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## **ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE OSUN STATE 2018 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION**

### **ABSTRACT**

Nigerian democracy is increasingly becoming a shadow of itself because of the historical violence associated with elections. Knowing that a peaceful transition through an election guaranteeing the total right to choose representatives is crucial to achieving a sustainable democracy, there is an increasing academic effort to look into the ways by which electoral violence can be curbed in Nigeria and Africa. The gubernatorial election conducted in Osun State in 2018 was marked with violence, which questioned the credibility of its outcome. Using a quantitative research method, the findings indicated that the use of political thugs, vote-buying and intimidation of voters had a negative impact on the credibility of the 2018 gubernatorial election. While the study concludes that electoral violence is a recurring factor in Nigerian elections, it recommends a policy framework focused on stern measures to punish perpetrators and improve voter education before and during elections.

### **Key words**

Election, Violence, Democracy, Credibility, Osun

## Introduction

Violence before, during and after elections in Nigeria is becoming common. Though political violence is not new to Nigeria's political journey, what has drawn our attention is how the violence has metamorphosed into different shapes and dimensions with different degrees of consequence for national development (Alfa & Otaida, 2012). Tenuche (2011) noted that electoral violence has continued to threaten Nigeria to its very foundation. An election in itself is a contest between those in power and those who are likely to assume that power if so determined by its results. However, violence has often attracted a narrative of weak or no credibility from the international community to Africa. In some countries, many people lose their lives during elections because of the "do or die" attitude of those who aspire to power.

Ugboaga (2007) noted that electoral violence is a resort of these "do or die" aspirants who organize blackmail or harm other opponents for selfish gain during and after elections. Electoral violence has so affected the attitude of voters towards voting that some are afraid of going to a polling booth because of that fear. However, this does not reduce the principles of ideal democracy which consider an election a vital instrument in choosing representatives peacefully. Elections represent a mechanism through which people participate in choosing those who should govern them. This means the electorates are constitutionally allowed to freely and fairly choose those who they perceive to be competent and to guarantee their well-being in office (Ayeni-Akeke, 2008).

Elections are not new in Nigeria as many were conducted between 1951 and 2019 at regular or irregular intervals (Kurfi, 2005). Most of these elections have failed credibility tests owing to the violent activities orchestrated by the political class, competitors and desperate supporters. Over the years, these violent acts have led to a loss of lives, physical damage and fear of voting. Yacub (2007) noted that the 2007 general election witnessed confusion and electoral malpractices. The Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) professed commitment to the election and that the preparation for a free and fair election did not seem to translate to a peaceful and transparent electoral outcome in 2007. Despite being contentious, INEC believed subsequent elections would be better as they were set to learn from their failure. The 2011 presidential election proved to be more credible than the 2007 electioneering process; however, Adibe (2015)

observed that there were elements of irregularities. General Muhammadu Buhari alleged that INEC helped the ruling party PDP to amass the votes needed to win: “I lost because I was rigged out”. Recurring electoral violence in these elections has diminished confidence in the Nigerian electoral system.

The 2018 Osun gubernatorial election represented the sixth major election in the state. The election was held and conducted by the INEC in thirty local governments within the state. The two major parties, namely the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC), were represented by their candidates, Senator Ademola Adeleke representing the former and Gboyega Oyetola representing the latter. Owing to reports of irregularities in some polling units, INEC declared the election inconclusive. At that time, PDP was leading the APC by 353 votes. Following that declaration, a re-run election was conducted and this time it was the APC who led the poll with 255,505 votes while PDP gathered a total of 255,023 (Casmir-Igbokwe, 2018). However, the US Consul-General John Bray questioned the credibility of the outcome of the re-run owing to reports of violence. The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) also questioned the credibility of the outcome describing the whole event as a compromised attempt at distorting the process of democracy. Even in the re-run election on September 22, 2018, there were confirmed reports of harassment of observers by party thugs at PU 17, Ward 5, Osogbo.

The statement of the problem arises from the lack of credibility that has beset election results in Nigeria, usually caused by violence. It is believed that there are violent conspiracies before, during and after elections which have continued to distort democratic processes. The quest for an efficient democratic system demands academic investigation into the 2018 Osun gubernatorial election. The primary objectives of this research is to critically explore, analyze and, through valid facts, conclude bias-free research on electoral violence in Nigeria via a case study of this 2018 Osun gubernatorial election.

