

## **Impact of Electoral Violence on Human Resource Mobilisation for Community Development in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*There is global awareness that election is an important tool for selecting leaders who will govern for good of the people. Thus, it is a tool for human resource mobilisation for community development as well Nigerian elections are marred by violence, and at the same time there is the problem of good governance in the land amidst abundant socio-economic resources. The study intends to find out if there is a relationship between occurrence of violent elections and existence of poor governance in Nigeria. Both primary and secondary data were used. For the primary data, a total of 250 randomly selected respondents were drawn from the five (5) geo-political zones (Ibadan, Ibarapa, Ogbomoso, Oke-Ogun and Oyo) of Oyo State in equal proportions of 50 samples each. A sixteen-item questionnaire concerning people's opinions on the implication of electoral violence on community development in Nigeria was developed to collect data with educated adult persons forming the study population. The study revealed that electoral violence is a serious clog in Nigeria's wheel of utilising election to derive human resources for community development, and that it deeply perpetrated by the elites of power with the support of other citizens, among other things. Consequently, it is recommended that the interest of the ruling people or citizens generally should be ethically guided as most Nigerian political actors lack diligence, a virtue that can help political actors not to fall into the trap of self-complacency, fantasy and corruption, among other ones.*

**Keywords** *Development, election, governance, mobilisation and violence*

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## INTRODUCTION

Citizen participation is a useful tool of governance that is deployed in several manners like service delivery, public financial management, natural resources management including holding public officials accountable through programmes like assets and liabilities disclosure and monitoring, citizens' report cards and public interest litigation (Olaleye & Ayobade, 2020). This is imperative given man's quest for survival, development, social order and happiness in his socio-political realities (Oyeshile, 2024). Election is an important component of democracy being used to achieve the above, and, of course, the most visible way of observing the existence of democracy within a political system. Thus, its invention by mankind is making democracy possible, especially the selection of political leaders. It is however more than this in hitherto authoritarian state. Nigeria prior to 1999 was one of such states.

The consequences of authoritarianism have been noted in four negative disparate ways: the turning of politics into 'warfare', and as such infecting leaders with 'siege mentality' and effectively relegating development issues to very 'low priorities'; disconnecting leaders from their people and totally dissociating public policy from social needs; regular coercion of the people produces alienation of the people from the state which is therefore seen as a force to be 'feared, evade, cheated and defeated as circumstances permit, and lastly it has produced enormous waste of human resources, the very engine of development (Ake, cited in Emenuo, 2015). When free, fair and credible elections are conducted in a society, axiologically, the objective is to eliminate development barriers associated with authoritarianism especially its negative impact on the mobilisation of human resources, taunted as the *sinquanonistic* vehicle for community development.

Societies have utilised elections of leaders to generate societal development, and any elected leader regarded as rascal should exit office by voting him out or not allowed at all in the first instance to get to the office. In the Western democracies like United States of America (USA) and Britain, right from the end of World War II, electors have developed increased expectations as to how government behave in terms of economic performance and the improvements of their living standards. Any incumbent government that falters on this is regarded as a rascal that should be kicked out of office in the subsequent election. This has resulted in the continuous oscillation between Labour Party and Conservative Party in British government and between Republican Party and The Democrat in USA (Mullard, 1992, cited in Ikpeze, 1999). Election of leaders thus makes the citizens to realise their social and economic needs in the society (Adewuyi, 2023).

However, when elections are conducted in violent atmosphere, politics remain warfare, and as such mobilisation of human resources, at the level of both leadership and followership through election for community development remain forlorn. It is against this background that Pat Merloe (quoted in Adegboruwa, 2019: 40) has reasoned that:

*“There is no democracy without the engagement of citizens. Engagement is thus both a right and responsibility of citizens in establishing, developing and sustaining democracy. Citizen engagement is not an abstraction; it takes tangible forms and serves particular purposes to improve people's lives. Citizen Engagement pursues economic, social, cultural and political development, including the provision of opportunity, resources, services, and security”.*

Nigeria's fourth republic, like its previous ones, is also a witness of electoral violence aided by possession of small arms proliferation whose occurrence is caused by several factors like stagnation of electoral justice, nature of African politics, zero-sum game politics, ethnic bigotry and religious intolerance, selfishness of the political actors and high level of poverty and unemployment especially among the youthful citizens as fuelling factors. Trigger factors include fractionalised political elites, elite system, youth bulge, external support for local militia, and easy access of aggrieved groups to surplus arms and light weapons. By implication, uncontrolled arms proliferation in the society hinders development, blocking businesses at both local and international levels, responsible for diversion of local resources, encourages misuse of public money, and in fact imposition of "might is right", a serious clog in the wheel of utilisation of elections for human resources mobilisation for community development most especially in developing countries whose democracy is very nascent, and can of course render Nigeria's democracy longitudinally fragile (Ibeanu & Mbah, 2012).

