, looting etc.

The second is the **Revolutionary youth model** which views youth as rebelling against political and economic marginalization. This type of approach is motivated by propositions like that of Lindberg (2010), who argues that the use of violence and exclusionary tactics against an obviously flawed electoral processes have in many cases stimulated increased vigilance and unity among reformers, as well as increased determination by international actors to have an impact on the nature of the regime.

The third is the **delinquent youth model** which views youth participants in violent conflicts not as revolutionary idealists but as alienated and economically dispossessed opportunists exploiting the economic spoils of social and political turmoil. In this case, young people engage in violence in defence of no higher ideal, but rather for the heady adventure of violence itself.

The fourth is the **youth Clientelism model** which emphasizes how youth manage their dependency and agency within an institutional structure of repressive patrimonialism in which their subordination to adults is based on a cruel mixture of brutality, personal benevolence and reciprocity. This model uses institutions built through client-patron relations to explain youth agency in violence.

THE CAUSES OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

There are many reasons behind the constant recurrence of electoral violence. All the actors of electoral violence have different compelling force inducing them to involve themselves in electoral violence. The following are to mention just a few (Usman 2009)

1. Financial Inducement

More often than not political violence is paid for, used as a tool by prominent Nigerians to bolster their own political and financial positions. Virtually, the bulk of the causes of electoral violence in Nigeria are financial. Every active participant of electoral violence, aim to gain one thing or the other, here are five (5) causes under financial inducement.

a. The Plum of Office

Political offices in Nigeria are too attractive. The ostentation lifestyle of political officeholders is a great stimulus for those outside to go to any length to win election including using electoral violence. While those in power also try to maintain their seats by hook or crook. This excessive display of authority and the paraphernalia of office made those in government seem to be untouchable tin gods. Their impunity from the harsh realities those outside government face is one the greatest attraction of going to every length including electoral violence to maintain or wrench away power.

b. Attraction of Official Lucre

Greed cut across all the four actors of electoral violence – instigators, collaborators, implementers and retaliators. Selfish desire and lack of accountability and transparency as a short cut to becoming wealthy once elected into government is a major catalyst of indulging into electoral violence. Thus politicians see government as big business where they invest little and reap huge profit after winning elections.

In an attempt to win elective offices, politicians and their agents often induce electoral officials, law enforcement agents and other influential stakeholders in the system with financial and material gifts, all in the bid to subvert the

The lack of adequate knowledge or information on politics, particularly electoral processes, coupled with low level of education, the high level of deprivation and impoverishments of the Nigerian youths, force many to take the readily available 'job opportunity' – implementers of electoral violence. These conditions easily play the gullible youths into the hands of unscrupulous politicians, who manipulate them by dangling irresistible baits for the youths to undertake electoral violence, despite the attendant aftermath of violence. The aftermath could be denial of education and other capacity development training for the youths, a vicious circle that also causes another round of electoral violence. The worst is that over 99% of promises made to the youths by the instigators are never fulfilled. Yet, these youth go back to the same instigators again and again over paltry sum and electoral violence continue.

d. Monetization of Elective Offices and Godfatherism

Elective offices in Nigeria have become mere commodities to be purchased by the highest bidder. Thus, those who 'invest' in them, use all the means at his disposal to secure winning

the election as an avenue to recoup and make profits. Potential aspirants therefore, monetise whichever office they intend to contest. The godfather then steps in and finances the candidate. The sole aim for both the aspirant and the godfather is to win by all means that is where electoral violence comes into play. In this case, no amount is too much to use in instigating electoral violence, even expending the lives of opponents and valueless youths. e. Sit-Tight Syndrome

Having enjoyed the plum and paraphernalia of office, as well as the impunity attached to their positions, incumbents use state resources and machinery at their disposal to maintain power. Everybody is either seen as a resource or an enemy. All the EMBs are influenced and manoeuvred to rig election in favour of the government of the day. Security operatives as the most effective instrument of coercion in accomplishing this selfish ambition is brazenly implored or bribed. They are deployed to harass, intimidate, arrest and physically terrorize opponents. For other reasons too, the opposition do not take this laying down. Thus, clashes results into electoral violence.

