

Electoral Violence and the Growth of Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract

Democracy offers the citizens the opportunity to actively participate in the governance of their countries. In some advanced democracies, there are minimal occurrence of violence during elections, unlike Nigeria where electoral violence held sway in all her elections. The study used secondary data and content analysis method. The findings of the study revealed killings, arson, snatching of ballot boxes and thuggery among others as some forms of violence that characterized the electoral process in Nigeria. The causes of electoral violence in Nigeria according to the study include: poverty/unemployment, bribery/corruption, manipulation of electoral results and lack of political will by political leaderships to prosecute perpetrators of electoral violence. The paper recommends attitudinal change on the path of the citizens to desist from the culture of electoral violence. The paper also recommended that further studies should be conducted on the reasons behind the inability of security agencies to prevent electoral violence in Nigeria.

Keywords: Deaths, Democracy, Elections, Electorates, Electoral Violence, Politicians, Voting

1. Introduction

Leaders are made to rule and direct the affairs of their followers to the attainment of their set out goals and aspirations. There are different ways and circumstances through which leaders emerged. Some leaders occupy their offices through hereditary, some through struggle, violence and imposition while others are appointed. Yet some leaders are democratically elected for a fixed term. The democratically elected leaders represent the larger proportion of the population of the society. This is because such leaders emerge through the conduct of elections on a periodic interval. Democracy which is simply refers to the government of the people, by the people and for the people is seen as the modern and best way to elect leaders. In a democracy, power ultimately emanates from the people, as citizens in a democracy not only have rights, they have the responsibility to participate in the political system that, in turn, protects their rights and freedoms. Democracy is distinguished by its ability to have a free and fair elections. In a democratic country, free elections act as a medium for growth and long-term development (Ogunbodede and Adelokun, 2018).

Elections revolve around the active participation of the people who are referred to as the electorates for the continuous survival and sustenance of democracy. In a democratic setting, power ultimately resides with the people and not with the few and privileged ones.

However, democracy as a system of government has been criticized in recent years as some few and noble persons in the society have turned this system of governance to personal affairs. Thus, closing the window of participation against larger sections of the population mostly in developing countries of the world where violence dominates their elections on regular basis. One of the major obstacles to the growth of democracy in the world today is election violence.

It is obvious that democracy across the world is under threat considering the various activities and ugly events that characterized elections and practice of democracy around the world today. Today, some elected leaders have turned dictators and authoritarians labouring day and night to root out the last remnants of domestic opposition who stand against their path. In some instances, many freely elected leaders are melodramatically narrowing their concerns to a restricted and fixed interpretation of what the national interest is all about (Repucci, 2020). The goal of this paper is to analyze election violence and its impacts on the advancement of democracy across the globe with particular reference to Nigeria. This paper is important to a larger section of the population who see elections and democracy as the hallmark of growth and development. The paper will also give a clue to electoral umpires on how best to manage elections and avoid violence during electioneering period among others. The paper will look at the importance of elections in a democracy, causes of electoral violence and effects of electoral violence. It equally made some viable recommendations in addressing electoral violence in Nigeria.

2. Study Area

The paper focuses on electoral violence and the growth of democracy in Nigeria. Nigeria is located on the African continent. It is the world's most populous black country. Nigeria is a federation with 36 states and Abuja as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The country practices the presidential system of government. Nigeria was colonized by Britain, which made English the formal language. Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo are the three most common languages spoken in the country. Other languages spoken in Nigeria include: Urhobo, Ijaw, Idoma, Igala, Isoko, Efik, and Itsekiri among others. Nigeria is bounded on the west by the Benin Republic, to the north by Niger Republic, Chad Republic to the north east, and to the south east by the Cameroon Republic. It is bounded to the south by the Gulf of Guinea, which is part of the Atlantic Ocean. Nigeria's geography is diverse, with climates ranging from arid to humid equatorial (Falola *et al*, 2020). The country is endowed with vast amounts of human and material resources, as well as massive hydrocarbon deposits. Nigeria's main water bodies include River Niger, River Benue, Lake Chad Basin, Gulf of Guinea Basin and other tributaries among others.

Christianity and Islam are the dominant religions in Nigeria, with only a few practicing traditional religion. Nigeria's population is estimated to be over 140 million persons (National Population Commission Census of Nigeria and Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Nigeria's population is expected to exceed 206,139,589 by 2020 (United Nations, 2020). Nigeria is a littoral nation having a coastline of 420 nautical miles with an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles, equating to approximately 84,000 square nautical miles. Nigeria's maritime area of interest encompasses the entire

Gulf of Guinea (GoG), which is approximately 574,800 square meters in size and spans a total coastline of 2,874 nautical miles. The Atlantic Ocean coastline is shared by eight of Nigeria's 36 states, accounting for 25% of the country's population (Jamoh, 2020). Figure 1.1 Depicts the map of Nigeria, including the FCT, Abuja.

