ROLE OF YOUTH IN ELECTORAL RELATED VIOLENCE IN ADAMAWA STATE: A CASE STUDY OF 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN THE ADAMAWA NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of youth in electoral-related violence within the context of the 2023 Presidential Election in the Adamawa North Senatorial District of Adamawa State. Electoral violence, particularly involving youth, has been a persistent challenge in many regions, often leading to disruptions in democratic processes and undermining political stability. The aim of this research is to understand the factors influencing youth involvement in electoral violence, the strategies employed by stakeholders to mitigate such violence, and the impact of these strategies on election outcomes and post-election peace. The study employs a mixed-methods approach. Key findings from the research shed light on the motivations driving youth participation in electoral violence, the role of political actors in mobilizing youth for violent activities, the effectiveness of existing conflict mitigation strategies, and recommendations for enhancing youth engagement in peaceful electoral processes. The insights generated from this study can inform policy interventions aimed at promoting youth inclusion, strengthening electoral integrity, and fostering sustainable peace in Adamawa State and similar contexts.

Keyword: *Electoral-Related Violence, Political Actors, Youth Inclusion, Youth Leaders, Presidential Election*

1.1 Background of the Study

In the dynamic realm of electoral processes, the active participation of youth is both a promising asset and a potential challenge. The democratic system of Adamawa State, like many regions worldwide, is made up with threads of political fervor and civic responsibility. However, amidst the pursuit of democratic ideals, the specter of electoral-related violence emerges, often with the active involvement of the youth demographic. This project aims to investigate the role of youth in electoral-related violence within the context of Adamawa State. As agents of change, the youth represent the future of a nation, embodying aspirations, energy, and the potential for transformative societal progress. However, instances of violence during electoral processes underscore the need for a nuanced examination of the factors contributing to such behaviors.

By understanding the underlying motivations, socio-economic conditions, and political influences that drive youth involvement in electoral-related violence, we can formulate targeted strategies to mitigate these challenges. This project explore the complex dimensions of the issue, seeking to analyze historical precedents, socio-economic disparities, and political climates that may contribute to the susceptibility of youth to engage in electoral-related violence. Through comprehensive research and analysis, we aim to shed light on the root causes and potential mitigating factors, ultimately contributing to informed policy recommendations and grassroots initiatives that empower the youth to become catalysts for positive change within the electoral landscape of Adamawa State.

Lewis (2018) suggested that the introduction of democracy brings about significant opportunities to ensure leaders are held accountable and to enhance government transparency. Consequently, the current challenges in Nigerian democracy are perceived not merely as a cessation of military rule but also as the creation of political institutions that are responsive, responsible, and trustworthy. These institutions are envisioned to foster an accountable, transparent, and responsible government, prevent corruption, uphold human rights and the rule of law, and ensure the sovereignty of the people (Jega, 2007).

Elections serve as the widely accepted method for effecting changes in government through established electoral procedures. The electoral process encompasses various stages such as voter registration, identification of political parties for voting, the act of voting, vote counting, and the subsequent declaration of election results. Through elections, leaders are chosen to represent their constituencies, and these electoral events are organized periodically based on prevailing laws in specific regions or countries. The outcomes of many elections have been fiercely contested, posing a threat to the country and its democratic principles.

It is emphasized that meaningful progress for any society is unattainable unless there is a deliberate effort to involve and channel the energy of the youth (Idike, 2014). Unfortunately, in numerous developing countries, including Nigeria, there is a tendency to neglect and inadequately engage the youth, leading to a demographic challenge characterized by a burgeoning youth population. This neglect is linked to the emergence of political violence and civil conflicts (Idike, 2014). Electoral violence, in particular, poses a significant threat to democratizing societies, manifesting in various forms such as murder, arson, abduction, assault, violent seizure and destruction of electoral materials, and the intimidating presence of armed forces and youths.

The argument presented above highlights a clear connection between youth bulges or youth unemployment and instances of violence. In Adamawa state, located in the northeastern zone of Nigeria, the significant presence of a large pool of unemployed youths, coupled with pervasive poverty, poses a considerable challenge for the state. It is evident that ensuring an election free from violence and irregularities is crucial for establishing legitimate leaders in power. However, the involvement of youths in electoral processes, as orchestrated by political elites, contradicts this ideal.

It is widely accepted that youths constitute an indispensable and dynamic element in any society. They serve as catalysts and drivers of innovation, change, and progress within human collectives. Consequently, a society cannot achieve positive transformation and advancement unless its youths are not only empowered but also actively engaged. The idleness experienced by youths is closely linked to the susceptibility to becoming instruments for electoral violence. In Nigeria, the federal government

acknowledged in 2008 that approximately 80% of Nigerian youths are unemployed, with an additional 10% underemployed (Daily Trust, 2018).

The aforementioned perspectives strongly suggest the vulnerability of youths to engaging in criminal activities. In Nigeria, a culture of violence has permeated society, particularly within the political sphere, where virtually all elections conducted since independence have been marred by violence. What adds to the concern is that youths, both as perpetrators and victims, play a central role in electoral violence. In light of the preceding discussion, this study aims to investigate the involvement of youths in electoral-related violence in Adamawa state, focusing on the 2023 presidential election as a case study.

