



Electoral violence and democratic governance in Nigeria

BY

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of electoral violence on democratic governance in Nigeria. The study's specific objectives are to examine the impact of electoral violence on democratic governance and electoral credibility in Nigeria. The study adopts an exploratory research design while content analysis of publicly available archive documents was employed for the analysis. Secondary data were generated via journal publications and other documented materials relevant to the study. The review of literature on the impact of electoral violence on democratic governance revealed that the persistent violence at different elections conducted in Nigeria has greatly undermined, discredited, and emasculated democratic governance in the country. The result showed that electoral violence had a negative influence on electoral credibility in Nigeria. The study concludes that electoral violence has remained a sour taste in Nigeria's bid for democratic governance in Nigeria. The study also concludes that electoral violence discourages the election of credible leaders and people's participation in the electoral process thereby militating against electoral credibility in Nigeria. The study recommends the need to reconstruct the security architecture of the country, sanction political leaders, political parties, and individuals who violate electoral laws, tackle the problem of arms proliferation, and embark on political education and enlightenment that will encourage citizens to adhere strictly to democratic tenets. The study recommends a reduction in the financial attractiveness of political offices, and handing down stiffer penalties to perpetrators of electoral violence by the government to deter others from demonstrating such acts in the future.

Keywords: Democratic Governance, Electoral Credibility, Electoral Violence, Marxist Theory of Conflict

Introduction

Democracy as a system of government is commonly practised in most countries of the world. While it is popular mostly due to its unique attribute of selecting leaders through elections, it is characterized by various levels of electoral violence in some regions especially among developing countries like Nigeria. The violence that is perpetrated before, during and after elections is referred to as electoral violence (Flores & Nooruddin, 2023). Democracy is considered as the solution to Africa's problems; but it has become a major source of violence and conflict in countries with some of Africa's big economies like Nigeria. However, with democracy taking shape across the Africa continent, new forms of conflicts are emerging, including electoral violence, which seems to be pushing democracy into total retrogression (Yusuf, 2019). It is true that democracy come with its own challenges. Sadly, however, electoral violence has become a common trend and is assuming a dangerous dimension in the Africa continent. Electoral violence has great consequences to the Nigeria citizens, government and the image of the country before the international

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communities. 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 in the electoral process so long as electoral violence is the order of the democratic process in Nigeria.

Yusuf (2019) noted that while the main purpose of electoral violence is the manipulation of the electoral system to favour particular candidates or political parties through the use of violence, various forms of violence are usually employed by unpopular candidates with the aim of hijacking the electoral process to their favour. Ebiziem (2015) agreed that electoral violence is one of the main challenges affecting democracy as it tends to affect electoral outcomes as well as the overall quality of governance. Looking at electoral violence from a diverse perspective, Mollah and Jahan (2018) are of the opinion that electoral violence is mainly used by incumbents as means to win elections fraudulently in order to hold on to power.

Electoral violence tends to affect most areas of a country's development thereby leading to poor democratic governance, insecurity, corruption among other effects. Electoral violence is one of the major challenges facing Nigerian electoral processes since independence. It has been observed that elections in Nigeria are always faced with different forms of violence. Violence around elections increasingly captures the attention of donors and practitioners, who invest growing resources into enhancing the safety and security of democratic governance around the world (Althaus et al., 2022).

During an election cycle the possibility of violence increases as the stakes of political contestation heighten and when outcomes between candidates and incumbents are viewed in a zero-sum manner. This is particularly true where both the ruling party and its opposition view elections as a zero-sum game. Electoral violence is rarely mono causal; a confluence of factors enables violence before, during or after an election. There seems to be a growing academic discourse on the impact of electoral violence on democratic governance around the globe. It is argued in many quotas that democratic governance is a panacea to electoral violence; in fact, it is one of the measures the United Nations (UN) often advocate in their intervention efforts in war torn countries (Segun, 2013). However, Segun (2013) argued that democracy rather than been a solution to violence, is a major driver of violence in developing countries like Nigeria.

After about two decades in which the process of political renewal began in Africa, the mission of democratic governance appears to be in crisis in most African States, particularly in Nigeria. Since Nigeria's attainment of independence in 1960, electoral violence and myriad irregularities have persistently marred the process of electing the country's leaders. Much violence tends to cluster around election times to manipulate election results. For this reason, election violence as an academic discourse is getting more

and more attention. An increasing amount of literature has been dealing with electoral processes and systems in conflict-prone countries without specifically focusing on electoral violence and democratic governance in Nigeria.