**The specific objectives include the following:**

- i. Examine the factors that generated violence during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun state
- ii. To ascertain whether electoral violence affected the credibility of the election outcome
- iii. To determine measures needed to curb electoral violence in Nigeria

For the purpose of clarity, this study is organized into different sections. The first is the introduction, the second gives conceptual clarification, the third provides the theoretical framework while the fourth a synopsis of violence in

the 2018 Osun gubernatorial election. The fifth section gives the research results, the sixth an analysis and interpretation of the data collected and the last a conclusion and recommendations.

## Conceptual Clarification

Examining different academic views on electoral and political violence during elections remains important for this study. Medvic (2010) opines that an election goes beyond choosing those who will hold a political position; it is a way of choosing a tested and trusted person who would truly represent the people. Kurfi (2009) agrees by stating that the freedom to choose representatives makes democracy the best form of government in the world. An election makes it possible for electorates to freely choose those who would govern them. The implication of this is that they are responsible for the outcome of their choice of political leaders. Ojo (2007) defines an election as an institutional mechanism which conveys formal expressions of preference by the governed as to who should remain in office, who should be removed and who should come in. He opines further that an election in the modern sense is carried out from time to time through several methods such as the secret ballot or an e-voting system. Elections are meant to be free and fair and anything less is not an election. In Nigeria, various practices have marred the electioneering process which has in turn rendered Nigerian democracy a shadow of itself. Among these practices are bribery and corruption, inefficient electoral laws, and the political nature of the electoral commission (Kurfi, 2009). Kurfi calls for a profound investigation into the flawed electoral system and observes that transparent elections define great democracies.

Violence refers to any activity that is capable of inflicting injury or harm to others and comes with the fear of destruction and coercion. It disrupts the peaceful co-existence of people, groups and society (Anifowose, 2006). Violence can be physical, psychological or structural in nature. Physical violence involves physical contact between two or more persons, psychological violence happens in the mind of a person, while structural violence is worse than the others and happens when members of a society are unable to exercise their rights to freely choose their representatives. They are denied by the government an atmosphere conducive to achieving a good life (Gatlung, 2004)

Harish and Toha (2019) note that electoral violence is mostly found in countries where democracy has not been consolidated. Its appearance suggests that prior institutional decay has given room for forms of violence to thrive. Electoral violence allows for the use of intentional force during elections to subvert the will

of the people through intimidation organized by state and non-state actors. Ugboaja (2007) aligns his thought to the above by defining electoral violence as organized unlawful acts perpetrated by unscrupulous elements to forcefully impose their will on the people. It is a result of the selfish desires of politicians which could take the form of harassing and blackmailing their opponents and is manifest at different levels of an election. It goes from “party primaries” to declaration of election results and voter registration (Seerberg, Wahman & Skanning, 2018).

Violence in “party primaries” is caused by powerful members of a party whose decisions and influence are hard to challenge. They select those who are loyal to them rather than competent and proven individuals. The selection process breeds conflict in the party and the loyalists of the powerful begin to intimidate their opponents. Straus & Taylor (2012) maintain that elections in Africa are often marked with harassment, blackmailing and intimidation. They noted that in Africa, thugs and security guards are bribed to steal electoral materials and cause harm to voters. In fact, powerful politicians use the young as an instrument of violence for selfish political objectives.

Upon the announcement of election results, violence could take the form of kidnapping, assassinating the winner of the election, the use of inciting statements on opponents by the losing party. On the causes of electoral violence, Fjelde and Hoglund (2016) identify political intolerance, ethnic polarization and institutional decay as root causes. Ugoh (2004) also notes that in Nigeria, political parties go as far as kidnapping their opponents. This shows the height of political intolerance and lack of respect for human rights. The “do or die” attitude of Nigerian politicians largely promotes violence in Nigerian elections.