The study aims to achieve several key objectives: to identify the factors that drive youth participation in electoral-related violence in Adamawa State North Senatorial District; to examine the various roles played by youths during the 2023 election periods in Adamawa State North Senatorial District; to assess the consequences of electoral violence in Adamawa North Senatorial District; and to investigate the approaches commonly employed by the government to prevent youth engagement in electoral-related violence in Adamawa State North Senatorial District.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1   Introduction

This chapter explores essential concepts and frameworks. Adopting Johan Galtung's theory of violence, it categorizes violence into direct, structural, and cultural forms, offering insights into how structural factors like unemployment influence youth engagement in electoral violence. The definition of "youth" extends beyond an age range, emphasizing the dynamic nature of this phase. Conceptualizing violence differentiates between physical, psychological, and structural forms, with a focus on electoral violence during the electoral process. The review also discusses the electoral process's significance and categorizes patterns of electoral violence into pre-election, Election Day, and post-election phases. This comprehensive review establishes a strong foundation for analysing youth involvement and electoral violence in the subsequent sections of the study.

2.1.1   Conceptual Understanding of Youth

2.1.2   Who is a Youth?

According to Henze (2015), youth can be broadly defined as the life stage between childhood and adulthood. This phase is characterized by experimentation with roles and identities, free from the weight of social norms and obligations. It serves as a period of preparation for young individuals to eventually become full members of the social collective. As they navigate the process of social integration, young people encounter a complex social system comprising elements such as tradition, history, social expectations, aspirations, and individual future prospects. The challenge lies in incorporating these elements into a cohesive framework to establish a solid foundation for their personal lives.

According to khrisman, et al (2017); United state define Youth as the period of transition from dependence of childhood to independence and awareness to as members of the community. According to Chioma, (2020); there is no universally accepted global definition of youth. African nations, as well as those in the global south and various other countries, have consistently emphasized that youth is not

merely an age range, but rather a collection of culturally influenced social processes that signify the transition from childhood to adulthood. In light of this perspective, the writer deems it important to explore several well-known definitions of youth and to assess the consequences of the restricted definition of youth in Nigeria.

A youth is a person especially a young man or boy. The term youth is also seen as the freshness and vitality characteristic of a young person (word web dictionary, 2010). Youth has also been defined as the period in an individual's life which runs between the end of childhood and entry into the world of work (Onuekwusi and Effiong, 2002). The Cambridge International Dictionary of English defines youth as the period of your life when you are young, the state of being young, or a young person. According to Nigeria's National Youth Development Policy (Olujide, 2020), the youth comprise all young persons of ages 18 to 35, who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Youth constantly, is a delicate phase in human development. It is the time when future choices are made. It represents the most volatile, complex, unpredictable, dynamic as well as the most vulnerable segment of the population, socio-economically, emotional and otherwise. These suggest therefore that, the youths are the pillars of human continuity or otherwise as they comprise the majority in most societal set up.

Alimba, Momodu, Abba, and Bello (2010) have defined youth as individuals aged between 17 and 30 years. This period is considered promising, characterized by the energy, willpower, encouragement, and strength for active engagement in various ventures. According to Alimba et al. (2010), in Nigeria, youth are often regarded as the leaders of tomorrow and are seen as trustees of the nation.

The evident reality that cannot be overlooked is that youth play a significant role, both in the nation's development and as potential agents of destruction. Their numerical composition, as highlighted by Alimba et al. (2010), emphasizes their importance compared to other demographic groups in the country. Philip's study in 1996 further underscored the prominence of youth, revealing that they constitute the second-largest group, surpassing the combined total of other age groups. This emphasizes that the youth, being the most active segment of the population, should not be disregarded.

Inokoba and Maliki (2011) referenced the National Youth Development Policy, which defines youth as individuals aged 18 to 30 years and who hold Nigerian citizenship. This age-based definition serves practical purposes by excluding those who are either underqualified or overqualified. While youth is a chronological period, it also represents a distinct phase in human development. Inokoba and Maliki (2011) noted that during youth, individuals prepare for the pivotal stage of life – adulthood. It serves as both a transitional period and a preparatory phase for significant life aspects such as fame, power, wealth, and more profound responsibilities within society.

Agbese (2007) asserted that youth is the time when individuals gather the essential building blocks for constructing the mansions of their future lives. This phase is inherently delicate in human development, representing a period of making critical choices for the future. It is characterized by volatility, complexity, unpredictability, dynamism, and vulnerability, affecting various aspects, including socio-economic and emotional dimensions. As the link to the future, youths are integral to the continuity of human society, serving as pillars for ongoing development.

Youth around the world are commonly referred to as the leaders of tomorrow, a characterization closely tied to their abundance of energy and mental alertness (Nnamani, 2013). The utilization of this energy,

however, varies between positive and negative outcomes, depending on the individual or, in some instances, societal factors. Ekwuruke (2007) describes this phase as one marked by vigor, curiosity, spiritedness, action, and inexperience. A significant number of college and university dropouts often find themselves in urban areas seeking menial jobs, while others end up on the streets, highway junctions, and engage in traffic hawking, effectively transforming into "mobile supermarkets" (Ekwuruke, 2017).

Oluwaseun (2013) argues that these societal challenges contribute significantly to the persistent problems of youth violence and involvement in the electoral process, which is a prevalent issue among Nigerian youths today. With the emergence of civil rule and the concurrent increase in electoral violence and youth restiveness, there remains a substantial gap in understanding the connection between youth violence and the electoral process within the Nigerian democratic framework (Moveh, 2009).

The understanding of the concept of youth has been subject to various interpretations and flexible usage. On one level, youth is often perceived in terms of its future role as the leaders of society. However, in his examination of youth as a category, Obi (2006) astutely observes that labeling youth as future leaders implies a lack of scrutiny of the existing power dynamics in society. This perspective, according to Obi, sets the stage for grooming the youth to perpetuate specific power relations, suggesting a permanence of dominant structures and interests, albeit with changes in individuals over time.

Obi goes on to argue that this conceptualization also implies the subordination of youth to the power structures controlled by elders, serving to enhance system stability, cohesion, and continuity. In this view, political time acts as a conveyor belt that propels loyal and disciplined youth into future positions of power when the elder generation fades into myth and history (Obi, 2006).

