

# ELECTORAL VIOLENCE AND THE 2015 ELECTION IN GOMBE STATE: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTION IN GOMBE METROPOLIS

BY

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## ABSTRACT

*Electoral violence is the illegitimate and unauthorized use of force related to electoral processes. It is characterized by intimidation, harassment, assassination, blackmail, kidnappings, killings and destruction of properties. The study used descriptive research design of survey type. A total number of 650 respondents were drawn from Gombe metropolis that formed the sample of the study. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation which inferentially used t-test statistics with the aid of SPSS. The results revealed that political thuggery, desperation among politicians to win elections by all means, poor attitude of the electorate towards elections, high level of unemployment, godfatherism and illiteracy are the major causes of electoral violence during the 2015 General Elections in Gombe metropolis. The findings further revealed that the use of card reader, effective voter education, absence of military officers at the voting points and the humility by staff at the voting points are the contributory factors of achieving violence-free election during the 2015 General Election in Gombe metropolis. Therefore, an effective public enlightenment and recruitment of competent staff are part of recommendations.*

**Key words:** Violence, Election, Metropolis, Thuggery, Card Reader.

## 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Gombe state was created in 1996 by Abacha regime. The people have been participating in the political processes, aimed at entrenching democratic values among the electorate. The state had been ruled by military and democratically elected governors. The first two military governors served from 1996-1999 in the persons of Captain J.I. Orji and Col. M. I. Bawa. The return to democracy in 1999 made it possible for the state to have three democratically elected governors from 1999 to date. The first executive governor was Alhaji Abubakar Habu Hashidu who served from 1999 to 2003 (one tenure) under the

All Peoples Party (APP). The second executive governor was Alhaji Muhammad DanjumaGoje who served from 2003 to 2011 (two tenure) under the of Peoples' Democratic Party. The third executive governor is Alhaji Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo (incumbent governor) from 2011 to date (Abubakar, 2015).

Abubakar (2015) stated that a return to democracy accompanied by democratic principles like freedom of association, speech and many may be attributed to the growth and development of thuggery. A number of jobless *Yan kalare* belonged to different political parties simply because when their party candidates win elections at various levels, they will guarantee them employment. As such, more youths belonged to a number of political parties by participating in political processes like campaigns and rallies of their preferred candidates as supporters. Since political parties have their right to mobilize supporters at their discretion, and the citizens have the right to choose a political party to belong to, thereafter, politicians were interested in sponsoring thugs who help to manipulate election processes; conflict arises due to the difference in objectives and manifests. Eventually, *Yan kalare* become subservient to politicians.

It is observed by Abubakar (2015) that the 1999 General Election paved way for democratic growth and development in Gombe state. This is because the electorate were tied with the military rule and as such a considerable level of voter turnout was recorded with a few cases of clashes and election rigging. The emergence of Alhaji Abubakar HabuHashidu being the first elected governor in the state was recorded with some few cases of violence. This can be attributed to the fact that the election was supervised by the military regime. It was also the time when politicians were eager to organise themselves and control political power.

According to Report of the Human Rights Watch (2007), thuggery manifested itself in the political processes of Gombe state in 2003 in various ways. The Report also stated that in preparation for Nigeria's 2003 election, the PDP mobilized large numbers of young men, ostensibly to protect their votes from attempts at rigging by rival parties. Community leaders, civil society activists and other residents of the state interviewed by Human Rights Watch, stated that those youths were used to help the PDP in winning the election by stealing and stuffing ballot boxes, chasing away voters and intimidating INEC officials. The organized thugs are now a constant feature of Gombe political culture and not only limited to political affairs but also have been implicated in numerous acts of criminal activity and violence against ordinary Gombe residents (HRW, 2007).

The Report further revealed that Gombe State is like the rest of Nigeria; a home of large numbers of unemployed young men who have little opportunity for legitimate employment or socio-economic advancement. The thugs have proven easy prey for politicians who offer them small amounts of money, drugs, alcohol, and local weapons in exchange for engaging in acts of intimidation and assault during their campaigns in a demonstration of muscle. Since 2003, thugs have committed not only politically related crimes but also other forms of violent abuses with impunity. Not only politically motivated attacks in 2003, their activities have degenerated into assault, rape, harassment, and extortion of ordinary civilians most notably during the election period of 2007. The thugs were armed, most commonly with machetes, clubs and their like. The thugs continued to engage in acts of intimidation of political opponents even after the 2003 elections. Between December 2003 and April 2007, at least 115 people were killed and more injured as a result of election related violence in Gombe state. For instance, the Director of Gombe Specialist Hospital confirmed to Human Rights Watch that his hospital alone treated 41 people for injuries sustained as a result of political violence during the ten days of 2007's General Elections (HRW, 2007).