## **Theoretical framework**

This research adopts conflict theory in explaining electoral violence in Nigeria. Conflict theory holds the view that a ruling or political class sees violence as a tool for retaining political power and sustaining the accumulation of the state’s wealth. From a capitalist angle, power is best protected by creating weak socio-economic and political systems to perpetuate accumulation as much as possible. To sustain unequal access to public goods and state wealth, there has to be forceful domination of the poor by the powerful. Karl Marx (1818–1883) is notable for establishing his thought on the violent use of state powers to suppress the powerless in society. To him, weak systems have further resulted in poverty, inequality and corruption which in turn create tension in society.

The Nigerian situation deeply reflects the position of conflict theory as the use of domination of the common man by the ruling class through all possible means. The use of state apparatus by the incumbent government to intimidate opponents often leads to violent conflict, resentment and decreased confidence in democratic transitions. We have seen how politicians in an attempt to retain political power take advantage of unemployment to lure thugs and some of the young into disrupting campaigns and elections for certain rewards. The deliberate creation of poverty is responsible for increasing the mobilization of thugs in Nigeria and this has continued for many years. Good governance gives birth to peaceful co-existence and justice. However, Nigerian politicians focus on the use of mercenary fighters and thugs during elections to perpetrate violence to either attack a potential winner or rig elections in their favor. This inglorious method to retain or get hold of power has not been attended to with all seriousness. Conflict theory helps to better situate this study in the quest for academic contributions to find solutions to the perpetual violence which has remained a tool in the hands of “do or die” politicians in Nigerian elections

### **Electoral violence in the 2018 Osun gubernatorial election**

Osun state, popularly known as *Ipinle Omoluabi* (the state of virtues), is home to the cultural heritage of the Yoruba nation. Located in the south-western part of the country, it covers 14,875 km<sup>2</sup> and has Osogbo as its capital city. Osun state boasts of mineral resources such as gold and kaolin as well as the rivers and streams which provide its water. It includes people from Ijesha, Igbomina, Ife and other parts of the country, while being known for its multi-religious activities which accommodates Christianity, Islam and traditional religions. Osun natives speak either Yoruba or English. The state has three federal senatorial districts, nine federal constituencies and thirty local government areas. Together these amount to a population of 3.4 million (National Population Census, 2006).

The 2018 gubernatorial election was contested by politicians belonging to popular and unpopular parties. The All Progressives Congress (APC) and People’s Democratic Party (PDP) were the stronger parties represented by Adegboyega Oyetola and Nurudeen Adeleke respectively. The total number of registered voters in Osun State in September 2018 was 1,682,495 (inecnigeria.org). On September 22, 2018, the Independent Electoral Commission declared Osun State gubernatorial election inconclusive in four local government areas – Osogbo,

Orolu, Ife south and Ife north. Though Senator Ademola Adeleke had an initial victory with a margin of 353, the election was declared inconclusive by INEC because of irregularities. In fact it was discovered that the margin between APC and PDP candidates was less than the number of canceled votes – 3,498 (Shehu, 2018).

Following this declaration, INEC conducted a re-run election and this time it was the APC who led the poll with 255,505 while PDP gathered 255,023 votes. The result of the re-run led to allegations of manipulation by INEC. Even the ruling party, APC, was perceived by some (particularly members of the PDP) to have manipulated the outcome (Samuel & Josiah, 2018).

There is a constitutional basis for the declaration of elections as inconclusive. INEC takes its initiative based on evidence supporting electoral malpractice to make this declaration at any point in time. The electoral regulations that guided the 2015 election state that in a case where the margin between the winner and loser is less than the number of canceled votes, the election must be declared inconclusive. The justification for this makes sense since, if those who were denied the right to vote had done so, the election outcome might have changed because there were more disenfranchised voters than there were votes between the two candidates. More so, there are many times when the disenfranchisement is not caused by the electorate, but can be traced to the government's inability to prevent potential disruption, party flag bearers, security personnel, and those politicians who try to sabotage an election, which could then result in the declaration as inconclusive. Snatching ballot boxes and intense violence at polling are only two examples of actions that have caused INEC to declare an election inconclusive. On various occasions, including the 2011 and 2015 Imo state gubernatorial elections as well as the 2015 election for the state of Anambra, Kogi, Taraba, and Bayelsa, the INEC has used this authority to declare an election to be inconclusive (Inecnigeria.org).

