



## Political Thuggery and Democratic Dividends in Nigeria: An Empirical Study

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Received 2 July 2011; accepted 20 September 2011

### Abstract

The paper is an empirical study on political thuggery and democratic dividends in Nigeria. Utilizing secondary and primary data, the study tested four hypothetical assumptions. Analysis done through chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistical test reveals that political thuggery hinders public accountability of elective officers thus a bane to good governance in Nigeria; increases crime rate thus a threat to the achievement of democratic dividends and exercise of citizenship rights in Nigeria. The study also reveals that the rising level of poverty, unemployment and weak security agencies account for the thriving market for political thuggery and violence in Nigeria. The more elective offices are made attractive financially the more politicians employ thugs during elections and campaigns. On the basis of these findings, the study recommends among others that government should make elective offices less attractive financially and conceited government programme and policies should be aimed at solving unemployment, poverty and strengthening the capacity of security agencies. Government must consistently educate the masses/youths on the evil of political thuggery and violence. Politicians should be made to sign undertaking that they would not employ thugs in their electioneering campaigns and that they will operate within the acceptable norms governing electoral process in Nigeria. Any politician who disobeys this

should be severely punished and bound from participating in future elections.

**Key words:** Political thuggery; Financial attractiveness; Elective offices; Unemployment; Poverty; Security agencies; Democratic rights

Michael Sunday Agba (2011). Political Thuggery and Democratic Dividends in Nigeria: An Empirical Study. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 1(1), 58-65. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/j.hess.1927024020110101.057> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.hess.1927024020110101.057>

### INTRODUCTION

All too often, debates, analyses and scholarships on Nigerian government and politics revolve around political thuggery, malpractice, violence and pessimistic undertones not until recently with the conduct of the 2011 general elections when people are beginning to be optimistic. Contemporary Nigerian politics is characterized by thuggery and private armies of politicians which only serve to facilitate criminal victory at the polls. The seemingly failure of democratic governance in Nigeria since 1999 (in arresting the widespread of poverty and social problems) which has been arguably blamed upon a number of factors among which are the epileptic nature of democratic elections and the widespread of corruption in the country makes a study on political thuggery significant.

This study focuses on political thuggery and democratic dividends in Nigeria. It progresses from the proposition that the privatization and commercialization of elective offices with attendant privileges increases the incidence of political thuggery, crises and cannot midwife a democratic resurgence and governance where the needs of the masses are satisfied. With the aid of primary and secondary data the study argues that unless and until monetary gains of elective offices are less emphasized prebendalistic politicians will continue to rely more on

rigging and other electoral malpractices than the votes of the electorates to secure victory at the polls. The present crops of politicians with their prebendalistic orientation cannot midwife democratic governance and structure where the needs of the masses are sufficiently addressed or met.

Underlying the incidence of political thuggery, violence, political killings and assassinations in contemporary Nigeria is a range of barometric questions which serve to give focus to this paper and constitute its basic research problem. What are the causes of political thuggery and violence in Nigeria? Why has political thuggery strived or remained largely unchecked in contemporary Nigeria? Does political thuggery constitute a bane to public accountability, governance and harvest of democratic dividends in Nigeria? What is the effect of political thuggery on citizenship rights like voting? Is there any change in attitude of Nigeria and workers toward democratic governance in Nigeria since 1999? What can be done in curbing political thuggery in Nigeria?

These questions are fundamental because as AFROBAROMETER (July, 2006) succinctly notes, at the time of the political handover in May 1999, many Nigerians (including civil servants) expressed hopes for a “democracy dividend” that would expand political liberties, improve the performance of government, encourage accountability among leaders and revive the ailing economy. These expectations or dividends have been slow in coming and many scholars, commentators and analysts are deeply concerned about political violence, ineffective government, corruption, irresponsible leaders and economic deprivation.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

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In a developmental perspective, democracy is a people based government aimed at serving the interest of the masses. It is within this understanding that Schumpeter (1942), defines the term as an institutional arrangement in which decision-making is transfer to individuals by means of competitive struggle for people’s votes. Democracy, according to Saward (1998, cited in Sambo, 2006), is a political system in which the citizens themselves have an equal effective input in the making of binding collective decisions. We can see that the concept democracy has attracted a plethora of definitions so much so that even regimes that are known to be despotic, authoritarian and dictatorial take pride in describing themselves as democratic (Bello, 2003 cited in Sambo, 2006).

