ELECTORAL VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL APATHY IN NIGERIA FOURTH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

This paper examines the nexus between electoral violence and political apathy in Nigeria. Electoral violence is one of the factors that precipitate the contemporary political apathy that threaten democratic consolidation because; democracy cannot thrive without popular majority participation in the electioneering process. It looks at some conceptual clarification after reviewing some literature on electoral violence. After a critical look at some of the various causes of electoral violence in the country, the writer discovers that a high level of uncontrollable electoral violence will lead to an unmitigated level of political apathy. It is against this background that it recommends amid others: the strengthening of the Electoral Act, 2022 as amended; political campaigns should be based on issues and not on individual personality, condemnation of money politics, intra-party democracy, and the creation of a level play-ground for all political contestants, etc; that will prevent electoral violence and a panacea to mitigate the level of political apathy.

Keywords: Governance, democracy, apathy, violence.

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Introduction

Without political power acquisition, utilization, and manifestation in the political system for his ever-unceasing search for relevance and advantage, which has in fact produced so many tensions and hostilities, the civilization of mankind would not have been possible and would not have seen the enormous transformation of man and his environment. Political violence is thus a common occurrence in most developing democracies, particularly in third-world nations like Nigeria, and its nature and scope are extremely frightful in the political sphere. Nigeria has made headlines in recent years due to extremely horrific acts that took place during elections in various sections of the country (Ishaku and Obi, 2017).

The emergence of political issues that transcend national borders and, as a result, cannot be resolved by nation-states alone is a hallmark of our time of globalization. At the same time, scholars and professionals today concur that the suprastate organizations designed to assist in solving these issues have democratic shortcomings. Therefore, for democracy to have any significance today, it must encompass global democracy.

Internal threats to democracy are on the rise, such as political leaders who won't accept election results or relinquish power peacefully. Regression toward democracy may result from this. Citizens are looking for alternate avenues of political conversation and engagement, facilitated by new technology, as a result of voter apathy and skepticism of established political institutions, particularly political parties and politicians. The integrity of political systems is weakened by big money's influence in politics and its capacity to engulf the state and promote corruption. In their efforts to establish stable democratic societies, conflict-affected nations and those in the democratic transition are particularly at risk. Opposition parties have questioned the legitimacy of electoral procedures and boycotted or refused to accept the results in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia, the Maldives, Pakistan, and Thailand; this pattern reveals the region's poor democratic institutions (IDEA 2014).

Democracization is advancing quickly in Africa. The endurance of multiparty democracy will be put to the test in governing regimes for the first time since independence in Angola, South Africa, and Zimbabwe (Obi, Sekpe and Stephenson, 2019). Conflicts broke out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Gabon, and Zimbabwe in 2016 and 2017 as a result of executive machinations to extend their

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terms in office above those allowed by the constitution. Presidents' attempts to assert their power frequently result in violent protests and cycles of repression, as was the case in Burundi, where President Pierre Nkrunziza's obstinate demand for a third term in office almost brought to "state failure" for the nation (IDEA 2014). One-party states in Asia and the Pacific like China and Viet Nam continue to advance economically; in 2016, Viet Nam changed its government through an election won by delegates of the ruling Communist Party.

It is important to remember that both the political landscape and the general populace of Nigeria have experienced violence in the past (Usman, Bi, and Thomas, 2020:18). Since Nigeria gained independence, its political behavior has been unwavering and constant. This philosophy of violence is one of the main reasons why Nigerians don't participate in politics very much, especially during elections and other social events. Armed bands of hoodlums who have been recruited and trained by politicians to aid them in seizing control of power have frequently engaged in violent street street brawls for political offices in place of democratic opposition and enmities. Many political elites openly assemble and supply criminal groups with weapons so they can terrorize their opponents and the populace.The primary representation of every representative democracy in contemporary society is the election, which

is a formal procedure through which the populace choose leaders to hold public offices. They had the chance to exercise their right to choose their rulers thanks to this (Obi and Vidime, 2018).

Since Sir Hugh Clifford introduced the elected representation in the Legislative Council for Lagos and Calabar in 1922, and since the subsequent elections in the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Republics, Nigeria's elections have been called into "question," This is due to the multitude of factors that make true democratic elections a mirage. Democracy still stands as the finest form of government for Nigeria at the center of all known and tried options because it inspires good will and elevates mankind to a greater level, Dimegwu (2007) observed. According to Dimegwu (2007:18), "freedom of expression, economic freedom" are the characteristics that distinguish democracy from other types of political systems. Accountability, transparency, rule of law, free, fair, and credible elections, press freedom, equality before the law, and respect for the protection of fundamental human rights of the populace are some of these principles. The fact that fights for meaningful electoral politics have persisted as a problem has contributed to the gap between electoral and democratic sustainability in Nigeria.

