

The copyright © of this thesis belongs to its rightful author and/or other copyright owner. Copies can be accessed and downloaded for non-commercial or learning purposes without any charge and permission. The thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted as a whole without the permission from its rightful owner. No alteration or changes in format is allowed without permission from its rightful owner.



**IMPACT OF POLITICAL THUGGERY ON THE CREDIBILITY
OF THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA**



ABUBAKAR UMAR ALHAJI

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
2025**

**IMPACT OF POLITICAL THUGGERY ON THE CREDIBILITY
OF THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA**



ABUBAKAR UMAR ALHAJI (904158)

**A Thesis Submitted to the Ghazalie Shafie Graduate School of Government in
Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy, Universiti Utara
Malaysia**



Kolej Undang-Undang, Kerajaan dan Pengajian Antarabangsa
(College of Law, Government and International Studies)
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA

PERAKUAN KERJA TESIS
(Certification of thesis)

Kami, yang bertandatangan, memperakukan bahawa
(We, the undersigned, certify that)

ABUBAKAR UMAR ALHAJI (904158)

calon untuk Ijazah
(candidate for the degree of)

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (POLITICAL SCIENCE)

telah mengemukakan tesis yang bertajuk:
(has presented his/her thesis of the following title):

**IMPACT OF POLITICAL THUGGERY ON THE CREDIBILITY OF THE 2019 GENERAL
ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA**

seperti yang tercatat di muka surat tajuk dan kulit tesis.
(as it appears on the title page and front cover of the thesis).

Bahawa tesis tersebut boleh diterima dari segi bentuk serta kandungan dan meliputi bidang ilmu dengan memuaskan, sebagaimana yang ditunjukkan oleh calon dalam ujian lisan yang diadakan pada **5 OGOS 2025**

*That the said thesis is acceptable in form and content and displays a satisfactory knowledge of the field of study as demonstrated by the candidate through an oral examination held on: **AUGUST 5, 2025***

Pengerusi Viva : **PROF. DR. MOHD HANIFF
(Chairman for Viva) JEDIN**

Tandatangan
(Signature)

Pemeriksa Luar : **PROF. DR. MOHD IZANI
(External Examiner) MOHD ZAIN (UPM)**

Tandatangan
(Signature)

Pemeriksa Dalam : **PROF. DR. MUHAMMAD
(Internal Examiner) FUAD OTHMAN**

Tandatangan
(Signature)

Tarikh : **5 AUGUST 2025**
Date

Nama Pelajar : ABUBAKAR UMAR ALHAJI (904158)
(Name of Student)

Tajuk Tesis : IMPACT OF POLITICAL THUGGERY ON THE CREDIBILITY OF THE 2019
(Title of the Thesis) GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Program Pengajian : DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (POLITICAL SCIENCE)
(Programme of Study)

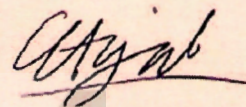
Penyelia Pertama : PROF. DR. MOHD
(First Supervisor) AZIZUDDIN MOHD SANI

Tandatangan
(Signature)



Penyelia Kedua : ASSOC. PROF. DR. UMMU
(Second Supervisor) ATIYAH AHMAD ZAKUAN

Tandatangan
(Signature)



UUM
Universiti Utara Malaysia

PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree from Universiti Utara Malaysia, I agree that the Perpustakaan Sultanah Bahiyah UUM may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for the copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purpose may be granted by my supervisor(s) or, in their absence, by the Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government (GSGSG). It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to Universiti Utara Malaysia for any scholarly use which may be made of any material from my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of materials in this thesis, in whole or in part, should be addressed to:

Dean (Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government)

UUM College of law, Government and International Studies (UUM COLGIS)



Universiti Utara Malaysia

06010 UUM Sintok

Universiti Utara Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Political thuggery is one of the fundamental issues that affected the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The conduct of the entire electoral process was flawed by widespread violence arising from the activities of political thugs who violently attacked voting centres and disrupted electoral processes, as witnessed during rallies, campaigns, voting, the collation of results, and the declaration of winners across the country, resulting in more than 626 deaths. The elections were marred by the intimidation, abduction, and killing of voters, candidates, election staff, security officials, observers, and journalists. It was also characterised by violent destruction and theft of electoral materials and equipment, which included ballot papers, ballot boxes, result sheets, vehicles, offices, generator sets, phones and smart card readers at various places across the country. The study examined factors that influenced political thuggery during the 2019 general elections, its impact on electoral credibility, and its role in post-election insecurity. The research used a qualitative method in which data obtained were reviewed, analysed and presented using content analysis and thematic techniques, supported by charts and tables. Frustration Aggression and Broken Window theories were used as tools of explanation. The findings show that political thuggery had a negative impact on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, creating a volatile political environment characterised by civic unrest, excessive cancellation and postponement of elections leading to high cost of electoral expenditure, low voter turnout and participation rates. Rigging and outright rejection of election results, excessive tribunals, corruption, disenfranchisement and poor political culture are as a result of political thuggery. Consequently, the research recommends a further review of the 2010 Electoral Act, prosecuting all perpetrators of political thuggery, improving electronic-based electoral processes, ensuring the neutrality of the authorities in the conduct of elections, reorienting citizens towards good political behaviour and culture, youth empowerment, and the formation of community-based election observers and security committees across all wards in the country.

Keywords: Political Thuggery, Electoral Violence, Election, Credibility, Democracy.

ABSTRAK

Keganasan politik merupakan salah satu isu asas yang menjejaskan kredibiliti pilihan raya umum 2019 di Nigeria. Pelaksanaan keseluruhan pilihan raya tersebut tercemar oleh keganasan meluas yang berpunca daripada aktiviti samseng politik yang menyerang pusat pengundian serta mengganggu proses pilihan raya, sebagaimana disaksikan ketika perhimpunan, kempen, pengundian, penjumlahan keputusan, dan pengumuman pemenang di seluruh negara sehingga mengakibatkan lebih daripada 626 kematian. Pilihan raya tersebut turut dicemari dengan intimidasi, penculikan, serta pembunuhan terhadap pengundi, calon, petugas pilihan raya, pegawai keselamatan, pemerhati, dan wartawan. Ia juga dicirikan oleh pemusnahan ganas dan kecurian bahan serta peralatan pilihan raya, termasuk kertas undi, peti undi, borang keputusan, kenderaan, pejabat, set janakuasa, telefon bimbit, dan pembaca kad pintar di pelbagai tempat di seluruh negara. Kajian ini meneliti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi keganasan politik sepanjang pilihan raya umum 2019, kesannya terhadap kredibiliti pilihan raya, serta peranannya dalam ketidakselamatan pasca pilihan raya. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif di mana data yang diperolehi telah disemak, dianalisis dan dibentangkan menggunakan analisis kandungan serta teknik tematik, disokong oleh carta dan jadual. Teori Frustrasi Agresi dan Teori Tingkap Pecah digunakan sebagai kerangka penjelasan. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa keganasan politik memberi kesan negatif terhadap kredibiliti pilihan raya umum 2019 di Nigeria, sekali gus mewujudkan persekitaran politik yang tidak stabil yang dicirikan oleh kerusuhan sivil, pembatalan dan penangguhan pilihan raya yang berlebihan sehingga meningkatkan kos perbelanjaan pilihan raya, serta menyebabkan kadar keluar mengundi dan penyertaan yang rendah. Penipuan pilihan raya dan penolakan keputusan secara terang-terangan, jumlah tribunal yang berlebihan, rasuah, penghakisan hak mengundi, serta budaya politik yang lemah adalah antara akibat daripada keganasan politik. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini mencadangkan semakan lanjut terhadap Akta Pilihan Raya 2010, pendakwaan terhadap semua pelaku keganasan politik, penambahbaikan proses pilihan raya berasaskan elektronik, pemastian bahawa pihak berkuasa bersikap neutral dalam pengendalian pilihan raya, pengorientasian semula warga ke arah tingkah laku serta budaya politik yang baik, pemerkasaan belia, serta pembentukan pemerhati pilihan raya dan jawatankuasa keselamatan berasaskan komuniti di semua kawasan mengundi di seluruh negara.

Kata Kunci: Keganasan Politik, Keganasan Pilihan Raya, Pilihan Raya, Kredibiliti, Demokrasi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My profound gratitude and praise go to Almighty Allah (SWT) for granting me health wisdom and the favour of undertaking such a giant project (Alhamdulillah). I testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Him. May His peace and blessings be upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). My gratitude goes to my parents, late Alhaji Abubakar Musa and Hajiya Hadiza Alhassan, who patiently nurtured, guided, and put me through all the trivialities of life, and to my family members. It is my routine prayer that Allah (SWT) reward them abundantly and grant them eternal peace.

My special appreciation goes to my excellent supervisors, Professor Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani and Associate Professor Dr. Ummu Atiyah Binti Ahmad Zakuan, who tirelessly and patiently put me through this research with special courage, mentorship, training, and support for ensuring that I succeeded in the programme. They remain my parents throughout my academic life. It is my routine prayer that Allah (SWT) reward them abundantly and grant them everlasting peace. I also appreciate the efforts of my teachers at UUM, including Associate Professor Dr. Aminurraasyid bin Yatiban, Associate Professor Dr. Kamarul Azman bin Khamis, Dr. Fakhrorazi bin Ahmad, and Dr. Mashitah binti Mohd Udin, who immensely contributed to shaping background of my academic research. Special thanks go to my friends at UUM.

I similarly extend my gratitude and appreciation to the management of the Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State, for all the support and assistance rendered to me during the course of my PhD program. I also appreciated the board members of the Faculty of Social Sciences especially Prof E. N. Attah and Dr Umar Mohammed. Equally, I thank the board members of the Department of Political Science at the Federal University of Kashere especially Dr Ahmed Wali, Dr Babayo Sule and Ahmed Abdulkadir. Likewise, my special appreciation and thanks go to the management of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Abuja, for the sponsorship under the Academic Staff Training and Development program. The support and sponsorship helped me achieve my long-term goal of a Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science at the University of Utara Malaysia. I therefore remain grateful to all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ABSTRAK.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xii
CHAPTER ONE GENERAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the Research	4
1.3 Problem Statement	9
1.4 Research Questions	16
1.5 Objectives of the Research.....	16
1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Research.....	16
1.7 Significance of the Research.....	17
1.8 Research Methodology.....	21
1.8.1 Research Pattern.....	21
1.8.2 Method of Data Collection.....	22
1.8.3 Sources of Data	22
1.8.3.1 Primary Sources.....	22
1.8.3.2 Secondary Sources.....	23
1.8.4 Techniques of Data Collection.....	23
1.8.4.1 Interview	24
1.8.4.2 Focus Group Discussion.....	26
1.8.5 Method of Data Analysis	28
1.9 Definition of Key Terms	29
1.9.1 Election	30
1.9.2 Credible Election	31
1.9.3 Political Thuggery.....	32
1.9.4 Democratic Sustainability	34

1.10 Outline of Chapters	34
1.11 Summary	35
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	37
2.1 Literature Review.....	37
2.2 Election	38
2.2.1 Election Credibility	45
2.2.2 Factors Enhancing Election Credibility	47
2.2.3 Electoral Violence.....	49
2.3 World-wide Cases of Political Thuggery.....	56
2.4 Political Thuggery.....	62
2.4.1 Causes of Political Thuggery	69
2.4.2 Recruitment and Sponsorship of Political Thugs.....	76
2.4.3 Youths and Political Thuggery	78
2.5 The 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.....	85
2.5.1 Candidates and Electorates	90
2.5.2 Security and Other Actors in the Election	93
2.5.3 Electoral Malpractice and Funds Management.....	105
2.5.4 Political Attacks across Geo-Political Zones in Nigeria.....	107
2.6 Research Gap	111
2.7 Summary	116
CHAPTER THREE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	118
3.1 Introduction.....	118
3.2 Relative Deprivation Theory.....	118
3.2.1 Basic Assumptions of Relative Deprivation Theory	119
3.2.2 Criticisms of Relative Deprivation Theory	120
3.2.3 Explanation to Relative Deprivation Theory	120
3.3 Frustration Aggression Theory	122
3.3.1 Basic Assumptions of Frustration Aggression Theory	123
3.3.2 Criticism of Frustration Aggression Theory	124
3.3.3 Strengths and Applications of Frustration Aggression Theory.....	124
3.4 Broken Window Theory.....	127
3.4.1 Basic Assumptions and Strength of Broken Window Theory	127

3.4.2 Criticisms of Broken Window Theory	128
3.5 Theories of Frustration Aggression, Broken Window and Political Thuggery .	129
3.6 Summary	134

CHAPTER FOUR FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED POLITICAL THUGGERY DURING THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA..136

4.1 Introduction	136
4.2 Structural Imbalance and Frustration	138
4.3 Politics of Clientelism or Patronage.....	146
4.4 Politics of ‘Do-or-die’ Affair	150
4.5 Absence of Political Party Ideologies	160
4.6 Politics of Business Investment	165
4.7 Weak Electoral Management Body	171
4.8 Inadequate Electoral Law and Regulation	181
4.9 Weak Security and Judiciary.....	192
4.10 Unpatriotic Attitudes.....	203
4.11 Summary	209

CHAPTER FIVE IMPACT OF POLITICAL THUGGERY ON THE CREDIBILITY OF THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA.....211

5.1 Introduction.....	211
5.2 Volatility of Political Environment with Civic Unrest	215
5.2.1 Disruption of Electoral Processes	218
5.2.1.1 Political Parties’ Campaign and Rally.....	220
5.2.1.2 Polling and Collation of Results.....	222
5.2.2 Hostile Political Relationships.....	229
5.2.3 Constraint to Free Movements.....	232
5.3 Low Voter Turnout and Participation	234
5.4 Excessive Cancellation of Results and Postponement of Elections.....	239
5.4.1 Over Voting	242
5.4.2 Violent Attacks	244
5.5 Inconclusive Rigging in Elections	248
5.6 Outright Rejection of Election Results and Excessive Tribunals	263
5.7 High Cost of Electoral Expenditure and Corruption.....	269
5.8 Disenfranchisement and Poor Political Culture	278

5.9 Summary	286
CHAPTER SIX THE ROLE OF POLITICAL THUGGERY ON INSECURITY CHALLENGES AFTER THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA	289
6.1 Introduction	289
6.2 Excessive Criminality and Resurgence of Criminal Groups.....	295
6.3 Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons.....	303
6.4 Illicit Drug Use and Trafficking.....	306
6.5 Aggressive Political Behaviour.....	309
6.6 Corruption in the Security System	311
6.7 Threatened Internal Sovereignty	318
6.8 Mitigation Strategies to Curb Political Thuggery in Nigeria.....	320
6.8.1 Strengthening Legal and Electoral Reform.....	321
6.8.2 Strengthening INEC's Ability.....	322
6.8.3 Strengthening Election Security Framework	324
6.8.4 Promoting Socio-Economic and Educational Opportunities	326
6.8.5 Community-Based Preemptive Measures.....	328
6.8.6 Promoting Civic Orientation and Good Political Culture.....	329
6.9 Summary	331
CHAPTER SEVEN SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	333
7.1 Introduction	333
7.2 Summary	333
7.3 Conclusion	338
7.4 Recommendations	346
REFERENCES.....	349
APPENDICES	367

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 <i>Key Informants Interviewed</i>	26
Table 2.1 <i>Violence and its Related Terms</i>	52
Table 2.2 <i>Dimensions of Political Thuggery and Electoral Violence</i>	55
Table 2.3 <i>Differences between Political Thugs and Related Criminal Groups</i>	82
Table 2.4 <i>Elections and Seats won by Political Parties in the 2019 General Elections</i>	93
Table 2.5 <i>Attacks and Deaths across Political Zones in the 2019 General Elections</i>	110
Table 4.1 <i>Limitation of Electoral Expenses and Penalty in the 2019 General Elections</i>	174
Table 4.2 <i>Inconclusive Elections Announced in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria</i>	189
Table 4.3 <i>Petitions Filed during the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria</i>	202
Table 5.1 <i>Cancelled Votes of Federal Elections in the 2019 General Elections</i>	248
Table 5.2 <i>Inconclusive Governorship Elections of the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria</i>	258
Table 5.3 <i>Inconclusive State Constituencies Elections in the 2019 General Elections</i>	259
Table 5.4 <i>Inconclusive Senatorial Zones in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria</i>	260
Table 5.5 <i>Inconclusive House of Representatives in the 2019 General Election in Nigeria</i>	261
Table 5.6 <i>Petitions Filed in Tribunals after the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria</i>	267
Table 5.7 <i>Re-Run Elections by Order of the Election Petition Appeal at Tribunals</i>	268
Table 6.1 <i>Excessive Attacks and Deaths Recorded from 2018-2022 in Nigeria</i>	293

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Procedure of data collection and analysis	29
Figure 2.1	Voters Turn-out of Five Elections 2003-2019	92
Figure 2.2	Rates of Deaths by Thuggery over Five Elections 2003-2019.....	95
Figure 2.3	Election Petition Cases for Five Election Periods, 2003-2019	102
Figure 3.1	Frustration Aggression Theory versus Broken Window Theory	134
Figure 4.1	Unemployment rate in relations to violent attacks in Nigeria.....	140
Figure 4.2	Violent Attacks during the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.....	140
Figure 4.3	Killings during the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.....	157
Figure 4.4	Pre and Post-election Litigations in the 2019 General Elections	174
Figure 4.5	Factors that Influenced Political Thuggery in the 2019 elections.....	209
Figure 5.1	Voter Turnout of the Five Elections 2003-2019	238
Figure 5.2	Election Petition Cases of Five Election Periods, 2003-2019.....	265
Figure 5.3	Election Expenditure from 1999 to 2019 in Nigeria.....	271
Figure 5.4	Votes vis-à-vis Cost Expenditure in the 2019 General Elections	272
Figure 5.5	Cost of Wasted Votes in the 2019 General Elections	265
Figure 5.6	Impact of Political Thuggery on the Credibility of the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.....	265
Figure 6.1	Resurgent Incidences of Criminal Attacks in Nigeria, 2018-2022	297
Figure 6.2	Resurgent Incidences of Criminal Attacks in Nigeria, 2018-2022.....	297

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A Informants and Dates of Interview	367
Appendix B Interview Questions.....	368
Appendix C Letters Obtained	368

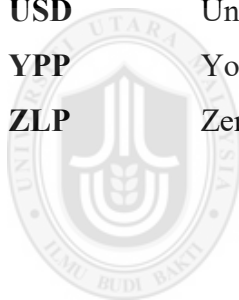


LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Action Alliance
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data
ACRVI	Average Cost per Registered Voter Index
ADC	African Democratic Congress
ADP	Action Democratic Party
AFIS	Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems
APA	American Psychological Association
APC	All Progressive Congress
APGA	All Progressives Grand Alliance
APM	Allied Peoples' Movement
APO	Assistant Presiding Officer
BWT	Broken Window Theory
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
CDD	Centre for Democracy and Development
CJN	Chief Justice of Nigeria
CMEV	Centre for Monitoring Election Violence
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPC	Congress for Progressive Change
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DDCM	Direct Data Capturing Machines
DW	Deutsche Welle
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crime Commission
EU	European Union
FAT	Frustration Aggression Theory
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRSC	Federal Road Safety Corps

HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practice and Other Offences Related Commission
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra
IRI	International Republican Institute
IS	Islamic State
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISWAP	Islamic State of West African Province
KDI	Kimpact Development Initiative
LGA	Local Government Area
LP	Labour Party
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NDLEA	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
NLC	National League of Cities
NNPP	New Nigeria People's Party
NPF	Nigerian Police Force
NRM	National Rescue Movement
NSCDC	Nigerian Security, and Civil Defence Corps
NSIP	National Social Investment Programme
NST	National Security Tracker
NUTRW	National Union of Transport Workers
OPC	Oduduwa People Congress
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PO	Presiding Officer
PRP	Peoples Redemption Party
PU	Polling Unit
PVCs	Permanent Voter Cards
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons

SCR	Smart Card Readers
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SERAP	Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SPO	Supervisory President Officer
SURE-P	Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme
TIDS	Transparency International Defence and Security
UDF	United Democratic Front
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
YPP	Young Progressive Party
ZLP	Zenith Labour Party



UUM
Universiti Utara Malaysia

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter encapsulates the general background of the whole research process and is designed to provide a general outlook on the way the research is framed, conducted, and presented. The idea of this research was formulated on the need to investigate the factors that influenced political thuggery, the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections, and the role of political thuggery in general insecurity across the country after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. As a qualitative research project, volumes of literature related to elections, political thuggery, and the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria were carefully consulted, reviewed, analysed, and acknowledged. The literature sourced from libraries and the internet included books, journals, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, and reports both in hardcopies and softcopies essential to the research objectives. This was demonstrated in the logical steps followed in designing the research, from the background of the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the objectives of the study, the research significance, and the research methodology that constituted data collection, general analysis, and presentation of findings.