Democracy is often linked to public accountability. This is why ROAPE (cited in Amuwo, 1992, P.7) sums up democracy as the participation of the powerless and the accountability of the powerful. As further exemplified by Schmitter and Karl (cited in Amuwo, 1992), democracy is an estimated system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by

citizens acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.

From the above, democracy have certain empirical referents or characteristics which could be summarized as follows:

- (i) level of civil and political liberties manifested by freedom of speech and associations;
- (ii) the supremacy of the will of the electorate;
- (iii) regular and periodic elections through meaningful competition for elective position among individuals as representatives of political parties;
- (iv) accountability and the exclusion of the use of force;
- (v) high level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies (Larry et al, 1990; Babawale, 2006).

Political thuggery or violence manifests itself mostly at the empirical referent of regular and periodic elections.

Political thuggery or violence is the use of thugs, private armies and physical force to threaten or harm political opponents or rig elections. As UNESCO (2005) observes, it could results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, deprivation or mal-development.

Political thuggery is an “obstaculum” to democracy and it hinders the attainment of the aforementioned referents without which democracy is worthless. For example, public accountability is a myth because Nigerians and Africans in general have not been able to hold their elected representatives accountable. Ensuring public accountability in Nigeria is not only cumbersome but problematic. Nigeria possesses a bad form of democracy which has not alleviated the country’s poverty and improves service delivery. Nigerian politicians in elective and appointed positions earn far above what their colleagues in countries like United Kingdom and America earns. Our roads have continued to claim lives through accidents because of their abysmal state in spite of billions of Naira government claimed to have spend in maintaining them. It is against this backdrop that this study is conducted to find out the relationship between political thuggery and the problem of governance in Nigeria.

Primarily, the outcome of elections and government that emerges from democratic elections in Nigeria is not a true reflection of the votes of the electorates. Gen. Buhari captures this point in 1984 by noting that the shameless rigging and the widespread pervasion of the electoral process could not, in all honesty, have been said to have produced a Government of the people by the people. What we had, through the manipulated results both at Federal and State (even local government) levels, were governments imposed on the people by the scandalous use of a mixture of political thuggery and wide-scale bribery (cited in Olagunju, et al 1993). The last general elections of 2011 became a significant improvement

of electioneering activities in Nigeria. With some level of integrity observed in the conduct of that elections, people are beginning to have positive mind towards the institutionalization of democracy in Nigeria.

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## **SPADE OF POLITICAL THUGGERY AND VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA (1999-2008)**

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Since elections and post-election periods of 1999 to 2008, there is hardly any state in Nigeria that has not witnessed political violence, killings and thuggery. These periods are characterized by what Agbaje et al (2004: xix) describe as “allegations of rigging, incidence of violence, and litigations over elections outcomes in an increasingly charged atmosphere”. The preponderance of political violence/thuggery “gives the impression that Nigeria can never run a successful democracy” (*This Day*, April 7, 2003 cited in Adebani, 2004:336).

Statistical data on political assassinations, violence and thuggery within the period under review are frightening and call for speedy remedial actions. On November 7, 2002 new breed politician in Sokoto Umaru Dan Maliki was attacked and beaten almost to the point of death by some armed youths numbering about eleven. He was attacked because he decamped from their party (All Nigerian Peoples Party – ANPP) to People’s Democratic Party – PDP. The thugs left him in a state of coma. On March 2, 2003, ANPP gubernatorial candidate in Enugu State petition police regarding telephone calls threatening assassination if he does not give up his bid. On March 5, 2003 Marshall Hary, ANPP vice chairman for the south-south zone was assassinated in his Abuja residence.