On Election Day in 2007 general elections, Human Rights Watch Report further stated that *kalare* members played an integral role in the efforts of the PDP to rig the polls. *Kalare* members were seen snatching ballot boxes from polling stations to prevent voting in nine wards in Gombe state during the state polls. Local observers identified and named many of the individuals involved in intimidation and stealing of ballot boxes in their report on the elections. The ANPP reported to INEC and the police that voters had been chased away and ballot boxes snatched by *kalare* in every Local Government Area in the state and this led to the series of violence within and outside the Gombe metropolis (HRW, 2007).

## **2. REVIEW ON ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA AND GOMBE STATE**

Electoral violence is mostly manifested in party clash. It involves violent acts, like riot, thuggery, kidnapping, arson, and political assassinations, which are all directed at individuals and groups perceived to be the political opponents (Ugoh, 2004). Electoral violence usually is attributed and characterized by altering, influencing or changing by force, the voting pattern or manipulating the electoral results in favour of a particular candidate or political party (Ugoh, 2004; Alanamu, 2005; Saliu et al, 2006). More importantly, political and electoral violence are orchestrated and sponsored by godfathers to ensure

electoral successes of their political godsons and protégés using army of unemployed youth recruited, armed, and maintained by the godfather. However, electoral violence can also be defined as the illegitimate or unauthorised use of force to effect decisions against the will or desires of others. Likewise, Nwolise (2007) cited in Adele (2012) also defined electoral violence as all forms of organised acts or threats of physical, psychological, and structural, aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during and after an election with a view to determining, delaying, or otherwise influencing an electoral process.

As observed by Adele (2012), the general conclusion of Nigerians regarding the 2003 election was that no election could be conducted in Nigeria under a civilian government without corruption, electoral malpractices and violence of the highest order. He also stated that The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) that monitored the 2003 election reported the irregularities that smeared the election when it stated that Twenty-nine of the registered political parties that either contested or did not contest the elections have variously rejected the results as announced by the INEC declaring the results as fraudulent. Both Domestic and International Election Observers documented massive irregularities that characterised the elections and refused to endorse the elections as free and fair. Some political parties and their candidates decided to challenge some of the results before the various Election Petition tribunals and have gone ahead to do so while others declared “mass action” to pressurise a government without popular mandate to abdicate power (Adele, 2012).

Similarly, the 2007 state and federal elections fell short of basic international and regional standards for democratic elections. They were marred by poor organisation, lack of essential transparency, widespread procedural irregularities, significant evidence of fraud, particularly during result collation process, voter disenfranchisement at different stages of the process, lack of equal conditions for contestants and numerous incidents of violence. As a result, the elections have not lived up to the hopes and expectations of the Nigerian people and the process cannot be considered to have been credible (Adebayo and Omotola, 2007:207 cited in Adele, 2012).

Furthermore, during the 2011 general elections in Nigeria, Adele (2012) argued that for many years and irrespective of what happened in the past, Nigerians had for long developed a deeper love for democracy. This love had been demonstrated in the time past whenever there is a need for this. Thus, in spite of the ills that followed the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections, Nigerians still showed their willingness to elect their leaders. He also noted that, 17 people lost their lives during the 2011 post-presidential poll violence in

Gombe and 100 suspects were arrested. The Acting Head of Clinical Services and Training of the Federal Medical Centre, Gombe, Dr Ali Shaliza stated that 71 patients of post-election violence were brought to the hospital. The violence also resulted into about 300 casualties to be attended to by the Red Cross.

Collation process of the presidential election results was suspended for over an hour because some youths forced their way through INEC gates and overwhelmed the security men on duty. Riots also continued in other parts of the state. Vehicles in INEC office destroyed and the Commission's office windows broken. Three buses were set on fire along Federal college of Education (FCE) road and INEC office in *Bajoga*, Funakaye LGA by the angry Youths Daily Trust, (Tuesday April 19, 2011:4), Guardian newspaper on (Tuesday, April 19, 2011:6, and Monday, April 18, 2011:6) also reported the same.

The thugs began rampage in Gombe on the evening of Saturday April 16, 2011 soon after voting. Vandalisation and violent protests started when results were being counted and collated. PDP members were allegedly targeted. There was vandalisation at INEC headquarters in Gombe (Vanguard, Saturday April 23, 2011:9). Similarly, on Sunday, April 17, 2011 Anti-PDP riot on Gombe streets began. Youths armed with machetes and clubs attacked the house of Governor DanjumaGoje and tried to set it on fire. The youths moved to the town centre abusing the Resident Electoral Commissioner, the PDP, and Governor DanjumaGoje. Houses of prominent persons were also torched. There is also destruction of 4 Gombe Line Mass Transit Vehicles. House of former Minister of Education and PDP chieftain, Hajia Aisha JibirDukku's house and vehicles vandalized. The Police Station along Dukku road attacked (Daily Trust, Monday, April 18, 2011, p.3 & Tuesday, April 19, p.4, Daily Sun, April 18, p.6, Guardian Tuesday April19, p.6 Gombe Sunday, April 17, 2011). Therefore, these and many more developments have informed the researchers to conduct this investigation with a view to finding out and evaluate the causes, effects and factors responsible for the success or otherwise of the 2015 General Elections in Gombe metropolis.