Accordingly, the 2019 general elections in Nigeria were the sixth round of elections after the return of democratic governance in 1999. The 2019 general elections were conducted on February 23rd, 2019 for the offices of the President, 109 Senators, and 360 Members of the House of Representatives across the country. Whereas on March 9th, 2019, the elections of 29 state governors, 991 members of the States House of Assembly, and 6 area council chairmen of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, were similarly organised and conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC (INEC, 2019). However, there were cases of postponements, cancellations, and the return or re-run of elections that necessitated new dates in some places as ordered by INEC or the court due to certain challenges arising from violence across the country (Situation Room, 2019; European Union, 2019). In view of that, the Commission announced an extension of voting and collation of results to one or two days in some cases, while it fixed 23rd March 2019, 2nd April 2019, and other dates for the supplementary elections (INEC, 2019). Nevertheless, the court ordered the Independent National Electoral Commission to conduct re-run elections for 30 positions after a series of adjudications arising from election petitions. The Commission complied and fixed 30th November and 25th January 2020 to conduct re-run elections in 2 senatorial districts, 13 federal constituencies, and 15 State House of Assembly seats, respectively, across the affected 12 states in Nigeria (KDI, 2019; INEC, 2019).

In view of that, the electoral records of the Fourth Republic from 1999 to 2019 revealed six (6) series of elections conducted with unprecedented achievements and misfortunes in Nigeria. The six (6) cycles of elections were conducted consecutively without interruption for twenty (20) years on the interval of a four-year term for a single tenure to the maximum of two terms (for presidential and governorship positions), with no

restriction to the number of terms for members of the National Assembly and States House of Assembly (INEC, 2019). As part of the recorded achievements over the years in the Fourth Republic, democratic governance stayed longer than in the terminated First, Second, and Third Republics (through military coups) without prejudice to developed democracies where democratic values and principles are strictly observed. It is, however, strongly argued that a lot of democratic misfortunes, which included electoral violence, political thuggery, electoral rigging, vote buying, abuse of electoral laws, partisan politics, ethnic and religious bigotry, abuse of fundamental human rights, and manipulation of the constitution to suit political interests, were seen to have appeared and dominated democratic activities, which invariably affected democratic governance and sustainability in most developing democracies like Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019; European Union, 2019; HRW, 2019).

Furthermore, it was observed by the researcher that there were cases of political thuggery during elections, which put the principles of free, fair, and credible elections in Nigeria in danger. This, of course, is believed to undermine democratic governance and election credibility. A number of reports indicated the use of political thugs during elections, which were aimed at causing violent attacks and destructions in an attempt to rig elections to favour a political party or candidate against a political opponent (HRW, 2019). Political thugs are individuals, mostly youth, who use dangerous weapons during elections. They attack voters, supporters of political parties, candidates, election management staff, security personnel, observers, and media reporters. They also destroy polling units and collation centres in an attempt to rig or manipulate the processes to favour their preferred candidate or political party against their opponent. The political thugs are believed to be supported by politicians who recruit them as security guards during elections but suddenly become agents of

manipulation, election wrongdoing, and malpractices at pre-election, during-election, or post-election cycles, including rallies, campaigns, voting processes, collation, and declaration of election results.

The frustrated politicians use political thugs to instill fear into the minds of voters, candidates, and other stakeholders through violence against the principles of free competition and contest for all individuals and political parties. Political thugs destroy election materials, burn offices and vehicles, disenfranchise, injure, or even kill voters, candidates, election management staff, security personnel, election observers, and media reporters in order to influence rigging and change election results to favour their patron or party (INEC, 2019; IRI & NDI, 2019). Thus, the violent behaviour of political thugs that besieged the 2019 general elections led to the death of over 626 people and the destruction of properties. The 2019 general elections were marred by violent attacks and destructions that caused inconclusive declarations of election results, postponements, and re-runs due to violence, which generated litigation, condemnation, rejection, and protest by election analysts, candidates, political parties, and independent observers within and outside the country.

1.2 Background of the Research

Elections are believed to be a peaceful means through which electorates choose their preferred candidates to become their leaders in democratic states (Sule, et al., 2020). The processes and procedures to elect representatives are usually clear and set up by the custodians of electoral processes and other stakeholders who are responsible for safeguarding and protecting the interests of all individuals, especially in multi-ethnic and diverse cultural societies. This will ensure and propel peaceful coexistence, relative economic growth, and development within a given period and space (Tran,

2019). It is also maintained by democratic peace theorists that elections have proven to be a legitimate means through which a sizable number of citizens can democratically choose their leaders, as opposed to other forms of government like monarchical and dictatorial systems, specifically the military, where the majority of citizens lacked a role to play in choosing the leaders. In democratic societies, therefore, citizens are expected to choose their leaders freely without fear, intimidation, harassment, suppression, or any tendency that will undermine democratic principles by a political actor or authority in power, which may trigger protests, demonstrations, and even violence (Tran, 2019).

It is evident that elections today turned out to be a battleground for politicians and political parties in their quest to control political power at the expense of peaceful coexistence and democratic sustainability (Pippa et al., 2015). In the contemporary world, countries with a long history of democratic values like the United States of America also experienced incidents of electoral violence because of attempted electoral rigging and manipulation by certain groups of politicians and political thugs against electoral integrity and credibility. This was the case during the recently concluded presidential election of 2020 in the United States of America, where political thugs attempted to disrupt Congress sitting at the Capitol. The election was marred by the activities of political thugs in the name of rioters who supported President Donald Trump and stormed the Capitol with the intention of distracting Congress members from endorsing the victory of Joe Biden as the elected President of the United States of America on January 6th, 2021 (Clayton, 2021). Although political thuggery is not a new phenomenon in most developing democracies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the way it surfaced in the strong democratic countries concerned

researchers and prompted political inquiry, especially how it affects election credibility and democratic governance across the world.

In the contemporary world, manipulation of elections is a well-known phenomenon in many countries, especially when dealing with African and Asian politics. Pippa et al. (2015) noted that politicians in democratic societies usually calculate whether creating any form of violence will make them win or lose elections in their attempt to maintain or control political power and positions. This was seen not only during the 2020 general elections in the United States but in many democratic countries like Brazil, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and so on, where political thugs become agents of political destruction and manipulation, whose activities cause violent attacks and destructions arising from the use of threats, intimidation, harassment, abduction, terrorization, injury, and killing of political opponents in an attempt to rig the election and win at all costs. Political thuggery continuously poses a major threat to democratic governance and its sustainability through the activities of political thugs who enjoyed the support of certain unpatriotic politicians who wished to win elections at all costs, regardless of the existing rules and regulations. This happened when security agencies failed to address the matter due to certain political reasons exploited by incumbent candidates or political parties in the country.

In the developing democratic states of Africa and Asia, the use of violence and the threat of violence to get access to political power through political thugs and militias is an open business because politicians and political parties are all involved. Taylor (2018) cited a few incidences of political militias in Malawi, Kenya, and Sri Lanka. In Malawi, the history of electoral violence with political militias hinged on the recruitment of paramilitary armed groups who become political vanguards to protect

the interests of their respective patrons and political parties. Two dominant political militias were created, which included the Malawi Young Pioneers, supported by the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), and the Young Democrats, affiliated with the United Democratic Front (UDF). These groups were institutionalised by their supportive political parties, and they used violent attacks and intimidation on each other (they also attacked critics and those who opposed their political ambitions) so as to maximise their chances of winning elections.

Similarly, in Kenya, candidates and politicians who were major players in political activities in elections supported ethnic militias that reflected the political parties' affiliation, which at the same time also represented different ethnic groups and communities. In view of this, Jomo Kenyatta, Mwai Kibaki, and Uhuru Kenyatta represented the Gikuyu tribe; Oginga Odinga and Raila Odinga represented the Luo tribe; and Daniel Arap Moi and William Ruto represented the Kalenjin tribe. These politicians represented their tribes in national politics and had their militias defend ethnic and community interests in an attempt to control or retain political power in the country (Taylor, 2018). Likewise, in Sri Lanka, political militias are more ethnic and religious groups, particularly the Tamil Tigers and Buddhist Sinhalese. The two groups instigated a series of violent attacks that turned into a civil war that lasted for twenty-five (25) years, resulting in the death of about eighty thousand (80,000) people and the destruction of many properties. It is therefore very clear that political thuggery is not limited to Nigerian politics only but it is rather influenced by political dynamism, structure, motive, and operations regarding their existence, which may differ in time and space from one another just to achieve political goals during election processes (Taylor, 2018).

In the Nigerian context, elections are one of the means by which citizens elect their representatives, and the process is mostly seen as contentious among political parties, candidates, and supporters of different groups (European Union, 2019). Consequently, the 2019 general election was regarded as the most hostile election, which was characterised by incessant violent attacks and destruction across the country (Aboh & Odeh, 2021; Ezeibe, 2021). Political thuggery was used as a tool to strategically attack and destroy political processes and influence election results so as to get a greater advantage and win elections against political opponents (Moliki, 2021). It has been established that the 2019 general elections in Nigeria were affected by consequential tactics, overt manipulation of elections, and robbery by candidates or supporters of different political parties in their attempt to retain or control political power. Politicians and political parties employed political thugs in order to disrupt electoral processes, rig elections, and win at the detriment of other political parties and candidates (Sule et al., 2020; European Union, 2019; Situation Room, 2019).

Political thuggery has become so pervasive during elections in Nigeria that no political party can claim sanctity over the use of political thugs. That is to say that, neither the party in power nor those in opposition can be exonerated from malpractice or business. During elections, reports have revealed that political thugs move freely, armed with weapons and other dangerous arms, on the streets, at polling units and collation centres, disenfranchising voters, attacking candidates, targeting election management staff, and chasing media reporters and election observers for the purpose of disrupting election processes or changing election results, which will give their preferred candidate a strong advantage over and above other candidates (European Union, 2019). In view of this, political thugs usually direct their attacks on election-related matters, where they destroy election materials and equipments, burn houses that

belonged to different candidates, destroy and even burn campaign offices that belonged to candidates and political parties, abduct, injure, or even kill supporters or candidates of various political parties, set vehicles ablaze, and engage in physical confrontation with similar groups of political thugs. The act usually degenerates into a full-blown battle among different groups of political thugs across the country. Although studying political thuggery is not a new subject of research, investigating its impact on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria serves as a major departure from previous works, especially considering the role of political thuggery in the prevalence of insecurity in Nigeria during and after the 2019 general elections.

1.3 Problem Statement

The state of political thuggery during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria was so prevalent that it attracted condemnation and disturbing reports from election analysts, observers, voters, and other stakeholders all over. After more than two decades of democratic leadership and perhaps six (6) cycles of uninterrupted elections in Nigeria, political thuggery continued to resurface at alarming rates, with negative consequences that included violent attacks on persons and destructions of property across the country. The phenomenon of political thuggery has kept increasing since the 2003 general elections, with gruesome consequences of lost of lives and property. It revolved around perpetual attacks on voters, political parties' supporters, staff of the election management body, candidates, security personnel, election observers, and media commentators or political analysts. In fact, it was revealed that political thuggery increased the incidents of politically motivated assassinations since the 2003 general elections in Nigeria. Accordingly, it was reported that over 100 people were killed during the 2003 general elections; not less than 290 people were killed during

the 2007 general elections. More than 500 people were killed, which included ethno-religious instigated violence, during the 2011 general elections. 106 people were killed during the 2015 general elections; and of course, more than 626 people were killed during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019).

Political thugs moved freely in groups armed with dangerous weapons and rallied on the streets, at polling units, and at collation centres during the 2019 general elections. Political thugs were supported by politicians who were mostly frustrated and desperate to win elections at all costs. Political thugs attacked voters, candidates, election staff, media reporters, observers, and even security officials. The attacks were in the form of intimidation, threat, molestation, abduction, and killings, in addition to the destruction of election material and equipment across the country for the purpose of influencing or changing election results through rigging and manipulation so as to give their preferred candidates a strong advantage of victory over and above their political opponents (European Union, 2019; HRW, 2019). In sum, not less than one hundred and sixty-one (161) cases of violent attacks were recorded that resulted in the killing of over six hundred and twenty-six (626) people, from the official start of the 2019 general elections to the announcement and declaration of winners (October 2018 to March 2019) by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019).

Over the years, the government has initiated policies on empowerment opportunities for youth so as to reduce idleness and cut unemployment nation-wide (Ja'e & Lukman, 2021). A policy like the National Social Investment Programme called N-Power was initiated by the Buhari-led administration, which promised to employ three million people (3,000,000.00) Nigerians every year. The policy was subdivided into four

categories, including N-Tech, N-Tax, N-Teach, and N-Agro, with the aim of training and supporting youth in technical work, wealth creation, agriculture, and teaching (Ja'e & Lukman, 2021). However, the policy did not help to eliminate political thuggery because of the government's insincerity at the implementation; it failed to meet the stated objectives of employment for the people, except for routine recruitments in the security sector, especially in the police and army, which were not part of the policy proposal. Similarly, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (before President Buhari's administration, 2010 - 2015) had come on board with a policy to cut unemployment through a national policy called the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (Sure-P). The policy ended up providing politicians with slots of allowance for their families and friends as against the jobless youths; in addition to that, Goodluck also came up with the *Almajiri* Education Policy by building *Almajiri* (informal Islamic education) schools to settle them at designated places and support them with food and other needs so as to take them off the streets begging for food, and engaging in criminal-related activities, especially in the northern part of the country (Uche, 2022).

Beside the policies initiated by the Federal Government, state governors also set up security squads to deal with political thuggery and deter political thugs from their criminal activities in their respective states (Abubakar et al. 2018). For instance, the Gombe State Government came up with a joint military and mobile police squad called Anti-Kalare to tackle the menace of political thuggery in 2005. After a short-lived period of relative stability, political thuggery resurfaced widely with more killings and attacks, especially during the 2007 elections, in the state. The policy collapsed due to its politicisation, and the government initiated another policy called Traffic and Environment Marshal to integrate and rehabilitate political thugs in society (Abubakar

et al. 2018). Thus, the existing efforts to combat political thuggery failed because the policies were inadequate, lacked continuity, sincerity, and patriotism to meet the desired objectives. Afterward, the activities of political thugs increased not only in the state but throughout the nation despite measures by the federal and state governments.

More so, political thuggery widely manifested during the 2019 general elections, in which over one hundred and sixty-one (161) cases of violent attacks were confirmed which resulted in the killing of over six hundred and twenty-six (626) people within five (5) months (Situation Room, 2019). The effect of political thuggery on national security escalated beyond the 2019 general election cycle, which invariably affected peaceful coexistence, democratic governance, and its sustainability even after the election across the country. The European Union, on Election Observer Mission, reported that the 2019 general elections in Nigeria was marred by political thuggery and a number of irregularities that include late distribution of election materials, lack of transparency, inadequate supply of information or update to public on election preparedness, votes buying, low voter turnout, excessive use of money beyond limit during campaigns, trade of hate speeches among parties' supporters, failure of smart card machines during voting, abrupt postponement and cancellation of election and results; postponement of Presidential, Senatorial, House of Representatives elections from 16th to 23rd February, 2019 on the one hand, and Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly elections from 2nd to 9th March, 2019) on the other hand, just six (6) hours to the Presidential and National Assembly elections (European Union, 2019).

In an attempt to ensure free and credible elections in Nigeria, efforts were made by the government, the election management body (INEC), and other stakeholders for the provision of necessary supports that can guarantee hitch-free elections in the country.

The government approved and released the sum of Two Hundred and Forty Two billion, Two Hundred and Forty Five million. Fifty Thousand and One Hundred Naira (N242, 245,050,100) for the 2019 general elections. Primarily this was to enable INEC to purchase the necessary equipment, materials, and other preparations towards achieving credible elections. Particularly, INEC was given One Hundred and Eighty Nine billion and Two Hundred million Naira (N189, 200, 000), which was equivalent to Five Hundred and Twenty One (\$521,000,000) million United States Dollars. Whereas, the security officials were allocated Fifty Three billion and Two million Naira (N53, 200,000,000), which was equivalent to One Hundred and Forty Six million, Six Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$146,600,000). Beside this allocation, donor agencies contributed to the body. The European Union alone contributed Thirty Nine million Euros (€39,000,000), which was equivalent to One Hundred and Seventy million Naira, to ensuring a hitch-free election in Nigeria (Abiola, 2019; European Union, 2019). This allocation made the 2019 general elections the most expensive compared to previous elections conducted, so far.