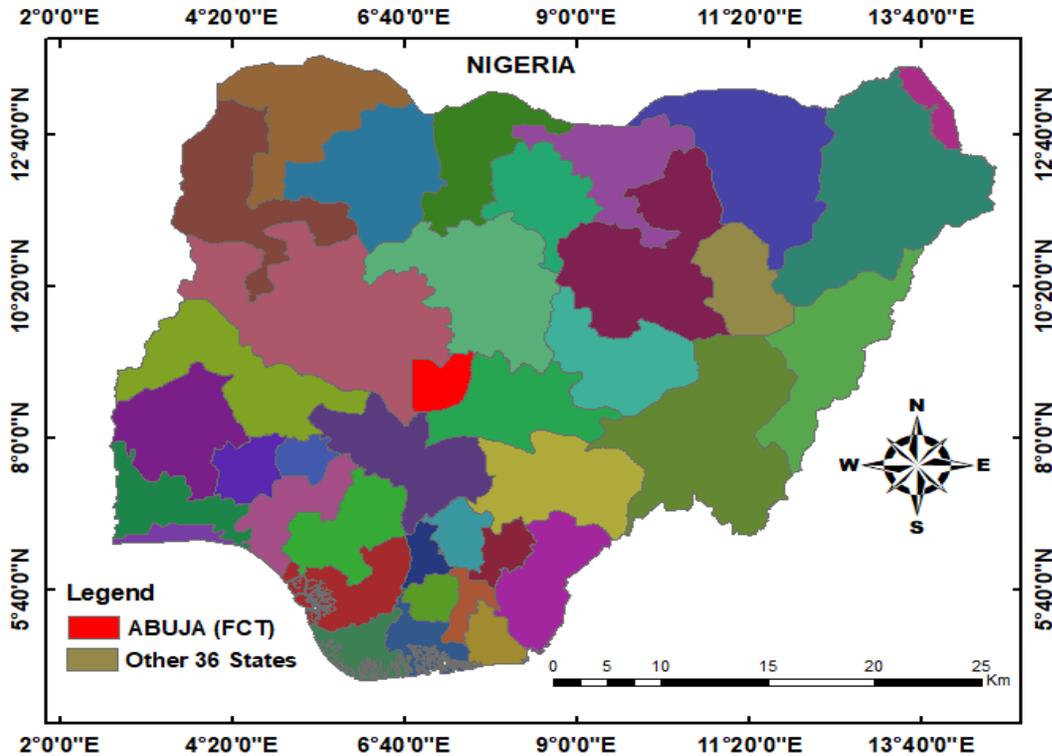


Fig 1.1 Nigeria and the 36 States (Study Area)
Source: Author's Analysis (2021)

3. Methods and Materials

3.1 Materials: The study used secondary data derived from both published and unpublished works. Materials were also obtained from the internet in order to improve the overall quality of the work.

3.2 Methodological Approach: The content analysis method was used in the research to analyze the collected data and materials in a more systematic manner.

3.3 Research of Literature: The AFRIGIST and Obafemi Awolowo University Campus libraries in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, were used for the literature search.

3.4 Description of Documents: To improve the quality of the work, the study employs a descriptive method on the various collected documents in order to retrieve relevant information on elections and electoral violence in Nigeria.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Overview of Electoral Violence in Nigeria Violence has been linked to humanity since the unlawful murder of Abel by his elder brother, Cain, according to the Bible, the Holy

Book of the Christian. Every year, more than one million people died around the world due to various reasons such as wars, fires, floods, riots and elections. Overall, violence is one of the leading causes of death worldwide and electoral violence is no exception. According to the World Health Organization, violence is the intentional use of physical violence, threats or actual, against self, other individuals or communities, resulting in serious potential for injury, death, emotional harm or deprivation (Krug *et al.*, 2002, cited in Hamby, 2017). The Concise Oxford Dictionary defined violence as "the illegal use of physical violence". These connotations of violence clearly illustrate how politicians around the world, including Nigeria, use violence during election periods.

Nigeria's electoral history, dating back to 1960, is rife with violence, resulting in random deaths, destruction of lives and property. According to Ahmad and Shehu (2019), the history of elections in Nigeria's fourth republic (1999-present) is full of violence with sad memories. This is because many people have died untimely, injured, maimed, as property worth millions of naira are loss to election violence. Electoral violence covers riots, demonstrations, party clashes, political assassinations, burning, and thuggery, among other tactics employed before, during, and after elections. Electoral violence encompasses any form of pre-planned acts of threat aimed at frightening, injuring, or blackmailing political opponents and election officials before, during, and after election with the sole purpose of determining, delaying, or influencing a political process (Ogundiya and Baba, 2005; Albert, 2007; cited in Olowojolu *et al.*, 2019).