However, election violence as an academic field is still an unmapped research arena where people in academia are continuously working to make it a separate field of study from other kinds of violence such as political violence, domestic violence and sexual violence. Research on the electoral system design, preventing electoral conflict, elections in countries emerging from authoritarian rule or violent conflict has generated intense debate among practitioners and scholars. Nevertheless, the impact of electoral violence on democratic governance in Nigeria has not been extensively studied. The preponderance of political violence in Nigeria and its manifestations has remained one of the greatest threats to democratic governance. These threats or challenges had thrown up a myriad of social problems such as poverty, unemployment, corruption, marginalization and neglect, which have brought untold hardship to the citizens with vulnerable groups like women, children and youths, as the worst hit casualties.

Unfortunately, the joy that heralded the reintroduction of democracy in Nigeria seems to be fading after 24 years, respectively, of democratic rule with less hope on the horizon owing to election violence. Ideally, the transition from authoritarian regimes is supposed to bring about democratic governance. This can be achieved through due regard to human rights, respect for the rule of law, strengthening of institutions, constitutionalism and the conduct of periodic, free, fair and credible elections. Democratic governance has been described as the capacity to bring about stability and persistence in a democracy, by imbibing the democratic principles (Botchway, 2018). This democratic principle could be in upholding the constitution, ensuring democratic stability or peaceful coexistence. Corroborating this view, Masipa (2018) agreed that democratic governance is when a high premium is placed on the constitution, healing from past wrongs and establishing a society based on democratic values such as social justice, and fundamental human rights.

The current reality is that democracy in Nigeria has not been totally free of violence, political killings, intimidation, and suppression of the opposition and citizens alike. There are also the cases of thuggery, disregard to the rule of law, corruption, manipulation of elections through voter rigging. These menaces have continued to be a threat to the democratic governance in Nigeria. Efforts have been made by the Nigerian State government in collaboration with non-governmental organisations and international organisations to educate the electorates and the politicians on the need to shun election violence and other forms of election malpractices (Onapajo, 2014).

Despite these efforts at curbing the menace of election violence in Nigeria, data from several studies suggest that election violence continues to manifest in almost every election. Recent studies have shown that although the election is central to democratic governance, its periodical conduct has shown less progress towards the democratic governance in Nigeria (Fatai, 2017). He attributes the problem to the failure of the institutionalisation of liberal democratic principles such as the rule of law, constitutionalism and political liberty which has been the reason(s) for democratic reversals.

However, much of the research on election violence and democratic governance to date has been merely descriptive in nature and has failed to holistically analyse and interpret the role of election violence on democratic governance in Nigeria. Surprisingly, democratic governance and election violence in Nigeria has not been closely examined particularly on an analytical scale. Consequently, not much is known about how election violence contributes to the slow pace of democratic governance in Nigeria. It is also unclear if the different factors and ways through which election violence continues to undermine democratic governance in Nigeria. This, therefore, constitutes the gap which this study seeks to fill, and it is upon this basis that this study was predicated with the aim to help understand and analyse the interplay between election violence and democratic governance in Nigeria.

Prior studies in Nigeria like Erunke et al. (2022) examined the relationship between political violence and the sustenance of democratic values in Nigeria, with particular reference to Nasarawa State. While, Kalu and Gberevbie (2018) made reference to the 2011 and 2015 general elections in Lagos State. Whereas Ita (2022) explored the prevalence of electoral violence in Nigeria between 1999 and 2019 with evidences from the South-South geo-political zone. Harry and Kalagbor (2021); Okpuvwie (2021); Adekola (2021); Nse and Onya (2019); Oranye et al. (2019); Nwachukwu (2018); Ogunbodede and Olabisi (2018); Ikyase and Egberi (2015) all examined the effects of electoral violence on the democratization efforts and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Mezieobi et al. (2017) assessed the consequences of political election violence on democratic social order in Nigeria. The study was carried out in North central geo-political zone of Nigeria. Even as Nwachukwu (2017) adopted descriptive research design, and is focused to establish the philosophy behind the electoral fraud in Anambra State in particular and Nigeria at large. From the forgoing review of literature, there is gap on impact of electoral violence on democratic governance in Nigeria. Hence, this study seeks to make contributions to this research endeavour.