## Research methodology

The study adopts a quantitative method through the administration of questionnaires to collect data, with an emphasis on collecting and analyzing numerical data. It covers the four local government areas where inconclusive elections took place during the 2018 gubernatorial elections in Osun state, namely Ife north, Ife south, Orolu and Osogbo. The population for this study includes all eligible voters in these areas. In order to collect an unbiased sample, this study employed a simple random sampling technique generating data through questionnaires

from those who fall within the study areas. A questionnaire method was chosen as the most appropriate due to its flexibility and because it allows the generation of valuable information from respondents. Hence, the number of questionnaires was limited to 346 a combination of those who were residents and legally registered voters in the local governments.

The survey uses a well-structured questionnaire for balanced research, structured to obtain primary data from respondents. It comprised sections A to D: A with items on the demographic and personal data of the respondents; B with opinions on the causes of political violence in the 2018 Osun gubernatorial election; C with the opinions of respondents on the effects of political violence on the election; and D with the opinions of respondents on measures to tackle political violence in Nigeria. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

## Data analysis and interpretation

This section presents an analysis and interpretation of data obtained through the questionnaire. It includes socio-demographic data on the personal awareness level of the respondents as well as analysis of variables on each of the three objectives of this study. A total of 348 respondents were targeted and 348 questionnaires were administered and completed.

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic data and political participation of respondents

	Items	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	18–30	45	12.9
		31–40	73	21.0
		41–50	123	35.3
		51–60	79	22.7
		61 and above	28	8.0
		<b>Total</b>	348	100.0
2	Sex	Male	193	55.5
		Female	155	44.5
		<b>Total</b>	348	100.0
3	Religious Affiliation	Christianity	122	35.1
		Islam	226	64.9
		<b>Total</b>	348	100.0

	Items	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
4	Occupation	Students	79	22.7
		Civil Servants	146	42.0
		Traders	123	35.3
		<b>Total</b>	348	100.0
5	State of Origin	Osun	271	77.9
		Oyo	26	7.5
		Kwara	15	4.3
		Ekiti	36	10.3
		<b>Total</b>	348	100.0
6	Local Government	Osogbo	87	25.0
		Ife North	87	25.0
		Ife South	87	25.0
		Orolu	87	25.0
		<b>Total</b>	348	100.0
7	Ward	Ward 7	54	15.5
		Ward 8	44	12.6
		Ward 9	84	24.1
		Ward 10	79	22.7
		Ward 5	87	25.0
		<b>Total</b>	348	100.0
8	Educational Qualification	No formal education	52	14.9
		Primary	38	10.9
		Secondary	64	18.4
		Tertiary	194	55.7
		<b>Total</b>	115	100

Survey, 2019

**RESEARCH QUESTION ONE:** What are the factors that generated violence during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State?

**Table 2.1.** The use of thugs by political parties/politicians created an atmosphere for violence during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun state

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	145	41.7
Agree	33	9.5
Strongly Disagree	142	40.8
Disagree	23	6.6
Undecided	5	1.4
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 145 respondents representing 41.7% of the total population strongly agreed; 33 representing 9.5% agreed; 142 representing 40.8% strongly disagreed; 23 representing 6.6% disagreed; five representing 1.4% were undecided.

**Table 2.2.** Inadequate electoral materials and the incompetence of electoral personnel caused violence during the election

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	253	72.7
Agree	19	5.5
Strongly Disagree	48	13.8
Disagree	28	8.0
Undecided	0	0.0
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 253 respondents representing 72.7% of the total population strongly agreed; 19 representing 5.5% agreed; 48 representing 13.8% strongly disagreed; 28 representing 8.0% population disagreed; 0 (0.0%) were undecided.

**Table 2.3.** Do you agree that hate campaign/speeches prompted violence during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun state?

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	93	26.7
Agree	53	15.2
Strongly Disagree	173	49.7
Disagree	28	8.1
Undecided	1	0.3
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to these assertions, 93 respondents representing 26.7% of the total population strongly agreed; 53 representing 15.2% agreed; 173 representing 49.7% strongly disagreed; 28 representing 8.1% disagreed; one respondent representing 0.3% was undecided.