Between March 10 and 11, 2003 Lagos recorded a political clash between PDP and Alliance for Democracy (AD) where seven people feared dead. The convoy of Gani Fawehinmi, presidential candidate for National Conscience Party (NCP) was attacked on March 14, 2003 where his driver was seriously injured. Bola Ige (a federal justice minister and Attorney General) was shot dead at his residence in Ibadan, Oyo State on December 23, 2001. Though the reason for this murder is unknown, it is mostly likely to have political undertone. About four days before Ige’s death, a representative in Osun State House of Assembly, Odunayo Olagbaju, was killed following repeated stabbings on him. The day following a local AD chairman was also killed as supporters protested violently the killing of Olagbaju.

Between November 1, 2006 and March 10, 2007, the Nigerian press and other sources reported four assassinations and several attempted assassinations of Nigeria politicians, party officials and other individuals which were directly linked to various electoral campaigns. The most notorious murders related to the PDP primaries took place in mid-2006 when two PDP gubernatorial aspirants-Funsho Williams in Lagos State

and Ayo Daramola in Ekiti State- were murdered in July and August 2006 respectively (hrw.org. “Election or Selection”? : Human rights abuse and threats to free and fair elections.”).

Human Right Watch (a body committed to defending human rights worldwide) estimates that a minimum of 300 Nigerians were killed in violence linked to the 2007 elections although there may be other credible estimates considerably higher than this. Politics in Nigeria is war with bloodshed and diabolical devices to kill potential opponents.

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## **STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES**

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The following hypotheses will be investigated in the study:

(i) political thuggery hinders public accountability of elective officers thus constituting a bane to good governance in Nigeria;

(ii) the rising level of poverty, unemployment rate and weak security agencies account for the thriving market for political thuggery and violence in Nigeria;

(iii) the more elective offices are made attractive financially the more likely politicians will employ thugs during elections and campaigns; and

(iv) Political thuggery increases crime rate thus a threat to the achievement of democratic dividends and exercise of citizenship rights in Nigeria.

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## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

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A survey of 159 respondents was taken. These study units were randomly selected and used because of their competence in answering the questions raised in the questionnaire administered. Their responses were used descriptively on the issues investigated.

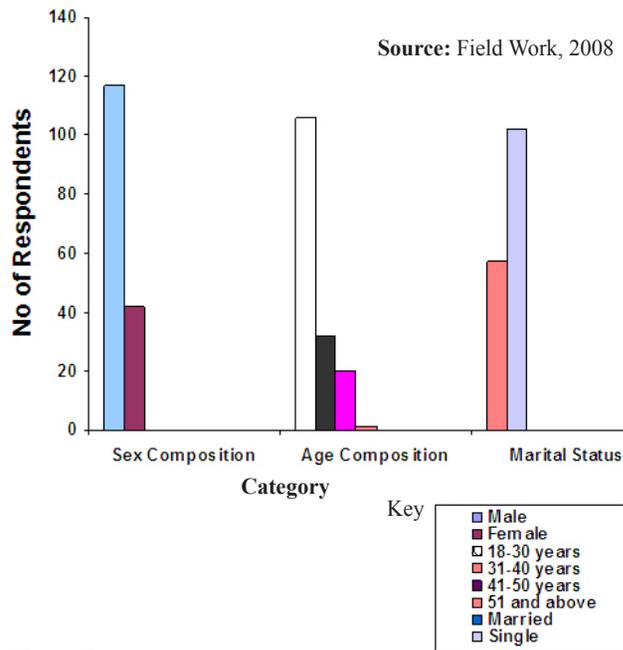
The questions raised in the questionnaire construct reflect the variables studied thus ensuring reliability of data gathered. Furthermore, the reliability and validity of data were fortified by allowing experts in statistical analysis to make useful inputs on the research instrument. The questionnaire construct was also given to experts in social sciences to scrutinize with a view to ensuring that the research instrument was consistent with variables raised in the hypotheses and that it actually measured the issues the researchers have in mind to study. This, therefore, beefed up the construct and face validity of the research instrument.

On the basis of this satisfactory validity, the data reflect adequately the issues investigated subject to the minimum distortion by subjective factors. There is, therefore, an acceptable reliability.