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of electoral violence on democratic governance in Nigeria. Other specific objectives of this study are to;

- i. Examine the impact of electoral violence on democratic governance in Nigeria.
- ii. Determine the impact of electoral violence on electoral credibility in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Electoral Violence

Electoral violence is defined as an acts or threats of coercion, intimidation, or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process or that arises in the context of electoral competition. When perpetrated to affect an electoral process, violence may be employed to influence the process of elections; such as efforts to delay, disrupt, or derail a poll and to influence the outcomes: the determining of winners in competitive races for political office or to secure approval or disapproval of referendum questions. Bamgbose (2011) further stated that electoral process at the public level is the process of planning and conducting elections to choose representatives of the people in public offices of governance such as the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government at state and national levels.

Democratic Governance

Democratic governance is building open, responsive, and accountable institutions and processes that serve the needs and preferences of the public. It is a system of government where institutions function according to democratic processes and norms, both internally and in their interaction with other institutions. Democratic governance is giving citizens a say in how decisions are made, and is fundamental to ensuring that democracy delivers for all of society. Strong democratic governance is characterized by transparency and accountability in both the public and private sectors.

Elaigwu (2014) defined governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. True democracy rest on good governance and the major determinant of whether governance is a good or bad is not dependant on effective policy formulation alone, but also on how the policy brought about growth, stability and more importantly, the extent at which it enhances the over- all well-being of the citizens.

Democratic governance therefore is a broad phenomenon that recognizes the interconnection of issues of democracy and governance. It is useful concept that touches on the significant challenges of state reform and the quest for development and progress of the people of a state. Despite this connection, democracy and governance are conceptually distinct phenomena with different theoretical and philosophical underpinnings. In a much discussed quantitative analysis Ibeanu and Egwu, (2007), measured democratic governance in practice, is not only expected to promote the core values of democracy , it is also about deepening democracy in such a way that state institutions and political parties are accountable to the

citizens. Democratic governance requires minimum conditions of dignity and well-being for the people in order to function fully.

Electoral Credibility

Credible election is always used interchangeably with clean, acceptable, free and fair elections. These are elections conducted in accordance with the existing electoral rules and in which every contestant is given equal opportunity to win. It is an election conducted without partiality or undue advantages of any party or candidate. Credible election is election conducted in a democratically acceptable manner/process. It must provide for equal electorate and freedom which afford them opportunity to make real and meaningful choice devoid of coercion or intimidation (Ayogu et al., 2019).

Furthermore, credible elections are indispensable to the establishment and maintenance of democracy. In developed liberal and social democracies such as the United States and many European states, elections have been institutionalized as the *dues ex machina* for fostering competitive party politics, taking stock of the performance of leaders at various levels of the polity and ensuring the smooth and orderly transfer of the reins of power.

Empirical Review

Electoral Violence and Democratic Governance

Erunke et al. (2022) examined the relationship between political violence and the sustenance of democratic values in Nigeria, with particular reference to Nasarawa State. The study employed survey research and, hence, adopts the use of primary and secondary sources of data collection as method of investigation. Data was collected and analyzed using simple percentage analysis. The results from the findings reveal that though conscious efforts have been made by government and other stakeholders to mitigate violence during elections, not much has been achieved in sustaining the peace before, during or after elections.

Rosenje (2022) investigated how security lapses accentuated electoral violence thereby threatening democratic consolidation in Southwest Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It made use of documentary data gathered through secondary data source. It further averred that these inadequacies of the security personnel, the politicisation, and manipulation of its deployment by the leadership as well as prevalent arms proliferation had posed challenges to peaceful conduct of elections. The study concluded that in order to resolve the security challenges bedeviling the Southwest's electoral process, with a view to attaining a violent-free election that will guarantee democratic consolidation.