According to Igbuzor (2010), election violence is a form of aggression committed during political activities prior to, during, or post-election. Thuggery, the use of force to disorganize political meetings or voting units, or the use of harmful instruments to frighten electorates and other election officials, or to cause physical pain or suffering to anyone that participates in electioneering processes are all examples of this act. Any act committed by an individual or group of persons acting on their own or on behalf of their sponsors to create fear, disrupt, or destabilize an election is referred to as electoral violence. In a nutshell, electoral violence is defined as any act or acts committed by an individual or group of individuals acting on their own or on behalf of others in order to threaten, disrupt, or destabilize the smooth process of an election.

Elections in Nigeria have been marked by serious electoral violence and the use of divisive and governance tactics to influence voters' turnout pattern since 1960. Nigerian politicians used electoral violence as a ploy to instill fear in voters in order to stay in power (Olowojolu *et al.*, 2019). The Nigerian military handed over power to the civilian government in 1999 after nearly 15 years. The fourth Republic in Nigeria runs from 1999-till date with the election of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as the president on 29 May 1999. Since 1999, Nigeria has conducted presidential general elections in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. The 1999 elections witnessed minimal electoral violence. This may be due to the fact that it was conducted and supervised by the military unlike the succeeding elections.

However, right from 2003 till date, electoral violence in Nigeria has become more disturbing and worrisome as some politicians and their followers have remained resolute in ensuring that they remain relevant and thus ready to crush to death any person who stands against their way (Okafor, 2015). There were about 967 incidents of electoral

violence during the 2007 elections in Nigeria as the election was characterized with abduction, kidnapping, killings, protest, disruption and defacing of electioneering posters and billboards. In the aforementioned year under review, about 300 people were killed in an election related matter.

Similarly, lethal and fatal election-related and communal violence left about 800 persons dead in some parts of northern Nigeria during the presidential election conducted in April 2011 (International Foundation for Election Systems Reports, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2011; cited in Okafor, 2015). For instance, during the 2011 elections, a bomb attack occurred at the office of the Independent National Electoral Commission in Suleja, Niger State, where about 10 persons were killed and several others injured. Also, in the build-up to the battle of who becomes the chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party in Imo state, southeastern Nigeria between Chime and his opponents, Commodore Anthony Oguno and Chief Sam Ejiofor had their homes invaded by political thugs (Adele, 2012; cited in Okafor, 2015).

The general elections conducted in Nigeria in 1999, 2003 and 2007 were generally marred with irregularities as compared to the 2011 elections. The elections of 2011 were a good departure from the polls of 2007, which were highly characterized with issues like excessive pre-election and election-day violence and intimidation, a flawed voter registration process, and opaque tabulation and announcement of results. The 2011 polls saw increased citizen awareness, greater public confidence in the leadership of election authorities and a higher level of engagement by political parties and civil society when compared to the previous years (National Democratic Institute Reports, 2012).

Generally speaking, the incidents of violence during elections gradually increased after the primary elections conducted by various political parties have been held. During the period of political campaigns, election day and the aftermath of the presidential elections, violence are usually recorded across Nigeria. Before the first round of elections in 2011, more than 100 deaths and several hundred people were injured due to politically motivated violence. Clashes among party supporters or with the police and attacks on candidates claimed lives across the country, including turbulent states like Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Delta, Edo, Ekiti, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kogi, Niger, Ondo and Plateau among others. In 2011, a prominent gubernatorial candidate and a party leader were assassinated in two separate incidents in Borno State, northeastern Nigeria. Also, in Akwa Ibom state, south-south Nigeria, there were clashes between supporters of competing political parties which led to mob violence, injuries, deaths, arson and massive destruction of property (National Democratic Institute Reports, 2012).

4.2 Importance of Free and Fair Elections in a Democracy

Elections are conducted periodically to elect new political leaders by the electorates. In the memorable phrase of his blessed memory, late President Abraham Lincoln of the United States of America, in his Gettysburg address to the people which lasted a little over two minutes on November, 19, 1863 asserted that “democracy is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people” (Akande, 2019). In a democracy, elections form the basis and the pillar upon which it thrives. For elections to be deemed to be free and fair, it must be devoid of all forms of threat, intimidations and violence of any kind. The electoral umpire

must be seen to live and act above board and acts in the preservation of the principles of democracy. Through free and fair elections, legitimate leaders are voted into office. In this capacity, the electorates are seen to have actively played a crucial role in the emergence of their political leaders.