Nevertheless, INEC was given all the necessary support from the government, political parties, security agencies, and other stakeholders to ensure credible elections in the country. Yet, the 2019 general elections was marred by series of challenges which included lack of transparency by the election management body over the election processes, with incessant criminal and violent attacks, and destructions perpetrated by political thugs. Late distribution of election materials to voting points in many states, low participation of voters that led to low voter turnout, voter intimidation, planned rigging and votes buying were also widespread; The abrupt postponement of the elections with just about six hours to the polls, coupled with the lack of information to the public raised questions on the neutrality of security officials, election staff brought

about lack of trust of the entire electoral processes. These among other reasons have i cast significant doubt on the preparedness and neutrality of the election management body, INEC towards 2019 general elections (European Union, 2019). Security agencies responsible for securing elections also failed to holistically address political thuggery, either due to corruption, unprofessional ethics, or unpatriotic attitudes, during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Hence, these issues prompt us to raise questions about the fairness, transparency, inclusiveness, acceptability, and credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Furthermore, during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, political thugs attacked numerous individuals, including voters, election staff, candidates, security officials, journalists, and observers. Accordingly, INEC (2019) reported attacks and destructions at different polling units and collation centres. Political thugs attacked a number of polling units and collation centres in Adamawa, Zamfara, Kano, Katsina, Taraba, Ondo, Osun, Anambra, Imo, Kogi, Plateau, Benue, Sokoto, Ebonyi, Lagos, and Oyo states. The attacks included lynching, abduction, intimidation, and killing of voters, securities, election staff, candidates, observers, and journalists, in addition to the destruction and stealing of election materials and equipment, both sensitive and insensitive, that included ballot papers, ballot boxes, result sheets, vehicles, offices, generator sets, bikes, phones, and smart card readers (INEC, 2019). This was carried out to aid electoral rigging through violence. For instance, an INEC ad-hoc staff and military officers were killed, while many individuals sustained injuries in Rivers State; five (5) people were killed in Delta and six (6) others in Akwa Ibom. Electorates were also killed in Osun and Ondo states; and a serving member of the House of Representatives from Lagelu/Akinyele of Oyo State was confirmed killed by political

thugs during the Governorship and State House of Assembly elections in Oyo State (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019; Situation Room, 2019).

Equally, three election management staff (ad hoc) were declared missing, and a police corporal died while the voting process was disrupted and the voters dispersed in Danmusa Local Government Area of Katsina State. In Kano State, groups of political thugs roamed the streets, polling units, and collation centres, attacking the electorate, supporters of the opposition political party PDP and other stakeholders in the election. Observers and journalists, in different places have also been affected other places such as Nasarawa and Dala LGA of Kano State (INEC, 2019; European Union, 2019). Similarly, an Inspector of Police and two people were murdered during the Presidential and National Assembly elections in Kogi State, and many houses belonging to politicians, offices of INEC, and political parties were burned down. Vehicles owned by voters, candidates, and security personnel were also destroyed and burned in various states, and above all, election materials, including ballot boxes, ballot papers, scoring sheets, smart card reader machines, and other equipment, were destroyed, vandalised, or stolen (INEC, 2019).

Consequently, the election process was characterised by violent attacks and destructions from political thugs with the support of frustrated politicians who are desperate to win the election at all costs, especially through violence and rigging against their political opponents. However, it is against this background; therefore, that this research investigates the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria with a view to determinine the factors that influenced political thuggery during the 2019 general elections and, at the same time, analysing the role of political thuggery on insecurity after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

This research has the following specific questions:

- i. What were the factors that influenced political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria?
- ii. What was the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria?
- iii. Did political thuggery contribute to insecurity after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria?

1.5 Objectives of the Research

The main aim of this research is to investigate the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria by demonstrating the role of political thuggery in the security challenges of the country. The specific objectives included:

- i. To determine the factors that influenced political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.
- ii. To analyse the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.
- iii. To examine the role of political thuggery on insecurity after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Research

The research is titled "Impact of Political Thuggery on the Credibility of the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria". As against the previous studies that have inadequately addressed the relationship between elections and political thuggery in 2019, this

inquiry took on a different scope and dimension, particularly by investigating the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria with a view to determining the role of political thuggery on general insecurity within the country. Accordingly, the 2019 general elections were selected fundamentally because political thuggery has become an issue of concern in the country among academics and political analysts, as politicians use political thugs during and after elections. It is evident that political thugs were mobilised all over the election cycles during (the 2019 Presidential, Senatorial, and House of Representatives elections as well as Governorship and State House of Assembly elections) in Nigeria.

Accordingly, the boundary of the study is limited to elections and political thuggery, as our major variables, and Nigeria as the political environment. The inquiry is confined to the 2019 general elections based on the analysis, whereby findings and generalisations are made based on the available data generated and reviewed. Consequently, the study is also limited by inadequate information gathered through interviews and focus group discussions conducted with key personalities that included categories of electorates, candidates, political thugs, political party officials, academics, security agents, government officials, civil society organisations, and political analysts. Against the major limitations, the research was conducted and completed because most challenges were overcome in carrying out the study.

1.7 Significance of the Research

This research focuses on the use of political thugs in elections, particularly the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Scholars who attempted to study the use of political thugs in general elections in Nigeria included Timothy & Omolegbe (2019), Obiam (2021), Salihu & Yakubu

(2021), Abubakar et al., (2018), Adeleke (2016), Mohammed (2015), Austin (2015), Okafor & Okafor (2018), Abubakar et al. (2016), and Sule et al. (2020). However, their aims and results further created a gap, which has prompted this research, as none of the aforementioned works dealt with the specific objectives of this research. As such, the untouched gap left behind by the previous studies has informed and provoked the idea of conducting this research. Although this research is based on existing studies, it practically differed in terms of its objectives, methodological style, research design, theoretical framework, and even presentation of results and findings.

The decision to focus the research attention on the 2019 general elections in Nigeria arises from the significance of elections in the country's democratic trajectory, its scale, and the intensity of political thuggery that undermined electoral credibility. First, the 2019 elections represented the sixth general election since Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999, making it a critical test of the country's capacity for democratic consolidation (INEC, 2019; European Union, 2019). Unlike previous elections, the 2019 polls were widely expected to demonstrate institutional maturity, particularly after the passage of several electoral reforms. Instead, the elections exposed persistent structural weaknesses that reinforced concerns about the resilience of Nigeria's democracy.

In addition, the 2019 elections recorded over 84 million registered voters, 91 political parties, and contests for 1,558 positions, including the presidency, governorships, and legislative seats on one hand with the highest cost of election expenditure at the sum of 242.4 billion naira funded by the government, on the other hand (INEC, 2019; European Union, 2019). The sheer scale of low participation amplified the risks and

consequences of political thuggery, as violence in key states directly affected voter turnout, electoral transparency, and ultimately, the legitimacy of outcomes.

Reports from domestic and international observers highlighted the widespread prevalence of political thuggery, electoral violence, and intimidation during the 2019 elections. The EU EOM (2019) observed that violent incidents disrupted voting in several regions, while domestic groups such as Yiaga Africa and CLEEN Foundation (2019) documented systematic patterns of thuggery involving youth gangs, political sponsors, and even collusion with security agencies. There was the high rate of violent attacks and killing where 161 cases of violent attacks led to 626 deaths. The election witnessed very low voter turnout at 34.96% (the lowest since return to democratic government in 1999) in spite growth in voter registration and increase in funding. There was high cases of election litigation numbering 1,701 cases that were channelled to election tribunal committees rejecting the results announced by the INEC (Situation Room, 2019; KDI, 2019; INEC, 2019). This underscores the 2019 elections as a case study where the destructive impact of thuggery was particularly visible and well-documented.

Similarly, the 2019 general elections have been identified in scholarly and policy circles as a turning point for electoral credibility in Nigeria. The elections not only influenced public trust in electoral institutions but also deepened debates about the role of political violence in shaping democratic legitimacy in fragile states (Nwankwo, 2020; Afolabi, 2021). As such, analysing the 2019 elections provides valuable insights into both the entrenched nature of political thuggery and the broader implications for democratic governance in Africa's largest democracy.

Focusing on the 2019 elections is justified by the policy relevance of its outcomes. Lessons drawn from that electoral cycle will directly inform reforms leading to the Electoral Act amendment to introduce innovations. Examining the failures of 2019 elections, therefore, contributes to understanding the motivations behind subsequent reforms and offers critical perspectives on their effectiveness in preventing similar threats to credibility in future elections (PLAC, 2022; INEC, 2023). Thus, the 2019 general election stand out as a landmark electoral event that exposed the destructive role of political thuggery in Nigeria's democratic process. Concentrating research attention on this election is academically justified not only by its historical and empirical significance but also by its enduring policy implications for electoral integrity, democratic stability, and governance in Nigeria.

Consequently, the study highlighted recurrent issues of political thuggery in Nigerian politics and elections, which previous studies have inadequately addressed, especially the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria and its role in the general insecurity in the country. The outcome of this research would help to improve election credibility in Nigeria and the world at large. As well, the study adds to the body of existing knowledge in the literature that concerned elections, political thuggery, and security matters in Nigeria. Furthermore, the research findings would assist government and non-governmental bodies to better understand, in many ways, how to address the menace of political thuggery during elections with a view to formulating and implementing policies that relate to elections and security matters in Nigeria. Therefore, the practical and theoretical potentials of the study would surely enrich the scope of political science and other social sciences towards political thuggery and elections, provoking further debates, arguments, and scientific inquiries within and outside the academic environment.

1.8 Research Methodology

This research is designed qualitatively to ensure adequate explanation and analysis. It is designed in such a way that the whole process of data collection, analysis, and presentation of results was done systematically. The study employed the use of primary and secondary sources of data to generate adequate and reliable information. Primary methods of data collection were used to obtain first-hand information through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Similarly, secondary methods of data collection were employed because of the need to use existing literature on elections and political thuggery with the help of thematic reviews and relevant books, journals, articles, magazines, newspapers, periodic publications, and reports, both printed and electronic, from different libraries and the internet. The result is presented thematically with the help of tables, charts, and numerical values where necessary to aid clear explanations.

1.8.1 Research Pattern

The study is designed qualitatively by using a case study approach (that is, the 2019 general election in Nigeria). Qualitative research entails the aggregation and use of primary and secondary data to explain a given phenomenon under investigation by using suitable techniques that are peculiar to the topic (Creswell, 2014). It is believed that the explanation of people's views, arguments, and beliefs, both written and spoken, helps to understand and interpret a local meaning so as to generate precise data and seek patterns and explanations of varied and divergent views (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Brink, 1993). Therefore, information generated via literature, interviews, and focus group discussions of this research is explained thematically using the content analysis technique, and the discussion is presented systematically in the form of

themes and sub-themes. The outcome of the research is also qualitatively designed, presented, and explained based on the stated objectives of this research.

1.8.2 Method of Data Collection

The data collection for case study research of this kind is designed qualitatively. The data is gathered and sourced from primary and secondary means (Brink, 1993). Hence, primary and secondary data were collected with the help of some scientific techniques, which included a logical review of existing literature from libraries and the internet and an in-depth interview and focus group discussion with key informants from the field.

1.8.3 Sources of Data

The research used primary and secondary sources of data. These were used to generate relevant and reliable data for the analysis. It revealed a way in which the research obtained all the materials and data used in the research. Primary and secondary sources determined the types of data obtained, either as first-hand information that is from a primary source or as documented materials that were gathered from a secondary source.

1.8.3.1 Primary Sources

Primary sources helped in collecting primary data, called first-hand information that was obtained via two complementary techniques: interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) with key informants. Here, individuals' views, beliefs, arguments, sense of understanding, and experiences are collected, aggregated, analysed, and presented qualitatively in a summary form using thematic style.

1.8.3.2 Secondary Sources

Secondary sources of data are basically derived from documented literature that helped in generating secondary data from libraries and the internet, which included journals, books, periodicals, reports, magazines, newspapers, and so on, both in soft and hard copies. The information obtained is studied, examined, digested, interpreted, and presented qualitatively using a content analysis approach with the help of themes and sub-themes in accordance with the stated objectives of the research.

1.8.4 Techniques of Data Collection

Unlike quantitative research, which uses existing rules for drawing the research sampling, like Krejcie & Morgan (1970), Yamane (1967), and Research Advisors (2006), which presents few techniques, in qualitative research design, sampling essentially depends on the ability of the researcher to systematically draw it (Brink, 1993), where the researcher systemically selects the actual population as informants who represent different categories that are critical and important to the topic of consideration. Thus, the informants under consideration must have the appropriate knowledge, reliable information, and ready-to-release information sought by the researcher.

In this qualitative research design, instrument measurement is determined by a clear, systematic, and logical review and presentation of information obtained through a review of relevant literature, interviews, and focused group discussion. In view of this, Golafshani (2003) believed that the truthfulness of the researcher is a measuring instrument (as opposed to statistical tools in quantitative research), which is used to determine the validity and reliability of data based on triangulation. Here, the research reflected on the systematic but logical review and presentation of people's views,

beliefs, and arguments so as to synthesise, summarise, and make generalisations of the findings. Thus, nineteen (17) informants were logically selected as key informants using interview and focus group discussion techniques. However, the researcher was able to interview seventeen (17) informants whose experience of political thuggery during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria was relevant and reliable.

1.8.4.1 Interview

The interview process in this study was carefully structured to ensure both depth and reliability of information gathered on political thuggery in Nigeria's 2019 general elections. The researcher successfully interviewed eleven (11) key informants which included electorates, candidates, political thugs, political party officials, academics, security agents, government officials, civil society organisations, and socio-political analysts. These informants were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in the electoral process, their knowledge of political violence, and their relevance to the research objectives. The use of purposive sampling ensured that only individuals with informed perspectives could provide meaningful insights into the subject.

A semi-structured questionnaire was designed to guide the interview sessions. This tool contained open-ended questions framed around the objectives of the study, thereby allowing informants the freedom to express themselves while ensuring consistency across interviews. The semi-structured format also enabled the researcher to probe further where necessary, clarifying vague responses or exploring emerging issues not originally anticipated. This flexibility was critical in capturing both factual information and subjective experiences regarding political thuggery.

The interview sessions were conducted across multiple locations, depending on the availability and safety of both the researcher and informants. For example, political thugs were interviewed within Gombe Prison under controlled conditions, while electorates were

interviewed in Jos and Abuja to represent both Northern and Southern perspectives. Government officials were engaged at the Gombe State Government House, while a socio-political analyst was interviewed via telephone due to geographical limitations. This multi-sited approach ensured geographic representation and reduced bias associated with single-location sampling.

The informants were divided into nine categories: electorates, political thugs, candidates, political party officials, academics, security agents, government officials, civil society organizations, and socio-political analysts. Each category represented a key stakeholder group relevant to the dynamics of electoral thuggery. For instance, electorates provided perspectives on victimization and voter intimidation, political thugs revealed motivations and recruitment processes, while academics and analysts contributed theoretical and policy-oriented insights. Security agents and government officials, on the other hand, shed light on institutional weaknesses and enforcement gaps.

During the interview, ethical considerations were observed. Consent was sought from all participants before commencing the sessions, and confidentiality was maintained, particularly for informants such as political thugs and security officers whose disclosure of information could pose personal risks. Interviews were conducted in safe, neutral, and convenient locations to protect both the researcher and participants. Additionally, anonymity was ensured in the final reporting, with informants identified only by category of coding rather than by name. In total, eleven informants were interviewed across the nine categories, as summarised in Table 1.1. Their responses formed a significant component of the study's qualitative data. By combining perspectives from diverse stakeholders, the interview process allowed for complimenting of information, thereby increasing the validity of findings. The diverse responses were later analysed thematically to identify patterns, contrasts, and linkages in relation to the study objectives.

Table 1.1
Key Informants Interviewed

Category	Informants	Frequency
A	Electorates	2
B	Political thugs	2
C	Candidates	1
D	Political party officials	1
E	Academics	1
F	Security agents	1
G	Government officials	1
H	Civil society organizations	1
I	Socio-political analysts	1
Total		11

Source: Researcher's Calculation, 2024

The researcher conducted the interview with key informants whom were believed relevant to the topic across Nigeria that included: two (2) electorates representing Northern and Southern regions (who were from Jos and Imo states interviewed in Jos and Abuja respectively), one (1) candidate interviewed in Gombe, one (1) academic staff from Federal University of Kashere was interviewed, two (2) political thugs were interviewed (from Gombe Prison), one (1) political party official was interviewed, one (1) security personnel was interviewed, one (1) government official was interviewed at Gombe State Government House, one (1) member of civil society organisation in Abuja, and one (1) political analyst was interviewed via phone call who is from the North central. The total of eleven (11) informants were duly interviewed, and their relevant responses formed an integral part of the analysis.

1.8.4.2 Focus Group Discussion

The study employed Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as a qualitative research technique to generate in-depth information from informants on the impact of political thuggery on the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. FGDs provided an interactive setting where participants shared and debated their experiences, producing richer data

than one-on-one interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2015). As such, the rationale of using FGDs is to capture collective perceptions, attitudes, and lived experiences of Nigerians from different ethnic and regional backgrounds. Given that political thuggery is a socially embedded practice tied to networks of political actors and communities, the group interaction allowed participants to co-construct meaning in ways surveys could not.

The participants were systematically selected to reflect Nigeria's three dominant ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani (North), Igbo (East), and Yoruba (West/South). Selection was based on cultural, political, and historical factors (Osaghae, 2021). Six participants were chosen through purposive sampling, ensuring they had prior knowledge or experience with political thuggery in 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Purposive sampling is appropriate for identifying information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). Based on value setting, FGD was conducted in Wuse, Zone 5, Abuja (FCT). Abuja was chosen for its neutral and cosmopolitan setting, ensuring accessibility and reducing local political tensions. In addition, the group composition and size included six participants with two participants from Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo ethnic groups. This aligns with best practices, as FGDs with 6–8 participants balance depth and manageability (Morgan, 1997).

However, on moderation and procedure, the discussion was moderated by a trained facilitator (researcher) who introduced the study topic, explained ground rules, and assured confidentiality of information gathered, as being only for research purpose. A semi-structured discussion guide was used, covering topics such as: experiences with political thuggery in 2019, causes and sponsors of thuggery, regional/ethnic perspectives on electoral violence, implications for democracy and election credibility,

role on general insecurity, and suggested solutions. The discussion was audio-recorded (with consent) and supported by note-taking. In addition, the participants showed enthusiasm and openness, validating or contesting each other's views. This dynamic revealed how ethnic, regional, and political contexts shaped perceptions of political thuggery. The interactive process enriched the findings beyond individual accounts.

Accordingly, data recorded using electronic devices from the field was transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically in textual (written) form so as to enable analysis and presentation of findings. Thus, these insights provide nuanced, context-specific evidence for the study. The FGD process proved effective in uncovering collective insights into political thuggery in the 2019 elections. By including participants from Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo ethnic groups, the study captured the cosmopolitan diversity of Nigeria, ensuring that the findings reflect the diverse socio-political realities.

1.8.5 Method of Data Analysis

The data generated through a review of relevant literature, an in-depth interview, and a focus group discussion were qualitatively interpreted, analysed, and presented using a content analysis strategy (Brink, 1993). This was carried out and further presented by using themes and sub-themes in explaining, demonstrating, and presenting topical issues within the scope of the stated research objectives. The research equally gave attention to tables, charts, diagrams, and numerical values during the review, analysis, and presentation of the research outcome, particularly in chapters Four, Five, and Six, where the three objectives for the study are discussed and presented. The charts that are depicted included pie charts, bar charts, line charts, and column charts with single or multiple descriptions. This is necessary to ensure a clear understanding of the

research findings. Therefore, the general outlook of the entire methodology is summarised in Figure 1.1.