Ita (2022) explored the prevalence of electoral violence in Nigeria between 1999 and 2019 with evidences from the South-South geo-political zone. The study ascribed the recurring and high level of political

violence in the country to over-zealousness and desperation of political gladiators to win elections or remain in office at all cost. The empirical work of Harry and Kalagbor (2021) examined the effects of electoral violence on the democratization efforts and democratic consolidation in Nigeria since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1999. The primary data were mainly drawn from mainly the authors' observations during elections, over the years, while secondary data were drawn from existing literature on the subject matter. The study revealed that the pervasive violence at different elections has greatly discredited and emasculated democratic governance in the country. The study concluded that, to ensure the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, election management bodies must adopt an electoral system that drastically reduces congregation of people at a voting point(s) so as to reduce violence.

Okpuvwie (2021) conducted a study on electoral violence and the growth of democracy in Nigeria. The study used secondary data and content analysis method. The study revealed killings, arson, snatching of ballot boxes and thuggery as 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.

Adekola (2021) examined electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Implication for democratic development. It adopts secondary source of data collection using all relevant documented materials to analyse the work. The study discovered that electoral violence occurs in three occasions, which are: Pre, during and post elections periods. Consequently, violence that characterised elections in Nigeria's fourth republic is a major obstacle to democratic development and Nigerian inability to conduct free, fair and credible election.

Igwe and Amadi (2021) explored how the prevalence of political violence has undermined Nigeria's democracy. The study adopted survey data to address the questions regarding democracy and political violence. The study argued that these assumptions obviously constitute a 'universal pattern' in democratic practice, which makes a critical evaluation of the Nigerian experience important. Consequently, the findings suggest that the prevalence of political violence is fundamentally an attribute of vested interests of the political elite.

Nse and Onya (2019) examined the problem of electoral violence in Nigeria with focus on the 2015 general elections. It adopted a qualitative method with reliance on secondary sources of data and argued that although there was relative sanity in some parts of the country during the exercise, the elections recorded

some casualties in States like Akwa Ibom and Rivers. The study concludes that electoral violence has remained a sour taste in Nigeria's bid for democratic consolidation and sustainability.

Dokoupilová (2019) analysed the causes of pre-electoral violence in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, where election observation missions took place in 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. It draws upon the official documents of the European Union and several NGO's final reports from missions and simultaneously from questionnaire of Czech observers. The study reflected pre-electoral violence from the perspective of international relation theories, which set in the context of historic events in chosen country, which thereafter become a core for the following analysis of pre-electoral events.

Oranye et al. (2019) investigated the effect of electoral violence on democratic consolidation in Nigeria, relying on documentary approach, using data gathered from secondary sources. It analyzed generated data using content analysis. The study found that electoral violence in Nigeria has resulted in the imposition of corrupt and illegitimate leaders who have no regard for the principles of democracy which are off-shoots for good governance, rule of law, constitutionalism and fundamental human rights.

Yusuf (2019) conducted a study on democratic consolidation and electoral violence: An Analysis of Kogi State, Nigeria and KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa 1994-2017. The study adopted a qualitative research approach using case studies. A structured interview and focus group discussion was used to gather data from ten locations- five each from Kogi State and KwaZulu-Natal, respectively. Thematic and descriptive analyses were both used in aiding to the analysis of the data from this study. Results obtained from the study revealed that election violence undermines the consolidation of democracy in Kogi State and KwaZulu-Natal. The study further discovered that most of the politicians in Nigeria and South Africa lack the required qualifications, both political and educational qualifications, and the competence to rule, which best explains the irrational behaviour among the political elite.

Nwachukwu (2018) conducted a study on electoral violence and democratic consolidation in Nigeria: Reflections on the 2015 general elections. The study examined electoral violence in the 2015 general elections and its implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The study argued strongly that the persistence of electoral violence in Nigeria is a threat to democratic consolidation in the country.

Kalu and Gbervbie (2018) examined election violence and democracy in Nigeria with focus on the 2011 and 2015 general elections in Lagos State. The study adopted a qualitative method basically from primary data (oral interview) and secondary data, using observations, journal articles, newspaper reports and report of INEC obtained online. It revealed that election violence was caused by many factors including; lack of

internal democracy within political parties, inefficiency of the electoral commissions, inadequate security personnel, inadequate voter education, voters' bribery, rumour of rigging, among others.

Ogunbodede and Olabisi (2018) explored and analyzed election violence in Nigeria and its implication on democratic consolidation and development using content analysis method. The findings revealed that indicators of democratic consolidation are conspicuously absent in Nigeria. Conclusion reached by the study is that democracy is yet to be consolidated in Nigeria, as it can only be possible in elections devoid of violence and or conducted in peaceful environment.