Wojtasik (2013) outlined 7 functions of elections in a democratic system to include: delegation of political representation; selection of the political elite; legitimization of those in power; control over authorities; political accountability; creation of political programmes; and restoration of public opinion. The function of delegating political representation is one of the powerful weapons the electorate have in making the choice of who is to represent them. This is after they have assessed the views held by such persons to benefit and represent their best interest (Żukowski 2004; cited in Wojtasik, 2013). Elections serve as the medium through which the people gauged the candidates' credibility and acceptance. With the aid of credible elections, the electorates have the opportunity to actively get involve in the decision-making process of the governance of their country.

Free and fair elections help in preventing coups and counter coups as well as avoidable uprising from the people. In a free and fair elections, all eligible voters are given the chance to select their leader through their right to vote and to be voted for as the representative or candidate who have been elected are liable in many ways to the people who voted and elected them during elections. These elected representatives have to implement those campaign promises made during elections with much transparency, accountability and good governance. The goal of any voting system is to establish the intention of each individual voter and decode those intentions into reality. His blessed memory, late president Abraham Lincoln once said that; "No man is good enough to rule over another man without his permission" (Akande, 2019). This explains the fact that for any political leader to truly emerge and rule, he or she must obtain the consent of his followers (electorates) through the ballot and not by force or intimidation or any kind of malpractice.

Buttressing the assertions of late President Abraham Lincoln on democracy and elections, former USA President Lyndon Johnson said that "the right to vote is the most basic right, without which all others are meaningless". This suffrage to vote should be unhindered from any kind of threat, force and intimidation, because voting is the primary duty of democracy. This is because in a democracy, your vote is your voice, your power and your strength. Through elections, our ways of life are preserved. Through free and fair elections both state and national leaders are held responsible for the decisions they make. Isah (2019) posited that the purpose of elections is to express the popular will of the people, arouse political variations and give legitimacy to elected governments. This role according to him is very key, central and ultimate for democracy to truly thrive.

4.3 Causes of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Democracy is not government of some people by some people and for some people as frequently practiced in some developing nations like Nigeria. One notable attribute of democracy is that the minority will have their says while the majority on the other hand will always have their way. Electoral violence has become a clog in the will of progress in most developing countries like Nigeria. Violence during elections has continued to manifest in all elections held in Nigeria since she returned to a democratic rule in 1999

(Isah, 2019). Electoral violence does not just break out before, during and after elections, rather, there are some indices that ought to be studied by government and electoral umpires before the commencement of elections. Various reasons abound for the outbreak of electoral violence in most countries around the world as some government officials and politicians do not see the need of ensuring the sanctity of the electoral process.

The vote gives true meaning to the memorable and unforgettable words of late President Abraham Lincoln, who said, "You can always fool some people, you can fool all people, but you can't always fool all people". Electoral violence can mostly be attributed to politicians and government officials who want to recklessly manipulate election results and the processes, show the politics of bluffing, tricking and subversion, without following the basic democratic process (Isah, 2019). Politicians in Nigeria take the advantage of vulnerable and unemployed youths having lured and enticed them with some amount of money, thus, coerce and pressure them to threaten, intimidate and cause mayhem to their political opponents thereby undermining the democratic process. In the words of Isah (2019), the electoral and political landscape of Nigeria has moved from violence to greater violence. This statement is true considering the way and manner politicians and top government officials go about with the conduct of elections in Nigeria. At every electioneering year, politicians see elections as a do or die affairs, arming themselves and supporters with guns and charms as means of fortification to engage in a warfare.

The conduct of free and fair elections has remained elusive and problematic in Nigeria since independence as elections were all fraught with various levels of anomalies ranging from bribery, electoral violence, intimidation and harassment of voters, ballot box snatching and ballot stuffing, under age voting and vote buying among others. This trend has not changed as exemplified by the 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections in the country (Aluaigba, 2008). Even, the recently conducted gubernatorial elections in Ekiti State on 18 June 2022 and Osun State on 16 July 2022, witnessed massive vote buying and intimidations. *This informed the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) to call on the Independent National Electoral Commission to "gather information about reports of vote-buying, undue influence, intimidation, ballot box snatching, and other electoral offences by the three leading political parties in the just concluded Ekiti State governorship election" with a view to prosecuting such offenders.*

People and political parties who felt shortchanged and cheated with this ugly situation are forced to indulge in political violence as a form of revenge against their perceived oppressors. Some politicians in Nigeria see political offices as their birth rights and may not want to relinquish that office for another person as they prefer to stay in perpetuity in such office. This selfish and greedy act could breed sentiment, hatred, acrimony and ultimately snowballed into political violence and intimidation during elections.