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## **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

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**Figure 1**  
**Socio-demographic Data of Respondents**

The socio-demographic data from figure 1 shows a sex composition made of 117 males representing 74 percent and 42 females representing 26 percentages. Age composition revealed that 106 respondents representing 66.7 percent were between 18-30 years while 32 respondents constituting 20.1 percent were 31-40 years. 20 respondents representing 12.6 percent were 41-50 years; only 1 (0.6%) fell under the age bracket of 51 and above years. Marital status of respondents revealed that 57 respondents representing 36 percent were married while 102 respondents representing 64 percent were single.

In summary, the survey shows a data dominated by male respondents with most of the respondents single and fall within the age bracket of 18-30 years.

**Table 1**  
**Political Thuggery and Malpractices**

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Agree	152	96
Disagree	5	3
No comment	2	1
Total	159	100

Source: Field work, 2008

In Table 1, 152 respondents representing 96 percent agreed that elections in Nigeria are characterized by political thuggery and malpractices. 5 respondents representing 3 percent disagree while 2(1 percent) of the respondents maintained a posture of no comment. A large majority of Nigerians currently disapprove the conduct of elections in Nigeria and will prefer to remain in doors during the period of voting. The apathy of some Nigerians to elections made some governors in 2003 to force workers under their jurisdiction to participate

(register) during the voters registration exercise. This they did by making evidence of voter's registration a condition for payment of salaries. As rightly observed by Akindele (2005:8), many Nigerians have developed apathy to civic responsibilities.

**Table 1-1**  
**Performance of Democratic Government in Nigerian**

Options	No of Resp.	Percentage (%)
Roads and Health facilities	8	5
Education infrastructures	18	11.3
Better salaries for civil servants	45	28.3
Security	3	1.9
Water and electricity	3	1.9
All of the above	11	6.9
None of the above	71	44.7
Total	159	100

Source: Field work, 2008

From Table 1-1, it can be deduced that democratic regimes since 1999 have failed in delivering democratic dividends of good roads and health facilities, education infrastructures, better salaries, security, water, electricity to the masses. Majority- 71(44.7 percent) of the respondents are of the above opinion. This finding agrees with the report of a United Kingdom Team on delivering service in Nigeria. The team notes that poor people in rural areas complain about lack of access to potable water (consistently a top priority), education, healthcare, rural feeder roads, electricity, and general unavailability of markets. In urban areas, the services typically lacking are piped water, access to health and education facilities, regular electricity supply if any, community facilities, and good roads.

**Table 1-2**  
**Political Thuggery Makes Voting Right a Mere Formality**

Options	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Agree	145	91.2
Disagree	7	4.4
No comment	7	4.4
Total	159	100

Source: Field Work, 2008

Out of 159 respondents, 145 representing 91.2 percent agreed that the exercise of voting right is a mere formality that has no meaning since thugs facilitate the rigging of election in favour of their candidates provided they are periodical settled or paid. 7(4.4 percent) and 7(4.4 percent) disagree and had no comment respectively.

## TEST OF HYPOTHESES

### Hypothesis I

(H<sub>0</sub>): Political thuggery do not hinder public accountability of elective officers thus not a bane to good

governance in Nigeria.

(H<sub>1</sub>): Political thuggery hinders public accountability of elective officers thus a bane to good governances in Nigeria.

Independent variable: political thuggery

Dependent variables: public accountability, good governance in Nigeria.

Test statistics: chi square(x<sup>2</sup>).

Degree of freedom (df): 2

Level of significance: 0.05

Decision rules: retain Ho if calculated x<sup>2</sup> value < critical x<sup>2</sup>-value. Reject Ho if calculated x<sup>2</sup>- value > critical x<sup>2</sup>-value.