2.1.3   Conceptual Understanding of Violence and Electoral Violence

Violence is a ubiquitous phenomenon that manifests in diverse forms and across various locations. Meadow (2019) identifies several types of violence, including domestic violence, criminal violence, interpersonal violence, proactive violence (utilizing violence or the threat of violence to influence outcomes and decisions), and reactive violence (post-event protests against unfavorable outcomes). Williams (2015) defines violence as harm inflicted on individuals or property, encompassing actions that range from restricting freedom of movement to torture and death in the case of individuals, and from simple damage to complete expropriation or total destruction in the case of property.

Galtung (1996) offers a broader perspective, defining violence as any form of social injustice, whether perpetrated by individuals, institutions, or the workings of society at large. This definition encompasses acts involving the intentional infliction of personal injury through physical or psychological force, as well as systemic injustices that may not involve direct personal harm.

Before delving into the discussion of electoral violence, it is crucial to elucidate the concept of an election and its role in a country's development. The term 'Electoral' is simply defined as relating to or involving elections, electors, or voters. It is also considered as anything related to elections (WordWeb Dictionary, 2012). Roberts and Edwards (1991), cited in Omotola (2007), define an election as "a method for the selection of persons to fill certain offices through choices made by an electorate; those citizens who are qualified to vote under the rules and procedures of the electoral system." Periodic and genuine elections are viewed as a key component for enhancing the legitimacy of a government and strengthening the social

contract between citizens and their governments. The relationship between democracy, good governance, and development is strongly tied to elections. It is believed that elections are a process through which legitimate leaders are chosen, and such leaders are expected to foster meaningful development.

Since violence is an unauthorized use of force to achieve an aim, Albert (2017) defines electoral violence as all forms of organized acts or threats—physical, psychological, and structural—aimed at intimidating, harming, or blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during, and after an election with the intention of determining, delaying, or otherwise influencing the electoral process. Electoral violence is also described as a premeditated act intending to influence the electoral process using foul language, verbal intimidation, blackmail, dangerous weapons, arson, and assassination (Bamfo 2018).

2.1.4 Historical Overview of Nigerian Electoral Violence

According to Olowojolu (2019) argues that, the historical account of electoral violence in Nigeria dates back to the first republic, notably during the 1964/65 elections. The primary political parties of that era— the Action Group (AG), Northern People's Congress (NPC), and National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC)—were ethnically aligned, representing the Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani, and Igbo communities, respectively. The 1964/65 elections were marred by widespread incidents of violence, including murder, kidnapping, and arson among politicians. Subsequently, significant irregularities prompted a military coup, marking the end of Nigeria's first democratic experiment.

Electoral violence resurfaced during the highly contentious 1983 general elections, marked by extensive rigging, such as the declaration of Oyo and Ondo states in Favor of the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN). This controversial announcement led to outbreaks of violence and contributed to a sense of apathy among Nigerians. Consequently, the military intervened, resulting in the removal of President Shehu Shagari on December 31, 1983.

The June 12, 1993 election, organized by then Military President General Ibrahim Babangida, aimed to break the cycle of Nigeria's tumultuous political history. The campaign strategies, government support, enthusiasm of registered voters, and overall sentiment toward June 12, 1993, were unprecedented. The election sought to conclude General Ibrahim Babangida's regime and establish a democratically elected government.

Two political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC), were formed for the June 12, 1993 election. Notably, both parties nominated Muslim candidates—MKO Abiola for the SDP and Bashir Tofa for the NRC. Despite concerns about a Muslim-Muslim ticket with the SDP's choice of Alhaji Babagana Kingibe as the running mate, religious and ethnic affiliations did not significantly influence Nigerians' voting patterns during the campaign. The NRC selected Sylvester Ugoh, a Christian from Eastern Nigeria, as Tofa's running mate. The June 12, 1993 election, widely regarded as Nigeria's freest and fairest, ended in disappointment when the military government annulled MKO Abiola's presumed victory. This led to nationwide protests, strikes, and civil disobedience. The post-June 12 crisis prompted General Babangida to step down as head of state on August 27, 1993, handing power to an unpopular Interim National Government, which was later dismissed by General Sani Abacha on November 17, 1993.

In 1994, Abacha arrested MKO Abiola on charges of treason for declaring himself president-elect. Abacha's autocratic rule ended with his controversial death on June 8, 1998. On June 7, 1998, the day he was supposed to be released, MKO Abiola also died. The newly appointed military ruler, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, pledged to return Nigeria to civilian rule in 1999, marking the beginning of Nigeria's fourth republic. On May 29, 1999, former military ruler Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was inaugurated as the President of Nigeria. In the fourth republic, electoral violence trends were evident in the general elections of 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015. The 1999 elections had minimal violence as the military supervised the electoral process. The 2003 elections, during President Obasanjo's second term bid, were marked by manipulation, rigging, and violence. The ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) dominated, solidifying its control. President Obasanjo's administration conducted widely criticized elections in 2007, with significant irregularities, inflated voting figures, and manipulation of security services. Before the elections, Obasanjo declared it a "do-or-die" affair for the ruling PDP. The 2007 results differed from those announced in Abuja, contrary to the Electoral Act. The Interim National Government led by Chief Ernest Shonekan played a role in this period (Olowojolu, 2015).