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- a) To find out the causes of electoral violence in Gombe metropolis.
- b) To evaluate the effects of electoral violence in Gombe metropolis.

### **4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- a) What are the causes of electoral violence in Gombe metropolis?
- b) To what extent has electoral violence affected the electorate and the conduct of elections of 2015 in Gombe metropolis?

## 5. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

One null hypothesis was tested in this study as follows:

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between poverty and electoral violence especially during 2015 General Elections in Gombe metropolis.

## 6. METHODOLOGY

The paper used descriptive research design. A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed and 573 were retrieved from respondents that were drawn from eleven Registration Areas in Gombe Metropolis. This has formed the research sample in which 18 years and above also formed our category of the population. The research used instrument with the reliability coefficient of 0.9 of data collection. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation and inferentially with the aid of SPSS.

## 7. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

**Question 1.**What is causes of electoral violence in Gombe metropolis?

**Table 1:** Frequency Distribution, Mean and Standard Deviation for the Opinion of Respondents on Causes of Electoral Violence in Gombe metropolis

| SN           | FACTOR  | Y            | %  | N           | %  | T            | %   |
|--------------|---|--------------|----|-------------|----|--------------|-----|
| 1            | Political Thuggery  | 458          | 80 | 115         | 20 | 573          | 100 |
| 2            | Desperation among politicians to win elections by all means | 533          | 93 | 40          | 7  | 573          | 100 |
| 3            | Poor attitude of electorates towards elections              | 304          | 53 | 269         | 47 | 573          | 100 |
| 4            | High level of unemployment                                  | 533          | 93 | 40          | 7  | 573          | 100 |
| 5            | Godfatherism  | 418          | 73 | 155         | 27 | 573          | 100 |
| 6            | Illiteracy  | 292          | 51 | 281         | 49 | 573          | 100 |
| 7            | absence of security personnel                               | 241          | 42 | 332         | 58 | 573          | 100 |
| 8            | apprehension of electorates towards election results        | 407          | 71 | 166         | 29 | 573          | 100 |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |   | <b>3186</b>  |    | <b>1398</b> |    | <b>4584</b>  |     |
| <b>MEAN</b>  |   | <b>199.1</b> |    | <b>87.4</b> |    | <b>286.5</b> |     |
| <b>S.D.</b>  |   | <b>58.2</b>  |    | <b>59.5</b> |    |              |     |

The result presented in Table 1 revealed that the respondents who opined 'YES' and believed that political thuggery, desperation among politicians to win elections by all means, poor attitude of electorates towards elections, high level of unemployment, godfatherism, illiteracy, absence of security personnel and apprehension of electorates for election results are the causes of electoral

violence in Gombe Metropolis scored a mean of 199.1 with standard deviation of 58.2 as against respondents who opined 'NO' (mean =87.4, S.D= 59.5).

**Question 2.** To what extent has electoral violence affected the electorates and the conducts of elections in Gombe metropolis?

**Table 2:** Frequency Distribution, Mean and Standard Deviation of the effects of electoral violence

| SN           | FACTOR  | Y            | %  | N            | %  | T            | %   |
|--------------|---|--------------|----|--------------|----|--------------|-----|
| 1            | Injuries and Loss of Human lives              | 533          | 93 | 40           | 7  | 573          | 100 |
| 2            | Destruction of Houses and Valuable Properties | 418          | 73 | 155          | 27 | 573          | 100 |
| 3            | Decrease in Voter Turnout                     | 533          | 93 | 40           | 7  | 573          | 100 |
| 4            | Increase in Social Disorder                   | 533          | 93 | 40           | 7  | 573          | 100 |
| 5            | Induced Migration                             | 418          | 73 | 155          | 27 | 573          | 100 |
| 6            | Increase in Unemployment Rate                 | 533          | 93 | 40           | 7  | 573          | 100 |
| 7            | Hunger and Starvation                         | 418          | 73 | 155          | 27 | 573          | 100 |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |   | <b>3386</b>  |    | <b>625</b>   |    | <b>4011</b>  |     |
| <b>MEAN</b>  |   | <b>241.9</b> |    | <b>44.64</b> |    | <b>286.5</b> |     |
| <b>S.D.</b>  |   | <b>64.2</b>  |    |              |    | <b>68.1</b>  |     |

The result presented in Table 2 revealed that group of respondents who opined 'YES' and believed that loss of lives (93%), destruction of properties (73%), decrease in population (93%), increase in crime rate (93%), induce migration and IDPs (73%), increase in unemployment rate (93%) as well as hunger (73%) have a mean of 241.9 and the standard deviation of 64.2 against their 'NO' responses which shows a mean of 286.5 and the standard deviation of 68.1.