2. Election Management Bodies (EMBs) Breach of Trust

Election Management Bodies (EMBs) are the electoral umpires. In the case of Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security forces, political parties, the media, civil society organizations and judicial officials are all EMBs. The EMBs are responsible for providing election security. Election security is the process of protecting electoral stakeholders such as voters, candidates, poll workers, media and observers; electoral information such as vote results, registration data and campaign material; electoral facilities such as polling stations and counting centres; and electoral events such as campaign rallies against death, damage or disruption. In all ramifications – the rule of law, respect for human rights, democracy, good governance and morality, the EMBs should discharge their duties and responsibilities honestly, transparently, fairly and impartially to all electoral stakeholders without fear or favour. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, almost all the EMBs are found short in the discharge of the constitutional and civic responsibilities. Their brazen approach to electoral matters is a significant cause of electoral violence. a. Electoral Body

When electoral officials, as collaborators allow themselves to be influenced or manipulated by politicians, definitely the opposing camps react spontaneously. Sadly the common language known as a reaction is electoral violence. Impartial electoral body could be a source of electoral conflict in any nation. No matter the financial independence enjoyed by the electoral body, when it is seen not to be neutral or impartial in the way it conducts its activities in Nigeria, it is bound to create a lot of dissatisfaction that may subsequently lead to crisis.

b. Law Enforcement Agencies

Past elections in Nigeria had clearly shown the bias position of some security agencies, who are supposed to be absolutely neutral and impartial in supervising the system to ensure fair play and security of life and properties. But they are obviously found to be active collaborators in subverting the process. In most cases, they succumb to government influence, collect bribe to harass and intimidate voters. More so, they provide cover for electoral officials and politicians to destroy electoral materials, intimidate voters, or fully engage in electoral violence just to rig elections. These actions give rise to protests and subsequent violence by aggrieved individuals and parties. c. Judiciary and Election Tribunals

Civilization provides an avenue to seek redress in the event of electoral disputes. This implies that even in normal circumstances, genuine electoral disputes might occur. The law provides that if people feel dissatisfied with the electoral process, as law abiding citizens, they are expected to follow legitimate means of seeking redress through election tribunals. In Nigeria the judiciary through election tribunals are the main organs saddled with the responsibilities of resolving election disputes. The judiciary is therefore the last hope for resolving any electoral disputes. For this reason, the way and manner electoral tribunals handle electoral disputes contribute in stemming or aggravating electoral violence. So when the judiciary fails to deliver judgment in accordance to the law and the electorate feels that the ruling was not fair, unbiased and impartial, the aftermath could be electoral violence. d. The Media

The role of the media also as an unbiased and impartial umpire goes a long way in preventing or triggering electoral violence. So the media might become a source of conflict generation when they succumb to influence of selfish politicians who would want to use their outfits as propaganda launch pad. The media is a causative instrument for electoral violence if they indulge in campaign of calumny, mudslinging, defamation or slanderous attack on other political actors. This is a sure cause of electoral violence.

3. Religious and Ethnic Sentiment

Religion and ethnicity are two very sensitive issues that unpatriotic elements effectively use to their selfish purposes. Either one or both religious or ethnic cards are used, depending on the one that favours the instigator. The bait for the simpleton youths is that the worst candidate of your like is better the best candidate outside your religion or tribe. Sometimes places of worships are turned into campaign grounds for candidates. The support of religious and community leaders are sought, once that is achieved, their followers fall in place like a pack of cards. These practices greatly threaten the very fabric of our national unity and integration. Qualities of merit like competency, honesty, integrity, trust and credibility would not be put into cognizance. Such a candidate on merit would not win as such he has to resort to acts of electoral violence. No sooner would they ascend the throne would they turn against the same youths that supported them through electoral violence, yet during another election they go back to the same people with the same story.

The Consequences of Electoral Violence

Electoral violence has serious wholesome consequences for democracy, respect for human rights and good governance as already highlighted in the opening pages. Electoral violence affects the entire credibility of the democratic system, human security and wanton destruction of properties. Electoral violence also erodes the credibility of the rule of law and impact negatively in democratic activities.

