

**Electoral Violence and Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria****Rapheal Nwatu****Department of Public Administration ESUT****Abstract**

*The manifestation of electoral violence since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999 have assumed an unprecedented magnitude and changing form, resulting in instability in democratic consolidation as well as the loss and displacement of many innocent lives. This study on electoral violence and sustainable democracy in Nigeria is therefore timely and apt for our present situation. The study revealed the causes of electoral violence and its implications to sustainable democracy in Nigeria. It also identified some measures to tackle electoral violence and made vital policy recommendations for the elimination of electoral violence for sustainable democracy in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Electoral violence, Sustainable Democracy, Election, Free and Fair Election, Electoral Process*

**Introduction**

Election is generally accepted in all climes of the world as the hallmark of democracy. However, since the advent of democratization in Africa in the 1990s, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on holding regular elections. There can be no doubt then that the political acts that surround leadership succession and regime change constitute a serious aspect of political life in any society. In political systems in general and in Nigeria politics in particular such act constitutes an important index of development or determination of politics. Be that as it may, the essence of democratic elections is that elections be free and fair. The idea of democratic self-government is incompatible with electoral farces (Ojo, 2008, p.109). Thus, free and fair election is a condition since qua non for a political system to be termed democratic, but not every election fulfils these criteria.

However, the conduct of elections in evolving democracy in Nigeria is deficient in these cardinal ingredients because of sheer incapacity inherent in such new democracies which barricade adherence to electoral law. The quality of elections which is one of the mechanisms for giving the extent of democratic consolidation has shown evidence of progressive decline (Alemika, 2012, p. 155). Kean (2013, p.16) observed that violence is greatest enemy of democracy, being the bane of Nigeria march to democracy.

There can be no democratic election, democratization, consolidation of democracy, growth in democratic culture or internalization of best democratic practice in any country if electoral violence is prevalent. Electoral violence resulting from representational campaign, balloting, ethnic and religious interest and result conflicts have been a terminal problem of Nigeria politics since the fourth republic. As a matter of fact, election violence in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon, considering that even the 1959 independence election organized by the departing colonial authorities were characterized by various degrees of violence. What have changed over the years, however, are the frequency ramifications and intensity of electoral violence and these are the elements that must be carefully studied, understood and addressed in order to improve election credibility in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In any objective political arrangement all over the world, election through the ballot is recognized as the only credible barometer to determine power equation. However, one of the challenges facing Nigeria today is how to choose leaders at different levels of government through a free and fair election. The evil of electoral violence and urgency of Electoral Reform in Nigeria can best be captured from the statement of the late president Umaru Musa Yar'Adua while receiving the report of the Electoral Reform Committee. He said and I quote "our focus on the Electoral Reform is predicated on the belief that elections are the very heart of democracy hence they must not only be fair but they must be free from violence and seen to be by our people and the rest of the world as such. It is our abiding belief that failure in instituting an acceptable process by which the representatives of the people are chosen will definitely resort in failure in the long run this administration has considered it a sacred mandate to institute deep and elaborate reforms that will lead to the restoration of the integrity of the electoral system in this country".

The hottest topic of discussion in Nigeria today is electoral matter and this is as a result of past federal elections and particularly 2007 general election which was adjudged by both local and international observers as below, even Nigeria standard. Orji and Uzodi (2012, p.6) also noted about the outbreak of the 2011 post-election violence which they attributed mainly to the tensions arising from lack of certainty in the practice of zoning rotation of presidency by the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). However, it remains debatable how much weight we can attach to a single factor like that in explaining the violence. It is obvious that 2015 general election was still

characterized by same violence in many areas. This problem needs to be addressed urgently if the Nigeria democracy must be consolidated and sustained.