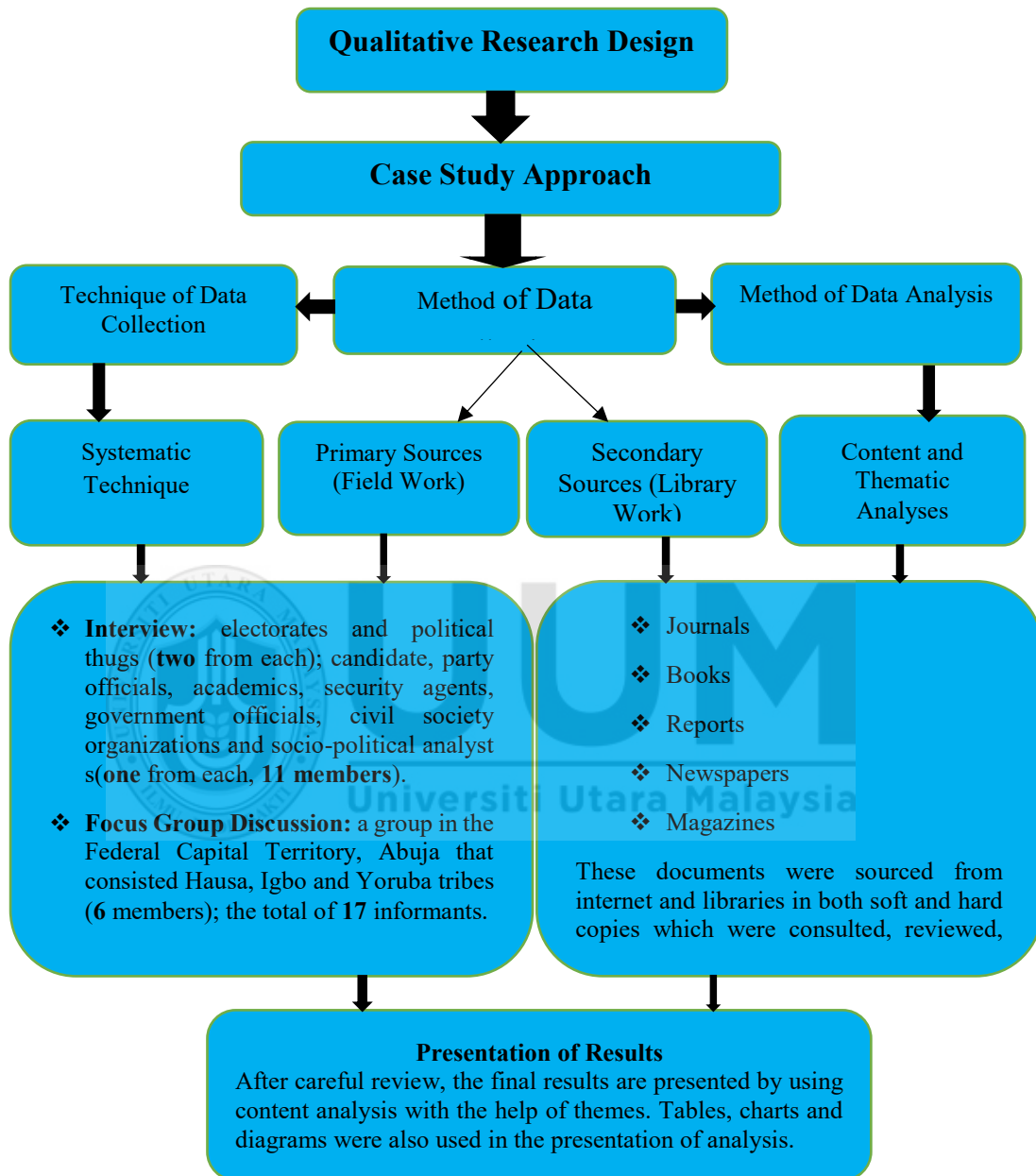


Figure 1.1 Procedure of data collection and analysis

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

In this research, four major terms were defined. These include elections, political thuggery, credible elections, and democratic sustainability. These are discussed as follows:

1.9.1 Election

Elections refer to the way in which citizens elect their leaders to various positions at different levels. This act involves the democratic process for selecting a leader that is mostly periodic in nature, where the citizens, known as electorates, are free to vote for their candidate of choice who will represent them. Elections are associated with democratic government, and a periodic election means the peaceful transfer of power and change of government by the electorate (Sule, 2018). Thus, election is a viable, free process of selecting a leader by electorates to represent them at different levels, which are generally accepted by all within a given period and space.

In addition, elections in democratic societies are practically demonstrated as the collective effort of the citizens to elect leaders in laid-down procedures, whether general or specific, which render the acceptability of all stakeholders and the interests of all citizens ultimate and can be considered first in the rule (Adam, 2018). Election is a medium through which citizens jointly agree on certain principles of representation, and any break in agreement by the representatives may lead to the change of such leader(s) via the same medium. It is therefore to say that an election can be either peaceful or contentious depending on the conduct of the election accorded by the principles of democracy and democratic rule.

However, electoral violence always derails democracy, which is believed to have eroded election credibility in many democratic countries. Thus, electoral violence entails any form of violence surrounded by elections and electoral processes with the sole aim of disrupting electoral activities through violent attacks and destructions around either pre-election, during election, or post-election cycles (USAID, 2010). For that reason, electoral violence is an integral part of election malpractices and rigging

meant to inflict fear, intimidation, or threat on individuals and groups in order to maximise chances of winning by creating an unstable political atmosphere for someone or a group of other individuals against political opponents. Many factors might have significantly influenced electoral violence in many countries that cannot be limited to ethnic bias, religious sentiments, group affiliations, sectional interest, regional differences, frustration, desperation, and structural imbalance arising from corruption, selfishness, and unpatriotic attitudes of leaders, politicians, and security agencies.

1.9.2 Credible Election

Credible election means elections are conducted and the results are generally accepted in line with the principles and rules governing its operations, which are free from malpractice, violence, and other related misconduct. Credible elections are characterised by a trusted and transparent electoral process, high voters' turnout, free participation by all political parties and candidates, public acceptance of election conduct and results by all stakeholders, equal treatment and inclusiveness to parties, and above all, violent free election processes. Credibility of elections connotes general standardisation and acceptability of the electoral processes as clean, pure, and worthy of recognition, and that election results are declared legitimate with a good reputation and are all-inclusive by the entire election stakeholders, including the election management body, political parties, observers, voters, and candidates. Such an election is free from any act of violence, malpractice, interference, or influence that jeopardises its acceptability.

Credibility is therefore accorded with the principles of integrity and democratic sustainability, which resulted from a set of universal norms that include the presence

of agreed-upon principles applicable to all countries. The principles that must reflect on election processes range from election preparations to the declaration of results through inclusiveness and free acceptance of the conduct of election cycles by candidates, voters, political parties, and other stakeholders without any form of exclusiveness, suppression, or segregation by one another that may dent the electoral image and undermine its credibility (Pippa, 2017). Simply put, election credibility holds that the entire electoral process is basically inclusive of parties, candidates, and voters against depriving political rights and franchise, for which the outcome of the election is generally accepted without legal or illegal rejection by election stakeholders. Hence, the credibility of an election possesses a seamless process that is free from all sorts of manipulation and rigging from the early stage of participation to the declaration of the winner, fair to all parties involved in recognising the outcome after the declaration of results, and accepting the final results and declaration of winners arising from the entire electoral cycle.

1.9.3 Political Thuggery

Political thuggery entails the act of politically motivated attacks and destructions during election cycles perpetuated by political thugs who enjoyed the support of politicians, mostly frustrated and desperate to influence election victory against political opponents. Whereas, political thugs are individuals especially youth who violently intimidated, victimised, terrorised, kidnapped, injured, and even killed voters, election staff, candidates, security officials, observers, and journalists during campaign rallies, voting, and the collation of results. In addition, political thugs destroy election materials and equipment, which include ballot papers, ballot boxes, result sheets, machines, computers, vehicles, offices, and even houses that belong to not only

the election management body and staff, political parties and their members, but also security agencies and their officials at different times and locations.

Furthermore, political thuggery is thus an element of electoral manipulation that can be used to change the election result, which is predicated on four basic elements: the motive, the time, the actors, and the target (Taylor, 2018; Höglund, 2009). The motive of political thuggery and electoral violence is very clear and specific, which is to maximise the chances of winning the election with all sense of malpractice and rigging through the use of threats that include intimidation, terrorising, injury, molestation, abduction, destruction, and killing. While timing is important because not all violence is political thuggery, all acts of political thuggery are electoral violence that frequently occur during electoral cycles. The timing is targeted to influence election processes and win election positions mostly during pre-election, during election, and post-election periods. This defined pervasive nature of political thuggery with a high tense of violent attacks and destructions from the official commencement of the election to the final announcement of the election results.

Therefore, political thugs are individuals, mostly youth, who are involved in politics and election processes by politicians (as vanguards or personal security but later turned to agents of manipulation and rigging) to influence victory for a given person of a political party against political opponents. In other words, political thugs are basically recruited, mobilised, and financed by politicians who are usually frustrated but desperate to win elections against political opponents. Politicians induce political thugs with little money, petty materials, unfulfilled promises, and illicit drugs so as to cause confusion, disrupt elections, and harm political opponents so as to maximise the chances of election victory. Political thugs and politicians are the actors, while voters,

election staff, security officials, candidates, observers, and journalists are the targets during elections.

1.9.4 Democratic Sustainability

Democratic sustainability simply means the process by which a state or country upholds democratic values and institutions that are premeditated upon the entrenchment of the ideals of democracy. There are established political mechanisms and institutions to guide election transparency, the principles of the rule of law, the protection of civil rights, fundamental freedoms, and safeguarding lives and properties in the state. Thus, democratic sustainability is the way in which the ideals of democracy and democratic values are put in place to sustain democracy and political culture against any act that may derail democratic governance (Abubakar et al., 2015).

1.10 Outline of Chapters

The research is designed into seven (7) interconnected and interdependent chapters. Chapter One discusses the general background of the study, which include the introduction, statement of problem, research questions, objectives of the research, scope and limitations of the research, significance of the research, research methodology, organisation of chapters, and definition of major terms. Chapter Two consists of a literature review that examines elections, political thuggery, and the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Chapter Three explains the theoretical framework in which Frustration Aggression theory and Broken Window theory were adopted and applied in demonstrating further the ways politicians use political thugs (as a means to an end of election victory), but security agencies reluctantly fail to address the menace of political thuggery during elections in Nigeria.

Chapter Four explains factors that influenced political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Chapter Five analyses the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Chapter Six discusses the role of political thuggery in raising insecurity after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Chapter Seven presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendation(s). Lastly, references are cited in line with American Psychological Association (APA) techniques, with appendices attached at the end.

1.11 Summary

The research is predicated on the recurrent attacks and destructions by political thugs during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Precisely, previous studies failed to investigate the “impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria”. Political thugs violently attacked voters, election staff, security officials, candidates, observers, and journalists at different locations and times during polling and the collation of results, with intimidation, molestation, abduction, injury, and killing that resulted in the deaths of over 626 people in the country.

Accordingly, the research is guided by three main objectives: to determine the factors that influenced political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, to analyse the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, and to examine the role of political thuggery on insecurity after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. As a qualitative research design, the data collected were sourced from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include the collection of first-hand information through interviews with eleven (11) informants across the country and conducting focus group discussions with a group of six (6) people in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. Relevant literature (from books,

journals, periodicals, magazines, reports, and newspapers) was consulted on political thuggery, elections, and the 2019 general elections in Nigeria in both soft and hard copies from different libraries and the internet. The chapter breakdown demonstrated the logical steps followed in designing the research, from the background of the study, problem statement, research questions, objectives of the study, scope and limitation, significance of the study, research methodology, definition of key terms, outline of chapters, and method of data collection to the presentation and analysis of findings for the study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature Review

Literature review is the summary, analysis, and consideration of the works of previous scholars that are relevant to the research area or topic (Creswell, 2014). Its purposes are to enlighten, guide, direct, and limit a researcher within the scope and jurisdiction of the research interest so as to ensure reliability in data collection and the validity of research findings (Brink, 1993; Braun & Clarke, 2013). It is therefore appropriate to state that the literature review of this research is confined to elections, political thuggery, and specifically, the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, yet references are made to similar issues related to and relevant to the stated research objectives.

As qualitative research, the study explored the content analysis approach with thematic style; where necessary, tables, charts, diagrams, and numerical values were also used to further explain and summarise what has been discussed in the work. The thematic review is in the form of an examination and assessment of the views, postulations, beliefs, or arguments of previous scholars in order to relate, qualify, clarify, or criticise them so as to come up with a synthetic position for a clear understanding.

2.2 Election

Election is generally conceived as the process in which citizens, who are called electorates or voters, elect their leaders to represent them at different levels and positions (Sule et al., 2020; Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019; Carlos & Amilcar, 2019). According to these scholars, elections symbolise a medium through which citizens and leaders jointly agree on certain principles of representation, and any break in agreement by the representatives may lead to the change of such leader(s) via the same medium. For this reason, Adam (2018) believed that elections are practically demonstrated as the collective efforts of the citizens to elect leaders in laid-down procedures, whether general or specific, which render acceptability to the understanding that the interests of the citizens are ultimate and can be considered first in the rule. He believed that the acceptability of the general understanding that an election presupposes active accord of free choice by the citizens and solely depends on the probability of the electorate having a chance to choose leaders either by retaining or removing the candidate in power through voting (Adam, 2018).

Free choice and satisfaction of the general needs of the citizens led Tran (2019) to argue that election is an avenue that adequately satisfies the general need, and by so doing, the voices of the electorate are sufficiently listened to. It is expected that this act will surely address and reduce the possibility of revolt or any act of violence. In this view, election is fundamentally conceived as a mechanism for getting the mantle of leadership, and leaders are held accountable when they are in power. It is simply to assume that elections serve as checks and balances for which the electorates checkmate the excesses of those in power. On any account, where the electorate voted for the continuity of any person, it is a clear indication that such a person performs well to the

yearning and expectations of the masses. However, where electorates vote against any person (out of power), it demonstrates that such a leader has performed below expectations.

Fundamentally, elections serve as a link that connects voters and leaders in order to measure their policy performance, as a scorecard or scale of measurement in many democratic societies. In view of this, periodic elections always send signals to the leaders that their power to make policies has a limited time span and is time-bound. Hypothetically, elections must always be free, fair, and credible. The custodian of elections must protect their integrity based on stipulated rules and regulations in order to avoid crises of legitimacy; where rigging, fraud, manipulation, and violence are identified, such elections are deemed to have the status of being incredible, and that is to say, the election lacks credibility. Therefore, liberal democratic societies believed that credible elections are always fair and transparent and that the result is generally accepted by all parties involved, which absolutely paved the way for democratic governance and its sustainability. However, where the result has been doubted, it can be legally challenged in a court of law without resorting to any violent means as instigated by the candidates, political parties, or electorates in a given society (Obiam, 2021).

Contrary to the belief of liberal democratic scholars, the electoral conflict thesis argues that elections are a mechanism where people at a given advantage tend to manipulate the results of the election in their interests against other individuals. In this vein, Pippa et al. (2015) noted that contentious elections refer to any form of contest that surrounds an election that encounters a high level of severity and may affect the legitimacy of actors involved through the electoral process, including the final results. This

emanated from the circumstances of the elections within the ambit of rules guiding the entire conduct of elections. It is fundamental to note that contentious elections exist mostly in volatile environments, especially where tensions and disputes challenge the activities of electoral actors, electoral rules and regulations, or the influence of higher authorities, incumbent leaders, and political parties in their attempt to manipulate stipulated principles guiding the conduct of elections and the entire electoral outcome.

In other words, contentious elections are kinds of elections that resulted from violence and tension (usually started from peaceful to violent reactions) during and after elections. This demonstrates a lack of confidence by the electorate in the electoral body, government, the entire electoral process, and outcome, which eventually lead to non-participation or boycott by the political parties or candidates (Pippa et al., 2015). This suggested what is called electoral displeasure arising from peaceful demonstrations to violent reactions that resulted from dissatisfaction with the electoral process and results, either during voting at polling units, collation of results at collation centres, or after the declaration of results. In most cases, such incidents virtually occur as a result of manipulation or an attempt to rig the electoral processes by the party in power, and thereafter, the opposition parties or citizens become angry and express dissatisfaction through protests or violent attacks that can lead to the loss of lives and properties.

Throughout the history of electoral violence in Nigeria, for instance, electoral violence mostly arise from the attempt to manipulate election processes by the party in power or dissatisfaction with the election result by the masses. The electorate feel that what they had voted on is not reflected in the election result as declared. Thus, protests arise and violence against either the government or the electoral management body begins,

which may turn into something different in many situations. Against incidents that occurred in the 2019 and 2015 general elections, post-election violence occurred after the declaration of President Goodluck Jonathan as elected President of Nigeria, which demonstrated violent reactions from the citizens. INEC declared Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party as the winner, defeating Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). The announcement of the election resulted in highly tempted electoral violence in the country that consumed human lives and valuable properties, especially in the northern part of the country (Moliki, 2021; Sule, 2018).

In addition, major characteristics of contentious elections were identified by Pippa et al. (2015), though not conventionally adopted by election specialists, but such an attempt was made by scientific and research evidence in the selected countries. The characteristics included lack of trust by the electorate in the election processes or results; peaceful challenge of election results in the form of demonstrations; challenging election results in court and elections boycott; and above all, violent demonstrations that cause the use of force by the government in power to subdue the tensions. Other than violence, weak institutional authorities that are self-guided by subjective interest and bias for not carrying everyone along in leadership sharing arrangements result in heightening the risk of violence, especially where such societies are basically divided along ethnic lines.

Furthermore, most developing democracies are victims of violence emanating from elections. This is the situation in most African, Latin American, and Asian countries where leaders exercised authority more than the existing structures of political institutions. In those countries, leaders attempt to dominate and control political power

by extending their tenure in office through manipulation of the constitution and laws or standing structures of governance to suit their interests. Regrettably, some of the leaders in those countries turn leadership into a family and friends affair; it is only those people who have shown absolute loyalty to the leaders that will be recognised and be given certain positions; some positions become life-time appointments rather than through merit guided by bureaucratic principles in the civil service; public wealth and treasury happen to be in a single man's pocket to withdraw money at any time without due process guided by fiscal and financial regulations (Obiam, 2021). Hence, people become more servants than citizens, in exercising their civic rights and the government fail in discharging its own responsibilities.