While the hope for transiting Nigeria from military authoritarian rule to democracy in 1999 was essentially developmental, the country remains underdeveloped as the quality of governance in the land is very poor. The failure of democratic governance in Nigeria manifests itself in the unfilled promises of electioneering campaigns in which more destitution, unemployment, starvation, lack of stable electricity, illiteracy and insufficient medical facilities are the orders of the day (Adedokun, 2020). In this circumstance, for the citizens to survive, the citizens would need to provide socio-economic amenities like water, electricity, road, health care, education, etc., for themselves (Adegboruwa, 2019).

The above is a picture of negative view of the state, the context in which the citizens perceive the state as an institution that merely supplies opportunity for some individuals or groups to pursue their own interests (Clapham, 1991 cited in cited in Uroh, 2020). The consequence of the above is the absence of community development in King's (1988) view, a process of mobilising resources for the improvement of personal and group welfare through collective action by individuals who share commonality of interests. The above is borne by an active, public spirited citizenry together with reciprocity, cooperation, trust; horizontal social relations against vulnerability to defection, distrust, shirking, exploitation, isolation, disorder and stagnation (Putman, 1993).

In societies transiting from authoritarianism to democracy like Nigeria, elections serve not only the purpose of choosing leaders and policies, but also to allow the state to mobilise and build the support of its people in order to make them act out their support and participate in the process. The intent of this is to develop positive view of the state in the citizens, in which the state is seen as the essential foundation for the pursuit of public benefits (namely) peace, welfare, and the opportunity for the individuals to pursue their own happiness (Clapham, 1991 cited in cited in Uroh, 2020). A political system in which elections are being marred by violence remains a mirage to enjoying the above.

Elections provide the citizens the opportunity to participate in governance as it enhances government and decision makers to have an understanding of their immediate community needs, and consequently enhances government responsiveness and public acceptance of government activities. Thus, elections give citizens the opportunity in participating in choosing those who will represent them in government (Okeke, 2015). In this wake, election helps, among other things, in the mobilisation of additional resources for

government's development programmes (Ganiyu, 2020). Given the ravage of electoral violence in Nigeria, a mark of non-existence of good political institutions, it has been difficult to mobilise the citizens for community development as it constitutes a serious bottleneck for the mobilisation of the citizens for the development of positive view of the state. Parts of the consequences have been creation of negative image for the country in the international community, emergence of mediocre as political leaders, development of political apathy in the political process, lack of legitimacy and institutionalisation of bad governance (Aiyede, 2021).

Several factors like newness of elections in Africa, weakness of democratic institutions in Africa, the evolutionist factor, inter alia, have been blamed for the above grotesque social circumstance (Ibeanu & Mbah, 2012). For this study the political class or the elites of power, whether within power corridor or outside the corridor of power, are seen as controlling the primacy of the responsible factors. The reason is that the elites have failed to effectively perform their role of modern elite in terms of motivating social and economic development and establishing a political system that embodies "the ideas of citizens" and popular "sovereignty", the situation that denies ordinary citizens the freedom to establish a social relationship that builds a sense of togetherness, shared interest and values that evolve mutual co-existence (Oladipo, 2020). Thus, elites are supposedly the providers of desired change, that is, good governance which democratic government aspires. In the contrary, they engage in nefarious activities (electoral violence) in order to maintain their strong hold on power (Adedokun, 2020).

### **Statement of the Problem**

As resources for the development of the community, elections are important instruments of mobilising the citizens for community development as no nation can be greater than its citizens. But when the citizens are barred from participating in electoral process, especially through violence, they cannot be free sources for the development of the community. Citizen participation is thus needed as it is a useful tool of governance that is deployed in several manners like service delivery, public financial management, natural resources management including holding public officials accountable through programmes like assets and liabilities disclosure and monitoring, citizens' report cards and public interest litigation (Olaleye & Ayobade, 2020).