Facts indicate that attempts to establish democratic electoral procedures in Nigeria have been polluted and hampered by manipulation

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of the highest kind (Enojo and Obi 2016:18). This frequently exposes Nigeria's transition to democratic elections and government to crises. Electoral violence perpetrated by political hoodlums and desperate politicians poses a serious threat to lives and the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria; however, it is disheartening to note that in many states in that country, democratic elections have been obstructed, frustrated, and marred as a result. It is due to these nefarious activities of electoral violence that give the state and local elections that were held in 2003, 20 legitimacy. In this situation, some political analysts believe that electoral violence has reached a point where democratic election procedures and government appear to lack morality and ethics. If this trend is not reversed, future elections in Nigeria may become more untrustworthy and may even result in voter discrimination. In order to provide workable recommendations that would result in peaceful democratic institutionalization and sustainable development in Nigeria, this study examines the extent to which electoral/political violence has affected and harmed the democratic electoral processes from 2011 to 2019 elections.

Whether a country has a presidential or parliamentary style of government, elections and voting are sacred and necessary for democracy and good governance to flourish. However, due to electoral

violence, elections and voting (electioneering) activities have long been associated with pessimism, uncertainty, and worry for the safety of people's lives and property in Nigeria (Ihonvbere, 1994). It poses a challenge to the country's effort to consolidate and stabilize its democracy. Since gaining political independence, election violence has frequently threatened the threads that bind Nigeria's many ethnic groups together into a single, cohesive whole. Many questioned Nigerians' capacity to maintain control over the electioneering event in 2015 as a result of the unfavorable violence and loss of innocent lives following the 2011 Presidential election (Falana, 2015). Between 2014 and 2015, some pessimists questioned if Nigeria even existed as a country (Adeleye, 2013).

Because of our political system's support for zero-sum game politics, where only the victor takes it all, electoral violence is more pervasive in Nigeria. It is for this reason that Otoghile (2009) identified electoral violence as the radioactive by-product of certain structural and attitudinal dislocations in society that have an impact on the amount of political engagement of the populace. In Nigeria generally, and Kogi state specifically, the experience with citizen participation in electoral politics has not been positive. Even though political education for mass participation is a crucial component of the development plan and the

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development of local participation is an important instrument for rural development, programs have not fostered actual responsibility and engagement among the populace.

Nigeria's political culture has grown so ingrained with violence that every election is essentially marred by it (Olarinmoye, 2008). A "Non Violence Accord" was signed in Abuja before the 2015 General Election by the presidential candidates of the political parties who participated in the election as a result of the prevalence of violence in the country's general election. The Non Violence Accord was signed under the joint auspices of Mr. Kofi Anan and Chief Emeka Anyaoku, who were both former Secretaries General of the United Nations and the Common Wealth, respectively (Falana, 2015). It is distressing to hear political leaders consistently distance themselves from acts of violence during electioneering and criticize the offenders, saying that they will undoubtedly face justice. Good governance and progress in Nigeria, particularly in Kogi State, have become mirages due to the phenomenon of political apathy, as issues like vote buying, election rigging, and other electoral malpractices are more common when there is a low voter turnout.

Democracy, Political Participation and Good Governance: The Interface

Democracy by itself does not imply good government. It is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Deep-rooted and consolidated democracy in the form of liberalism, or what Cheema and Maguire (2004) refer to as "maximalist democracy," has been demonstrated to be capable of producing good governance. According to them, maximalist democracy entails "a variety of rights and liberties that must be connected with a competitive and inclusive governing system." While supporting the maximalist approach to democracy, Diamond (1999) contends that democracy is a notion that provides for fundamental human rights, broadens political involvement, and ensures credible and recurrent elections.