The provided text extensively covers the historical overview of Nigerian elections, focusing on key events from 1999 to 2015. It discusses the electoral violence, controversies, and changes in political dynamics during this period. The 2007 elections witnessed political killings, bombings, and armed clashes, leading to widespread controversies and condemnation. President Umaru Musa Yaradua, the winner, acknowledged the fraudulent nature of the electoral process. His administration established an Electoral Reform Committee to address flaws in the electoral system, incorporating some recommendations into the amended Electoral Act. The 2011 general elections were widely regarded as credible, with praise from observers, including the U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria and the EU Election Observation Mission. Security challenges leading up to the 2015 elections were concerning, especially due to the Boko Haram insurgency. The text also highlights the formation of the All-Progressives Congress (APC) in 2013, its impact on the political landscape, and the measures implemented in the 2015 elections to address fraud and violence. Stakeholders and the international community played crucial roles in ensuring a peaceful 2015 election. The elections were widely considered successful, with the APC becoming the first opposition party to defeat the ruling party in Nigeria. Former President Goodluck Jonathan's commendable conduct in accepting defeat contributed to a smooth transition to General Muhammadu Buhari's administration on May 29, 2015.

2.1.5   Electoral Process and Patterns of Electoral Violence

Elekwa (2018) defines the electoral process as a comprehensive cycle that spans from providing voter education to the dissolution of the National Assembly. As outlined by INEC (2006) in Elekwa's work, the various phases of this process include the delimitation of electoral boundaries, registration of voters, issuance of election notices, nomination of candidates, election campaigns, the actual voting process, announcement of results, completion of tribunal sittings, participation of other organizations, and the resolution of electoral conflicts arising from the involvement of various entities.

Ogbeide (2013) provides a broader perspective, describing the electoral process as an all-encompassing procedure that involves voter registration, identification of eligible political parties, the act of voting, the counting of votes, and the declaration of election results. Elections serve as the fundamental mechanism through which leaders are chosen to represent the interests of their electorates, scheduled periodically

based on prevailing laws in a specific place or country. Ologbenla (2013) further defines the electoral process as a means by which the mode of coming to power or changing government is decided in a particular country at a given time. Elected leaders gain the mandate to make decisions that positively impact the lives of citizens, coupled with the responsibility of being accountable to those who elected them into power.

2.1.6 Intraparty feuding

Violence within political party factions is most prevalent in the lead-up to party primaries, and its intensity is closely linked to the political influence of the party. There is a positive correlation, with the belief that party factions are more prone to strife when the party holds significant political power. This pattern is especially observable at the national level and across many of Nigeria's thirty-six states, where the People Democratic Party (PDP) often holds the position of the ruling political party.

For instance, securing a spot on the PDP ticket is frequently perceived as a pathway to victory in numerous parts of the country, spanning from State Houses of Assembly to governorships. The competition for PDP nominations is notorious for being associated with violent confrontations. Notably, this type of violence tends to be disconnected from ordinary voters, seldom directly involving them. Instead, it is often waged by militias sponsored by political elites or directed at the elites themselves. The competitive dynamics within the PDP, driven by the stakes of political power, contribute to an environment where internal struggles escalate into violent clashes, creating challenges for the party's internal cohesion and stability.

2.1.7   Interparty clashes

This form of violence is not confined to a specific phase of the election cycle but is most commonly witnessed after party primaries and during the post-election period. During this time, party supporters who perceive electoral rigging against their candidate often clash with the opposition, leading to instances of violence. A recent illustration of this phenomenon occurred in Rivers state, where post-election violence unfolded. The voting process in Rivers state had already faced challenges, including minimal voter turnout, missing ballot materials, closed polling booths, and incidents of voter intimidation. Despite these issues, the state-wide vote tallies reached millions, sparking significant outrage.

Surprisingly, rather than diminishing after the elections, election-related violence in River's state escalated. Human Rights Watch (2007) noted that the violence in Rivers state was not a random occurrence but, rather, a widely predicted aftershock of Nigeria's rigged and violent April 2007 nationwide elections. This perspective suggests that the violence was not merely a response to local events but a consequential and anticipated outcome of the larger context of the contested and problematic national elections in April 2007. The post-election period, marked by dissatisfaction and perceived electoral irregularities, thus became a volatile and contentious period, resulting in heightened violence in Rivers state.

2.1.8   Electoral events violence

Hazen and Homer (2007) argue that patterns of election violence tend to follow a predictable sequence, particularly around key electoral events. Critical periods of concern include party primaries, election days, and, notably, the announcement of results. Even the initial selection of party delegates can be a

source of contention. Historical data from past elections indicate that violence becomes increasingly likely as the polls draw nearer, making the entire month of elections a high-risk period.

In April 2007, there was a substantial uptick of almost 42 percent in recorded incidents of violence compared to March 2007 (Adetula, 2007). Election days themselves have historically been marred by violence and intimidation tactics directed at journalists, political aspirants, their families, and ordinary voters, as highlighted by reports from Human Rights Watch (2007). The announcement of election results, especially when known to be fraudulent, has the potential to provoke heated reactions. This was evident in the case of opposition voters in Katsina, who set government buildings ablaze upon learning of the seemingly unlikely news that the People Democratic Party (PDP) had swept the state's gubernatorial polls (Human Rights Watch, 2007). This underscores the volatile nature of post-election periods and the potential for public outrage when election results are perceived as lacking credibility.

2.1.9   Communal unrest

The provided text discusses various factors contributing to electoral violence in Nigeria, including preexisting community conflicts, regional resource fighting, rebellious unrest, ethnoreligious hostility, and tensions arising from communal identity. Specific regions of concern highlighted are Plateau state and the Niger Delta, along with insecure areas like Anambra and parts of the north, such as Borno. The text emphasizes that election-related tensions tend to escalate as key electoral events approach, leading to increased violence during party primaries, election days, and the announcement of results.