Electoral violence constitutes a serious hindrance to utilising election for human resources mobilisation for community development. It is being aided by arms proliferations especially in developing countries like Nigeria. There are serious negative effects of electoral violence aided by arms proliferation on the Nigerian polity. It makes the country to be reported and viewed in bad image, politically, socially and economically. The Reports of Council on Foreign Relations (2011), CLEEN Foundation (2015), Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (2019) and the Reports of Commonwealth Observer Group (2019), among other ones, were never in positive light. The encouragement of political apathy among the citizens also occurs in the country. People such as the educated ones, the learned, government workers, teachers, nurses, lecturers, technocrats, engineers, usually leave the electoral stage for commercial drivers, farmers, market women, artisans, young boys and girls who are susceptible to electoral inducement and ready to do the bidding of the violent politicians. For the fear of death or injury, very many people become apathetic to electoral processes in Nigeria as loss of lives and properties also occurs within the hub of violent elections in Nigeria. Between 1999 and 2019,

1784 lives were lost (INEC Reports, 2019). This is apart from inestimable injuries sustained by the people and destruction of private and public properties that should pilot the economy of the nation. The crisis of legitimacy also pervades the land as a government produced illegitimately does not enjoy the goodwill, support and patronage of the citizens. On a general note, violent election is an instrument of instituting misgovernance, an attribute that characterise Nigerian government and political system (Joseph, 2006).

Electoral violence no doubt prevents the citizens who are willing to contribute to the positive development of the society, and the existence or continuation of this cannot be unconnected with social disorders like rebellion, insurrection, revolts in various forms of social disequilibrium like kidnapping, armed banditry, terrorism, destructive protests like the EndSars protest in the year 2020 and the rests in Nigeria (Hammed, 2024).

Generally speaking, most African countries have failed to create a framework that is adequate for moral development of their citizens. This results from the fact that most political actors lack diligence, a virtue that can help political actors not to fall into the trap of self-complacency, fantasy and corruption (Dimi, 2020). Ethical values expected from citizen engagement include, of course, valuing of life, striving for goodness, concern for the welfare of others, the just and fair distribution of benefits and burdens, honesty and truth telling as it applies (Teffo, 2020). These are hallmarks of good governance for which democracy stand.

The experience of citizen engagement in Nigeria as pictured above appears negative and unsupportive of human resource mobilisation for community development in Nigeria. Merloe's (quoted in Adegboruwa, 2019:40) idea, therefore, is not enough way of engaging the citizens if ethics is not attached. There is need for qualification of the idea. Thus, the idea should be ethical engagement of the citizens. In this instance, citizen engagement should be for collective interests for only when citizens' activities are channelled for collective interests that there can be community development. It is against this background that Durkheim (1993) argues that ethics is a matter of a whole, and to act morally is to act in collective interest. Thus, any act that violates the right of other persons is not only unethical, but also runs contrary to the idea of social contract, and of course diminishes social cohesion, an inbuilt component of human resource mobilisation for community development. Civic morality is necessary as it sets high standards for the government and citizens to follow and provides the link between social capital and institutional performance (Omoregie, 2020).

Summarily speaking, how to apply election as a democratic tool for the purpose of mobilising human resources for community development, through the eradication of electoral violence, in Nigeria, is the problem to which this study addresses itself. The following research questions are therefore generated for the study:

1. Is election an important tool in allowing citizens participation in community development?
2. Does electoral violence constitute any hindrance to mobilisation of human resources for community development in Nigeria?
3. Is there any relationship between electoral violence and Nigeria's poor governance situation?
4. Can possession of some ethical virtues mitigate or eradicate electoral violence in order to mobilise human resources for community development in Nigeria?

These and many other issues constitute the hub of this study. As a follow up to the above the following null hypotheses were formulated:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Election is not an important tool for in allowing the citizens participation in community development.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Electoral violence does not constitute any hindrance to mobilisation of human resources for community development.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no relationship between electoral violence and Nigeria’s poor governance situation.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** Possession of some ethical virtues does not have significant impact on the mitigation or eradication of electoral violence in order to mobilise human resources for community development in Nigeria.