Political participation is a prerequisite for good government. Political participation, which includes individuals' involvement in decision-making, public debate on national problems, and voting, should be encouraged. Wider political engagement naturally confers legitimacy on policies that emerge from that process, since individuals feel a feeling of belonging and can claim ownership of such programs. Policies are more likely to be durable when they obtain popular understanding and support, particularly when women, youths, and minorities have input

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into governmental choices and are also given with mechanisms for contesting and protesting unfavorable policies. The goal of broad citizen participation in policymaking is to establish a sense of belonging and awareness that is required for policy to be sustainable, even if it is a short-term painful policy that will offer long-term profit. This form of public participation is powerful enough to strengthen democracy and foster good governance.

Because the majority of Nigerians want economic development and physical improvements to their infrastructure and environs, responsive government would seek and encourage economic development. Good governance, on its own, denotes the extent to which a country's institutions (such as the Executive, Legislature, or Judiciary) and processes (such as the role of political parties in elections) are transparent, accountable to the people, and allow them to freely participate in decisions that affect their lives. Good governance occurs when the government's authority and sovereignty ultimately lie in the people and are responsive to them. As a matter of welfare policy, the government and its institutions must be pro-poor and encourage the human development of all citizens. Robert Dahl (1989) distinguishes democracy from other forms of authoritarianism by identifying three elements: the democratic process promotes individual and collective

freedom, it promotes human development, and the democratic process, while not perfect, is the best way for people to protect and advance their common interests and goods.

The beauty of good governance stems from its proclivity to provide citizens with opportunities for self-fulfillment and self-actualization by deliberately enhancing the capacity of individual citizens, who in turn transform other factors of production into productive purposes for national development. Human development is the way through which other types of development can be realized. Good governance must, in fact, democratize the decision-making process in order to ensure the engagement of the groups for whom decisions are being made. For example, a wealth creation program can only be effective and long-term if the impacted group is involved at all levels of decision-making.

Governance is good when it is nondiscriminatory and treats all members of society according to the established norms; rules should apply to both the haves and the have-nots in society. Citizens, regardless of social rank, ethnic origin, or gender, should have unrestricted access to justice, and the judiciary, as an arbitrator, should be impartial, neutral, and efficient in its interpretation of the law. As a result, excellent governance is expected to be possible in an atmosphere of rule of law

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preservation. In order to foster development, good governance should also prioritize outcomes above processes. It should be evaluated using the government's delivery inputs. That is, effective government is about actual accomplishment and good intentions, not budget provisions. Good governance is not only necessary for development, but it should also be capable of properly utilizing resources to create wealth, promote economic growth, and foster long-term development.

Finally, development is aided by democracy, political involvement, and effective governance. Individuals are significantly constrained by liberal and consolidated democracy to behave within the bounds of the law, and the electorate determines who occupies what position. The institutions of good governance must be funded, staffed, trained, and equipped in a way that will investigate, expose, and punish corrupt behavior, thereby fiercely discouraging it in the future. Through realistic and lasting changes, good governance can be improved through improving the quality of democracy, including devolution and decentralisation of authority and resources, protection of human rights, eradication of corruption, speeding up justice, and strengthening electoral commissions.

Electoral Violence

Violence is defined as activity that is designed to injure or kill another person (Hornby, 2005). Crimes, acts, or threats of violence against any individual, whether physical or emotional, can hurt sentiments. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or a group or community, resulting in or having a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation (WHO,2002). It is any act that causes or may cause physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, verbal, or economic injury to any individual, whether in private or public life, during peacetime or during conflict (Ladan, 2012). Electoral violence thus refers to any act of violence committed during the course of political activities, including before, during, and after elections, in any of the following forms:

• When lethal weapons are used to frighten voters, resulting in political indifference.

• Manipulation of electoral machinery, including rules and results

• When lethal weapons are used to inflict bodily damage on anyone involved in the election process.

• Property damage and arson

• The deployment of thugs to interrupt political gatherings, campaigns, or rallies.

• Any civil action taken against political adversaries.

Electoral violence (conflict) is defined by Fisher (2002) as any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced protection, blackmail, property destruction, or assassination. In essence, electoral violence has often been a stumbling block in the nation's (Nigeria) unity and progress.

The Causes of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Many causes have been identified as being responsible for the prevalence of election violence in Nigeria, including the socio-cultural, economic, and political environments. From a societal standpoint, the social difference between political office holders and the rest of society allowed most people to seek political office at any cost.

In Nigeria, political offices are viewed as the simplest way for someone to change his social position; thus, most political office seekers have chosen politics because, according to Idakwoji (2014:19), "seek you first the political kingdom, and all other wealth shall be added unto you." Thus, political office aspirants hire goons to help them come into government and rob the public coffers for wealth and status.