On this note, Lijphart (1999) argued that the power sharing formula always reduces tensions and violent situations in multi-ethnic and divided societies, thereby weakening the usual situation of the majority taking all in power sharing scenarios. Likewise, the nature of the leadership regime has a great role in intensifying conflicts, especially during elections. Electoral violence happened as a result of leadership changes in most countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as opposed to long-established democratic settings where the electorate had better ways to express dissatisfaction with policies and election results in a peaceful manner. It is contrary to newly established democratic states where protests against any decision or election results turn to violence and the use of coercive force by institutional authorities and security forces.

Furthermore, politicians and political elites in Africa and Asia demonstrated several means to manipulate elections. In their explanation, Nicholas & Brain (2018) established that leaders in power rigged elections in many developing democracies.

They added instances where the aeroplane of an opposition leader was not allowed to land in Madagascar; announcing the results of elections seventeen times above the number of voters registered in Liberia; the assassination of an arch rival in Pakistan; informing the exact percentage needed of votes to win an election in Belarus; forcing election staff to change the results in Equatorial Guinea, and so on, are clear examples. They further added that other forms of election rigging, such as targeting opposition with violence, harassment, and intimidation, remained in practice in most countries (Nicholas & Brain, 2018). In view of election rigging, four areas in which politicians mostly rig elections were identified. These include manipulating election boundaries and borders; vote buying in cash or petty material; suppression and repression of other candidates from partaking in full-fledged campaigns and other related activities; and when these fail, politicians may resort to a more advanced technological approach such as cyber hacking to change the results or stuff ballot boxes to their advantage.

In many countries, politicians and elites mostly calculate whether creating any form of violence would make them win or lose elections in their attempt to maintain or control political power and positions. In recent times, elections conducted in a few countries have been plagued by a number of irregularities, even in developed countries. Evidence emerged that incidents of politically motivated attacks, destructions, threats, intimidations, and killings increasingly surrounded not only the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019), but also the 2020 presidential election in the United States of America (NLC, 2021; Rachel, 2022; Clayton, 2021), the 2022 presidential election in Brazil (ACLED, 2022; Liam, 2022), the 2022 general election in Kenya (European Union, 2022), the 2019 general election in Malawi (Arne, 2019; European Union, 2019a), and the 2019 presidential election in Sri Lanka (CMEV, 2020).

In the United States of America, apart from the cyber insecurity that affected the credibility of the 2016 presidential elections, the activities of political thugs and other criminals have raised serious concern about the effect of electoral violence on the credibility of the 2020 presidential election, which was an attempt to favour the Republican candidate, Donald Trump, against Joe Biden of the Democratic Party (Moliki, 2021). In the same vein, there have been a series of attempts to manipulate electoral processes in some parts of the world. Elections in most of those countries were characterised by malpractice, manipulation of results, and violations of electoral laws. These situations resulted in crises and civil unrest, which terminated democratic governance, stagnated socio-economic prospects, and instituted a poor political culture. On this note, Nicholas & Brain (2018) argue that cunning politicians manipulate elections even before voting commences. This is because if it works in their interest, political violence and other related crises may be deemed to occur as the election results were already predetermined.

It is therefore worthy to note that election rigging and other manipulative tendencies are conceived as illegitimate and undemocratic ways of changing election procedures in order to favour a given candidate or political party at the detriment of other candidates and political parties. The intention is to win elections by all means against stipulated norms and principles with a view to undermining the existence of democratic principles and their sustainability. This act has a wide-ranging impact on the credibility of elections. This attempt is always exploited by politicians and political elites to cause confusion using a number of techniques that are deadly and violent in nature, especially in divided societies where democratic values are at stake. For elections to be credible, the institutions and other stakeholders must exercise power to resist any influence that may dent their credibility. In essence, a credible election is

always determined by the virtue of the institutions designed to defend and protect its election against any interest that may undermine the general interest of democratic credibility and consolidation in the state.

2.2.1 Election Credibility

Credibility of an election connotes acceptability of the entire electoral process and conduct as clean, inclusive, and worthy of recognition, and that election results are declared legitimate with a good reputation by election stakeholders, including the election management body, political parties, observers, voters, and candidates. Interference from any authority and inciting any act of violence or malpractice, like political thuggery, would dent its integrity and credibility. Credibility is therefore accorded with the principles of integrity and democratic sustainability, which result from the set of agreed-upon international recognition and the presence of universal norms that are applicable to all countries by reflecting on election processes. These range from election preparations to the declaration of results through all-inclusiveness and acceptable conduct of election cycles by candidates, voters, political parties, and other stakeholders without a negative image to flaw election credibility (Pippa, 2017).

However, credible elections are achieved when elections possess integrity, and the outcome of the whole cycle will be credible. Thus, election integrity is the measurable status of election outcomes and results that can be described as either credible or flawed. It is believed that electoral integrity is devoid of any act linked to fraud, manipulation, rigging, or other forms of violence, and as such, voters who are eligible can freely vote for their preferred candidates, and the outcome of their votes will be declared without any interference or manipulation by anybody that may instigate an unwanted crisis. As such, legitimacy exists because votes count and results are

declared freely; leaders may not face questions of legitimacy because the electoral process has integrity and the election is credible to all and sundry (Tran, 2019). In the same vein, the Electoral Integrity Project perceives electoral integrity as an agreed set of international pacts on the presence of universal norms applicable to all countries worldwide, reflecting election processes ranging from election preparations, candidates and political parties' campaigns, and other exercises on Election Day like voting, result declarations, and their aftermath, as being credible (Pippa, 2017).

In a clear illustration, Pippa (2017) further outlined major challenges that affected the electoral integrity and credibility of the 2016 general elections in the United States of America. These included partisan division in election procedures; absence of confidence from the citizens due to rigging, fraud, and violence; cyber hacking; non-compliance with campaign funding regulations; and inappropriate management of elections. The United States of America is considered to be the custodian of modern-day democracy more than any other country in the world. However, after the recent presidential elections conducted in 2016 and 2020, critiques of democracy began to justify that democracy is not the best system of government because of the inherent crises associated with it. As against other systems of government, democracy is said to have other means of addressing its challenges, of which election is one, but frustrated and desperate politicians turn elections into a battleground for acquiring political power rather than peaceful mechanisms and resort to coercive force that sometimes ignite military intervention in politics. It is therefore true that electoral integrity emanates from a free process devoid of any form of malpractice perpetuated by stakeholders that is detrimental to democratic governance and its sustainability. Hence, credibility of the election connotes transparency of the process, all inclusive of stakeholder involved, and acceptability of declared outcome (election result) by all

parties without rejection. It possesses elements of being free from rigging, manipulation or attacks for which the results are legitimately declared and accepted by all stakeholders including voters, candidates, political parties, observers, media reporters, electoral management body and judiciary within and outside the country. Thus, (Election credibility = Transparency + Inclusiveness + Acceptability).

2.2.2 Factors Enhancing Election Credibility

A number of factors upsetting election credibility and integrity include rigging, violence, regime type, changing electoral procedures, cyber-hacking, and other related malpractices occurring in not only most developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America but also affecting the model of contemporary democratic rules, the United States of America. These incidences have always blurred the electoral integrity and credibility of the elections, which attract both national and international condemnation. However, to register the factors influencing election credibility, Sule (2019) practically maintained that non-compliance with the regulations on campaign spending of candidates and political parties justified the fact that the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria were not credible, and to avoid the occurrence of such breaches of principles, candidates and political parties' spending on campaigns and elections must be according to electoral laws, and the authorities charged with the responsibility to ensure strict compliance should monitor all activities where anyone found guilty must be prosecuted according to the laws.

Furthermore, Raji & Angelina (2019) claimed that information, communication, and technologies (ICTs) can enhance the credibility of the electoral process in Nigeria and curtail electoral violence in many ways. It was added that the use of Direct Data Capturing Machines (DDCM), Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems (AFIS),

and Smart Card Readers (SCR) has been assumed to improve election credibility but has regrettably paved the way for other malpractices ranging from physical manipulation to digital and machine manoeuvres in Nigerian politics that usually affect election processes. Failure of smart card readers to verify the bio-data of voters serves as a means for politicians to call for manual verification of intended voters as against digital procedure; the traditional (manual) verification paves way for election malpractice that is difficult to authenticate through electorate who register at that polling unit, which is difficult to halt the possibility of double voting at the same or different voting point during the election. This could result in over voting, as the votes cast may outnumber the registered voters in that polling unit. In the 2019 general elections, this has generated what is popularly called an inconclusive election, in which elections are declared inconclusive because the number of cancelled votes may affect the clear margin or difference between two major candidates, which could easily change the election result to determine the winner. This is not a bad principle of election, but the way politicians engaged in causing violence through the use of political thugs so as to cancel votes in an attempt to make INEC declare the election inconclusive is a major concern.

Interestingly, it is clear to say that strict compliance with the stipulated rules and regulations guiding the conduct of the gamut of electoral processes. They absolutely enhance election credibility: neutrality, transparency and openness by the election management body, ensures truthfulness that leads to acceptability of the electoral processes and the outcome of elections. Non-partisan security personnel who are bestowed with the duty to ensure violent-free elections also serve as a scorecard to election credibility Trustworthy politicians, the electorate and political parties that are determined to protect the ideals of democracy and democratic principles all go a long

way to ensure electoral integrity; and perhaps, acceptance of defeat or election results by all contenders mellows down tensions and grievances, thus guaranteeing election credibility. It is against the afore-mentioned factors that this research work seeks to investigate the impacts of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria and the role of political thuggery in the high security challenges in the country. Thus, what is electoral violence?

2.2.3 Electoral Violence

As a matter of fact, there is a difference between violence, political violence, electoral violence, and political thuggery. These concepts seem to be interrelated, but they share slight differences with each other on a general note. Violence can be seen as an all-integral civil disorder, instability, and crisis generated from a number of social, political, economic, cultural, technological, administrative, and scientific misfortunes that affect individuals in their respective societies, mostly as a result of human relationships in day-to-day activities (Taylor, 2018; USAID, 2010). Thus, violence encompasses social violence, economic violence, cultural violence, and political violence, as the case may be. However, political violence is seen as any type of violence pertaining to politics and power relationships between two individuals or groups of people with a clear political goal to achieve within a political environment (USAID, 2010). This type of violence exists in the political environment as a result of election, transition, regime change, and revolution across human societies on the quest for rights, liberty, freedom, and justice, which thereafter ignite military coups, civil wars, communal clashes, secessions, rebellions, inter- and intra-faith-based violence, and genocide. These are the common examples of political violence in the contemporary world today.

Whereas electoral violence entails any form of violence emanating from the conduct of elections and electoral processes in an attempt to disrupt electoral activities, it usually comes as a result of rigging either at pre-election, during election, or post-election periods (USAID, 2010). In other words, this is a form of political violence mostly perpetuated by politicians in their desperation to win elections at all costs, regardless of the existing rules and regulations that safeguard the principles of free, fair, and credible elections. In his words, Clayton (2021) opined that election violence is a type of violence that is caused by an attempt to influence the outcome of elections at all processes, whereby politically motivated attacks are always carried out or instigated either by the government, civilians, political parties, candidates, or voters in their attempt to influence election victory in favour of a given political party or candidate against political opponents (Clayton, 2021).

Most electoral violence are clear forms of election malpractice, which are meant to inflict fear or injure an individual, group of individuals, or entire community in order to maximise chances of victory through an unstable political atmosphere on behalf of a candidate or political party (Taylor, 2018). Accordingly, many factors have significantly influenced a number of electoral violence that cannot be limited to ethnic bias, religious sentiment, group interest, regional emotion, party differences, corruption, frustration, desperation, and other imbalances related to socio-economic structure that are used to cause mayhem during elections in many societies. These factors necessitate attempts at malpractice that prompted rigging, abuse of electoral laws, and interference in electoral conduct, mostly by higher authorities, incumbent candidates, and political parties, to control the election management body and influence victory. For instance, post-election violence in the 2011 general election in Nigeria was the most common type of violence that took on a religious and sectional

dimension between a northern Muslim candidate under the Congress for Progressive Change and a southerner Christian candidate under the People Democratic Party (Muhammadu Buhari and Goodluck Jonathan, respectively), which caused the death of not less than 500 people and the destruction of a lot of properties (Sule, 2018).

Accordingly, electoral violence encapsulates all acts of political thuggery and the use of political thugs to cause violence during elections, which became a precondition to election victory at all costs, even if it was against the general interest of the community or the principles of a free and fair election that guaranteed the credibility of the election. On this note, Taylor (2018) and Höglund (2009) opined that political thuggery is thus an element of electoral manipulation that can be used to cause change in election results through violence, which is predicated on the motive, the time, the actors, and the target. Thus, the use of political thugs in the 2019 general elections paved the way for election rigging and other malpractices. It is important to state that all activities of political thugs during election cycles are aimed at causing violence and destruction. The summary of the meanings of violence, political violence, electoral violence, and political thuggery are therefore presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Violence and its Related Terms

Term	Meaning	Illustration
Violence	Violence can be seen as an all-integral civil disorder, instability, and crisis generated from a number of social, political, economic, cultural, technological, administrative, and scientific misfortunes affecting individuals in their respective societies, mostly as a result of human relationships in day-to-day activities (Taylor, 2018; USAID, 2010).	Violence includes social violence, economic violence, cultural violence, and political violence.
Political Violence	Political violence is seen as any type of violence pertaining to politics and power relationships between two individuals or groups of people with a clear political goal to achieve within a political environment (USAID, 2010). It exists in the political environment, covering issues like election, transition, regime change, and revolution across human societies in the quest for rights, liberty, freedom, and justice.	This entails military coups, civil wars, communal clashes, secessions, rebellions, revolutions, and inter- and intra-faith or ethnic-based violence.
Electoral Violence	Electoral violence entails any form of violence that relates to elections and electoral processes with the sole aim of disrupting electoral activities on which the violence erupts either pre-election, during the election, or post-election period (USAID, 2010). Therefore, all electoral violence is a clear part of election malpractices meant to inflict fear or injure an individual or group in order to maximise chances of winning by creating an unstable political atmosphere for someone or a group of other individuals (Taylor, 2018).	Electoral malpractices in the form of rigging, abuse of electoral laws, selfishness, or bias by candidates and political parties resulted in chaos either during the pre-election, during the election, or during the post-election periods.
Political Thuggery	Political thuggery is a subset of electoral violence specifically aimed at maximising chances to win elections by employing thugs to disrupt electoral processes against political opponents (Taylor, 2018). This act has led to the loss of lives and properties with political, social, and economic consequences due to civic unrest. It is the use of force to harm and frighten political opponents through the mobilisation of private guards in order to rig elections for the benefit of a given political party or candidate.	It implies intimidation, disenfranchisement, and attacks on electorates, candidates, or supporters of parties by inflicting injuries, snatching ballot boxes, disrupting the election process, creating chaos, and causing social disorder.

Source: Researcher's Design, 2024

Furthermore, Taylor (2018) noted that political thuggery and electoral violence share four common dimensions. This is because political thuggery is a subset of electoral violence in which political thugs carry out violent attacks and destructions during elections just to influence the results through rigging. The dimensions include severity of magnitude, timing, perpetrators, and victims. The severity of thuggery may be understood in relation to its degree of harshness, which is attributed to three levels that include lower levels, high levels, and greater events. The lower level is characterised by security personnel engaging people at rallies and campaigns, dispersal of party supporters on the streets, seizure of media outlets belonging to oppositions, promulgation of laws to disqualify candidates, and short-term arrest of oppositions. High-level violence is the second dimension of severe violence that is characterised by the assassination of candidates and supporters of political parties, the arrest of party members, harassment, and the use of militias to intimidate people. The third severity is called greater violence, which is characterised by repeated killings, vandalism at campaigns or rallies, physical assault, and widespread attacks that are masterminded by mostly incumbency with the help of political militias.

Timing is the second dimension of electoral violence that revolves around pre-election, election, and post-election cycles. Pre-election violence is linked to violent misfortunes prior to election day, usually aimed at influencing voters' behaviour with a view to discouraging them from taking part in an election or dissuading them to support a given candidate or political party. Violence during elections presupposes violence in election days, from the distribution of election materials to the collation of election results. This act is mostly aggravated by government officials in power, although even opposition candidates and political parties are involved to ensure electoral malpractices with the help of political thugs to vandalise and disrupt election

activities. Post-election violence is the electoral violence that occurs after the announcement of election results or where election results are perceived to be unfavourable to candidates or political parties, then supporters or political thugs switch to attacks and destructions targeting specific individuals, party members, security personnel, or candidates at different places as a reaction to unsatisfactory results that do not reflect their choices.

Perpetrators of electoral violence see it as significant that violence becomes an attractive political action for politicians to get things done. This occurs when politicians are no longer able to afford the usual vote-buying from electorates to stay in office. On a few occasions, the opposition use violence when they perceived that they could not compete with the incumbent government in the contest of the election, particularly on free and fair principles. In this vein, the incumbency factor always drives the ruling party or candidate to use violence, especially in areas where oppositions are strong, because money fails to buy votes or as a result of too much resistance to any attempt at election manipulation. This is the case in many developing countries where the political institutions are weak and the incumbency factor is very strong to subdue any amount of pressure from oppositions or even the international community, as seen in Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, and Nigeria during the 2007 general elections, where incumbency was used as an advantage.

Accordingly, the victims of electoral violence and political thuggery are basically candidates and political party supporters, but in a few instances, other innocent individuals are affected in these violent attacks and destructions. Political thugs eventually target candidates, supporters of political parties, election management staff, journalists, election observers, and electorates in many instances, resulting in the death

of people and the destruction of properties. Victims of political thuggery and electoral violence experience violent attacks in the form of intimidation, sustained different degrees of injuries, and trapped in political abduction, or even faced brutal killings that occur during the pre-election, election, and post-election periods. Therefore, a tabular summary is presented in Table 2.2 that explains dimensions of political thuggery and electoral violence, including severity, timing, perpetrators, and victims.

Table 2.2

Dimensions of Political Thuggery and Electoral Violence

Dimension	Explanation	Condition	Incidence
Severity	The severity of political thuggery and electoral violence may be understood in relation to its degree of harshness, which is attributed to lower-level, high-level, and greater events.	Lower, higher and greater levels.	Security disperses people at rallies and campaigns; seizure of media outlets; promulgation of laws to disqualify candidates; short-term arrest; assassination, harassment, and intimidation; and repeated killings, vandalism, physical assault, and widespread attacks.
Timing	Timing of political thuggery and electoral violence are periods when incidences of politically motivated attacks and destructions occur, including pre-election, during election, or post-election cycles.	Pre-election, during election and post-election periods.	Protest, demonstration, and violence against the conduct of the election process; attempts to manipulate materials and results on election days; and declaration of the winner where it does reflect popular votes by citizens.
Perpetrators	Perpetrators of political thuggery and electoral violence are primarily politicians who support political thugs to carry out violent attacks and destructions in	Recruitment and sponsorship of political thuggery and electoral violence are mostly carried out by politicians, elites, and	Candidates, supporters of political parties, and politicians resort to recruiting, sponsoring, and supporting political thugs with illicit drugs, little money, and promises in order to manipulate and cause violence that gives them the maximum

	relation to the timing of elections.	supporters of different political parties.	advantage of winning elections over their political opponents.
Victims	Victims of political thuggery are the prime target of political thugs, which include candidates, supporters of political parties, election management staff, journalists, election observers, and electorates; thus, victims are the main targets.	Civic unrest that result in the loss of lives and properties during and after elections in the polity.	Political thugs thus destroyed election materials, burn houses, destroy offices, injure or even kill individuals, set vehicles ablaze (belonging to candidates, the election management body, security personnel, political parties, and the general public), and engaged in physical confrontation with other groups of political thugs.