The problem of this study therefore is to identify the causes of electoral violence in Nigeria and its consequences on sustainable democracy and therefore proffer measures for reducing, if not eliminating it entirely.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the consequences of electoral violence on sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The specific objectives the study will focus upon include:

1. To investigate the causes of electoral violence in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the consequences of electoral violence on sustainable democracy in Nigeria.
3. To identify measures to be taken to eliminate electoral violence for sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the causes of electoral violence in Nigeria?
2. What are the consequences of electoral violence on sustainable democracy in Nigeria?
3. What are the measures to be taken to eliminate electoral violence for sustainable democracy in Nigeria?

### **Significance of the Study**

A study of this nature is significant in a number of respects. Obviously, the study is timely and in accordance with national priority. Election free from violence is a vital ingredient of sustainable democracy therefore very crucial to the socio-political development of any country.

Empirically, the study will guide the law makers especially in the area of electoral reforms to prevent electoral violence for sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

The study will also expose the cause and consequences of electoral violence and therefore help the electoral commission in collaboration with the federal and state government to find lasting solutions to this menace including the findings and recommendations made in this study.

The study will also benefit the masses or the electorates in enlightening them to see voting and protection of their votes against violence as their civil responsibility. It will help to inform them that securing their votes and eliminating electoral violence is not solely the responsibility of government and electoral commission, but the responsibility of every Nigerian. The various communities' civil societies and other associations can organize a force to stop electoral violence in their various constituencies.

Theoretically, the study will provide a sound basis for further research in the subject matter. It will serve as a good reference material to future researchers in related areas:

Above all, the study will give the researchers a sense of achievement especially when the findings and recommendations are well implemented to help eradicate electoral violence in Nigeria

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper on Electoral Violence and Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria is based on the Anomie Theory of Violence and Conflict popularized by French Sociologist Emile Durkheim in his influential book "Suicide" in 1897 (Haralambos and Holborn, 2007, p.71).

Anomie is a term meaning "without law", it is used to describe a lack of social norms or normlessness. It describes the breakdown of social bonds between an individual and their community ties, with fragmentation of social identity and rejection of self-regulatory values. Anomie occurs when there is discrepancy between common social goals and the legitimate means to attain these goals. Moreover, an individual suffering from anomie would strive to attain the common goals of a specific society yet would not be able to reach these goals legitimately because of the structural limitations in society. As a result, the individual would exhibit deviant behavior. In other words, Anomie occurs as soon as there are no clear standards to guide behavior in a specified area of social life. In these conditions people feel at a complete loss and worried a state of formlessness" sets in and the people begin to do whatever they like.

Consequently, this situation described the failure of Nigerian government to conduct free and fair elections or free violence election, policy failure (such as poverty alleviation programmes, scholarship packages for students, low pay of government officials such as the Nigeria policy civil servants and so on, tribalism, nepotism, etc. these and among others have triggers Nigerian youths to take up arms against the Federal Government of Nigeria.

These aforementioned scenarios have breed prostitutions, arm-robbery, thuggery, hooliganism, kidnapping and among others have tend to legalized corrupt actions in the country.

However, electoral violence in Nigeria is most often carried out by gangs (commonly called thugs whose members are openly recruited, financed and sometimes armed by public officials. These gangs comprised primarily of unemployed young men are mobilized to attack sponsor rivals, intimidate voters, rig elections and protect their patrons from similar attacks. Often sponsors of electoral violence take time and gain to the same criminal gangs, violent campus-based “cults” and other sources to recruit agents of political violence. These recruited are paid, often very little and sometimes armed for the sole purpose of carrying out violence abuses on behalf of their political sponsors (Kushre, 2011, p.6).