**Table 2**  
**Effect of Political thuggery on Public Accountability**

Variable	Value label			Total (%)
	A(%)	D(%)	N(%)	
Political thuggery weakens checks and balances	133(83.6)	9(5.7)	17(10.7)	159(100)
Political thuggery makes elective office holders unaccountable to the public	134(84.6)	8(11.3)	7(4.4)	159(100)
Total	267	27	24	318

**Source:** Field work, 2008 A-agree, D- disagree and N-No comment.

**The output of the chi-square model is:**

Cell	fo	fe	(fo – fe) <sup>2</sup> / fe
A	133	133.5	0.002
B	9	13.5	1.50
C	17	12	2.08
D	134	133.5	0.002
E	18	13.5	1.50
F	7	12	2.08
			X <sup>2</sup> = 7.164

From Table 2, it can be deduced that political thuggery weakens the institution of checks and balances put in place to guard against abuse of elective offices. Secondly, because elective office holders win elections through the assistance of their thugs (private armies) they tend to be politically unaccountable to the public. It is therefore common to find people saying election is selection and appointment of the powerful against the weak. The result of the statistical test substantiates the above claim (x<sup>2</sup> cal = 7.164 and x<sup>2</sup> tab = 5.991). The conclusion is that political thuggery hinders public accountability thus a bane to good governance in Nigeria.

Public accountability is a basic democratic ideal which induces a sense of responsibility on those who are called upon to render account of their stewardship. In this regard, Robertson (1993) cited in Ezeani (2003:3) sees accountability as responsibility put on government officials (elected or appointed) to show that they have exercised their powers and discharged

their duties properly. Enthroning public accountability in Nigeria has proved problematic. Nigeria possesses a backsliding democratic arrangement which has not alleviated the country’s poverty and improves service delivery. Nigerians currently disapprove the performance of democratic regimes in Nigeria since 1999. In a study by Afrobarometer (2006:7), it was observed that Nigerians evidently show diminishing confidence in the government’s ability to handle crucial issues affecting their lives.

**Hypothesis II**

(H<sub>0</sub>): The rising level of poverty, unemployment rate and weak security agencies do not account for the thriving market for political thuggery and violence in Nigeria

(H<sub>1</sub>): The rising level of poverty, unemployment rate and weak security agencies account for the thriving market for political thuggery and violence in Nigeria.

Independent variable: poverty, unemployment and weak security agencies.

Dependent variables: Political thuggery and violence in Nigeria.

Test statistics: chi-square(x<sup>2</sup>)

Degree of freedom (df): 2

Level of significance: 0.05

Decision rule: Retain Ho if calculated x<sup>2</sup> value < critical x<sup>2</sup>—value. Reject Ho if calculated chi-square > critical x<sup>2</sup>- value.

**Table 3**  
**Causes of Political Thuggery in Nigeria**

Causes	Value label			Total (%)
	A(%)	D(%)	N(%)	
Unemployment	124(78)	25(15.7)	10(6.3)	159(100)
Poverty	131(82.4)	7(4.4)	21(13.2)	159(100)
Weak security agencies	113(71)	27(17)	19(17)	159(100)
Total	368	59	50	477

**Source:** Field work, 2008. A-agree; D- disagree and N- No comment.

**Output of the chi-square model is**

cell	fo	fe	(fo – fe) <sup>2</sup> / fe
A	124	122.7	0.014
B	25	19.7	1.426
C	10	16.7	2.688
D	131	122.7	0.561
E	7	19.7	8.187
F	21	16.7	1.107
G	113	122.7	0.767
H	27	19.7	2.705
I	19	16.7	0.317
			X <sup>2</sup> = 17.772

The data in Table 3 suggest that unemployment, poverty and weak security agencies are indeed responsible for the thriving market for political thuggery and violence

in Nigeria. Unemployed youths are ready instrument in the hands of politicians and poverty makes them susceptible to political thuggery and electoral malpractices as they perceive thuggery as an easy way out of their poverty. Furthermore, inability of security bodies like police in curbing thuggery/ violence by punishing law breakers account for rising wave of political thuggery at federal, state and local governments elections. Little or no concrete action has been taken by the police against those who use thuggery and violence to further their political ambition. According to Human Rights Watch (2006), the perpetrators of violence and their sponsors often enjoys complete impunity for their actions both from the official law, enforcement bodies and their own political parties.