### Methodology

In the conduct of this study, survey research method was applied. The population for the study comprised of 250 different individuals randomly drawn from the five (5) geo-political zones of Oyo State (Ibadan, Ibarapa, Ogbomoso, Oke-Ogun and Oyo) in equal proportions of 50 samples each. It was carried out through purposive sampling technique. The instrument for the research was a self-designed questionnaire titled “Linkage between Electoral Violence, Human Resources and Community Development”. It was carefully designed to collect relevant data for the study. It consists of two sections (A and B). The first section contains the respondents’ personal bio-data while the other section consists of twenty items related to research questions for the study which was structured in form of a four-point Likert scale coded as Strongly Agreed (SA) – 4point, Agree (A) 3point, Disagree (D) – 2point, and, Strongly Disagree (SA) – 1point. The validation of the instrument was determined both in face value and content validity by expert in statistical analysis at the Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate. The scrutiny of the items was done with prudence and the identified corrections were effected before the preparation of the final draft. Alpha-Cronbach split-half was used to get the reliability of the instrument. In answering the research questions, the data generated were analysed by using frequency distribution, percentages, mean score and pooled mean. A mean score of 2.50 and above was taken as accepted while any mean score below 2.50 was considered as not accepted.

### Discussion of Results

**Research Question 1:** Is election an important tool in allowing citizens to fully participate in community development in Nigeria?

**Table 1:** Summary of mean and standard deviation of people’s opinion as regards the place of election in community development through citizen’s participation in Nigeria

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Pooled Mean	Decision
1.	Election is a visible component of citizen’s participation in development.	3.38	0.37		Agreed

2.	Without election, citizens are disconnected from their leaders.	3.50	0.36	2.67	Agreed
3.	Election makes citizens determine the quality of people who lead them in Nigeria	2.41	0.30		Disagreed
4.	With good leaders in power through election, the immediate needs of the community are met.	2.79	0.32		Agreed
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.02</b>				

From the data in table 1 above, the respondents' views to items 1-4 produces a mean rating that ranges between 2.41 to 3.50 and standard deviation which falls within 0.30 to 0.37 with the grand mean of 3.02 that is greater than the decision mean of 2.50. This reveals that the general consensus of the people is that election is an important tool in allowing citizens' participation in community development. This concurs with Okeke's (2015) view that election/democracy is an opportunity for the citizens to participate in choosing those who will represent them in government.

**Research Question 2:** Does electoral violence constitute any hindrance to mobilisation of human resources for community development in Nigeria?

**Table 2:** Summary of the mean and standard deviation of people's opinion on whether electoral violence constitute hindrance to mobilisation of human resources for community development in Nigeria or not.

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Pooled Mean	Decision
5.	Electoral violence turns politics to warfare.	3.10	0.37	2.6	Agreed
6.	Electoral not violence is a barrier to election of suitable leaders for good governance in Nigeria.	2.31	0.30		Disagreed
7.	Possession of arms and its proliferations are the immediate causes of electoral violence.	2.36	0.30		Disagreed
8.	Ethnic bigotry and religious intolerance aid perpetration of electoral violence.	2.60	0.31		Agreed
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.59</b>			

As revealed in table 2 above, the mean ratings of items 5-8 from the respondents' opinion are as shown above with standard deviation of between 0.30 and 0.31. The grand mean of the response is 2.59 which is greater than the decision mean of 2.50 which implied that the respondents agreed to the statement that electoral violence constitute hindrance to the mobilisation of human resources for community development in Nigeria. This agrees with Rimmer's (1991) negative view of the state, the context in which the citizens perceive the state as an institution that merely supplies opportunity for some individuals or groups to pursue their own interests, and to be avoided by majority of the citizens.

**Research Question 3:** Is there any relationship between electoral violence and Nigeria’s poor governance situation?

**Table 3:** Summary of the mean and standard deviation of peoples opinion as regards the relationship between electoral violence and governance situation in Nigeria.