Additionally, in some cases, the outcome from such violence is death and destruction of property. At times, government at the center as well as regional level aid and abate political violence. This is because they always want their own party to be in power at all cost. This view was corroborated by Arowolo and Aluko (2012) when they argued that electoral violence seems to be institutionalized in Nigeria since it flows from the corridors of power and so politics and political activities become exclusive rights of the politicians who make politics dirty and unattractive. They asserted that politics in Nigeria is infested

with greed, tribalism, intolerance, injustice and narrow-minded instinct of political leadership. Elections into various political offices in Nigeria right from 1999-2022 are constantly secured by politicians who had the monopoly of weaponry and thuggery as violence, rather than allow the electorates to decide who occupied what position and who govern them according to real democratic principle.

The quest for wealth, power and fame also caused electoral violence in Nigeria as politicians see politics as the best medium through which one can easily get rich quickly in Nigeria (Tamuno, 2003; Arowolo and Aluko, 2010; cited in Isah, 2019). Corruption is another driver of electoral violence in Nigeria. Government officials and politicians steal public revenues to pay for the services and weapons used for violence. Also, it has been reported that between \$4 billion to \$8 billion per year was lost to corruption between 1999 and 2007 in Nigeria and significant parts of this have gone into fomenting violence and trouble by politicians in their bid to continue to hold on to political posts even after the electorate have rejected them at the polls (Ugiagbe, 2010; cited in Isah, 2019).

There are instances where electoral officials who supposed to maintain neutrality and ensure the stability of democracy are caught in the web of bribery and corruption by politicians in order to manipulate and influence electoral results in their favour. Other causes of electoral violence in Nigeria include the winner takes all syndrome as politicians and political parties go about their electioneering campaign in a way and manner that show that it is a crime to be defeated in an election (Lawal, 2010 cited in Ogunbodede and Adalakin, 2018). This makes politician to employ violence in ensuring that election results are declared in their favour. Poverty and unemployment also promote electoral violence, as some category of persons live below one dollar per day. This situation makes such group of persons to find it difficult to easily resist the temptation to engage in acts that are inimical to free and fair elections.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Results

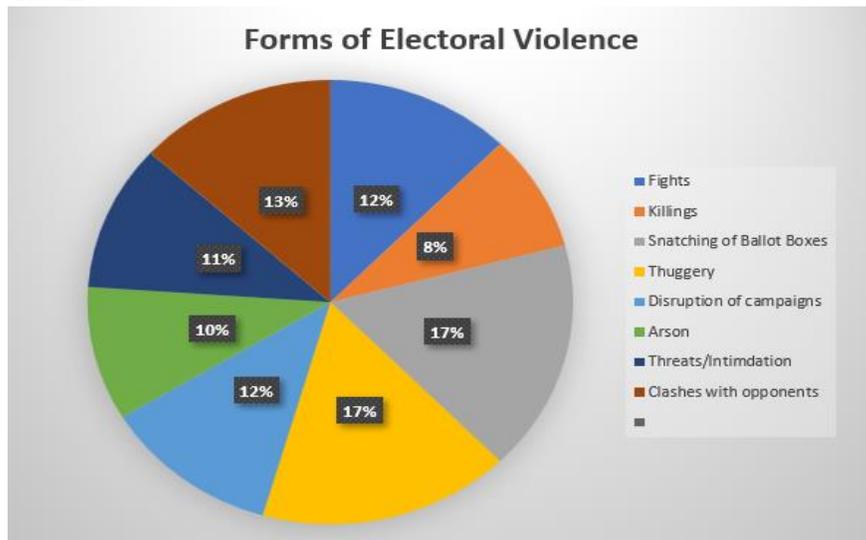


Figure 5.1 Forms of Electoral Violence Related Incidents in Nigeria

Source: Author's Analysis (2021)