Source: Researcher's Design, 2024

2.3 World-wide Cases of Political Thuggery

In recent times, elections conducted in a few countries have been plagued by political thuggery and other election related violence, even in developed countries. Evidence emerged that incidents of politically motivated attacks, destructions, threats, intimidations, and killings increasingly surrounded not only the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019), but also the 2020 presidential election in the United States of America (NLC, 2021; Rachel, 2022; Clayton, 2021), the 2022 presidential election in Brazil (ACLED, 2022; Liam, 2022), the 2022 general election in Kenya (European Union, 2022), the 2019 general election in Malawi (Arne, 2019; European Union, 2019a), and the 2019 presidential election in Sri Lanka (CMEV, 2020).

In the United States of America, the 2020 presidential elections was marred by the activities of political thugs in the name of rioters alleged to be supporters of President Donald Trump who stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021, with the intention of distracting Congress members from endorsing the victory of Joe Biden as the elected President of the United States of America (Clayton, 2021). Thus, the incident of the attack at the Capitol in the United States of America surprised political and democratic analysts, who were forced to embark on surveys and research so as to evaluate the rise of political thuggery and election-related violence in the 21st century. For instance, violent threats toward members of Congress rose within five years, as reported by the Capitol Police. The report revealed that in the year 2016, there were 902 cases, 3,939 in 2017, 5,206 in 2018, 6,955 in 2019, 8,613 in 2020, and 9,600 recorded cases in 2021 (Rachel, 2022). The Department of Justice received reports for more than 850 violent threats against election staff in relation to the 2020 elections (Rachel, 2022).

In Brazil, the 2022 presidential election reveals that political thugs in support of the then incumbent President, Jair Bolsonaro, attacked and destroyed government properties immediately after announcing that Jair Bolsonaro lost his re-election bid to Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva as the elected President of Brazil by the authority concerned. The election has not less than 324 cases of electoral violence and 15 dead. All verified attacks were targeted towards electorates, candidates, media reporters, and workers at research institutes during the first and second run-off elections on October 2nd and 30th, 2022 (Liam, 2022; ACLED, 2022). For instance, on January 8, 2023, thugs believed to be supporters of Jair Bolsonaro, stormed and attacked Praca dos Tres Poderes, the Senate hall of the National Congress, and the Supreme Federal Court palace to overthrow the Federal Government. They blocked major roads and highways across the country (ACLED, 2022). It was also reported that 40% of the cases of

violent attacks were perpetrated by the supporters of President Jair Bolsonaro; 7% of attacks were instigated by the supporters of Lula de Silva; and 53% of attacks were unidentified (Liam, 2022).

In Sri Lanka, political militias are also more ethnic and religious groups, particularly with the activities of Tamil Tigers and Buddhist Sinhalese (Taylor, 2018). These groups created violence, which degenerated into a civil war that lasted for twenty-five (25) years, consumed the lives of about eighty thousand (80,000) people, and destroyed huge properties. The 2020 general election in Sri Lanka also left a polarised ethnic division between Tamil Tigers and Buddhist Sinhalese followers (Aljazeera, 2019). The long-standing religious division frequently manifested in every election between Muslim and non-Muslim groups, which exacerbated election-related violence that most of the time influenced voters' choices and political party memberships (CMEV, 2020). The political institutions were controlled and influenced by the incumbent leaders, who supported Gotabaya Rajapaksa of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) in an effort to control and retain political power at the detriment of the opposition, Sajith Premadasa of the National Democratic Front, NDF, (CMEV, 2020). Thus, it was further reported that there were 1,088 confirmed cases of politically related violence, which included major and minor incidences, during the 2019 general elections besides the killing of not less than 258 people on April 21, 2019 due to religious sentiment between Muslims and the non-Muslim population (CMEV, 2020).

In Malawi, the history of electoral violence is linked to the activities of political militias, particularly the recruitment of paramilitary armed groups who are political vanguards with the mandate to protect the interests of their respective patrons and political parties. The two dominant political militias created were the Malawi Young

Pioneers, who are supported by the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), and the Malawi Young Democrats, who are affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF). These groups are institutionalized by their supporting political parties, thereby using violent attacks and intimidation on each other to maximize chances of winning elections (Taylor, 2018). However, the May 2019 general election characterised by electoral crises resulting from manipulation, rigging, violence, and other irregularities which led judges to nullify the presidential election and directed a new election within 150 days (European Union, 2019a; Financial Times, 2020). The election was contested after declaring Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) the winner, but it was challenged by Lazarus Chakwera of the opposition party, Malawi Congress Party (MCP). Therefore, electoral violence resulted to more than 250 incidence of attacks and threats, with not less than 21 dead across the 2019 election cycles in Malawi. (HRW, 2020; European Union, 2019a).

Equally in Kenya, candidates and political parties that are major players in political activities support ethnic militias based on ethnicity and community bias. For example, Jomo Kenyatta, Mwai Kibaki, and Uhuru Kenyatta represent the Kikuyu tribe; Oginga Odinga and Raila Odinga represent the Luo tribe; and Daniel Arap Moi and William Ruto represent the Kalenjin tribe. These tribes have militias affiliated to them in their quest for political power in Kenya (Taylor, 2018). He noted that the history of electoral violence with political militias hinged on the recruitment of paramilitary armed groups who are political vanguards to protect the interests of political patrons and parties in Malawi. Two dominant groups of political militias were created and institutionalised into politics and electoral processes, which included the Malawi Young Pioneers, supported by the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), and the Young Democrats, affiliated with the United Democratic Front (UDF). These groups were institutionalised by

political parties, and they used violent attacks and intimidation on each other who attacked and suppress oppositions so as to maximise their chances of winning elections.

Political party candidates in Kenya who are the major players in politics and electoral processes supported ethnic militias that also affected political parties' affiliation based on ethnicity. Jomo Kenyatta, Mwai Kibaki, and Uhuru Kenyatta represented the Kikuyu tribe; Oginga Odinga and Raila Odinga represented the Luo tribe; and Daniel Arap Moi and William Ruto represented the Kalenjin tribe. These tribes also have militias affiliated to them based on their ethnic formation in an attempt to control political power in the country (Taylor, 2018). Perhaps ethnic militias have been rooted in Kenyan politics, thereby reflecting in the membership of political parties, patterns of elections, formation of government, and representation at various levels of governance in the country. A few groups of political thugs that participated in Kenyan politics and electoral processes included Mombasa Republic Council, 'Confirm' in Nakuru and 'Nyuki', 'Miticharaka' in Tana River, and 'Bogi' Mawe in Kitale (ACLED, 2022a).

Although the August 2022 general elections in Kenya took place in relative peace but recorded high political attacks when compared to the previous elections (European Union, 2022). However, ACLED (2022a) reported that politically motivated violence increased during election periods, which led to contentious and peaceful demonstrations. There were 1,060 politically disorderly events in the course of the 2022 general elections in Kenya. It was added that about 400 violent incidences and mob actions were recorded, the largest proportion since the 1997 crisis. Such violence resulted from clashes between the armed group of Al-Shabaab and security forces, in

addition to routine attacks by resurgent armed ethnic groups that caused the death of not less than 72 people during the election cycles (ACLED, 2022a).

While Mexico has experienced severe political thuggery linked to organized crime. Freedom House (2019) observed systematic intimidation and assassinations of candidates, while Esponda and Poulsen (2019) documented how violence targeted at politicians and campaign staff hampered competition. More than 145 politicians were killed during the 2018 cycle, raising serious doubts about the fairness of elections. In Bangladesh however, the 2018 elections were characterized by attacks on opposition candidates, mass arrests, and voter intimidation. Amnesty International (2018) reported a violent crackdown on opposition campaigns, creating a climate of fear that suppressed participation and led to widespread criticism of the election's credibility. Whereas Philippines is notorious for election-related violence from 2000s to 2025, often involving private armed groups hired by politicians. To mitigate this, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) imposed nationwide gun bans and designates "election hotspots" for heightened security. However, political thuggery persists, undermining public trust in democratic outcomes (Atienza, 2020).

Meanwhile Zimbabwe's 2008 elections were marred by state-sponsored political thuggery, with militias and security forces engaging in intimidation, torture, and killings of opposition supporters. This violence forced a power-sharing arrangement after widespread condemnation that demonstrated how coercive tactics collapsed electoral credibility (Bratton & Masunungure, 2011). It was reported in Pakistan (2013 to 2018 elections) that Pakistan's elections have often been disrupted by militant and politically motivated violence. The Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (2018) experienced bombings, assassinations, and intimidation of

candidates, particularly in conflict-prone regions. These incidents limited voter participation and cast doubt on the legitimacy of the polls. Equally in the 2018 elections of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the elections were condemned due to widespread intimidation, restrictions on observers, and violent suppression of dissent. According to The Carter Centre (2019), the elections did not reflect the genuine will of the people, as political violence and coercion disrupted the processes.

2.4 Political Thuggery

Political thuggery stems from the word ‘thug’. Thuggery is a violent or criminal act associated with the activities of thugs or militias who usually possess dangerous weapons to attack and destroy election-related areas in order to achieve a desired goal in a society. In this view, political thuggery is seen as a form of electoral violence specifically aimed at maximising chances to win elections by employing political thugs to disrupt electoral processes against political opponents (Taylor, 2018). Simply put, political thuggery is a subset of electoral violence that is centred on election wrongdoing, offences, and malpractices aimed at aiding rigging through deadly attacks and destructions, violations of electoral laws, vote-buying and other malpractices.

It is also an act of electoral violence in which politicians usually employ political thugs to disrupt electoral processes just to influence rigging with the use of violence in order to favour a candidate or political party of their interest. The act has led to the loss of lives and properties with political, social, and economic consequences in many democratic countries today. It is basically a violent act initiated by politicians and the political elite with the sole purpose of causing harm or disrupting election processes so as to gain political advantage over and above political opponents during and after elections.

Political thuggery has become a widely spread political virus in elections and democratic ideals, which raises questions and concerns about electoral processes and election credibility. Abubakar et al. (2016), Ja'e & Lukman (2021), and Green (2005) argued that political thuggery is an act of violence in which political thugs are employed to disrupt electoral processes in the form of malpractices to favour a candidate or political party of their interest. The act has led to the loss of lives and properties with political, social, and economic consequences (Rasak, 2017; Abubakar et al., 2018). The general argument of these scholars is that political thuggery is basically a violent act initiated by politicians and the political elite with the sole purpose of causing harm or disrupting election processes so as to gain political advantage over and above others.

Accordingly, Paul (2013) believed that political thugs are individuals who are involved in politics and electoral processes as vanguards or personal security for politicians and who were mostly trained to help in manipulating elections so as to benefit their sponsors against other candidates. It is also important to understand that these political thugs are recruited, mobilised, and financed by the political class of the elite belonging to various political parties. The political thugs were mostly funded with little money and other petty materials or promises in addition to illicit drugs so as to cause confusion, disrupt elections, and harm political opponents, the electorate, or party supporters in order to maximise the chances of their sponsors (HRW, 2019).

The activities of political thugs include violent attacks and destructions in the form of intimidation, molestation, abduction, and killings of electorates, candidates or supporters of political parties, election staff, observers, and media reporters. The political thugs also destroy, snatch, and vandalise election materials and equipment,

which include ballot papers, ballot boxes, machines, offices, and vehicles, in addition to personal properties of candidates and supporters of different political parties at different places. This operation creates chaos, social disorder, hostility, frustration, and instability that result in voters' disenfranchisement, segregation, and abuse of fundamental human rights (Kabiru et al., 2015; Alphonsus, 2015). Political thugs composed of youth who move in groups of common age seen on the streets with light weapons to threaten people during elections or in the course of daily economic and other socio-cultural activities (Ja'e & Lukman, 2021; Paul, 2013).

Although political thugs are sometimes known to security personnel, little or no effort is made to arrest them permanently. This explains the high increase in criminality and insecurity during elections. Attacking political opponents is always the aim of political thuggery, and this explains why most politically motivated attacks and killings occur during election cycles, so as to instill fear in the political opponents and the electorate (Adeleke, 2016). In most cases, opposition political parties are defeated because the ruling party uses state resources and institutional authorities to influence, subdue, and oppress political opponents, especially in developing countries. When this occurs, violence escalates, and the person in power (a political leader) uses security forces to his advantage, even if it is against the general interest of society (Taylor, 2018). It is for this reason that political crises and violence emanate and sometimes degenerate into civil war, regime change, and revolution.

In the light of the vicious nature of political thuggery, Michael (2011) concluded that political thuggery is the use of force to harm and frighten political opponents through the mobilisation of private guards in order to rig elections for the benefit of a given political party or candidate. In this course, Nicholas & Brain (2018) further illustrated

that the aeroplane of the opposition leader was not allowed to land in Madagascar, whereas the leader in power forced election staff to change election results to favour the ruling candidate in Equatorial Guinea. In a similar postulation, Rasak (2017) understood political thuggery from a direction that reflect any act of violence to gain undue political benefit over and above others so as to maximise the chances of acquiring political power through harassment of opponents. He added that this phenomenon posed a threat to the credibility of elections (Rasak, 2017).

During elections, political elites and politicians recruit youth as political vanguards with the sole purpose of rigging elections. This atrocity dominates the scene of elections across the south-western part of Nigeria, where political thugs are used to rig elections on behalf of their masters. In many polling units and collation centres, political thugs overwhelmed security agents, and the political thugs compelled the electorates to vote for their candidates. They issue dead threats when voters did not vote in line with their directives as a result, voters choose to stay away from voting completely; security personnel are unable to secure lives and properties (Rasak, 2017).

In a further development, Shankyula (2019) opined that political thuggery is an act of intimidation, brutality, vanguard and gangsterism which is planned to cause damage on the electoral processes in order to gain political benefit against other political opponents during and after elections. The act is organized to have control of political positions by maximizing chances of winning elections. At this point, political thugs use dangerous weapons to disrupt election procedures through intimidation of voters, destruction of election materials and attack of the electorate or candidates to frustrate, injure or even kill. He therefore concludes that political thuggery deters women from political participation which creates a gap between men and women disparity in elected

political positions (Shankyula, 2019). In most African countries, political thugs gradually metamorphosed to criminals, gangsters and racketeers engaged in other deadly and violent activities after elections (Sule et al., 2020a; Idris et al., 2023). Most armed robbers, kidnappers, bandits, and others got their cradle from political thuggery, and on a larger scale, they become organised criminals, insurgents, and terrorists.

In view of this, Paul (2013) and Iyekekpolo (2018) linked the origin of *Boko-Haram* terrorism to the activities of political thugs in Borno State of Nigeria. Also, militancy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and the attempt of secessionists by the indigenous People of Biafra were linked to activities of political thugs who enjoyed the supports of politicians and elites in the Southern part of the country (Inyang, 2018; Moliki, 2021). Equally, bandits and kidnappers in Northern Nigeria were linked to the resurgent of criminal groups through political thuggery in Northern Nigeria (Sule et al., 2020a; Nowak & Gsell, 2018). Therefore, political thuggery is a small circle of bigger criminal groups that started from small organised groups with light weapons to highly sophisticated and dangerous weapons of destruction and attacks in most societies, affecting not only local communities but also expanding to larger cities and either within national or international borders, across the world.

Furthermore, manipulation of elections is a well-known phenomenon in contemporary democratic countries today. Pippa et al. (2015) argued that politicians usually calculate whether creating any form of violence will make them win or lose elections in their attempt to maintain or control political power and positions. The 2020 general elections in the United States of America essentially revealed how political thugs were embedded into elections and used as agents of political manipulation and destruction to cause violence and threats just to intimidate, harass, and terrorise political

opponents. Political thugs hide under what was called rioters who penetrated the Capitol in order to disrupt legislative sitting, which was perceived as anti-Republican by the incumbent President, Donald Trump. The thugs were supporters of the Republican Party in defence of Donald Trump's re-election bid for his second tenure as President of the United States and faced deep challenges from opposition candidate Joe Biden of the Democrats. Taylor (2018) noted that in democratic countries of Africa and Asia, the use of violence and the threat of violence to get access to political power through political thugs and militias is a normal political business.

Political thuggery is therefore seen as an element or tool of electoral manipulation that can be used to cause a change in the election result, which is predicated on four basic elements: motive, time, actors, and target (Taylor, 2018; Höglund, 2009). The motive of political thuggery is very clear and specific, which is to maximise the chances of winning an election with all sense of malpractices like the use of threats (to intimidate, terrorise, injure, harm, or kill opponents or supporters). The timing of political thuggery is also important in this regard because not all violence is political thuggery, but all political thuggery is electoral violence. It is aimed at winning elections, which could revolve around all times of the election, including pre-election, during the election, and post-election periods. This explained the pervasive nature of political thuggery because it cut across all cycles and places of elections with a high tense of disorder, especially at the time of the official commencement of the election to the final announcement of the results.

Actors of political thuggery are fundamentally politicians, elites, and political thugs. Most political thugs are youth who were employed to serve as political vanguards (Paul, 2013). Politicians primarily employed the services of political thugs, who are

usually jobless, to cause damage to election processes in order to maximise the tendencies of winning elections for their clients in democratic societies (Moliki, 2021). It is obvious that the targets of political thugs are mainly candidates, supporters of political parties, election management staff, journalists, election observers, and electorates. These groups of individuals constituted the victims of political thuggery during pre-election, during election, and post-election cycles. The magnitude of such incidents resulted in the destruction of properties like campaign offices, offices of election management bodies, houses of party candidates and supporters, electoral equipment, vehicles, and other utilities, as well as killings, intimidation, terrorization, and disenfranchisement of voters, candidates, and supporters of political parties, election management staff, journalists, observers, and even security personnel at different times and spaces.

Consequently, it is correct to say that desperate political elites and politicians introduced all sorts of vices into politics and elections just to maximise victory over other opponents (May 2016). On that angle, elections were characterised by killings, kidnappings, murder, assassinations, stealing of election materials, distortion of election procedures, mutilation of election results, and many other tactical strategies through the mobilisation of political thugs, who are youth induced with illicit drugs, little money, or petty gifts and initiations to cultist beliefs. Political elite called godfathers most often promised political thugs jobs or juicy gifts after winning elections, but when elected into their various offices, the promises were hardly fulfilled. Therefore, political thugs are basically individuals who are involved in politics as vanguards or for personal security but thereafter turn out to be agents of election rigging and destruction, mostly trained to help in manipulating election

processes so as to influence or change results through violence and favour a given candidate against other candidates.