The relevance of Anomie theory to the study is based on the fact that the theory exposes electoral violence as a product of lack of social norms or lawlessness. It shows that the problem is improper and inadequate electoral process and laws. It also shows that the failure of Nigeria government to provide standard to guide behavior in a specified area of social life. This state of affair has led the Nigeria police to be inefficient and ineffective. Policemen are ill-equipped to function effectively and ill-remunerated to be able to resist attempts to corruption. The effect is that transgressors are not apprehended either because the police are bribed to look the other way or because there is no resources. The Nigeria judiciary which is touched as the hope of common man has not lived up to its billing. The wheel of justice grinds slowly and with an unsure gait, which aggrieved parties find both frustrating and expensive. The breakdown of order in society makes people call for extreme solutions such as “Bakassi Boys, Odua peoples’ congress, Egbesu Boys, Arewa peoples’ congress” (Vigilantes) in Nigeria and military repression”. But such solutions may only make things worse by weakening the state and diverting attention from the need to improve basic institutions off governance notably the police. If the long run some of these ethnic militias become a menace to the government such as the incessant armed robbery cases in the west , oil pipeline destruction and kidnapping menace in the Niger Delta, child trafficking/kidnapping, destruction of property and like in the North, and indeed involvement in electoral violence.

Furthermore, despite lip service paid to stamping out electoral violence successive governments in Nigeria have made little significant effort to ensure that government officials and members of the security forces implicated in violations of civil and political rights, including election related violence, and are held to account.

This results in breakdown of social norms and lawlessness as described by Anomie theory.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Electoral Violence***

The first question that might logically come to mind is that which might lead to a better understanding of violence in general. For the purpose of this discourse the World Health Organization's (WHO), definition of violence would be adopted. WHO in the 2008 report, defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against one self, another person or against a group or community that either results in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation. The definition is all encompassing it covers wide range acts, going beyond physical acts to include threats and intimidation. Besides death and injury, the definition also includes the myriad and often less-obvious consequences of violent behavior, such as psychological harm, deprivation and mal-development that compromise the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

The definition particularly covers electoral violence, which is part and parcel of political violence succinctly captured in the definition of electoral violence by the international foundation for electoral systems (IFES). IFES defines electoral violence as 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 (voter, candidate, party officer, election worker, election monitor, journalist, etc), which may disrupt or attempt to disrupt any aspect of the electoral process (campaign, registration, voting, counting, etc).

Electoral violence can thus be seen as any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, blackmail, destruction of property, or association. The victims of electoral violence can be people, places, things or data. The acts associated with electoral violence include physical harm (examples: homicide, sexual violence, torture, assault); threat (examples; physical, verbal) intimidation, destruction of property (example: arson damage from stones or sharp objects) and forced displacement (Machika, 2009, p.3).

The objective of electoral violence is to influence the electoral process and its outcome by gaining an unfair political advantage by one individual or group of individual over another. It is

geared towards winning political competition or power through intimidation and disempowerment of political opponents (Olawale, 2005, p.16). According to Machika (2009, p.6) here are the common grounds on which electoral violence occurs:

1. During registration, when both the ruling and opposing parties attempt 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 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 used 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 takes 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".

### ***Sustainable Democracy***

Sustainable Democracy transcends the forming and merging of political parties, general elections, grapple for political office and having a civilian government/leadership in power. It is a process that involves the total and effective participation of citizens in determining policies and decisions which affect their day-to-day lives at all levels. It involves the responsiveness of the government to the needs and aspirations of its citizenry. It is based on the ability of a nation to provide channels for discussions, consultations and mobilizations. Nigeria needs to develop her democracy in such a way that it largely empowers the majority of the citizenry and guarantees the survival of the present and future generation. Our democracy should be developed, whereby the system of governance advertently and inadvertently develops the masses' individual and collective potential, which would promote and contribute positively to the overall wellbeing of the nation.

Democracy involves every stakeholder, particularly in the control of economic and political power in a way that inspires one's faith and commitment in the corporate reality of the nation. This will certainly guard against the monopoly of state powers by the supposed political godfathers. For Nigeria to get her democracy right and ensure the dividends of democracy reaches the majority of her citizenry, she needs to ensure and emphasize election violence free.