One of the consequences of Youths involvement in electoral violence is legitimising and perpetuating the vicious circle of the existing culture of corruption of public office holders. They must secure the financial means by which they would finance another round of electoral violence to either maintain power or to force power shift. Therefore as a result of electoral violence the capacity of government to deliver social services like maintaining roads, providing electricity, water, schools and health systems, has drastically reduced or are even completely non existent or ineffective(Usman 2009).

Apart from these, the youths themselves are being destroyed in three main ways. One, many are wounded and even killed in some of these violent acts. For every young person killed by electoral violence, an estimated 20– 40 receive injuries that require hospital treatment. In some cases, the ratio is even greater. Two, their future is negatively affected. Instead of being engaged in productive ventures that would prepare them for future leadership and productive adult lives they are rather engaged in violent activities that destroys them. Third, by engaging in electoral violence, Nigerian youths are helping to erode confidence in democratic system, which is suppose to help in grooming the youths to take over the mantle of leadership. By destroying themselves and the system, the youths are costing Nigeria both present and future credible leadership. There is a widening gap between 'rebellious' youths and adults, which is a bigger threat to the future leadership of the Nigerian state. This leads to the emergence of mediocre leaders in politics and government because honest, God fearing and credible leaders who can provide the required leadership are either destroyed or scared away from participation. Basically, the government would not be accountable to the people, rather corruption, dictatorship, nepotism and related features of mal-administration take the order of the day. In essence, the main objective of democracy and good governance is defeated.

While death, injury, displacement, and property damage are the most obvious effects of electoral violence, the most widespread impact arguably relates to increased fear and heightened perceptions of insecurity among civilians. Massive internal displacement has also occurred due to electoral violence in some cases like Jos, plateau state, Ihima local government area of Kogi State, Ukwale local government area of Delta State, and Asakio local government area of Nasarawa State. Electoral violence is also responsible for massive disruption of socio-economic activities across the country. Most victims of electoral violence lose their businesses to looting and their homes are often destroyed and many sink into poverty.

Electoral violence also erodes positive social capital across Nigeria's political landscape. Long years of peaceful co-existence and flourishing socio-economic ties between different ethnic, religious and communal groups has given way to bitter armed confrontation within and between political, religions and ethnic communities. Politics is supposed to enhance positive relationship marked by inter-group networks, co-operation and trust. But electoral violence instead destroys this and supplants bitter mistrust, suspicion and confrontation.

Again after those who are employed to perpetrate electoral violence lost their "jobs" when the election crises are over, they readily engage in other criminal activities as a means of survival. Thus electoral violence aided in emboldening criminals, bandit activities and secret cults, to continue terrorising the nation. This also results in another vicious circle of considerable deaths and injuries.

Apart from these, the youths themselves are being destroyed in three main ways.

1. Many are wounded and even killed
2. Their future development is negatively affected.
3. Their leadership inheritance is destroyed

By destroying themselves and the system, the youths are costing Nigeria both present and future credible leadership. In essence, the main objective of democracy and good governance is defeated.

The Way Forward

The future of any country rests squarely on the shoulders of her youths. The youths are the foundation of the society – that depends on the viability of these youths. Viability of the youths are products of intellect, psyche, economic, social, etc. For Nigerian youths to become an asset for this country, educational policies must change, when one is educated, he would place value for his life. When he leaves nothing and understands nothing the political terrain would be violence always. Acquisition of quality and compulsory education would guarantee them a bright future. Politics must be played according rule and best practices as obtained in other parts of the world. Meaning that Nigeria politicians should learn to accept and defeat where necessary – in short entrench democracy and the rule of law.

Government at all levels should put economic mechanisms or structures for job creation. This is so because a hungry man is an angry man. Besides, most industries in our shores have closed shop, these showcase the insensitivity on the part of our leaders past and present. The youths need employment. It is believed that frustration is responsible for some youths being “stupid” errand boys for the unscrupulous politicians. They become pawns in order to eat, clothe and perhaps belong to the society that of course, already tensed.

Indeed, religious bodies or organisations should carry the youths along through moral lessons, discussions, seminars and conferences on the need to shun violence and live productive lives. But it is not uncommon today, because of race for materialism the society is impacting on those religious organisations – call it church or mosque.