That is why Olusanya (2004:34) stated that politics of violence and thuggery will continue unless Nigerians cease treating political offices as a business. Politics of zero-sum completeness has been identified as one of the causes of political violence in Nigeria. According to Ahmed (2009:24), zero-sum competition politics is a political setup in which the winner receives all of the rewards of political office at the expense of other contestants. According to Ahmed, this scenario does not allow for all-inclusive government because parties that lose elections with large numbers of supporters fade into obscurity. This situation makes political competition extremely difficult and a "do or die" situation.

According to Ifechukwu (2007:28), there are several African peculiar factors that challenge democratic development in Nigeria; thus, from an economic standpoint, poverty and unemployment have been adduced as some of the economic factors responsible for thuggery in Nigeria, which eventually leads to political violence on democratic elections.

According to Ekpo (2007:34), electoral violence in the Nigerian politics is primarily a reflection of indiscipline that plagues society, i.e., general indiscipline among the political elite is to blame for the frequency of electoral violence. He went on to say that the concepts and

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values of democracy are still foreign to political practitioners, and that it is only when politicians renounce personal interests in favor of the general good that the goals of democracy can be realized in Nigeria and the use of thugs removed.

According to Oladimeji (2008:10), the current terrible experience in Nigeria politics stems from the impact of colonialism, which caused Africans to renounce their traditional beliefs in order to embrace the western culture of individualism, and from humanism to materialism. He also observed that as a result of excessive materialism and an uncontrollable desire for money acquisition, the traditional value of "brother keepers" has faded into obscurity, while greed, avarice, dishonesty, and ruthlessness have become the order of the day.

According to Onyibo (2007:14), for liberal democracy in Africa to work for the good of society and development, it must be based on African traditional ontology, which is centered on peaceful cohabitation and communalism. Other scholars, such as Inajoh (2009:13), have claimed that election violence triumphed because individuals in positions of authority did not recognize it as a social problem and did not come out emphatically to find a societal solution to the menace. According to Inajoh (2009:16), the victory of electoral violence stems from the fact that the government in power in the state feels that it

receives its power and legitimacy from thugs. According to Inajoh (2009), this unique belief has caused the government to rely on thugs in every activity, as they have become the principal contractors of government and dominate in practically all political appointments.

Electoral violence in Nigeria is increasing at an alarming rate. It is a worrying trend for all well-meaning Nigerians who want peace and growth in our beloved country. Electoral officials can help to reduce political violence in the country by remaining impartial and not taking sides.According to Ishaq & Obi, (2017) there are ten reasons for political violence as follows:

i. **Inadequate Voter Education**: The electoral umpire has a major task to carry out, educating the voters on the do's and don'ts before, during and after electorals. There must be a conscious effort to reach the voters physically to demonstrate and educate them on the need to carry out their franchise within the ambit of the law.

ii. **Failure of the Justice System**: A situation where politicians who have been indicted for electoral violence in the past are walking freely till this day tend to promote impurity among political class who has developed the mind-set that they can get away with violent acts during the electoraleering period. There is

every need to work hard in the judicial system to fashion out ways to prosecute electoral offender and ensure that they receive adequate and commensurate sanction.

iii. **Unemployment**: Majority of the youths that are unemployed are already made army in the hands of unscrupulous politicians. The desperation of the political class to grasp or retain political power by all means targets the frustrated, hungry unemployed youths that wants to survive at all cost.

iv. **Corruption**: This is a menace that has eaten deep into almost all strata of Nigeria society. In fact electoral system is not free from this menace as monies constantly changes situation like, inducing, silence or influence or alter the process of electoral in some areas.

v. **Lack of internal Democracy in Political Parties**: Most political parties have failed in their primary duty to re-orientate politicians' within their fold on the need to play by the rules of the party violence are consciously or unconsciously encouraged at the party level when candidates emerge for the main electorals. This may be due to the flawed process instituted internally by the parties

vi. **Inadequate Security:** The Nigeria security agencies are most times overwhelmed' by the spate of violence that has been witnessed in the security over time, but look the other way because of their limitations in terms of numbers of personnel, motivation, welfare, tools they need to carry out their duties effectively.

vii. **Poverty**: The mass poverty in Nigeria is capable of turning a decent man into a beast within a twinkle of an eye. The political class in the country is aware of this fact and they manipulate it to their advantage. So far they can flow the cash if possible to get people on their side to perpetuate the violence.