2.4.1 Causes of Political Thuggery

In a study on the implications of political thuggery on the socio-economic and political development of Borno State, Paul (2013) revealed that abject poverty, an increase in unemployment, an increase in illiteracy level, an increase in population and limited income for families, improper upbringing, poor living conditions, and a lack of other basic needs in life were responsible for political thuggery in Borno State. He added that political elites manipulated the conditions of vulnerable youth, who were recruited as political thugs, with the aim of rigging elections and causing confusion in the state. The effects of these activities on the economic development of Borno State are not limited to causing migration from urban to rural areas but also criminality. Families lost their breadwinners; while houses, shops, and other properties worth millions of naira were destroyed.

This demonstrated that political thuggery is due to the poor economic and lack of social basic needs of the youth, not forgetting the fact that some of them were given appointments by the political office holders to serve as their personal assistants and other elective offices, like councillors in various wards, yet they joined political thugs in electoral destruction afterward. In spite of the change in their income as political appointees, they still continue to serve as bigger political thugs for the interest of their 'political fathers'.

In a similar finding, Michael (2011) believed that the high level of poverty, increasing youth unemployment, and unprofessional security agents were the major factors

driving the incessant political thuggery in Nigeria. He further maintained that since elective positions attract high financial gains, most, if not all, political elites and politicians mobilised political thugs to win elections at every cost. He therefore suggested that employment opportunities be created to reduce poverty and idleness among the youth; professional training and capacity building be ensured for security operatives; mass education should target the youth to limit the evils of political thuggery; and the government should ensure even distribution of resources. To this view, one can relate poverty and unemployment as part of the causes of political thuggery, but this failed to explain why, even with appointments and employments, some of the youth joined political thuggery during elections.

It is also significant to note that the unprofessional behaviour of security agents contributed immensely to the growth and development of political thuggery in Nigerian politics. It is, of course, a valid statement, as the Police and Civil Defence Corps usually complain about political interference by politicians and other public office holders, which they believe affects their efforts in arresting and prosecuting criminals and political thugs. Even when they arrest political thugs, an order from the governor or any authority may direct the release of such criminals. Political thugs are fully mobilised and protected by their political masters in government.

For this reason, May (2016) believed that political patronage which is called clientelism or god-fatherism in Nigerian politics has encouraged politicians to engage and mobilize political thugs during elections. He added that subordinates of leaders in power like Commissioners, Special Advisers, Special Assistants, Personal Assistants and other designated personalities are fully involved in electoral malpractice so as to help their political master to retain or control political power. He also narrated that the

Oba of Lagos was worried and frustrated when some people voted for PDP; and the Oba told the Igbo community living in Lagos to vote for the APC governorship candidate or to perish in the Lagoon, during the 2015 general elections. Based on this argument, one can substantiate the postulations of the frustration aggression theory that frustration lead to aggression in so many conditions, regardless of class, religion or ethnic background in the society (Battigalli et al., 2019; Breuer & Elson, 2017). Politicians, political elites, and political thugs sometimes become frustrated and aggressive towards political opponents (Olaoluwa, 2018; Olu-Adeyemi, 2017). Sometimes, political elites and other groups join together based on a common interest to control or maintain political power but are still divided in determining who gets what, when, and how after winning an election. They command respect, to which every politician has to pay loyalty.

On a general note as culled from previous studies, the causes of political thuggery are summarised and explained as follows (Paul, 2013; May, 2016; Michael, 2011; Abubakar et al., 2018):

- a) *Poor Governance and Mismanagement*: It is believed that poor governance has influenced political thuggery in Nigeria. Leaders mostly have inadequate knowledge of addressing the yearnings of the poor majority; instead, political office holders usually focus attention on the policies and programmes that suit them, not emanating from the masses to address the menace, as the case may be. In most democratic states, citizens are expected to channel their demands to leaders in appropriate ways of communication, and the leaders listen and attend to such demands, but not always to the wishes of many leaders. Leaders in developing states determine what to do for the communities, even if it is

against the general needs and demands. This situation leads to the problem of the misplacement of priority for policy formation and implementation in government. As such, many policies and projects lacked continuity when encountering transitional changes in governance from different administrators. Many capital projects are abandoned, cancelled, or diverted for the simple reason that the leader in power is not the one who initiated the project, or the project is not located in the location of interest of the leader, even if it is in an appropriate location.

- b) *Poverty and Unemployment*: Poverty is the basic characteristic of developing societies. Many people in African, Asian, and Latin American countries are poor and unemployed. Families struggle to have what to eat and always faced with crises of insufficient food, an inadequate balanced diet, with malnutrition as the major health challenges for most children, in addition to inadequate clean water for survival. The unemployment rate has affected developing societies and makes a segment of their populations to be vulnerable to political manipulation and used as agents of violence because sometimes ‘a hungry man is an angry person’. Therefore, some political thugs are unemployed and poor with limited or no income, which makes them vulnerable to being used as political thugs by politicians and political elites in order to incite violence during and after elections.
- c) *Ignorance and Illiteracy*: Lack of knowledge of social and political happenings is another problem for most individuals in developing countries. People do not understand their political administration, economic situation, or cultural orientation. It is due to this fact that people become reluctant to know what the government is unable or unwilling to supply. People are unable to understand

why politicians tend to use the youth as political thugs. Lack of such knowledge is a reason why political thuggery has continuously reoccurred during and after elections. Furthermore, the illiteracy level in such societies is high, the population of out-of-school children continues to rise. Poor educational backgrounds and a lack of skills and technical know-how are also limited. In short, political thuggery exists because people are also ignorant of the consequences of electoral violence, have improper knowledge of the severe penalty for the culprits of political thuggery, and have inadequate knowledge of the need to nurture democracy and its sustainability against all evils during elections. Therefore, political thugs emerge because of the ignorance and illiteracy among youth in relation to the consequences of political thuggery towards social, political, and economic realities in their societies that forced them into such atrocities, not well intended but forced by conditions that surrounded their survival as manipulated by politicians to maintain the status quo.

- d) *Corruption*: Corruption is a common vice in most developing countries. The menace affects all spheres of life and stagnated social, political, and economic growth and development. Corrupt politicians have found ways to breed young people as political thugs during and after elections. Where political thuggery exists, it is corruption that holds its base, as state resources are used to fund and sponsor political thugs. These youth are trained to harass, intimidate, injure, or even kill political opponents in order to maximise their chances of winning elections over and above other candidates. This violent group of youth always launched attacks and destructions with deadly weapons, including knives, cutlasses, sticks, daggers, blades, and sometimes explosive devices. In

most cases, the security operatives are unable to arrest them, or even after their arrest, corrupt politicians who sponsored them gave orders for their release without trial or punishment.

e) *Weak Political Institutions:* In strong democracies where institutions and government machinery are effective, no single individual will commit a crime and go scot-free without punishment. But in weak political institutions, people in power are much stronger than the political institutions. Sometimes, leaders use the state treasury, manipulated security operatives, and other structures as their personal belongings. Thus, democracy in such states is just a mere system of governance where leaders authoritatively run and control government as a family and friends affair. In some of these societies, leadership is a lifelong authority, and election is just a symbol of pretence. In other situations, leaders dictated to the election management body what to do, how to do it, and when to do it at the expense of the majority. Leaders stayed longer in office by changing election rules and regulations, amending the constitution, and making other structural adjustments to retain their position. Political thugs become errand boys who are described as loyalists to leaders and enjoy special cover from their masters, but gradually become personal brigades and have access to leaders more than security officials.

f) *Poor Political Behaviour and Culture:* This is the way in which citizens adopt and internalise democratic principles and ideal ways of governance for sustainability through observing norms, values, beliefs, tenets, and other structural formations within a given polity. This in one way or another influence political behaviour of the entire population towards peace, sustainability, growth, and development through elections, deliberations,

public inclusion in decision-making, transparency in bureaucracy, and legal considerations. Regrettably, the absence of these stated goals that have become dominant in Nigerian politics have pushed jobless youths into a myriad of social vices that have invariably caused electoral imperfection during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Accordingly, politicians and ruthless political elites misused these teaming youth to serve as political thugs during elections without due consideration to peaceful coexistence, election credibility, and democratic sustainability in the country. Thus, an average Nigerian thinks that political thuggery is the basic character of elections and politics in Nigeria. For example, the election crises in the First, Second, and Third Republics were part of the fundamental reasons for the collapse of civil rule, which forced the military to successfully organise six (6) coups in Nigeria. It is a similar trend that has recurrently manifested in this Fourth Republic, which began in 1999, whereby almost all the 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 general elections have been derailed by political thuggery and electoral violence in Nigeria.

It is therefore necessary to state that the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, which were aimed at peaceful transfer of power, were associated with a number of irregularities, including political thuggery and other malpractices that compromised the election credibility (Sule, 2018; Salihu & Yakubu, 2021; Olu, 2020; Ojukwu et al., 2019; & Sule et al., 2020). Such malpractices were not limited to political thuggery alone; overspending of funds, vote buying, late distribution of electoral materials, insecurity, lack of transparency, and other irregularities basically characterised the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Hence, it is imperative to understand the recruitment and sponsorship patterns of political thugs during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

2.4.2 Recruitment and Sponsorship of Political Thugs

It is evident that political thuggery is a major feature of Nigerian politics. This manifested in the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, where the election was characterised by violence arising from deadly attacks and destructions from the activities of political thugs who enjoyed the support of politicians (Obiam, 2021; Moliki, 2021; Situation Room, 2019). It is fundamental, however, to understand who is behind the recruitment and sponsorship of political thugs during elections in Nigeria. Studies by Ahmad (2019), Abubakar et al. (2018), and Paul (2013) revealed that political thugs were basically recruited and involved in political processes by politicians and political elites with the sole aim of maximising political chances of retaining or controlling political power in the country. On several occasions, politicians pointed fingers by accusing each other of the recruitment of political thugs. The politicians belonged to all political parties and traded political thugs.

The popularity of a candidate or political party basically revolved around the ability to harness a huge crowd of supporters and political thugs, which also depended on the amount of money raised in support of these people during campaigns and the days of the election rather than competency. Politicians must stoke money in excess to fund political activities, which becomes the dominant nature of political processes during elections, which will allow a candidate to dictate to political thugs and have control of the electoral processes (Paul, 2013). Money has turned election into a ‘do or die battle’ regardless of competency, integrity, or quality of a candidate and merit. People without money cannot contest for elective positions except if a political elite brought him and sponsors the candidature with their money. Where money failed to influence the chances of winning elections, politicians and political elites, however, resort to the use of political thugs to frighten, terrorise, intimidate, harass, or threaten citizens in order

to inflict high degrees of injuries, killings, and abductions in addition to the destruction of properties during and after elections (Abubakar et al., 2018; Ahmad, 2019).

Generally, the recruitment of political thugs is done by politicians to maximise their chances of winning elections in Nigeria (Obiam, 2021; Paul, 2013). The Governor of Kogi State, Yahaya Bello (2020), argued that politicians recruited political thugs to win elections, and for any aspirant to win an election, he must support and recruit thugs, touts, militias, or criminals so as to use them for intimidation and to frighten people during the election. Politicians deploy thugs to the areas where they felt it was their 'danger or red zones'. Places considered as potential threat zones, are under the control of opponents or have a strong hold or areas supporting their political opponents. It can either belong to the ruling or opposition parties. In such areas, politicians try to cause crises to enhance rigging and manipulation of results in the form of barring the opposition supporters from voting, to reduce the votes cast, or inflate votes to cause over-voting so that the centre is cancelled. What politicians also desire is a 'zero sum game' practice where the winner wins all and the loser loses all.

Furthermore, politicians are the main sponsors of political thugs. These people sponsore political thugs with little money to cause obstruction during elections in order to help their masters to get political power (Moliki, 2021). Politicians sometimes make promises to youths but which they usually fail to fulfill, as provision of appointments, employment and award of contract; while others are induced with materials such as soaps, noodles, detergents, textiles, sugar, sewing machines and so on (May, 2011). In addition, politicians also induced political thugs with illicit and hard drugs for them to carry out their operation smoothly without respect to humanity and social coexistence which included alcohol, marijuana and tramadol (Aristotle et al., 2021). It was further

observed that security agents sometimes benefit from the activities of political thugs, particularly when they arrest the political thugs, but their families and friends would seek for their release and money is offered in the name of bail, or politicians may illegally give money to unpatriotic security personnel so as to release the culprits (Abubakar et al., 2016).

2.4.3 Youths and Political Thuggery

Youths are the most important group or segment of the human population in every society. Youths are comprised of able-bodied and capable individuals who are usually strong and fit. This group consists of both genders (male and female). The group is usually believed to be the most productive class because of their contribution to the social, economic, and political base in relation to other classes like the elderly and children (Siro, 2014). Since time immemorial, this class of people has been mobilised and trained to serve in different sectors of society. Youths are the most valuable human population category in every society and contribute to development. This group is believed to be the engine of social change and growth prospects in the history of human endeavours, which enhances socio-economic development and political stability. It is added that the group comprised young people aged between 12 and 30, regardless of gender, class, education, ethnic background, and religion, that have existed in all societies at all times to the present-day socio-political order (Siro, 2014).

In the olden days, youths engaged in not only the production of food crops for family sustenance but also heavily determined the production of cash crops for emerging industries and through large-scale industries that persistently produced mass commodities to make money. Abdulkadir and James (2018) noted the roles of youths on a social and political security scale, stating that youths are the vanguard of social

protection that provides security to their respective societies, even in both olden and modern days. Large numbers of the armed forces are mainly youthful individuals, able-bodied men, physically strong, and mentally stable, who have the ability to defend their society from internal threats confronting them or have the ability to strike any external aggression during war and difficult periods, including natural disasters and calamities. Wars of every kind were fought by youths who are enthusiastic to depend on their countries because of patriotism, national consciousness, and the protection of territorial integrity for self-defence or national interest.

In modern times, the youth are believed to protect democracy and its sustainability. In democratic societies, leadership is left in the hands of people with popularity and charisma, with ideas that can accommodate and cement divergent interests so as to provide a balance of social justice in the form of the distribution of the state's resources (Bashir et al., 2017). Hence, youths are the category of the human population that dominates most sectors; even in African societies, their population supersedes others. In most democracies, leaders are elected based on the popular votes of the majority. This segment of the population dominates most democratic activities, especially election processes, where youth participate in campaign activities, rallies, public awareness, election management and security of elections, voting process, collation of results, and announcement of the result or declaration of the winner.

During election processes, youths become more active, especially in developing societies where political elites try to misuse and employ their services to ensure victory. The services that youth render to politicians and political elites during elections are not limited to campaign and mobilization, to join political parties and activities, raising public awareness on who to vote for and how to vote during the

election, but also providing security services to political parties' and candidates as agents or in the name of providing security and vanguards. In this regard, some youths become mere servants to non-foresight politicians and elites who initiate and mobilise them into political activities as political thugs without a clear future (Kinge, 2015). This has become a major problem in African politics and many democratic societies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The involvement of youths in this situation has taken on different names depending on the peculiarities or political culture of a given society. However, the group possesses so many characteristics in common, which has affected democratic processes and their sustainability.

In a practical demonstration, the involvement of youth in Nigerian politics and election processes in particular has turned out to be more violent when politicians and elites recruited them to serve as political thugs to help in maximising their chances of winning elections against opponents or attaining popular majority in society, a trend that has developed and kept reoccurring since the reintroduction of democratic governance in 1999 in Nigeria. Accordingly, political thugs are named differently in many states of the country. For instance, political thugs are named *Kalare* or *Yan Kalare* in Gombe State, *Yan Daba* in Kano State, *Yan Sara Suka* in Bauchi State, *Yan Shunko* or *Daukan Amarya* in Adamawa State, *Area Boys* in Lagos State, *Ecomog* in Borno State, *Egbesu* in Bayelsa State, *Bakassi* in Abia State, and so on and so forth. The common characteristics of this group are harassment, intimidation, and terrorising of individuals through politically instigated attacks and destructions that target individuals and the political arena to inflict injury or even kill political opponents (Abubakar et al., 2018).

In addition, political thugs have common characteristics in their operations all over the country. This group of young people mostly moved in groups with deadly weapons such as daggers, knives, cutlasses, sticks, and axes hidden in their clothes or even in the open to harass, intimidate, or terrorise individuals with the aim of inflicting fear, injury, or even killing their target. Political thugs are mostly drug-aided people who have benumbed their minds so that they can carry out their attacks without remorse. It is believed that these young men are recruited and funded by some politicians in their attempt to maintain or control political power during elections. The purpose is to maximise their chances of winning elections against political opponents, even at the expense of the popular will of the general society. The menace continues even after elections because politicians sometimes failed to fulfil promises made to the youths after being elected into various offices, and as such, these young men resort to violent attitudes in order to survive such harsh situations and thereafter transform into big criminalities bringing about increased social and political insecurity in Nigeria (Rosenje et al., 2020).

Youths are supposed to be the custodians of democracy in order to safeguard democratic values and principles, yet some youths in Nigeria have become much more sceptical about participating in election processes because of tendencies to be hijacked or be manipulated by the politicians and be recruited into political thuggery. Yet, sustainable democracy is not a mere creation of democratic institutions, structures, and procedures but rather how individuals of a given polity have become much enthused to protect, propel, and embed democratic values into the minds of citizens, which more often than not ensures a clear political culture and behaviour towards democracy and its sustainability. Apart from political thuggery, it is pertinent to argue in recent times that democratic sustainability is affected by numerous challenges that pose a danger to

social, economic, political, and cultural prosperity in the development of Nigeria (Abubakar et al., 2018). With many socio-economic challenges such as inflation, unemployment, human rights abuses, ethnic and religious crises, global health crises, and other pandemics like COVID-19. Terrorism and other forms of insecurity like insurgency by Boko Haram, banditry, kidnapping, farmer-herder conflicts, and the threat of secession by IPOB have continued to threaten democratic sustainability in Nigeria. However, these and many other threats can be subdued when youths are determined to engage the government and other stakeholders in protecting democracy and ensuring credible elections in Nigeria. Hence, Table 2.3 presents the differences between political thugs or militias and other related terms that included gangsters, mafias, armed robbers, criminals, insurgents, and terrorists.