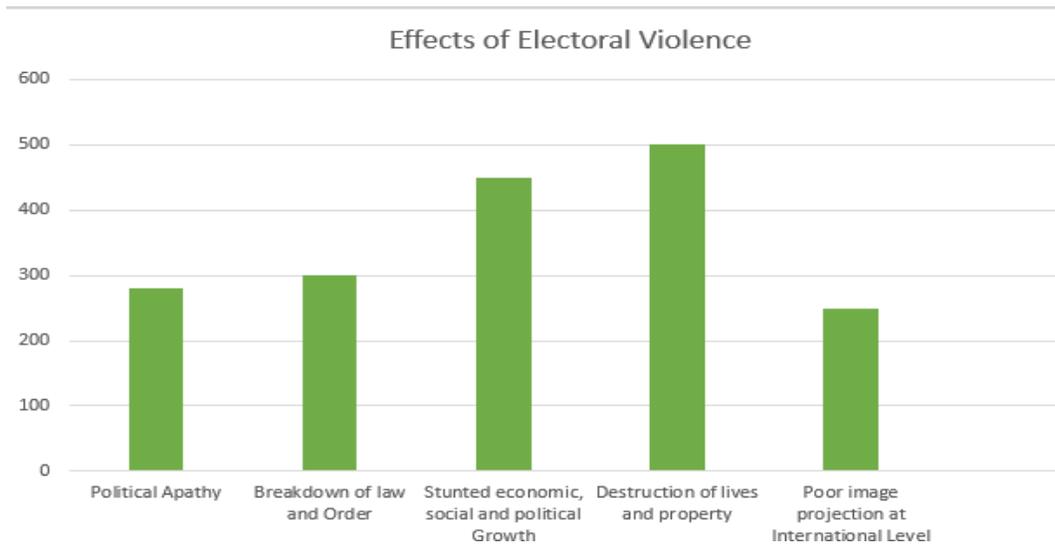


Figure 5.2 Effects of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Source: Author's Analysis (2021)

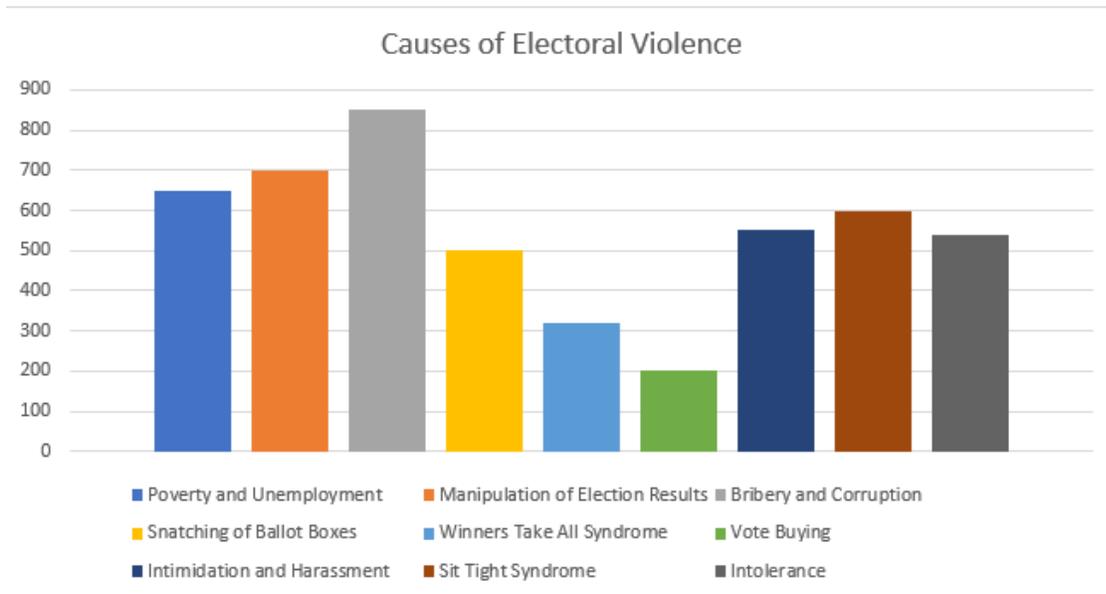


Figure 5.3 Causes of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Source: Author's Analysis (2021)

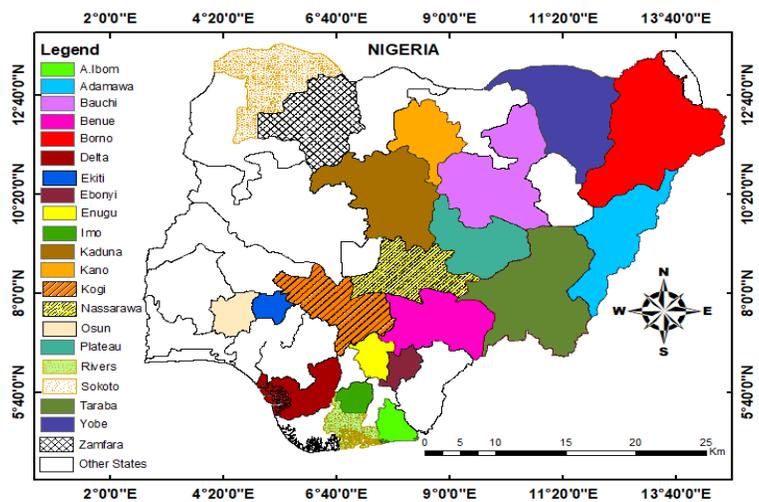


Fig 1.5 States Most Prone to Electoral Violence in Nigeria
 Source: Premium Times Newspaper (2014) & Author's Analysis (2021)