viii. **Misinterpretation of Politics**: Quite many people in the society especially Nigeria believes that violence is a norm and they have unfortunately accustomed it that spring up during the electoraleering period. Many youths who are recruited as private armies for politicians already have the mindset that their duty is to cause trouble, intimidate voters and their political opponents. This kind of activities clearly showed that politics have been misunderstood by political class, the public and party followers.

ix. **Lack of Democratic Culture/ Behaviour:** Decades of military rule has affected the psyche of the average Nigerians and

politician. Many are still struggling to come out to terms that we are not practicing democracy. Lack of democratic culture/ behaviour is evident in all the stages in the electoraleering period from internal party wrangling to campaign rallies, to political debates between politicians and the public efforts need to be made civil.

x.Lack of integrity from Electoral Umpires: A situation where the electoral umpire clearly shows bias for one group over another in an ingredient of political violence. Those whose duties are to conduct a free and fair electoral have been at the forefront of electoral malpractices which in turn result to civil disturbance by political parties that felt cheated. The central point is that the process should be credible in order to eliminate the constant cases of violence during electorals

The Concept of Political Apathy

Apathy is the feeling of not being interested in or enthusiastic about something or thing in general (Hornby, 2005). Politically, political apathy is the indifference on the part of any citizen of any country with regards to his/her attitude towards political activities (Harder, 2008). This could be generated through indifference feelings towards voting, political rally/campaign, electoral activities or any other political activities in a country.

Electoral Violence and Political Apathy Nexus in Nigeria

Electoral violence has frequently split the electioneering process in Nigeria. It could be either physical or psychological abuse. Electoral violence claims many lives and property. For example, "the Ahmed Lemu Report in 2011 stated that 943 persons were killed and 838 others were injured in the political violence that greeted the announcement of the presidential election results in several States in the North and Akwa-Ibom in April 2011." (Falana, 2015). "It was sad that the 626 individuals apprehended in connection with arson culpable homicide and other serious crimes committed during the civil unrest were let off the hook due to official impunity, which has become the norm under the current political regime" (Falana, 2015). As a result, electoral violence has continued to endanger lives and property in the country during electioneering. All of this has resulted in political apathy among voters, who are no longer interested in political activities and, in particular, are uninterested in the electioneering process. For starters, eligible voters typically do not register or vote in elections. Regardless of the government's public education campaign, some people now perceive public holidays provided by the government for voter registration as adequate time to go to farms or relax at their various houses, while some adult male adolescents take advantage to play football openly on main

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streets. Even when a small number of people vote, the administration that eventually takes power lacks legitimacy and demonstrates bad governance.

The populace makes fun of the period set aside for voter registration that the government declares and creates. These adult population political views emerge as a result of threats to lives and property throughout the electioneering process or period in the country. Second, political apathy is demonstrated by electorates when the Independence National Electoral Commission establishes a timetable for revising voter registration (INEC). This is the time and place where eligible voters who have registered return to authenticate their names, residences, and so on. The majority of Nigerians are no longer interested in it because they frequently believe that their vote will not be counted at the end of the day owing to electoral violence before, during, and after the election, which can occur physically or psychologically. Furthermore, the registration of eligible voters is viewed as a futile effort because they do not see the need to go and obtain their permanent voters card (PVC).

They are uninterested in the electioneering process because electoral violence, which has persisted, has dampened their enthusiasm. For example, ahead to the 2019 General Election in August 2018, INEC

claimed that over 500,000 (500,000) PVC had not to be collected from electorates in Edo state. Electorates frequently express their dissatisfaction with any official electoral result in the polity. There is a widespread conviction that any official result reported by INEC must have been influenced by political elites through election violence, resulting in indifference to PVC collection. Furthermore, electoral violence discourages a significant proportion of voters from voting in an election. Elections are therefore regarded as warfare due to unparalleled political thuggery and unbridled violence marked by wanton devastation of lives and property (Ake, 2001). The electorates have grown concerned about the safety of their lives and property. These electoral politics have raised considerable concerns about the country's consolidation of democratic and partisan politics. In essence, any electoral violence in an election has a "ripple effect" on the number of electorates who will vote in the next election. The country's electorates currently regard their voters' cards as a means or medium for personal formal identification rather than for use in an electioneering to vote.