Agah (2017) examined electoral violence and democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, using Delta and Oyo States. The Ex-Post Facto research design with the questionnaire technique was adopted. The study established that, there was a significant relationship between the nature and dynamics of the Nigerian state and electoral violence. It was also established that there was a significant relationship between electoral violence and democracy and thirdly, the study also discovered that there exist a positive relationship between electoral violence and the democratization process in Nigeria.

Abah and Ibeogu (2017) focused towards establishing the causes of electoral violence in Nigeria's democracy, with Bayelsa and Kogi State 2015 general elections as study areas. The study adopted content analytical method and survey research design. The study pin pointed frustration, aggression, greed, poverty and selfishness among the electorates and contestants as some of the factors that gave rise to electoral violence in Nigeria's political activities.

Ikyase and Egberi (2015) examined the political violence and democratic stability in Nigeria. The study argued that the Nigerian democratic project has been under perpetual threat since 1999 when the country returned to democratic governance. The methodology adopted focused on the secondary data and insights were drawn extensively from the conflict theorists. The paper revealed that the realization of democratic objective or stability depends solely on free, fair and credible elections.

Electoral Violence and Electoral Credibility

Momoh (2023) investigated voters' perception in Lokoja metropolis on electoral violence and the electoral credibility of the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State. Survey research design was adopted for this study. Data for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The sample of size of 400 registered voters from a population of 137,301 registered voters was collected from Lokoja. The result showed that electoral violence had an influence on electoral credibility in Lokoja during the 2019 Kogi State gubernatorial election. Furthermore, the study also found that electoral violence discourages citizens from voting in the 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis, Kogi State.

Jooji (2022) investigated the factors that triggered ethnic politics during the Kogi State 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis and how it undermined the electoral process during the Kogi State 2019 gubernatorial election. The study collected data from primary and secondary sources. This study used a sample of 400 people from the study's population of 137,301. Also, the alternative hypothesis which states that there is significant relationship between the ways ethnicity undermined the credibility of electoral process during the Kogi State 2019 gubernatorial election in Lokoja Metropolis is accepted.

Mezieobi et al. (2017) assessed the consequences of political election violence on democratic social order in Nigeria. The study was carried out in North central geo-political zone of Nigeria. The population of the study was 200 respondents across the area of study. Data was generated through structured interviews. It was found that ethnicity and religion, doctoring of election results, massive rigging, poverty, thuggery amongst others stimulated political election violence.

Akpan (2017) explored the patterns of electoral violence with some case scenarios from the Niger Delta region between the period 1999 to 2015. The study concluded that much of the violence is attributable to the failure of institutional mechanisms and similar apparatus to provide a functional polity where compliance to electoral rules could redress violence.

Nwachukwu (2017) adopted descriptive research design, and is focused to establish the philosophy behind the electoral fraud in Anambra State in particular and Nigeria at large. It established that too many evils and debasing electoral malpractices have too long been tolerated in this country and that they have remained unchecked, threatened national unity, peace and stability. Ityonzughul et al. (2021) investigated the economic impact of election violence on Nigeria's democratic development. From the forgoing review of literature, there is gap on voters' perception on electoral violence on electoral credibility in Lokoja during the 2019 Kogi State gubernatorial election in the literature of election and democratic studies.

Iheanacho (2015) examined the incidence of electoral violence in Nigeria and determine its implication for democratic stability. The study makes use of secondary data as its source of information. The study observes that electoral violence discourages election of credible leaders and people's participation in the electoral process thereby militating against democratic stability.

Theoretical Framework

The Marxist Theory of Conflict

Marxist theory of conflict was propounded by Karl Marx (1883). This theory is one of the earliest attempts at explaining social conflict. Marx saw social classes as the outcome or arising from the relations of production under capitalist mode. He underscored that the social relations of production under capitalism

generates two major and distinct classes in the society based on access to the means of production (Anugwom, 2009). The structure is such that those who possess the means of production (bourgeoisie) control, dominate, subjugate and exploit those who do not possess capital but depend only on their labour as a means of living (proletariats/ have-nots). Economic issues, according to Marx, are the major or primary causes of tension and violence in all societies (Aja, 2009).