The causes of electoral violence in Nigeria are multifaceted, as outlined by Inokoba and Maliki (2011). These include state institutions promoting violence, a culture of impunity, political leaders perpetrating violence with impunity, the absence of institutional and legal solutions, inadequate documented knowledge of the electoral system and violence, and prebendal politics.

Additionally, the text identifies specific causes of electoral violence in Nigeria, including bad leadership, unemployment and poverty, religious and ethnic divisions, weak governance and corruption, cultures of violence and impunity, and electoral rules and regulations. Bad leadership is linked to ill-gotten wealth demonstration and the frustration of the masses, contributing to destructive acts. Unemployment and poverty are associated with youth frustration and increased vulnerability to violence. Religious and ethnic divisions influence voting patterns, leading to tensions and violence. Weak governance, corruption, and cultures of violence contribute to electoral unrest, while electoral rules and regulations also play a role in shaping the electoral landscape.

According to Alubo (2004), corruption is identified as a significant issue in Nigeria, with resources intended for the welfare of the populace being diverted for personal gain by corrupt politicians. The consequences of corruption include frustration, decay of infrastructure, and abject poverty among the masses. This misappropriation of resources by political elites for personal interests has led to a perception of politics as a shortcut to affluence and influence, rather than a means to improve the lives of the electorate. The unequal distribution of wealth in Nigeria, creating a wide gap between the rich and the poor, further exacerbates societal challenges and contributes to electoral and post-electoral violence.

Cultures of violence and impunity are described as major features of politics in conflict and post-conflict societies. A culture of violence is defined as a system of norms, values, or attitudes that allow, make

possible, or even stimulate the use of violence to resolve conflicts or relations with others. Impunity, on the other hand, refers to the exemption of those who commit unlawful acts from accountability and legal punishment. In societies with cultures of violence and impunity, individuals, including government officials, police, military, and ordinary citizens, may break the law without fear of punishment due to a shared understanding of mutual silence regarding each other's abuses.

This culture of violence is often seen as a legacy of past violent conflicts, prevailing in societies that have experienced prolonged political violence. It makes violent acts, such as threats, coercion, and intimidation, acceptable and tolerable at both the societal and individual levels. Factors contributing to the persistence of these cultures in post-conflict societies include the weakness of state institutions. In such societies, government institutions are often unaccountable, non-transparent, politically biased, and financially unstable, lacking the legitimacy and resources needed to manage widespread violence. Elections conducted under such circumstances may fail to provide the necessary alternatives to advance democracy and may make political mobilization along conflict margins easier. Additionally, in societies where patronage politics is prevalent, security forces and judiciaries may face coercion and manipulation from political elites, hindering their efficiency in resolving conflicts.

In newly democratizing societies, both formal and informal rules of the electoral game play crucial roles in generating conflict. These rules can either facilitate conditions conducive to electoral conflict and violence or contribute to a more democratic and conflict-resolving character. Formal rules are broadly classified into rules of electoral competition and rules of electoral governance. Electoral competition rules include electoral systems, such as electoral formulas, district magnitude, and boundaries. Electoral governance rules cover party, candidate, and voter eligibility, registration, vote counting, tabulating and reporting techniques, election monitoring, conflict resolution mechanisms, and campaign financing. These rules provide structural inducements for modest and conflict-resolving behavior by political actors.

However, in many newly democratizing countries, electoral authoritarian regimes adopt different sets of informal rules that make electoral competition undemocratic. These regimes may impose restrictions on political rights and civil liberties, control media, restrict the rights of social and political organizations, preserve key political domains away from electoral competition, and exclude political opponents from the electoral game. These strategies aim to limit the choices available to the voting public during elections.

Youth in Nigeria, often considered leaders of tomorrow, are increasingly being manipulated by political elites during electoral events to create violence and achieve political objectives. Youths may engage in physical assault, burn down properties, destroy ballot boxes, and engage in various violent activities during and after elections. High levels of youth unemployment, lack of relevant skills, and limited opportunities contribute to their susceptibility to being used for violent purposes by political elites.

The effects of electoral violence on the democratic process in Nigeria are significant. Free, fair, and credible elections are crucial for democratic survival, as they determine the level of freedom exercised by the people in choosing their representatives. However, electoral violence, characterized by widespread violence, intimidation, bribery, and corruption, threatens the democratic process. The electoral violence erodes the relevance and value of the electoral process, leading to crises of legitimacy and complicating the dynamics of federalism. The future of democracy in Nigeria is questioned unless electoral violence is properly addressed.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Johan Galtung's violence theory as its theoretical framework. Galtung, a Norwegian sociologist, introduced three categories of violence: direct (e.g., brawls, international wars), structural (or indirect violence), and cultural violence. Galtung (1969) delineated the distinctions among Structural Violence, Cultural Violence, and Direct Violence, illustrating their interconnections in a triangular framework. Structural Violence is positioned at the left base, Cultural Violence at the right base (both invisibly), and Direct Violence at the visible vertex.

Galtung (1969) asserted that Cultural and Structural Violence contribute to Direct Violence, with the latter reinforcing the former two. While Direct Violence is observable as behavioral actions within the triangle, it is rooted in cultural and structural factors. Structural violence, as defined by Galtung, is ingrained in societal structures, manifesting as unequal power dynamics and disparate life opportunities. This inequality arises from the uneven distribution of resources and the power to control their allocation, encompassing not only material wealth but also non-material elements such as education and healthcare.

Galtung's theory suggests that attacking an individual is a clear case of direct violence, but denying education, healthcare, or employment to a large group constitutes structural violence. Direct violence takes various forms, including physical force, while cultural violence encompasses ingrained attitudes promoting the necessity of violence. Structural violence, on the other hand, emerges when certain groups have disproportionate access to resources and opportunities due to systemic inequalities.