## **The Causes of Electoral Violence in Nigeria**

While frequent political violence in Nigeria does not generally occur spontaneously and is not an intractable problem. Electoral violence in Nigeria is one of the few issues that do not follow the normal historic ethno-religious or sectional divide-lines (Machika, 2009, p.11). In Nigeria, electoral violence can be both intra and party and cuts across religion and sections though they might transform into ethno-religions without initially aiming at that. There are many reasons behind the constant recurrence of electoral violence. All the four actors mentioned earlier have different compelling force inducing them to involve themselves in electoral violence. The following are some of the causes:

1. **Financial Inducement:** More often than not electoral 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 according to Adewomi (2012, p.4), 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 Bello (2010, p.12). Thus politicians see government as big business where they invest little and reap huge profit 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 process for their personal advantage. These are the instigators. It is also greed that lull collaborators into selling their honour and public trust to do the bidding of the instigators. Mostly, financial promises, promotions in places of work



and fresh juicy appointments are the baits. For perpetrators, it is normally just a token that lead to the Mayhem they unleashed on fellow being. With just a small amount for drugs, meeting unrealistic demands to satisfy the feeling of belonging and to settle some personal scores, these youth sell their soles to perpetrate electoral violence. Unfortunately, the outcome of greed always ends into electoral violence.

- c. **Illiteracy, Ignorance and Poverty:** 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 Nigeria youths, force many to take the readily available job opportunity implements of electoral violence (Hoglund, 2006, p.4). These conditions he maintained easily play the gullible youths into the hands of unscrupulous politicians who manipulate them by dangling irresistible baits for the youths to undertaken electoral violence, despite the attendant after math 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 but to the same instigators again and gain 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 list disposal to secure winning the election as an avenue to recoup and make profits. Potential aspirants therefore, monetize whichever office they intend to contest. The godfathers then steps in and finance the candidate. The sole aim for both the aspirant and the godfather is to win by all means, which 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 impurity 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 electoral management bodies are influenced and maneuvered to rig election in favour of the government of the day. Security operatives as the most effective instrument of concern in accomplishing this selfish, ambitions brazenly implored or bribed. According to Umeh (2013, p.2), they are deployed then to harass, intimidate arrest and physically terrorize

opponents. For other reasons too, the oppositions do not take this laying down. Thus, clashes results into electoral violence.

2. **Election Management Bodies (EMPs) Breach of Trust:** Election Management Bodies (EMPs) 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 off protecting electoral stakeholders such as voters, candidates, poll workers media and observers; electoral information such as viete results registration data and campaign material, electoral facilities such as counting centres and electoral events such as campaign rallies against death, damage or disruption 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 ids not always the case, almost all the EMBs are found short in the discharge of the constitutional and civil 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. Umeh (2013, p.4). 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 it 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 sand 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 sobering the process. In most cases, they succumb to, government influence, collect bribe to harass and intimidate voters. More so, they provide lower 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 (Azeez, 2011, p.13).

- 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 dispute 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 judiciaries through election tribunals are the man organs saddled with the responsibilities of resolving election disputes. The judiciary as therefore, the last hope for resolving any electoral disputes. 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 judiciaries 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 elect oral 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 conflict generation when they succumb to influence of selfish politician who would want to use their outfits as propaganda launch pad. The media is accusative 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 issue 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 candidate of yours like is better the best candidate outside yours religions 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.

While contributing to the issue above, Machika (2009, p.2) stated that the aforementioned are some of the major causes of electoral violence in Nigeria, but indeed not the actual root causes. He maintained that the root cause of electoral violence include: sense of shame, sense of wrath, pride and ambition, productivity, lack of mentoring, he argued that lack of sense of shame is one of the root causes of electoral violence. According to him, collectively as a nation, Nigeria seems to have lost her sense of shame. Various acts committed in this country that brought disgrace and dishonor to our dear country were treated with laxity, without any feeling of remorse. He also stated that lack of confidence to face electorates without the support of godfathers and electoral violence is as a result of lacking a sense of worthiness by the candidate. Similarly collaborators in whatever form or class feels without indulging in shameless acts of electoral violence, he or she may not attain certain position in life. People involvement in electoral violence is as a result of lack of moral and social value, which is their sense of value-their goodness, usefulness or importance in the societal scheme should not be tied to monetary price. Human life to these youths has been rendered worthless. It is nothing but a commodity.