For Ndu (2001) and Obiam (2021), the Marxian political-economic approach implies an analysis of historical economic relations, given specific tools of analysis which are classes in social action. In other words, the approach focuses on man and how to meet his economic needs in society. There emerge the class that owns and controls the means of production, and the class that does not own and control the means of production – the former is the exploiting class and the other is the exploited class.

The Marxian class analysis shows how the various parts of the superstructure are used as instruments of domination of the ruling class, and as a mechanism of oppression of the subject class. According to Ake (1981), the approach explicitly analyses the economic reasons, interests, and agenda behind political and social decisions in any social formation. He maintained that members of the exploiting class, that is, the advantaged class, are usually better educated, more cultured, have higher social statuses and are fortunate, not only economically but also politically. The relevance of this theory to the study is that it exposes the fact that the violence that has plagued elections in Nigeria is as a result of the violent struggle among political actors (dominant class) in the country to access and control the resources of the state. In Nigeria, the person elected president determines and controls the economic sector and other sectors of the state. Hence, the contest for the post of the president of the country is viewed as a do-or-die affair and a zero-sum game that must be won by all means.

It helps in the understanding of the double standard of the Nigerian political ruling class whose key interest is to control the commonwealth to enhance their economic interest without necessarily pursuing the collective interest of all. In the bid to capture or retain power, the ruling class uses various means which are mainly violent in nature. This political ruling class incites ethnic and religious sentiments among the people to ensure that their interest is further protected.

Methodology

This study adopts exploratory research design while making use of secondary data generated via journal publications, internet, library, and other documented materials relevant to the study; the study tries to examine the impact of electoral violence on democratic governance in Nigeria using content analysis of publicly available archive documents. The research is conducted by examining literature concerning electoral violence and democratic governance. The literature was obtained through searches in publicly

available material. Literature from non-serial publications, official reports, and conferences has been included particularly if they have been cited by other references.

Discussion of Findings

The review of literature on the impact of electoral violence on democratic governance reveals that the persistent violence at different elections conducted in Nigeria has greatly undermined, discredited and emasculated democratic governance in the country. The study also revealed that mass unemployment, ethnic and religious cleavages, zero-sum nature of politics and unabated corruption are major precursors to electoral violence in Nigeria. The study revealed that ethnicity and sentiments have remained the major platform of the election campaigning in Nigeria and this scenario is affecting the nation's democratic governance. It further reveals that, election rigging has led to the electoral violence which has resulted to loss of lives and properties. These are some of the views held by Erunke et al. (2022); Rosenje (2022); Harry and Kalagbor (2021); Okpuvwie (2021); Adekola (2021); Oranye et al. (2019); Yusuf (2019).

The result gotten from empirical literature is that electoral violence negates electoral credibility in Nigeria. The result showed that electoral violence had a negative influence on electoral credibility in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the danger posed by political thugs influenced voters' decision to vote against their conscience in Nigeria. In addition, the analysis reveals that citizens voted for a certain candidate because they were intimidated by political thugs in Nigeria thereby reducing electoral credibility in Nigeria. This is the submission of Momoh (2023); Jooji (2022); Mezieobi et al. (2017); Akpan (2017); Nwachukwu (2017); Tyonzughul et al. (2021); Iheanacho (2015).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that electoral violence has remained a sour taste in Nigeria's bid for democratic governance in Nigeria. The study concludes that the persistence of electoral violence in Nigeria is a threat to democratic governance in the country. The study also concludes that electoral violence discourages election of credible leaders and people's participation in the electoral process thereby militating against electoral credibility in Nigeria. Much of the electoral violence is attributable to the failure of institutional mechanisms and similar apparatus to provide a functional polity where compliance to electoral rules could redress violence.

The study recommends for the need to reconstruct security architecture of the country, sanction political leaders, political parties and individuals that violate electoral laws, restructure Nigeria's federal system, tackle the problem of arms proliferation and embark on political education and enlightenment that will encourage citizens to adhere strictly to democratic tenets.

The study recommends for a reduction in the financial attractiveness of political offices, handing down of stiffer penalties to perpetrators of electoral violence by the government so as to deter others from demonstrating such acts in the future as well as effectively educating the citizens on the dangers of electoral violence and its effects on democratic stability in the country.

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