Again, electoral violence has turned some residents uninterested in political involvement. Because the people now perceives political demonstrations and campaigns to be violent, crowds are being rented for political rallies and campaigns. Political campaign and rally sites have

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become havens for thuggery and assassination. This is especially concerning because all of these criminal political actions are even facilitated by the presence of security personnel on political campaign grounds. On July 14th, 2018, during the campaign for the gubernatorial election in Ekiti State, there was electoral violence as the governor was "tear-gassed" by police during a rally (Vanguard, July 12th, 2018).

The election was so frightening that over 30,000 police officers were called in to regulate or avoid violence. Another frightening feature of election violence is that it has caused some excellent and enthusiastic Nigerians to be unwilling to run for elective political office due to a lack of trust in any current government's political attitude, etc. Some political parties buy votes, particularly those in power or with a large financial base. During the country's electioneering, the political class has always intimidated people by "vote buying" in various polling stations and polling booths. This conduct is frequently perpetrated directly through the deployment of political thugs, displaying the act of thuggery at various polling stations. This undermines public and electorate faith in the electoral process and, in most circumstances, results in spontaneous social disturbance whenever an election official is announced by the electoral empire, INEC.

Financial deception is used to influence voters' political party preferences at various voting units and polling booths. This offence is committed by anyone who impedes or inhibits a voter's free use of his vote through abduction, duress, or any fraudulent device or contrivance, or who thus compels, induces, or prevails upon any voter to give or withhold from providing his vote (Mohammed, 2014). Vote buying was common in the Edo State gubernatorial election in 2016 and the Ekiti gubernatorial election in 2018. The Nigerian Police Force arrested five people in Ado-Ekiti, the state capital, for allegedly providing money to voters during the election (Vanguard, July15.2018.p4). Both the APC and the PDP were clearly observed and acknowledged to be participating in vote buying. As a result, any political party that believes it cannot pull the upper financial muscle on the other will engage in repeated voting and ballot snatching. The political class in power would never think of excellent administration in order to recoup the vast money spent on electioneering by buying votes, because they now perceive politics as a money-making endeavor.

Another source of electoral violence in the country is the prevalence of election rigging. Election rigging is the dishonest manipulation of the election process and its outcome in order to achieve

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the desired outcome. Election rigging can occur before, during, or after a vote. It could take the following forms:

• The use of fake ballot paper; • Diversion or snatching of ballot boxes or paper; • Through Jerry-mandering; • Multiple voting; • Clearly under-age voting; • Voting by an unregistered person; • Ballot box stuffing; • Creating artificial scarcity of ballot papers; • The use of thugs to scare away voters; Any of these types of election manipulation frequently causes official election results to fall short of the expectations of the majority of voters. It usually results in a spontaneous unfavorable reaction at the announcement of election results, which can lead to violence. According to Awowede (2003), this is feasible because "elections are not won by hard-fought electioneering, but through rigging." As a result, individuals in political power would never consider probity and responsibility.

Following the political violence that accompanied the announcement of the Presidential election results in some Northern and Akwa-Ibom States in April 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan established the Ahmed Lemu Panel to investigate the crisis (Falana, 2015). The declaration of the election result resulted in the destruction of property and the loss of lives. Defections from one political party to another are another source of electoral violence. This is a source of

violence when politicians decamp (transfer) from one political party to another, particularly in the year preceding a general election. This act frequently results in hostility and muscle flexing between individuals who defect to another political party and those who are already members of the political party on how to win elections at any cost by engaging in violence. The defector(s) to the other political party are now regarded as political adversaries. The lack of a level playing field for various political parties and political candidates. The same level of playing field is never created for political parties and candidates that run for office in the country. The dominant party or incumbent political leaders utilize their authority to enslave the opposition. Because any party in power controls security operatives in the country, adequate official security is never provided for opposing party members. In the Ekiti gubernatorial race, where the APC has Federal clout, the Nigerian Police did not authorize a political campaign rally held by a PDP gubernatorial candidate and party members.