The application of Galtung's theory becomes evident in explaining the surge of youth involvement in electoral violence in Adamawa state. Structural violence, exemplified by widespread unemployment, serves as a backdrop to direct forms of violence during elections, such as physical assaults, assassinations of political opponents, and intimidation of perceived threats to political ambitions.

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Chi Square Test of the Factors Motivating Youth Involvement in Electoral Related Violence in the 2023 Presidential Elections in Adamawa Northern Senatorial District

Null Hypothesis: The following Factors do not Motivate Youth Involvement in Electoral Related Violence in the 2023 Presidential Elections in Adamawa Northern Senatorial District	Chi-square Statistics	Degree of freedom (DF)	Significance (P-values)
Most youths that get involved in electoral violence are unemployed.	429.653	4	0.000
Most youths that are perpetrators of electoral malpractices are uneducated.	184.765	4	0.000
The nonexistence of private sector economy is a major contributor to youths' unemployment	198.753	4	0.000
Most youths that are perpetrators of electoral malpractices are unskilled	97.352	4	0.000
Most youths that get involved in electoral violence are children of poor parents	81.532	4	0.000
Poverty is another favour that encourages youths' involvement	73.832	4	0.000
Poor Skill Acquisition Policy is not effective in to tackle youths' problems of unemployment in the state	258.463	4	0.000

Source: *Field Survey, 2024. Note that this table provides a summary of the chi-square test result.*

The Chi-square test results in Table 4.14 analyze the factors motivating youth involvement in electoral-related violence during the 2023 presidential elections in the Northern Senatorial District of Adamawa State. These results highlight several significant socio-economic issues that influence youth participation in electoral violence. Firstly, unemployment among youths is identified as a significant factor, with a Chi-square statistic of 429.653 and a degree of freedom (DF) of 4 and a P-value of 0.000. This result indicates a strong correlation between unemployment and youth involvement in electoral violence. Unemployed youths may be more susceptible to participating in such activities due to a lack of alternative means of livelihood and economic stability.

Secondly, the level of education among youths is another critical factor. The Chi-square statistic of 184.765 with a P-value of 0.000 shows a significant relationship between being uneducated and involvement in electoral malpractices. This implies that youths with lower levels of education are more

likely to engage in violent electoral activities, possibly due to a lack of awareness about the consequences and a lower propensity for engaging in lawful, constructive political participation.

The non-existence of a private sector economy in the region is also highlighted as a major contributor to youth unemployment, with a Chi-square statistic of 198.753 and a P-value of 0.000. This indicates that the lack of private sector opportunities exacerbates the unemployment crisis, leaving many youths without viable job prospects and potentially driving them towards electoral violence as a means of expression or economic survival.

The Chi-square statistic of 97.352 and a P-value of 0.000 indicates that a significant number of youths involved in electoral malpractices are unskilled. This lack of vocational or technical skills further limits their employment opportunities, pushing them towards illicit activities. Poverty is another significant factor, with a Chi-square statistic of 81.532 and a P-value of 0.000, showing a strong correlation between poverty and youth involvement in electoral violence. Youths from poorer backgrounds may be more easily enticed by monetary incentives offered by political actors to engage in violent activities during elections. The relationship between poor skill acquisition policies and youth unemployment is also significant, as indicated by a Chi-square statistic of 258.463 and a P-value of 0.000. Ineffective skill acquisition policies fail to equip youths with the necessary skills to secure employment, thereby contributing to their involvement in electoral violence.

3.1.1 Chi Square Test of the Roles of Youth in Electoral Related Violence in the 2023 Presidential Elections in Adamawa Northern Senatorial District

Null Hypothesis: Youths do not play significant role in Electoral Related Violence in the 2023 Presidential Elections in Adamawa Northern Senatorial District	Chi-square Statistics	Degree of freedom (DF)	Significance (P-values)
Youths are made to be body guards to politicians during elections	519.456	4	0.000
Youths are made to carry guns and other dangerous weapons during elections	746.763	4	0.000
Youths are made to hijack ballot boxes during elections	252.625	4	0.000
Youths are made to manipulate figures during elections	354.633	4	0.000
Youths are made to disrupt election rallies of opposing parties	257.827	4	0.000
Youths are made to threaten people from voting for candidates of their choice	526.767	4	0.000
Youths are made to stop people from voting for candidates of their choice	827.453	4	0.000

Source: *Field Survey, 2024. Note that this table provides a summary of the chi-square test result.*

The Chi-square test results presented in provide a detailed analysis of the roles played by youths in electoral-related violence during the 2023 presidential elections in the Northern Senatorial District of Adamawa State. The data reveals significant involvement of youths in various forms of electoral malpractices and violence, as indicated by the extremely high Chi-square statistics and highly significant P-values (all 0.000), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis that youths do not play a significant role in electoral-related violence. Firstly, youths are significantly involved in acting as bodyguards to politicians during elections, with a Chi-square statistic of 519.456. This indicates that a considerable number of youths are recruited to provide protection services for politicians, which often places them in situations where they can be involved in violent activities.

The involvement of youths in carrying guns and other dangerous weapons during elections is alarmingly high, with the highest Chi-square statistic of 746.763. This suggests a pervasive culture of arming youths, making them key players in the execution of electoral violence. Youths also play a critical role in hijacking ballot boxes, as indicated by a Chi-square statistic of 252.625. This activity is a direct form of electoral malpractice that undermines the integrity of the election process and indicates the extent to which youths are utilized in orchestrating electoral fraud. Manipulating election figures is another significant role played by youths, with a Chi-square statistic of 354.633. This role involves altering election results, which further highlights the systemic nature of electoral malpractice and the reliance on youths to carry out such acts. The disruption of election rallies of opposing parties is also significantly associated with youth involvement, as shown by a Chi-square statistic of 257.827. This form of violence aims to intimidate and suppress political opposition, reflecting the strategic use of youths to maintain political dominance.