The result from the significant test substantiates this claim ( $\chi^2_{cal} = 17.772$  and  $\chi^2_{tab} = 5.991$ ). The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected on the grounds that the  $\chi^2_{cal} = 17.772$  is far greater than the  $\chi^2_{tab} = 5.991$ . The alternative hypothesis is accepted- the rising level of poverty, unemployment rate and weak security agencies account for the thriving market for political thuggery and violence in Nigeria.

This conclusion is supported by Human Rights Watch (2006), when they note, widespread poverty and unemployment leave young people primarily young man, susceptible to informal employment 'by politicians or their supporters as small armed forces. Since political power is one of the few and fastest ways of accessing wealth in Nigeria, politics has become a do or die affair. Individuals are so desperate to remain or get to the corridor of power that they resort to ruthless methods that might be avoided if the economy and society offered other means of supporting themselves and their families.

Democratic regimes the world over and Nigeria in particular should design programmes aimed at addressing the rising rate of poverty. Poverty is not only a continental problem in Africa but global. According to Shah (2008) almost half the world-over three billion people- live on less than 2.50 dollars a day. UNICEF estimates death rate per day due to poverty among children under the age of five at 26,500-30,000. A study by the Washington, D.C. based population crisis committee reveals that over 90% of the countries with the highest levels of human suffering in the world can be found in Africa (cited in Mbaku, 2000).

### Hypotheses III

( $H_0$ ): The more elective offices in Nigeria are made attractive financially the more likely politicians will not employ thugs during elections and campaigns.

( $H_1$ ): The more elective offices in Nigeria are made attractive financially the more likely politicians will employ thugs during elections and campaigns.

Independent variable: financially attractiveness of elective offices

Dependent variables: Politicians and thuggery in

elections

Test statistics: Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )

Degree of freedom (df): 2

Level of significance: 0.05

Decision rule: Retain  $H_0$  if calculated  $\chi^2$  (chi-square) value < critical  $\chi^2$ - value. Reject  $H_0$  if calculated  $\chi^2$ -value critical  $\chi^2$ - value.

**Table 4**  
**Financial Attractiveness of Elective Offices as the Reasons Why Politicians Employ Thugs During Elections**

Causes	Value label			Total (%)
	A(%)	D(%)	N(%)	
Elective offices are financially and socially attractive	142(89)	8(5)	9(6)	159 (100)
Financially attractiveness of elective offices account for political thuggery	154(96.9)	4(2.5)	1(13.2)	159 (100)
Total	296	12	103	318

**Source:** Field work, 2008. A-agree, D- disagree and N- No comment.

### Output of the chi-square model is:

Cell	fo	fe	(fo - fe)2/ fe
A	142	148	0.24
B	8	6	0.67
C	9	5	3.20
D	154	148	0.24
E	4	6	0.67
F	1	5	3.20
			8.22
			$\chi^2 = 8.22$

The data on Table 4 indicate that elective offices in Nigeria are financially and socially attractive and because of this, politicians are more likely to employ thugs and private armies to secure wining during campaigns and elections. The result from the statistical test substantiates this claim ( $\chi^2_{cal} = 8.22$  and  $\chi^2_{tab} = 5.991$ ). The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected on the ground that the  $\chi^2_{cal} = 8.22$  is greater than the  $\chi^2_{tab} = 5.991$ . The alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is retained. In conclusion the more elective offices in Nigeria made attractive financially the more likely politicians will employ thugs during elections and campaigns. Statistics show that a local government councilor receives a salary of not less than 350,000 thousand Naira excluding other allowances. This is just one case out of a thousand.

### Hypothesis v

$H_0$ : political thuggery do not increase crime rate thus not a threat to the achievement of democratic dividends and exercise of citizenship right in Nigeria.

$H_1$ : Political thuggery increases crime rate thus a threat to the achievement of democratic dividends and exercise of citizenship rights in Nigeria. Independent variable:

political thuggery.

Dependent variables: crime rate, democratic dividends, and exercise of citizenship rights.