In the country, there are numerous election abuses (impunity) and a weak electoral act. There are electoral malpractices in the country, particularly during electioneering, and the perpetrators go unpunished. Political candidates and supporters do not follow "the rules of engagement." They manifest themselves in a variety of ways, including

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deliberate false campaign propaganda in which top political leaders make inciting statements about political opponents, total disregard for electoral outcomes by incumbent office holders, the illegal use of official vehicles by public officers for political campaigns, the use of private vehicles to transport electoral materials, and so on. The Action Congress used Edo City Transport Service (ECTS) buses for political campaigning in the Edo State gubernatorial election in 2012. The crisis of impunity is exacerbated during electioneering by partisan engagement of police, military forces, and other security institutions in the political process. Corruption has become a way of life in Nigeria, making it difficult for any government in power to ignore (Ejragbe, 1997). It is interesting to notice that members of the political class that instigate the slew of violence, as well as their foot soldiers who subvert the electoral laws by sustaining impunity, are invariably allowed off the hook (Albert, 2011).

The prevalence of Godfatherism is also a problem in election violence. A godfather is a father figure and mentor who, because of his financial and political prominence, guides a godson down the right way. In Nigeria, however, "political godfather" has a negative meaning of a small group of stubborn individuals who dominate power and utilize it to their advantage (Wilson, 1996). Unemployed youngsters are frequently

recruited as political thugs by the godfathers to promote electoral violence. One of the problems confronting the Nigerian State today is the democratization of violence, and since the state has lost its essential attribute of violence (a process complicated by the godfathers themselves), the godfathers profit from it by hiring and equipping unemployed youth with the latest weapons, which they use as political thugs to maim, terrorize, and kill those who oppose them in the game of politics (Ogbonmwan, 2005). The "Winner Takes All" syndrome in Nigerian politics. Another source of election violence in the country is the intrinsic system of government in which only the competitor who wins an election receives everything. Because of these causes, political contests are "do-or-die" events, especially given the lucrative nature of political jobs. This winner-take-all mentality has become more prevalent in the country as politicians perceive politics as a lucrative business to pursue and adopt the Machiavellian attitude that the end justifies the means..

Implication of the Study

Because democratic consolidation is an embodiment of a civilian regime's durability as well as acceptance and respect for democratic institutions, fair, free, and credible elections must not be an exception to these embodiments. Although there have been notable advances in

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Nigeria's fourth republic experiment, such as the first civilian government remaining in power for sixteen years without military intervention. Within the period range, five general elections were held, as well as the transfer of power from the incumbent to the opposition in 2015.

However, there is much to be desired in the fourth republic's democratic procedures in general, and in the electoral process in particular. Perhaps the difficulties of democratic practice in the fourth republic hindered its consolidation, and hence it is labeled as the bane of democratic government. As a result, issues such as disrespect and outright violations of electoral acts with impunity as a result of weak democratic institutions, electoral violence, ethnoreligious politics, rampant corruption and mismanagement, poverty, and a lack of internal democracy as evidenced by the incumbency factor, godfatherism, and excessive monetization in politics emerge (Egbelubem 2011). The moral underpinning of the state in its ability to meet its obligations to citizens, as well as citizens' ability to obey the laws, has been called into doubt. As has been pointed out, the obstacles that have produced electoral crises are largely technical and logistical ones; yet, for many politicians, winning elections is more important than deaths caused by the use of violence as part of their entire campaign strategy.

It is either to get an unfair edge over their opponents or to disrupt the process outright when it is evident that they are not on the winning side of the split for Nigerian politicians. "As a result, our democracy remains immature and unconsolidated, resulting in scant gain from it." As a result, it is clear "how democracy, rather than elections, is the problem with the Nigerian system." Obiya (2014):63 Weak democratic institutions in Nigeria, such as the legislature, political parties, and electoral administration bodies, have been unable to safeguard and consolidate democracy. In comparison to the government, the fourth republic legislature is a weak and premature entity, having been established in 1999. Many young people who are recruited as private armies for politicians already believe that their job is to cause trouble and scare voters and political opponents. This type of activity plainly shown that politics has been misinterpreted by the political class, the general public, and party supporters.

Poverty and unemployment have also been suggested as causes of political violence. According to Ifechukwu (2007), there are several African peculiar factors that challenge democratic development in Nigeria; thus, from an economic standpoint, poverty and unemployment have been adduced as some of the economic factors responsible for thuggery in Nigeria, which eventually leads to political violence on

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democratic elections. A key source of political violence has been recognized as an excessive commitment to political office. This is confirmed by Uche and Obi (2016)'s observation that until Nigerians stop treating political offices as a business, the politics of violence and thuggery would continue. Politics of zero-sum completeness has been identified as one of the causes of political violence in Nigeria. According to Ahmed (2009), zero-sum competitive politics is a political setup in which the winner receives all of the rewards of political power at the expense of other contestants. According to Ahmed, this scenario does not allow for all-inclusive government because parties that lose elections with large numbers of supporters fade into obscurity. This state of affairs makes political competition extremely difficult and a "do or die" situation.