Threatening people from voting for candidates of their choice is another critical role played by youths, with a Chi-square statistic of 526.767. This indicates a high prevalence of coercion and intimidation tactics employed by youths to influence the voting behaviour of the electorate. Lastly, the act of stopping people from voting for candidates of their choice has the highest Chi-square statistic of 827.453, highlighting the extreme measures taken to suppress voter turnout and manipulate election outcomes.

3.1.2 Chi Square Test of the Consequences of Electoral Violence in Adamawa Northern Senatorial District

Null Hypothesis: Electoral violence does not have significant consequences in Adamawa Northern Senatorial District.	Chi-square Statistics	Degree of freedom (DF)	Significance (P-values)
Electoral violence leads to destruction of properties	243.522	4	0.000
Electoral violence leads to loss of lives	325.645	4	0.000
Electoral violence increases voter apathy	324.625	4	0.000
it creates a conducive atmosphere for unscrupulous individuals to hijack the instrument of the state	254.242	4	0.000
Electoral violence can be used to manipulate electoral figure	435.231	4	0.000
It deprives the people voice in governance	324.251	4	0.000

Source: *Field Survey, 2024. Note that this table provides a summary of the chi-square test result.*

The Chi-square test results examine the consequences of electoral violence in the Northern Senatorial District of Adamawa State during the 2023 presidential elections. The data presented rejects the null hypothesis that electoral violence does not have significant consequences, showing that such violence indeed has profound and multifaceted impacts. This conclusion is supported by the high Chi-square statistics and the extremely significant P-values (all 0.000). Firstly, the destruction of properties due to electoral violence is highlighted by a Chi-square statistic of 243.522. This indicates that property damage is a significant consequence of the violent activities surrounding the elections, causing substantial material losses and disruption to community life. The loss of lives is another grave consequence, with a Chi-square statistic of 325.645. This underscores the fatal impact of electoral violence, highlighting the severe human cost and the tragic outcomes that result from these conflicts.

Voter apathy, as indicated by a Chi-square statistic of 324.625, is significantly increased due to electoral violence. This shows that violence discourages voter participation, leading to a lack of engagement and trust in the electoral process among the electorate. The creation of a conducive atmosphere for unscrupulous individuals to hijack the instruments of the state is also significantly associated with electoral violence, as shown by a Chi-square statistic of 254.242. This suggests that violence creates opportunities for corruption and the manipulation of state mechanisms by unethical actors. Electoral violence is also used to manipulate electoral figures, as indicated by the high Chi-square statistic of 435.231. This demonstrates how violence can directly influence the outcome of elections by intimidating or forcibly altering voting results, thus compromising the integrity of the electoral process. Finally, the deprivation of people's voice in governance, with a Chi-square statistic of 324.251, highlights how electoral violence undermines democracy. By preventing free and fair participation, violence effectively silences the electorate, thereby eroding the foundation of democratic governance.

3.1.3 Chi Square Test of the Approaches often adopted by Government to Prevent Youth Involvement in Electoral Related Violence in Adamawa State.

Null Hypothesis: The Approaches often Adopted by Government are not significant in Preventing Youth Involvement in Electoral Related Violence in Adamawa State.	Chi-square Statistics	Degree of freedom (DF)	Significance (P-values)
The governments often engage in massive voter education.	93.736	4	0.000
Providing employment opportunities for the youths	74.255	4	0.000
Improving the effectiveness of the security agencies in tackling electoral violence	97.463	4	0.000
Electoral reform with effective electoral laws that could confront the menace of electoral malpractices including electoral violence.	673.543	4	0.000
Peace education help to redress the culture of violence and also inculcate the value of peaceful coexistence	231.435	4	0.000
Politicians found guilty of electoral fraud and all those that benefited from it are adequately dealt with.	324.625	4	0.000
By publicizing agreement over principles, and maintaining clear dialogue, it can be possible to reduce mistrust and to encourage all players to respect the rules of the game.	196.651	4	0.000

Source: *Field Survey, 2024. Note that this table provides a summary of the chi-square test result.*

The Chi-square test results presented in table 3.1.3 provide an in-depth analysis of the approaches often adopted by the government to prevent youth involvement in electoral-related violence in Adamawa State. The analysis tests the null hypothesis that these approaches are not significant in preventing youth involvement in electoral violence. The high Chi-square statistics and significant P-values (all 0.000) indicate that these approaches are indeed significant in addressing the issue.

Firstly, the government's engagement in massive voter education is shown to be a significant approach, with a Chi-square statistic of 93.736. This underscores the importance of educating the electorate about the electoral process, the consequences of violence, and the benefits of peaceful participation, which can effectively reduce youth involvement in electoral violence. Providing employment opportunities for the youth is another significant approach, with a Chi-square statistic of 74.255. This highlights the critical role of economic stability in preventing youth from being drawn into violent activities. By addressing

unemployment, the government can reduce the vulnerability of youth to manipulation by political actors who may incite violence.

Improving the effectiveness of security agencies in tackling electoral violence is also a significant approach, evidenced by a Chi-square statistic of 97.463. Effective law enforcement and security measures are crucial in preventing and responding to incidents of electoral violence, thereby ensuring a safer electoral environment. Electoral reform with effective laws to confront electoral malpractices, including violence, is shown to be highly significant, with a Chi-square statistic of 673.543. This indicates that robust legal frameworks and reforms are essential in deterring electoral violence by ensuring accountability and legal consequences for perpetrators. Peace education is another crucial approach, with a Chi-square statistic of 231.435. By promoting the values of peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution, peace education helps to transform the culture of violence and foster a more harmonious society. The government's effort to adequately deal with politicians found guilty of electoral fraud and those benefiting from it is also significant, as shown by a Chi-square statistic of 324.625. Ensuring that such individuals face legal consequences helps to deter future electoral fraud and violence.