**Table 2.4.** Rigging during the 2018 gubernatorial elections in Osun state can be attributed to causing violence

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	151	43.4
Agree	57	16.4
Strongly Disagree	109	31.3
Disagree	26	7.5
Undecided	5	1.4
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 151 respondents, representing 43.4% of the total population strongly agreed; 57 representing 16.4% agreed; 109 representing 31.3% strongly disagreed; 26 representing 7.5% disagreed; five representing 1.4% were undecided.

**Table 2.5.** Poor security arrangements aided violence during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun state

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	203	58.3
Agree	18	5.2
Strongly Disagree	65	18.7
Disagree	38	10.9
Undecided	24	6.9
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 65 respondents representing 18.7% of total population strongly agreed; 18 representing 5.2% agreed; 203 representing 58.3% strongly disagreed; 38 representing 10.9% disagreed; 24 representing 6.8% were undecided.

The above shows the factors which created an atmosphere for violence during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State. The highest figure (72.7%) is for inadequate electoral materials and the incompetence of some electoral officers in creating an atmosphere for violence during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State.

**RESEARCH QUESTION TWO:** To what extent did the electoral violence affect the credibility of the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State?

**Table 3.1.** Violence unleashed by political thugs grossly affected voter turnout during the 2018 Osun gubernatorial election

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	130	37.4
Agree	68	19.5
Strongly Disagree	126	36.2
Disagree	18	5.2
Undecided	6	1.7
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to the first assertion, 130 respondents, representing 37.4% of the total population, strongly agreed; 68 representing 19.5% agreed; 126 representing 36.2% strongly disagreed; 18 representing 5.2% disagreed; six representing 1.7% were undecided.

**Table 3.2.** The pronouncement of the election by INEC as inconclusive created an atmosphere for electoral violence which in turn affected the credibility and outcome of the 2018 Osun gubernatorial election

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	169	48.6
Agree	28	8.0
Strongly Disagree	130	37.4
Disagree	19	5.5
Undecided	2	0.5
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 169 respondents, representing 48.6% of the total population, strongly agreed; 28 representing 8.0% agreed; 130 representing 37.4% strongly disagreed; 19 representing 5.5% disagreed; two representing 0.5% were undecided.

**Table 3.3.** Interference and intimidation of voters, journalists and election observers affected the credibility and outcome of the 2018 Osun gubernatorial election

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	165	47.4
Agree	27	7.8
Strongly Disagree	127	36.5
Disagree	24	6.9
Undecided	5	1.4
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 165 respondents, representing 47.4% of the total population, strongly agreed; 27 representing 7.8% agreed; 127 representing 36.5%

strongly disagreed; 24 representing 6.9% disagreed; five representing 1.4% were undecided.

**Table 3.4.** The conduct of the security agencies affected the credibility and the outcome of the 2018 re-run election in Osun state

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	68	19.5
Agree	41	11.8
Strongly Disagree	202	58.0
Disagree	35	10.1
Undecided	2	0.6
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 68 respondents, representing 19.5% of the total population, strongly agreed; 41 representing 11.8% agreed; 202 representing 58.0% strongly disagreed; 35 representing 10.1% disagreed; two representing 0.6% were undecided.

**Table 3.5.** The denial of access to a polling station for potential voters of the opposition party had a negative impact on the credibility and outcome of the 2018 Osun gubernatorial election

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	152	43.7
Agree	45	12.9
Strongly Disagree	126	36.2
Disagree	21	6.0
Undecided	4	1.2
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 152 respondents, representing 43.7% of the total population, strongly agreed; 45 representing 12.9% agreed; 126 representing 36.2% strongly disagreed; 21, representing 6.0% disagreed; four representing 1.2% were undecided.

**Table 3.6.** Voter inducement techniques through the use of insincere identification with the masses, distribution of cash and material gifts generated electoral violence that affected the credibility and outcome of the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	188	54.0
Agree	17	4.9
Strongly disagree	123	35.3
Disagree	20	5.8
Undecided	0.0	0.0
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 188 respondents, representing 54.0% of the total population, strongly agreed; 17 representing 4.9% agreed; 123 representing 35.3% strongly disagreed; 20 representing 5.8% disagreed.

The above shows the extent to which violence affected the electoral credibility of the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State. The highest figure (54%) is that voter inducement techniques through the use of insincere identification with the masses, distribution of cash and material gifts generated electoral violence that affected the credibility and outcome of the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State.