Youths are expected to rise up and challenge negative practices entrenched in the Nigerian society in a bid to correcting them. That is not to be rather youths are involved in electoral frauds, corruption, insecurity among others in the process do they truly prepare to take over as future leaders?

Conclusion

As discussed above, electoral violence has great potential to undo the achievements of Nigeria’s democratic struggles. As one of the most important stakeholders in this violence stake, young Nigerians need to be actively involved both at the policy and grass-roots levels. There are several strategies which will greatly reduce youth’s tendency to engage in election violence.

There is urgent need to create multiple economic opportunities for youth across all sectors. This will play crucial roles in erasing the predisposing factors to violence such as poverty, which make youth violent. There is also an overarching strategy to sensitize youth and promote their engagement in politics always. While youth engagement during the polls heightens, there is, however, always a tendency for citizens to disengage from politics and public affairs once polls are concluded.

This phenomenon in part explains why citizens often fail to continuously monitor and hold leaders to account beyond election seasons. Thus, it is crucially important that youth sustain their active political engagement beyond the polls to ensure that their aspirations, as outlined in the different communications they set out to promote during the campaign period, stand a better chance to make it to the governments and political parties’ policy agenda. Moreover,

the need to promote and sustain the commitment to peace, which youth initiated during the volatile campaign season, needs to be carried forward in view of post post-election tensions that the country continues to grapple with.

Empirical evidence abounds of how electoral violence affects the credibility of the electoral system, the democratic system and the rule of law. This ugly trend raises a fundamental question about the capacity and ability of the Nigerian state to curtail electoral violence and fraud since security agencies and INEC officials are implicated in the macabre dance of violence that dots the nation's electoral history. In fact, the nature, extent and magnitude of violence and rigging associated with elections in this country are posing a serious threat to the national quest for stable democratic transition, as well as the attainment of the long term goal of consolidated democracy (Malu, 2009). And as a problem that has ravaged and permeated the entire bloodstream of our political system, it has become imperative for Nigerians to know the danger that it poses to strengthening and deepening the nation's democracy with concomitant effect on national development.

For the nation to be able to achieve this and strengthen democratic institutions and deepen democracy, politicians, their supporters and the electorate alike should shun all forms of electoral and political violence. After this sustained process and strategy of political education, apprehended perpetrators of electoral violence and politics of bitterness should be punished according to the existing law. It is only through this strategy that the battle can be won.

Key Recommendations

1) **Employment and Income Generation:**

That if young people are employed, then they will be less likely to join violent movements for economic gain.

The following factors related to economic conditions were found to be closely linked to changes to youth's propensity toward violence:

- Ability to satisfy basic needs: The less often young people have to go without food, water, and other basic needs, the less likely they are to engage in or be disposed towards political violence.
- Employment status: Having a full or part time job that provides a cash income increases young people's likelihood to disapprove of the use of political violence.
- Conflict Management and Peace building Skills: It was unclear whether youth who have the skills and forums to discuss difficult issues are less likely to use violence to solve problems.

2) **Understanding Electoral Violence among Youth:**

However, young people's participation in peace dialogues did not influence their levels of trust of or interaction with others. One possible explanation for this is that youth were most often included in larger community dialogues rather than stand alone, youth-led dialogues, which may have limited the impact of their participation on their trust levels.

3) **Social Integration:** It appears that when youth are socially integrated, then they are less susceptible to involvement in violent groups.

Several forms of social integration among youth consistently reduce their risk of engagement in violence:

- **Associational membership:** Youth who are members of self-help groups exhibit higher levels of trust of. Similarly, youth who are actively involved in religious groups are less likely to engage in Electoral violence.
- **Collective action:** People perceive youth as more productive and responsible in locations where youth have engaged in collective action, such as joint income generation or community development projects. More positive attitudes towards youth, in turn, were found to be closely linked to lower levels of reports of youth involvement in Electoral violence.
- **Social identity:** Youth who give greater priority to their national identity than their group identity – i.e. feel they are a Nigerian first, before their tribal allegiance – are less likely to engage in or approve of Electoral and political violence in general.

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