The question is has we as individuals and as nation lost our sense of shame? The lack of feelings of dishonor, unworthiness and embarrassment of our actions and inactions is the root cause of our involvement in electoral violence, just many other bad things we do.

### **The Consequences of Electoral Violence to Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria**

Electoral violence has serious wholesome consequences for democracy, respect for human rights and good governance as already highlighted in the opening section the background to the study 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 of youth's involvement in electoral violence is

legitimizing 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 slite. 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 nonexistent or ineffective (Machika, 2009, p.23).

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 violence 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 credit leadership (Ojo, 2008, p.101). 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 seared 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 government is defeated (Kean, 2013, p.11).

While death, injury, displacement sand property damage are the most obvious effects of electoral violence, the most widespread impact arguably according to Kean (2013, p.11) relates increased fear and heightened perceptions of insecurity among civilians. Massive internal displacement has also occurred to electoral violence in some case like Jos, Platus state, Ihima Local Government Area of Kogi State, Ukwale Local Government Area of Delta State and Asakio Local Government Area of Nasarrawa 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 Suit 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 religious and ethnic communities, politics is supposed to enhance positive relationship market by inter-group network, co-operation and trust. But electoral violence instead destroys this and supplants bitter mistrust suspicion and confrontation (Orji and Uzodi, 2012, p.11). 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 survived. Thus electoral violence aided in emboldening criminals, bandit activities and secrete cults, to continue terrorizing the nation (Orji and Uzodi, 2012, p.12). This according to Kean (2013, p.17) also results in another vicious circle of considerable deaths and injuries.

Apart from these, the youths themselves are being destroyed in three major ways, according to Machika (2009, p.18).

1. Many are wounded and even killed
2. 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.

## **Methodology**

This study involved a documentary research design. In using documentary design, secondary data were collected through a review of relevant documents and records on electoral violence and sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The use of documentary research design was to enhance the validity and reliability of the results. The data were collected from secondary sources such as books, journals, government publications, magazines, newspapers and internet materials which are relevant to the research. This research employs Discourse Analytical method in its analysis. It is a qualitative method that has been adopted and developed by social researchers. The method attempts to identify roles, themes, ideas, views etc within the data used for the purpose of analysis or discussion.

**Findings**

This section embodies three sub-themes according to our guiding research questions. The emphasis of our findings and discussion is on qualitative analysis based on documented incidences of electoral violence in Nigeria in the fourth republic and supported by our quantitative analysis of data presentation, guided too by our research questions.

The first research question was on the causes of electoral violence in Nigeria fourth republic elections. The study identified financial inducement by the politicians, illiteracy and ignorance among the perpetrators of electoral violence, too attractive nature of political offices in Nigeria, monetization of electoral offices and godfatherism, bias position of some law enforcement agencies, poor performance of judiciary and electoral tribunals, high level of unemployment and poverty among the youths and ethno-religious sentiment as some of the causes of electoral violence in Nigeria.

The second research question was on the consequences of electoral violence on sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The study revealed that electoral violence affects the entire credibility of the nation's democracy, erodes the credibility of the rule of law, challenge to human security and destruction of properties, legitimizing and perpetuating the vicious circle of corruption culture, erodes positive social services capital across the country and destroy the future of the youths and Nigeria in general.

As regards the measures to be taken to eliminate electoral violence for sustainable democracy in Nigeria, the study identified economic empowerment of idle youths through skill acquisition programmes, exposing the youths to peace education, making political offices less attractive, strengthening law enforcement agencies especially during elections, independence of judiciary and electoral tribunals in performing their duties, massive employment creation and poverty eradication, removal of ethno-religious sentiment in Nigeria politics and administration as some of the measures.