Other factors identified were a lack of popularity of political aspirants and political parties, an excessive desire to win elections by political office seekers, violence persisting as a result of the winner-take-all syndrome by political office seekers after winning an election, and more than half of respondents agreed that violence is frequently triggered by supporters of the incumbent political party. The effects of electoral violence on democracy in Nigeria have been linked to a variety of issues, including the fact that violence makes the voting process

undemocratic. Electoral violence, unlike other forms of violence, is limited to political violence related with the electoral process, according to Afolabi (2003). This type of political violence occurs prior to, during, or following elections. Electoral violence is a type of violence related primarily with the electoral process in a given society, specifically in a democratic setup or in the process of democratic translation (Afolabi, 2003:79).

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that political violence reduces turnout on Election Day. The detrimental consequences of political violence on North Central's sociopolitical and economic growth were found as eloping fraction among different categories in society. Political violence also pushes political elites to use adolescents as thugs. According to Ajayi (2008), political violence perpetrated by political thugs in north central state has negatively impacted youths, who no longer respect elders or any constituted authority.

The study's findings show that democratic features have an impact on the electoral process, and that one's level of education is not a determinant factor in electoral violence, as indicated by the majority of study participants, as well as findings on the role of sensitization/campaigns programmers in reducing electoral violence. This finding is consistent with Adelekan's (2010) assertion that, ideally,

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democracy entails individual engagement in decisions affecting one's life. In a democratic society, citizens must be fully involved in democratic procedures such as ruler selection and effective communication of public policies and views. This suggests that proper knowledge helps throughout the voting process, as does a high degree of education, because illiterates are more active in political engagement than educated people.

The results of the study on the influence of low turnout during periodic elections on democratic consolidation in the study area demonstrate that low turnout during elections has harmed democracy in north central Nigeria. Furthermore, the data suggest that the failure of the masses to engage in elections has had an impact on our democratic practice in Nigeria, as the outcome does not reflect the will of the masses. Findings on its multiplier implication reveal that when people refuse to participate in politics, governance suffers, and vote buying and election manipulation are conceivable. According to the study, vote buying and electoral manipulation are important causes of apathy. This research demonstrates that the main reason for party flipping and cross-carpeting is a political party losing its hold on the masses' support or a low turnout for such party's support, and the implications for our political system are severe.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to show the relationship between electoral violence and political apathy. After the initial introduction, efforts were made to review the existing literature on the subject and made conceptual clarification. It is the position of this paper that there appears to be arobust relationship that exist between electoral violence and the increasing trend of political apathy in the country.

Given the foregoing, it is imperative to urge that the country's Electoral Act of 2010 be reinforced. Section 150 of the Electoral Act empowers the INEC to investigate and prosecute electoral offenders, but it lacks the resources to carry out this onerous statutory responsibility. As a result, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) should take on the responsibility of prosecuting election criminals across the country. To curb the spike of electoral violence and offenses, electoral criminals should face harsher penalties, as it has been recognized that current penalties are insufficient. Anyone found guilty of electoral violence should be barred from active politics for ten years. This will help dissuade potential criminals. In addition, it is suggested that political elites and their agents be barred from active politics for years after serving their prison sentences. Furthermore, political campaigns should be oriented on ideas rather than particular personalities. This should be

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strictly enforced in order to reduce the calumny campaign that frequently leads to electoral violence in the polity.

Scholars believe that this would discourage money politics and encourage the politics of debate, ideas, and competing programs; the defense of the people's interests and the accomplishment of the public purpose; and the only way the people can be protected from the ravenous appetite of political godfathers and money-bags (Osagie, 2006). This will prevent the rapid and excessive defection of political elites from one political party to another, as well as diminish the "do-or-die" election syndrome. A equal playing field should be established for both ruling and non-ruling party candidates. This should be equitable in terms of providing publicity and protection to any governing party candidate and constants in other political parties. When this is completed, all candidates will be permitted to campaign within the confines of the Electoral Act. Still on a level playing field, vote buying and other types of electoral rigging should be opposed by all parties engaged in order for those implicated to face proper prosecution. The recommendations may not be magical methods or solutions for ridding society of political violence and the current trend of political indifference, but they are worth examining.

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