Test statistics: chi- square ( $x^2$ )

Degree of freedom (df):2

Level of significance: 0.05

Decision rule: Retain  $H_0$  if calculated  $x^2$  (chi-square) value < critical  $x^2$ -value. Reject  $H_0$  if calculated  $x^2$ -value > critical  $x^2$ -value.

**Table 5**  
**Impact of Political Thuggery on Crime Rate, Democratic Dividend and Exercise of Citizenship Rights**

Variable	Value label			Total (%)
	A(%)	D(%)	N(%)	
Thuggery influences voting behaviour of electorates	151(95)	5(3)	3(2)	159(100)
Political thuggery hinders the emergences of credible candidates	149(93.7)	6(3.8)	4(2.5)	159(100)
Political thuggery increases crime rate and insecurity of lives	154(97)	2(1)	3(2)	159(100)
Political thuggery as a threat to democratic dividends and rights of citizens.	133(83.6)	16(10.1)	10(6.3)	159(100)
Political thuggery makes voting a mere formality and facilitate rigging of elections	145(91.2)	7(4.4)	7(4.4)	159(100)
Total	732	36	27	795

Source: Field work, 2008. A-agree; D- disagree and N- No comment.

**The output of the chi-square model is:**

Cell	fo	Fe	(fo – fe)2/ fe
A	151	146.4	0.14
B	5	7.2	0.67
C	3	5.4	1.07
D	149	146.4	0.05
E	6	7.2	0.20
F	4	5.4	0.36
G	154	146.4	0.39
H	2	7.2	3.76
I	3	5.4	1.07
J	133	146.4	1.23
K	16	7.2	10.76
L	10	5.4	3.92
M	145	146.4	0.01
N	7	7.2	0.01
O	7	5.4	0.47
			24.11
			$X^2 = 24.11$

The data on Table 5 indicate that political thuggery increases crime rate and hinders the delivering of democratic dividends and exercise of citizenship rights in Nigeria. Threats, thuggery and violence influence voting behaviour of electorates. It can be observed that some electorates vote under duress and in this kind of situation, they are most likely to vote candidates forced on them by thugs. One will therefore agree with Aluko (2002:393) that the Nigerian society is sometimes referred to as a permissive society, with the implication that something is ‘wrong’ in some sectors of the country. This conclusion seems to be supported by Kaur (2002: 9) when he succinctly observes that electoral process in Nigeria did not serve as a peaceful means to bring about change and neither did it offer to the people to exercise their choices in a free manner. It rather reflected a Hobbesian state of affairs where each party was in war with the other party and was ready to employ any means to gain political power. Such a state of affairs created obstacles in the smooth functioning of the democratic process. Akindele (2005:8) captures this point more clearly when he notes

that Nigerian leaders are flagrantly doing what they think is best for them rather what is best for the masses.

Political thuggery drives fear and danger into the minds of credible candidates thus hinders their emergence. As one Tony Nfed (cited in Igbefe and Offiong 2007:13) says “the way people are being killed frightens me; this politics of assassination can’t make me contest an election” and once they see a potential candidate standing against them, they will eliminate him.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Political thuggery and violence is an endemic feature of most political systems in the world. This is particularly true of developing states like Nigeria where political thuggery, killings, violence, malpractice and rigging became endemic characteristics of elections at federal, state and local governments. This has remained largely unchecked and has affected negatively the delivering of democratic dividends, exercise of citizenship right of voting and public accountability. Based on these findings and others, the following recommendations are made:

(i) Government should through proper Act make elective offices less financial attractive. By doing this, politics will now become a service to the public not the easy way to wealth acquisition.

(ii) Security agencies should be equipped to fight political thuggery and conceited government programmes designed to solve unemployment and poverty in the country. This can be achieved through proper budgetary mechanism backed up by effective implementation.

(iii) The need for transparent electoral reform is long over due. Electoral reform that ensures that credible candidates are voted into power should be put in place. This will improve the performance of government in providing roads and health facilities, educational infrastructures, security, water and electricity and better salaries for government workers at federal, state and local government levels.

(iv) Policy measures aimed at strengthening public accountability mechanism of the country should be put in place. This can be done by making the courts, Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and other bodies more independent and free from government control and intervention.

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