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Pooled Mean	Decision
9.	No nation develops above the engagement of the citizens in terms of deploying their resources for community use.	2.61	0.37	2.59	Agreed
10.	Quality citizens develop apathy for politics due to dangers associated with electoral violence.	2.59	0.31		Agreed
11.	Citizens’ cooperation through engagement in free, fair and credible election makes it to explore intellectual and socio-economic resources of the citizens for community development.	2.32	0.30		Disagreed
12.	Do or die attitude of the political class does not help in mobilizing citizens intelligence and socio-economic resources for community development.	2.58	0.31		Agreed
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.52</b>			

From table 3 above, respondents’ opinion to items 9-12 of the questionnaire produced a mean rating that ranges between 2.32 to 2.61 with the standard deviation range of 0.37 to 0.31. The mean ratings produced a grand mean of 2.52 which is slightly above the decision mean of 2.50. The result implied that the respondents are diverse in their opinion that is why the grand mean is slightly above the decision rule. Some are of the notion that electoral violence is not the cause of the country’s poor governance situation while others submit that Nigeria’s poor governance situation is an offshoot of electoral governance. The conclusion of the people on this other side might be due to the fact that those politicians who gain or maintain power through electoral violence are not the popular choice of the people or that they are not capable or prepared for good governance but for their selfish interest, hence their attitudinal decadence in delivering good governance to the citizenry.

**Research Question 4:** Can citizens’ possession of some ethical virtues mitigate or eradicate electoral violence in order to mobilise human resources for community development in Nigeria?

**Table 4:** Summary of mean and standard deviation of the people’s opinion as regards whether the citizens’ possession of some ethical virtues has a role to play in the eradication of electoral violence and mobilise human resources for community development in Nigeria or not.

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Pooled Mean	Decision
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13.	There is need to promote citizens' positive view of the state against negative view of the state to eliminate electoral violence.	3.39	0.37	2.71	Agreed
14.	Achieving item 13 above is a collective responsibility of both the political class and the led as politicians collaborate with citizens in the perpetration of electoral violence.	3.51	0.36		Agreed
15.	Development of cognitive sense of civic morality in the society will, to a great extent, reduce electoral violence and its negative effects on community development.	3.38	0.37		Agreed
16.	Civil societies like religious organizations, educational institutions, mass media, social clubs and economic institutions can help in developing civic morality in their different capacities.	3.12	0.27		Agreed
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.35</b>			

From table 4 above, the respondents' opinions to items 13-16 on the questionnaire revealed that the mean rating ranges from 3.12 to 3.51 with the standard deviation values between 0.27 and 0.37. The grand mean from the calculated mean resulted to 3.35 which is well above the decision mean of 2.50 chosen for the study. This implied that majority of the respondents alluded to the fact that possession of certain ethical virtues can mitigate or eradicate electoral violence to the barest minimum in the country. This is line with Dimi's (2020) assertion that most political actors lack diligence, a virtue that can help political actors not to fall into the trap of self-complacency, fantasy and corruption.

### Conclusion

From the study's findings, it is concluded that the incidence of electoral violence is a hindrance to applying election for the mobilisation of human resources for community development in Nigeria, more so when it is reinforced by arms proliferation. The consequence of this is that election becomes warfare, and in its wake, the institution of the state becomes an entity to avoid, instead of supporting it, thus the underdevelopment of the country in multi-various ways.

### Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made: There is no gainsaying in the fact that no society is greater than its people. Therefore, violence-free participation of people in governing process is a *sin qua non* for national development. All efforts that will make elections free and fair should be supported by those in government and outside of government, if really there should be socio-economic development in Nigeria. The interest of the ruling people or citizens generally should be ethically guided as most Nigerian political actors lack diligence, a virtue that can help political actors not to fall into the trap of self-complacency, fantasy and corruption. No wonder the high level of corruption of the politically exposed persons (PEP) in Nigeria, especially in this fourth republic.

This brings to fore the need for the development of cognitive sense of civic morality in Nigerian society. This will help in reducing the high rate of electoral violence and its negative effects on community development in Nigeria. Civil societies like religious organizations, educational institutions, mass media, social clubs, orientation agencies like National Orientation Agency (NOA) and economic institutions can be helpful in this direction and in different capacities. At the level of education, there should be education campaign by NOA that electoral violence and its effect matters of human right abuse which should be shunned by all the citizens because democracy has human right as one of its dividends. Nigerian government needs to develop educational curriculum that abhors violence of whatever form right from primary to tertiary level in order to generally develop violence-free society, a friend of development. The mass media should intensify on its public enlightenment programmes on electoral violence and its negative effect on achieving free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria.

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