**Recommendations and Conclusion**

To track electoral violence in Nigeria, there is more to be done. Nigeria security services agencies have a responsibility to perform their duties in a strictly impartial manner, to act with restraint, and to strike a balance between providing safe conditions for voting to take place and appearing to militarize the process.

Baba and Ogundiya (2013, p.3), and Ajayi (2014, p.2) noted that efforts should be made towards ensuring democratic consolidation through constructive socialization and involvement of the youths in the democratic structures especially the electoral process.

In recognition of the role desperate socio-economic conditions play in youth involvement in electoral violence, adequate and effective all embracing empowerment programmes must be put in place. Youths should be economically empowered through sincere, participatory and youth oriented skill acquisition and employment generation scheme. Socially, the youths could be empowered through civil orientation and educations to enable them understand their roles (rights and duties) in society. And they could be empowered politically through meaning political socialization and constructive participation in politics. For a sustained participation of youths in the political processes and structures, the strategy of educational counseling should be emphasized. The years of ignorance are over, especially in light of the millennium development Goal of 2015 “education for all”. Opportunity for formal and non-formal education for the youths will ensure political consciousness, knowing and defending their fundamental human rights. Counselors can teach the virtues of “give and take” (tolerance) in politics and human rights in the primary secondary and tertiary institutions. The youths should be made to be tomorrow. And that no politician audition is worth their blood and future.

Youths as the doorways to a peace continuum must be exposed to peace education. It is expected that peace education will help to redress the culture of violence and aggression and also inculcate the violence among young persons and adults alike. The youths have to know what peace is and guard themselves against embracing or being used to potent violence.

There is need for electoral reform to be pursued with more vigour in order to draft enforceable and effective electoral laws. That could confront the menace of electoral electoral violence. The civil society represented by several civil liberty non-governmental organizations and labour unions must pressurize the government to put in place stiff electoral laws that will make electoral fraud, a heinous crime against the citizen and state. If there is going to be any hope for democratic consolidation in Nigeria politicians found guilty of electoral fraud and all those that benefited from it one way or the other should no longer be treated with kid globes and palliatives. They must be made to face stringent and long lasting legal penalties and sanctions. It is hoped that this measure will serve as deterrence against any form of political lawlessness and violence.



There is need for attitudinal change among the various stakeholders in the election. Electoral body, law enforcement agencies, judiciary and electoral tribunals and the media should demonstrate love for our country by doing right things and being law abiding people rather than covering, or indulging in attitude that contribute in stemming or aggravating electoral violence. These bodies should be the peace making bodies and show a lot of patriotism in delivery their services rather than instigating and covering evil. Finally, the issue of godfather in Nigeria politics needs to be tackled and eliminated. It should be noted that as long as Nigeria allowed godfather to continue in the country's political process, violence will continue to characterize our elections.

As concluding remark, the nature, extent and magnitude of violence associated with elections in this country are posing a serious threat to the national quest for stable democracy, as well as the attainment of the long term goal of consolidating democracy (Alemika, 2012, p.157). Electoral violence has grown and assumed monstrous cyclical proportions, indeed a vicious circle. Nelson Mandela in the 2008, whose report on violence, reechoed this when he stated that:

“Youths who are bullied by others, is a legacy that reproduces itself, as new generations learn from the violence of generations past, as victims learn from victimizers and as the social conditions that nurture, violence are allowed to continue. No country, no city, no community is immune. But neither are we powerless against it. Violence pervades the lives of many people around the world, and touches all of us in some way. To many people staying out of harm's way is a matter of lacking doors and windows and avoiding dangerous places. To others, escape is not possible. This is indeed true as a South African who has lived through apartheid and is living through its aftermath, I have seen and experienced it. It is also true that patterns of violence are more pervasive and widespread in societies where the authorities endorse the use of violence through their own actions. In many societies, violence is subdominant that it threatens hopes of economic and social development. We cannot let that continue. Many who live with violence day in and day out assume that it is an intrinsic part of the human condition. But this is not so, violence can be prevented. Violence cultures can be turned around”.

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