5.2 Discussion

Electoral violence has great consequences to the Nigeria citizens, government and the image of the country. With electoral violence, some Nigerians will view elections and democratic process with apprehension and anxiety as nobody wants to sacrifice his/her life because of elections. Also, the popular confidence of the citizens will gradually erode so long as electoral violence is the order of the democratic process in Nigeria. Electoral violence undermines legitimacy of government and threaten democratic stability of a nation and this include Nigeria (Isah, 2019). The inability to conduct free and fair election has made the country the 'butt of bad jokes' in the eyes of international community (Adekanye, 1990; cited in Isah, 2019). No developed democracies around the world will take a country seriously where electoral violence continue to dominate its political firmament and space.

It is historically documented that many people lost their lives and property worth millions of naira destroyed in Nigeria whenever elections are conducted across the country. For instance, the 2003 elections witnessed about hundred persons dead, and many others wounded in Nigeria. In 2007, over 300 people were killed during the presidential and gubernatorial elections (Paul and Pedro, 2008; cited in Ogunbodede and Adelokun, 2018). Also, in October 14th and 15th, 2005, two persons were killed in the wake of the PDP's Ward and local government congresses in Edo-State, south-south Nigeria. In 2007, there were various electoral crises across the nation. This includes crisis in Ondo State as a result of protest by the people against the result of gubernatorial election. The same thing also happened in most states across the country where houses, cars and other property were set ablaze and destroyed. In Rivers and Akwa Ibom States, South-south Nigeria, it was a theatre of war and fight to finish just to mention but a few. This scenario plays out across all elections conducted in Nigeria right from 1999-2022.

Lawal (2014) maintained that whenever crisis is activated by supporters of one political party their opponents usually don't hesitate to respond on time. This destructive tendency exhibited by some political parties, politicians and their supporters is quite discouraging and can easily lead to voters' apathy which is a draw back to the growth of democracy. Electoral violence can lead to stunted political, economic and social growth and development. Electoral violence has the potentials, propensity and capability to instigate conflict in the society. Electoral violence if not properly managed can lead to total breakdown of law and order, creates instability and invariably affects the effective consolidation of democracy (Ogunbodede and Adedokun, 2018). Figures 5.1 and 5.2 respectively show the pictorial chart of violence related incidents and effects of electoral violence. While figures 5.3 and 1.5 show the various causes of electoral violence and most states that are prone to electoral violence across Nigeria respectively.

For democracy to grow in a developing country like Nigeria, both the political leaderships and the entire citizens must awake from their deep slumber. There must be a strong attitudinal change on the side of the entire citizens and a strong political will by the political leaderships to ensure that democracy brings the much-needed dividends to the people. As it is now, the dividends of democracy in Nigeria are not felt by the people despite the practice of democracy since 1999 till date which is approximately 23 years now. Democracy which is the government of the people by the people and for the people have been hijacked by few privileged ones in Nigeria to the detriment of the largely abandoned poor and less privilege in the society.

The culture of electoral violence has continued to dominate the political space in Nigeria to the extent that people are no longer interested to actively participate in the electioneering process of the country. This indeed is worrisome and needs to be tackled head-long by all and sundry. The works of Olowojolu *et al.* (2019); Isah (2019); and Ahmad & Shehu (2019), all supported the findings of this study when they opined that elections in Nigeria are characterized with high scale of electoral malpractice and electoral violence of different degree. At the moment, the political space of Nigeria has been stifled as violence, threat, assassination, arson, intimidation, harassment and all forms of political malpractices and irregularities have become the acceptable norms in Nigeria electoral system.

Politicians in Nigeria no longer follow the ideologies of their political parties as practiced in much advanced democracies around the world. Politicians in their quest to dominate their opponents perpetually, always engage the services of unemployed and vulnerable youths as well as corrupt electoral officials to manipulate results and promote violence before, during and after elections when they (politicians) know that the electorates no longer need their services. The work of Azom *et al.* (2021) is in total agreement with the findings of this study, wherein they opined that the election environments in most African countries, including Nigeria are not safe and secured due to violence.