Finally, maintaining clear dialogue and publicizing agreements over principles to reduce mistrust among political players is significant, with a Chi-square statistic of 196.651. Transparent communication and agreements can build trust and encourage adherence to democratic norms, reducing the likelihood of electoral violence.

4. Discussion of Major Findings

The analysis of electoral violence in the Northern Senatorial District of Adamawa State during the 2023 presidential elections reveals profound and multifaceted impacts, clearly rejecting the null hypothesis that electoral violence does not have significant consequences. The high Chi-square statistics and extremely significant P-values indicate that electoral violence has substantial negative effects on various aspects of society. Firstly, electoral violence leads to the destruction of properties, resulting in significant material losses and disruption to community life. This is a critical issue as it undermines the stability and development of the affected areas. The loss of lives is another grave consequence, emphasizing the severe human cost and tragic outcomes of such violence. These findings highlight the need for urgent measures to protect both property and lives during electoral processes. Voter apathy significantly increases as a result of electoral violence. The discouragement of voter participation undermines the democratic process by reducing engagement and trust among the electorate. This indicates that electoral violence not only affects immediate physical and material aspects but also has long-term implications for political stability and democratic health. Electoral violence creates an environment conducive to corruption, allowing unscrupulous individuals to manipulate state mechanisms. This fosters a culture of impunity and undermines good governance. Additionally, the manipulation of electoral figures through violence compromises the integrity of the electoral process, leading to illegitimate outcomes and weakening the foundation of democracy. The deprivation of people's voice in governance is another critical consequence of electoral violence. By preventing free and fair participation, violence effectively silences the electorate, eroding the principles of democracy and representative governance.

On the prevention side, the analysis of government approaches to prevent youth involvement in electoral violence indicates significant effectiveness. Massive voter education campaigns are crucial in reducing

youth involvement by educating the electorate about the electoral process and the consequences of violence. Providing employment opportunities for youth addresses economic vulnerabilities that may lead to involvement in violence, highlighting the importance of economic stability in preventing violent activities. Improving the effectiveness of security agencies is essential for ensuring a safer electoral environment. Effective law enforcement and security measures prevent and respond to incidents of electoral violence, thereby maintaining order. Electoral reforms with robust legal frameworks are vital in deterring electoral violence by ensuring accountability and legal consequences for perpetrators. Peace education plays a significant role in transforming the culture of violence and promoting peaceful coexistence. By inculcating the values of peace and conflict resolution, such education helps to reduce the prevalence of violence. Dealing with politicians found guilty of electoral fraud and those benefiting from it is crucial in deterring future electoral fraud and violence, ensuring that these individuals face legal consequences.

Lastly, maintaining clear dialogue and publicizing agreements over principles build trust among political players, encouraging adherence to democratic norms and reducing the likelihood of electoral violence. Transparent communication and agreements foster a culture of respect for the electoral process and democratic governance. Overall, these findings underscore the profound impacts of electoral violence and the critical importance of implementing comprehensive strategies to mitigate these issues. The significant results highlight the need for multifaceted approaches that address both the consequences of electoral violence and the prevention of youth involvement in such activities, ensuring a more stable and democratic electoral process in Adamawa State.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study on electoral violence in the Northern Senatorial District of Adamawa State during the 2023 presidential elections reveals severe consequences such as property destruction, loss of lives, increased voter apathy, corruption facilitation, electoral figure manipulation, and deprivation of people's voice in governance. Using chi-square test analysis, the research underscores the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address these impacts on communities and democratic processes.

The study also evaluates the effectiveness of government approaches to prevent youth involvement in electoral violence, emphasizing voter education, employment opportunities, security improvements, electoral reforms, peace education, dealing with electoral fraudsters, and maintaining dialogue. These measures are crucial in reducing youth vulnerability to violence and ensuring a safer, more democratic electoral environment. The findings stress the need for proactive measures to prevent and mitigate electoral violence in Adamawa State, fostering a peaceful and inclusive electoral process, safeguarding lives and property, strengthening democratic governance, and promoting social cohesion.

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study on electoral violence in the Northern Senatorial District of Adamawa State during the 2023 presidential elections, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Enhance Voter Education Programs: Government and civil society organizations should prioritize comprehensive voter education programs aimed at informing the electorate about the electoral process, the consequences of violence, and the importance of peaceful participation. These programs should target all segments of society, with a particular focus on youth and marginalized

communities.

ii.   Address Economic Vulnerabilities: Efforts to prevent youth involvement in electoral violence should include initiatives to address economic vulnerabilities. This could involve expanding job creation programs, vocational training opportunities, and entrepreneurship support aimed at empowering youth and reducing their susceptibility to manipulation by political actors.

iii. Strengthen Security Measures: Law enforcement agencies should enhance their capacity to prevent and respond to electoral violence effectively. This includes improving coordination among security agencies, deploying personnel to vulnerable areas, and implementing proactive strategies to deter violence before it escalates.

iv.   Implement Electoral Reforms: Policymakers should prioritize electoral reforms aimed at enhancing the integrity and transparency of the electoral process. This could involve enacting legislation to address electoral malpractices, strengthening electoral institutions, and ensuring robust mechanisms for accountability and oversight.

v.   Promote Peace Education: Educational institutions and community organizations should integrate peace education programs into their curricula and outreach activities. These programs should focus on promoting the values of tolerance, non-violence, and conflict resolution, thereby fostering a culture of peace and social cohesion.

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