**RESEARCH QUESTION THREE:** What measures can be put in place to curtail electoral violence during elections in Nigeria?

**Table 4.1.** Eradication of hate campaign/speeches would end violence during elections in Nigeria

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	21	6.0
Agree	93	26.7
Strongly Disagree	148	42.5
Disagree	86	24.7
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 21 respondents, representing 6.0% of the total population, strongly agreed; 93 representing 26.7% agreed; 148 representing 42.5% strongly disagreed; 86 representing 24.7% disagreed.

**Table 4.2.** Civil and Voter education programs would promote peaceful elections and mitigate electoral violence in Nigeria

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	115	33.0
Agree	123	35.3
Strongly Disagree	69	19.8
Disagree	41	11.8
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 115 respondents representing 33.0% of the total population, strongly agree that peaceful elections can be achieved through civil and voter education programs; 123 representing 35.3% agreed; 69 representing 19.8% strongly disagreed; while 41 representing 11.8% disagreed

**Table 4.3.** Do you agree that provision of adequate voting materials together with competent electoral personnel would curb electoral violence?

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	135	38.8
Agree	160	46.0
Strongly Disagree	34	9.8
Disagree	19	5.5
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this question, 135 respondents, representing 38.8% of the total population, strongly agreed that the provision of adequate voting materials together with competent electoral personnel would curb electoral violence; 160 representing 46.0% agreed; 34 representing 9.8% strongly disagreed; while 19 representing 5.5% disagreed.

**Table 4.4.** The federal government needs to effectively prosecute political parties/politicians who support the use of electoral violence so as to serve as deterrence

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	218	62.6
Agree	97	27.9
Strongly Disagree	19	5.5
Disagree	14	4.0
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 218 respondents, representing 62.6% of the total population, strongly agreed; 97 representing 27.9% agreed; 19 representing 5.5% strongly disagreed; and 14 representing 4.0% disagreed.

**Table 4.5.** Travel bans should be imposed on perpetrators and sponsors of electoral violence by foreign countries so as to dissuade others from electoral violence

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	208	59.8
Agree	132	37.9
Strongly Disagree	6	1.7
Disagree	2	0.6
Total	348	100.0

Survey, 2019

Reacting to this assertion, 208 respondents, representing 59.8% of the total population, strongly agreed; 132 representing 37.9% agreed; six representing 1.7% strongly disagreed; and two representing 0.6% disagreed.

The above shows the measures that can curb electoral violence. The highest figure (62.6%) shows that the federal government needs to effectively prosecute political parties/politicians who support the use of electoral violence so as to serve as deterrence.

## Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

This study carried out an academic survey of the 2018 Osun gubernatorial election. Since the role of credibility cannot be downplayed in restoring and sustaining confidence in electoral processes, a quantitative outlook and the analysis for this enquiry found that the election was marked with violence of varying degrees. As noted earlier by Ugoh that some aspirants and parties go as far as killing, kidnapping or orchestrating false accusations against their opponents in Nigerian elections, the majority of the respondents believed that politicians paraded thugs at polling booths to intimidate voters, causing a lot of fear which affected choice of voters. The study also found that violence was not avoidable at a time where some electoral officers failed to be professional in their discharge of duties and that the violence orchestrated by many factors affected the credibility of the election. Voters were not allowed to vote by thugs, the security agencies did not respond well to these situations, and vote-buying was instrumental in discrediting the electioneering process.

In the light of these, the study recommends a policy framework which will punish political parties or politicians promoting thuggery and activities used to intimidate opponents and voters. Such punishments could be in form of travel bans for perpetrators, jail terms in accordance with the provisions of the constitution, and banning such individuals from political activities for a number of years. The study also recommends increased professionalism for the security agencies during elections so that people can feel secure to cast their vote peacefully, as well as increased voter education before and during elections to curb electoral violence. Finally, the study recommends the provision of adequate voting materials and competent election administrators and officers to aid a smooth voting process in every part of the country.

In conclusion, investigation corroborates the existing literature and narrative on electoral violence in Nigeria as a recurring problem. The 2018 Osun gubernatorial election was marked with violence which discredited the election. Going forward, therefore, ensuring free and fair elections and achieving utmost credibility in the process remains the responsibility of the government, its institutions and the electorates.

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