The results and findings of the study revealed that electoral violence is a clog in the wheel of democratic advancement in Nigeria. It retards economic, social and political growth. It also makes the people to develop political apathy and exhibit the attitude of I don't care in the governance of the country. The work of Isah (2019) on electoral violence in Nigeria is consistent with the findings of this study when he asserted that electoral

violence in Nigeria has brought about apprehension and anxiety, with the electorates' popular confidence gradually being eroded in the electoral process of Nigeria. The study also reveals the snatching of ballot boxes, vote buying, manipulation of election results by corrupt electoral officials and intolerance to the views of political opponents among others as some of the bane of electoral violence in Nigeria. The views of Okafor (2015) on electoral violence in Nigeria in his work on "electoral violence and the 2015 general elections in Nigeria:..." were in tandem with the findings of this study. He equally acknowledged the presence of electoral violence in Nigeria and posited that electoral violence in Nigeria has become more complex as political actors and their followers have chosen to maintain this destructive violent course.

Electoral violence is witnessed across all states of Nigeria during elections; however, the degree and scale of occurrence varies. The study revealed Rivers, Kaduna, Borno, Ebonyi, Plateau, Kano, Bauchi, Ekiti, Kogi and Akwa Ibom among others as states in Nigeria that are most prone to electoral violence, hence, the need for government to be proactive and ensure that violence in these identified states is reduced to the barest minimum before, during and after electioneering period. The police are constitutionally responsible for the provision of security before, during and after all elections. They are to ensure that both the electorates, candidates and electoral materials are well protected, creating an environment for a free and fair elections (Oyadiran and Toyin, 2015; cited in Azom, 2021). Unfortunately, there are instances where security agencies connived with politicians and electoral officials to subvert the will of the people and the democratic process in Nigeria; and this seem to be the norm in all elections in Nigeria.

The work of Azom *et al.* (2021) corroborated the findings of this study when they observed the involvement of security agencies in promoting electoral malpractice and violence in Nigeria. They noted that security agencies showed partisan roles and complicity during elections in Nigeria. With the findings from the study, citizens are implored to be more patriotic and nationalistic in avoiding acts inimical to the growth of democracy in Nigeria. Corrupt electoral officials who usually connive with politicians to manipulate election results and subvert the democratic process in Nigeria should as a matter of national importance change their attitude and promote good virtues and principles that will make democracy work for the benefit of all Nigerians and the country at large. Furthermore, youths and other groups of persons who are vulnerable could as well change their attitude not to be used to perpetrate political thuggery, arson, ballot box snatching, assassins and disruption of political campaigns. Adequate sanctions could also be given to erring politicians, government officials, corrupt electoral officials as well as personnel of the various security agencies who are found to be culpable of dereliction of duty to serve as deterrents to any would be offenders. All these measures if implemented to the latter would help in the consolidation and strengthening of democracy in Nigeria.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria's democracy is always threatened by electoral violence across the 36 states whenever elections are conducted. Nigeria since 1999 till date has conducted series of elections and there is no election that seem to be violent free. Most citizens in Nigeria have lost interest and show political apathy in Nigeria electoral system because of the associated

violence. This indeed is worrisome. Politicians, electoral officials, the judiciary, political parties and vulnerable young men and women are culpable in promoting electoral violence in Nigeria from various investigations and studies conducted. Expanding the space for democratic participation, improving the environment for political competition and raising the standard for electoral fairness will effectively consolidate democracy in Nigeria. Political parties, electoral management bodies and the judiciary ideally are supposed to lead by example and be the arbiter to the consolidation of democracy and be an effective tool for social mobilization, social re-engineering, social re-orientation, transparent electoral governance, and effective electoral justice system. Unfortunately, in most cases, especially in the emerging African democracies including Nigeria, the reverse is the case. Perpetrators of electoral violence in Nigeria are hardly brought to book and this has equally encouraged violence at all time during electioneering period. Until the political leadership and all concerned institutions have the political will and rise up to their respective constitutional responsibilities, electoral violence will continue to dominate the political firmament of Nigeria.

The paper recommends that: (a) Nigerians should have attitudinal change and condemn the culture of electoral violence. (b) Perpetrators of electoral violence including personnel of various security agencies should be prosecuted in designated courts of competent jurisdiction by the government. (c) Corrupt electoral officials caught to have subverted the will of the people and the democratic processes should be prosecuted by the government in competent courts. (d) Politicians caught in subverting the will of the people and the electoral process should be banned for life by the government not to participate in all future electioneering process in Nigeria. (e) Political party leaderships and their agents should always have the political will to provide a level playing field for their party members during primary elections. (f) Further studies should be conducted on the reasons behind the inability of security agencies to prevent electoral violence in Nigeria. (g) The government should establish an electoral offences commission/tribunal to prosecute all election offences in Nigeria.

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