### Hypothesis

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between poverty and electoral violence especially during 2015 general elections in Gombe metropolis.

**Table 3:** t-test Analysis of the Opinion of Respondents on Relationship between Poverty and Electoral Violence

| Responses | N   | Mean  | S.D  | Df   | t-value | t-crit | p.   | Alpha | Decision |
|-----------|-----|-------|------|------|---------|--------|------|-------|----------|
| Yes       | 327 | 41.57 | 8.48 | 1498 | 12.36   | 1.98   | 0.00 | 0.05  | Sig      |
| No        | 246 | 26.50 | 3.99 |      |         |        |      |       |          |

\*Significant at  $p \leq 0.05$  level of significant



Table 3 results, shows that the t-value computed is 12.36 and the p-value of 0.00 is observed at degree of freedom of 1498. Since the critical p-value of 0.00 is less than the alpha value of 0.05, there is significant relationship between poverty and electoral violence in Gombe metropolis. A significant relationship implies rejection of null hypothesis and retaining alternate hypothesis. Consequently, null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between poverty and electoral violence especially during 2015 general elections in Gombe metropolis is rejected. Therefore, an alternative hypothesis which suggests that there is a significant relationship between poverty and electoral violence in Gombe metropolis during 2015 General Election is retained.

## 8. DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Finding from Table 1 shows that the prevalence of political thuggery, desperation among politicians to win elections by all means, poor attitude of electorates towards elections, high level of unemployment, godfatherism, illiteracy, absence of security personnel and apprehension of electorates towards elections result are the causes of electoral violence in the 2015 General Elections in Gombe Metropolis. Similarly, the result presented in Table 2 also reveals that injuries and loss of human lives, destruction of properties, decrease in voter turnout population, increase in social disorder, induce migration, increase in unemployment rate as well as hunger and starvation are the consequences of electoral violence in Gombe metropolis. It is therefore believed that loss of lives, destruction of properties, decrease in population, increase in crime rate, increase in migration and Internally Displaced Peoples, increase in unemployment rate as well as hunger are seen as the major effects of electoral violence. Thus, there is a significant relationship between poverty and electoral violence in 2015 General Elections in Gombe metropolis.

## 9. CONCLUSION

It is very clear that electoral violence in Gombe metropolis was as a result of manifold factors which included political thuggery, desperation among politicians to win elections by all means, poor attitude of electorates towards elections, high level of unemployment, godfatherism, illiteracy, absence of security personnel and apprehension of electorate towards election results. The strong view has been affirmed by our finding that there is a significant relationship between poverty and electoral violence in 2015 General Elections in Gombe metropolis. Accordingly, it is evident that the findings from the research of scholars such as Ugoh (2004), Alanamu (2005) Saliu et al (2006) affirmed that electoral violence is mostly manifested in party clashes and involves violent acts, such as rioting, thuggery, kidnapping, arson, and political



assassinations, all directed at individuals and groups as well as perceived political opponents. It is therefore the paper reveals that injuries, loss of human lives, destruction of properties, decrease in voter turnout, increase in social disorder, high rate of migration, increase in unemployment as well as hunger and starvation are the consequences of electoral violence in Gombe metropolis.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper made its recommendations as:

A special public enlightenment should be organized for the conduct of free and fair elections by media stations, faith groups, non-governmental organisations and community members. This process should be strengthened not only during election but a continuous process.

Recruitment of competent INEC Ad-hock staff in the future elections will help in building trust in the mind of electorates and consequently prevent the occurrence of violence and crisis during and after future elections in Gombe metropolis.

There is a need for INEC to go beyond card readers by introducing electronic voting in future elections and this will reduce elections malpractices and enhance effectiveness of election management in Gombe metropolis.

Since the presence of military personnel signifies fear which results in election irregularities on the side of the electorate, the paper recommended the use of police and other para-military personnel so as to secure free, fair and credible elections in Gombe metropolis and Nigeria at large.

Finally, internet facilities should be provided to ease communication between ad hock staff and INEC headquarters nationwide at the point of accreditation, voting, sorting and counting results, so as to reduce election malpractices to the minimum stage.

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