Table 2.3
Differences between Political Thugs and Related Criminal Groups

Term	Meaning	Characteristics	Objectives
Political Thugs (militias)	These are groups of individuals, mostly youths (with light weapons), who are used as political guards but transformed into agents of electoral rigging and manipulation during elections. They are employed by politicians to manipulate elections to cause violence and threats to political opponents or electorates in their attempt to create greater chances for election victory for their masters. This group is also called the militia, especially when it receives	These groups of individuals mostly moved in groups with deadly weapons to threaten, victimise, intimidate, deter, injure, abduct, or kill political opponents. They also attacked electorates, candidates, observers, journalists, security officials, and election staff. They patrol streets, polling units, and collation centres. Examples of thugs or militias varied from one socio-political environment to another, with mostly local names.	The aim of their operation is to create political unrest and cause violence through attacks and destructions, which paved the way for electoral manipulation and rigging that guarantees chances of victory against opponents on behalf of the political master.

	government recognition.		
Gangsters	These are racketeers or mobsters groups of individuals who are members of professional criminal organisations that attacked individuals on the streets or any place of business to confiscate valuables.	It is a complex organisation of criminal groups with structures and sources of funding for all members of the group. These included Somali pirates in Somalia, <i>Issakaba</i> and Area-boys groups in Nigeria, <i>downtown</i> gangs in the US, the <i>Whitney</i> Gang in Anfield, Liverpool, and <i>Yakuza</i> in Japan, etc.	These groups are not based on commercial purposes, like mafias, but rather on ideological genesis.
Mafias	These are highly organised groups of professional criminals with complex organisational structures and defined goals of business orientation. This economic group exists in most societies with clear leadership to manipulate all other sub-structures like politics, religion, and culture in order to give them economic advantages.	These groups were involved in complex businesses mostly prohibited by states that included illicit drugs, gambling, arm deals, loan sharking, prostitution, and human trafficking. Examples are <i>Ndrangheta</i> and <i>Camorra</i> of Italy, <i>Bratva</i> in Russia, <i>Ninkyō dantai</i> in Japan, etc.	The sole objective of this criminal group is to make huge and easy money without resorting to morality. It is a commercially oriented group of high-ranking criminals in the world.
Armed-robbers	Armed robbers are groups of thieves who carry weapons to forcefully steal valuables from strategic places and targets. They usually attacked banks, markets, roads, or business places where they expected money.	They hold deadly weapons by attacking individuals at business spots, markets, stations, roads, or homes. They are mostly on target to scare, intimidate, and even kill individuals in the process of their attacks.	The basic aim of this group is to steal or confiscate money, and while in the process of the attack, they injure or kill people.
Criminals	Criminals are persons who commit crimes or individuals that are convicted of criminal offenses. These criminals intentionally	They usually have dubious character and behave wisely or unwisely towards their target. They mostly hide	The main intention is to possess property or own money even against the law through

	attack, injure, and kill people; they also steal, rob, vandalise, burn, and destroy valuable properties. Accordingly, they are commonly called thieves.	weapons to enable them to achieve their target.	stealing, destruction, and vandalism.
Insurgents	These are groups of rebels opposed to the institutional authority of the state on policies and structures of governance. In modern times, insurgents operate within a sovereign state and continuously pose a security threat to the government through attacks, destruction, and instability.	They are usually small groups of rebels with irregular forces that possess weapons to attack government establishments or security forces and hide within the civilian population. Any insurgent groups that practice guerrilla war tactics are simple examples.	These groups operate within the borders of a sovereign state with the aim of causing instability in governing the affairs of that state.
Terrorists	Terrorists are groups of insurgents or criminals who are organised with complex structures and ideologies that operate across international boundaries. They are strategic groups that revolt government authorities by carrying out attacks, suicide bombings, and war either overtly or secretly to inflict major degrees of injuries, killings, and destruction of properties.	Terrorist groups operate without an international border, use highly skilled strategies, and handle complex and advanced technological machines and gadgets with deadly weapons to attack not only government establishments but also civilian populations across the countries. Examples of a few terrorist groups are <i>Al-Qaeda</i>, <i>Al-Shabaab</i>, <i>Boko Haram</i>, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), the Islamic State (IS), etc.	The basic aim of terrorist groups is to revolt against certain governmental authorities. They usually desired to form and control their own structures depending on their specific goals, which they perceived as the only way to achieve them through revolution and war.

Source: Researcher's Design, 2024

2.5 The 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

Nigeria (usually referred to as the Federal Republic of Nigeria) is a sovereign state practicing federalism with a presidential system of governance. The 2019 general elections was the sixth in the series of elections conducted after the return of democratic governance in 1999. There were elections conducted at the federal, state, and local council levels. The federal elections consisted of the presidential and bicameral National Assembly elections, which were conducted on February 23rd; the state governorship; the state house of assemblies; and the local council elections conducted on March 9th (INEC, 2019). Beside these elections, there were supplementary elections held on March 23rd, 2019. In these elections, there were 1,490 seats contested during the period under consideration. These included a presidential election, 109 senatorial elections, 360 House of Representatives elections, 29 governorship elections, 991 state house of assembly elections, and the six council chairmen of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (European Union, 2019; INEC, 2019).

The 2019 general elections conducted in Nigeria also had some of the challenges encountered in the previous elections of the First, Second, and Third Republics but with an increase in the rate of political thuggery, which became a peculiar yet worrisome characteristic of elections of the Fourth Republic, especially during the 2019 general elections in the country. The entire general elections conducted in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 after the return to democratic governance faced a number of irregularities, anomalies, and other malpractices (European Union, 2019). History has shown that the First Republic was terminated in 1966 due to election malpractices, ethnic bias, and crises among political parties. A similar justification for the collapse of the Second Republic in 1983 was recorded due to irregularities in election results, political party crises, corruption, maladministration, ethnic bias, and

pockets of violence all over the country. It was the same reason as the aborted Third Republic of 1993 in Nigeria and the reflections of the previous political upheavals that kept reoccurring in the present Fourth Republic.

Furthermore, the European Union on Election Observation Mission (2019) reported that the 2019 general elections were marred by multi-faceted challenges. Though candidates and political parties were able to campaign, the general assessment of activities was below the score bar. There was a problem of transparency, incessant electoral security challenges, low participation of voters in casting their votes that led to low voter turnout, and other related problems that smashed the image and integrity of the election procedures and results. In addition, increasing fatalities and violence, the I-don't-care attitude of security officials to address violence holistically, and intimidation of voters and candidates generated condemnation for the conduct of elections within and outside the country (European Union, 2019).

In addition, other scholars believed that the 2019 general elections in Nigeria were conducted under high tension, which was surrounded by the utmost altitudes of violence in the history of elections (Oluwabunmi & Goodnews, 2021; Onimisi, 2019). Similarly, the 2019 general elections in Nigeria were conducted under fear of major security threats due to the Boko Haram insurgency, herdsmen-farmers crises, political thuggery, and other security breaches (Ojobo, 2019). Boko Haram terrorists consistently launched violent attacks in the North Eastern region, especially in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states, with devastating effects on their social coexistence; farmers-herders crises dominated the states of Taraba, Benue, Plateau, and Nasarawa; while cases of secession, militancy, and cybercrime affected the southern part of the country; and the activities of bandits in the North-western and Central geopolitical

zones also posed major security threats to democracy, especially in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, Nasarawa, and Niger states.

The 2019 general elections was conducted under high tension and violent attacks which were mostly perpetrated by politicians through political thugs (Moliki, 2021; Obiam, 2021; Sule *et al.*, 2020). Apart from other security threats, the 2019 general elections, was characterised by violence, delay in the supply of election materials, and other related manoeuvres including violence, destructions, threats, and inconclusive manipulation of the election to influence changes in results, all of these were in one way or another flawed the quality of the election and its conduct (Sule & Sambo 2020). This caused low voter turnout, which drastically declined from 43.7% in 2015 to 34.96% during the 2019 general elections, even though total voter registration increased to 84,004,084 voters in the 2019 general elections from 69,720,350 voters in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019). However, the election management body (INEC) reported that the 2019 general elections were shifted from earlier scheduled on February 16th, 2019 for the Presidential and National Assembly elections to February 23rd, 2019; while the Governorship and State House of Assembly elections were also rescheduled from March 2nd to March 9th, 2019 due to logistics unpreparedness (INEC, 2019).

Similarly, INEC (2019) reported among other challenges that affected the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria was the spread of politically motivated attacks and destructions across the country, which emanated from the activities of political thugs instigated by politicians. There were snatchings of ballot papers and boxes, diversions of electoral materials, and vandalism of electoral equipments, in addition to intimidation, molestation, abduction, and killing of voters, election management staff,

candidates, journalists, and observers. There were reported cases of failure to provide election materials and equipments in good time due to a shortage of vehicles and boats or failure of the service providers in many areas despite collecting money from the INEC. In addition, there were cases of rigging and malpractices that led to violence, especially in the riverine areas, which resulted in an election postponement in Rivers State (INEC, 2019).

Accordingly, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) reported the presence of military officials during elections, which posed fear in the minds of electorates and invariably prevented some voters from exercising their rights to vote in many parts of the country. Thus, the deployment of the military in elections disenfranchised voters. In view of this, the sitting Governor of Rivers States, Nyesom Wike, argued that what the Nigerian Army exhibited during the 2019 election in Rivers was negative and the worst in the history of elections in Nigeria. The Army Division became the operational base of the APC political party in Rivers State. He further argued that despite peaceful voting during the day at polling units, the Army occupied collation centres in the evening to cart away EC 8C Forms for the governorship and EC 8b1 Forms for the State House of Assembly elections, where they arrested electoral officers and molested about 200 PDP agents (Wike, 2019). However, the Army refuted the allegation and constituted a committee to investigate the killing of an Army officer, Lieutenant Gumi, by political thugs in Abonnema (IRI & NDI, 2019).

The 2019 general elections was also characterised by public abuses, insults, blackmails, cruelties and enmity during political debates, discussions and arguments at gatherings or through media broadcast in many instances. This has resulted to destructive political propaganda between party supporters and candidates which led to

rancour and severe hate speeches, undemocratic utterances and political insults in trying to disrepute the personality of a given candidate or promote ones popularity during election cycles that in one way or the other undermined the credibility of the 2019 general elections in the country (Nwozor *et al.*, 2022; Aboh & Odeh, 2021; Ezeibe, 2021). Thus, the 2019 general elections were affected by violent political attacks and destruction by political thugs, logistics anomalies, hate speech among members of political parties, and intense political crises dominated intra- or inter-party primary elections, which led to the imposition of candidates, the late distribution of election materials, and the malfunction of smart card reader machines and other devices (Sule, 2019).

Consequently, political thugs attacked numerous individuals, including voters, election staff, candidates, security officials, journalists, and observers. Political thugs violently attacked and destroyed electoral processes, including campaign centres, polling units, and collation centres across the country. At some places, political thugs lynched, abducted, intimidated, and killed voters, securities, election staff, candidates, observers, and journalists, in addition to destroying and stealing election materials and equipment, which included ballot papers, ballot boxes, result sheets, vehicles, offices, generator sets, bikes, phones, and smart card readers, as reported by INEC in Adamawa, Zamfara, Kano, Katsina, Taraba, Ondo, Osun, Anambra, Imo, Kogi, Plateau, Benue, Sokoto, Ebonyi, Lagos, and Oyo states. (INEC, 2019). The attacks and destructions were made to aid electoral rigging through violence. This caused violence across the country, where INEC staff and military officers were killed and many individuals sustained injuries in Rivers State.

Equally, five (5) people were killed in Delta and six (6) others in Akwa Ibom. A number of electorates were reported killed in Osun and Ondo states. A serving member of the House of Representatives from Lagelu/Akinyele in Oyo State was also killed by political thugs during the governorship and state house of assembly elections in Oyo State (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019; Situation Room, 2019). Three ad hoc staff were declared missing while a police corporal died. The voting process was disrupted, and the voters were also dispersed in the Danmusa Local Government Area of Katsina State. In Kano State, however, groups of political thugs strayed streets, polling units, and collation centres, thereby attacking so many voters, supporters of the People Democratic Party, and other stakeholders in the election, such as observers and journalists, in varied areas of Nasarawa and Dala Local Governments (INEC, 2019; European Union, 2019). Likewise, a police inspector and two other people were murdered during the presidential and national assembly elections in Kogi State. While houses were burned down that belonged to politicians, INEC and political parties' offices were destroyed. Vehicles owned by voters, candidates, and security personnel were burned in various states. Election materials, including ballot boxes, ballot papers, scoring sheets, smart card reader machines, and other equipment, were destroyed, vandalised, or stolen (INEC, 2019).

2.5.1 Candidates and Electorates

The electoral management body (INEC) reported that a total of 22,643 candidates contested for the 1,558 electoral seats during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (INEC, 2019). The report added that at the national level, there were 6,657 candidates who contested for the 470 electoral seats, which included the President, Senators, and House of Representatives. The elections for president were massively contested

between 73 candidates, even though the major battle was between the two top candidates, including the then incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressive Congress (APC), who sought re-election for a second term, and former Vice President Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), who deputised Olusegun Obasanjo from 1999 to 2007. Accordingly, there were 1,904 candidates who aimed for the 109 senatorial seats and 4,680 candidates who contested for the 360 seats in the House of Representatives. It is, however, worthy to note that only five (5) women contested for the seat of president, and for the National Assembly, women candidates only constituted 12.3% in the Senate and 11.6% in the House of Representatives (Ojobo, 2019). This is in addition to 991 members of the State House Assembly and 29 governors across the country (INEC, 2019).

On the other hand, there were a total of 84,004,084 registered voters who were eligible to vote during the 2019 general elections (INEC, 2019). There were 14,283,734 new voters added to the 69,720,350 voters declared at the 2015 general elections. It is, however, important to note that despite an increase in voter registration, voter turnout was lower than in the 2015 general elections. This is not a new trend in Nigerian politics because, since the return to democratic governance in 1999, voter turnout has continued to decrease since 2003. Historically, voter turnout records included 34.96% in 2019, 43.7% in 2015, 54% in 2011, 57% in 2007, and 68% in 2003 (INEC, 2019). This is presented in Figure 2.1.

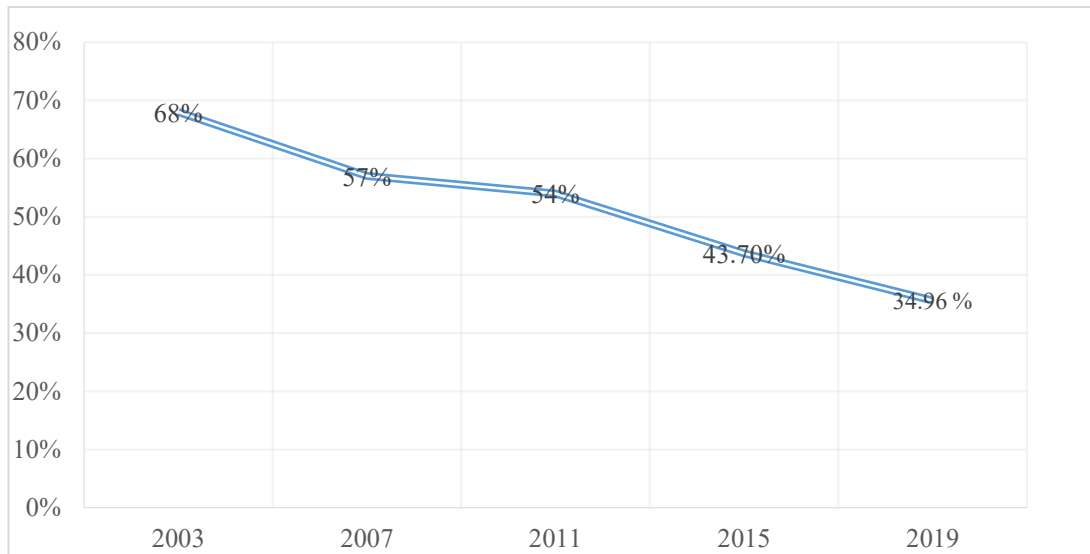


Figure 2.1 Voters Turn-out of Five Elections 2003-2019
Source: Researcher's design, 2024

Though the Independent National Electoral Commission announced that 8 million voter cards (Permanent Voter Cards, PVCs) remained uncollected from their custody, either due to the fact that owners had died, migrated, or an inability to appropriately locate them, have affected the collection. From the election, it was reported that President Muhammadu Buhari won nine (9) out of ten (10) states where card readers failed in biometric accreditation, and a manual election was conducted where he won with 13.5 million votes, mostly from the North West and North Central parts of the country, and of course smart card reader failure repeatedly occurred across the country (Ojobo, 2019; Situation Room, 2019). Thus, Table 2.4 presents the elections and seats won by political parties in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Table 2.4

Elections and Seats won by Political Parties in the 2019 General Elections

Election	APC	PDP	Other Parties	Total
President	1	0	0	1
Senators	64	44	1 (YPP)	109
Members House of Representatives	212	127	21 (APGA, 10; ADC, 3; AA, PRP, 2 each; APM, SDP, LP, ADP 1 each)	360
Governors	15	14	0	29
Members State House of Assembly	538	391	62 (APGA,32; AA, 8; APM, 7; ADC, 5; SDP, 3; ZLP, LP, 2 each; NRM, ADP, NNPP, 1 each)	991
Area Council Chairmen	4	2	0	6
Councilors	34	27	1 (SDP)	62
Total	868	605	85	1,558

Note* (YPP, Young Progressive Party; APGA, All Progressives Grand Alliance; ADC, African Democratic Congress; AA, Action Alliance; PRP, Peoples Redemption Party; APM, Allied Peoples' Movement; SDP, Social Democratic Party; LP, Labour Party; ADP, Action Democratic Party; ZLP, Zenith Labour Party; NRM, National Rescue Movement; NNPP, New Nigeria People's Party)

Source: INEC, 2019

2.5.2 Security and Other Actors in the Election

The 2019 general election was conducted under heightened security threats across all the regions in the country, which included lingering Boko Haram terrorism, herdsmen-farmers conflict, incessant killings by bandits, threat of secession by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and militancy, and cyber criminality by *Yahoo Boys* and Oduduwa People Congress (OPC) security threat (Sule et al., 2020; European Union, 2019; Situation Room, 2019). Due to these threats, not only the Police Force, , and Civil Defence Corps, but also military personnel, the Federal Road Safety Corps, the Nigeria Immigration Service, the Federal Fire Service, the Nigeria Customs Service, the Department of Security Service, and others were mobilised to ensure the protection of lives and properties so as to curtail electoral violence in the country. In spite of the presence of heavy security actors, political thuggery still smeared the election processes. A number of electorates were frightened due to the involvement of the military in elections, as many voters were scared to vote. In Rivers State, for example,

there was a serious clash between PDP and APC supporters because PDP controlled the state while APC controlled the federal. The then Governor Wike of Rivers State, being in strong hold of the PDP, accused the Federal Government of deploying military forces in the entire state so as to manipulate the election process (CLEEN Foundation, 2019).

Furthermore, IRI and NDI (2019) reported presence of heavy military officers at various places of collation centres and polling units, which inflicted fear on voters, especially in riverine states like Rivers, where crises emanated between the two dominant political parties (APC and PDP); as they struggled to control the lead in votes. An army officer was killed in Rivers by political thugs, and the Nigerian Army raided the entire community, which led to the killing of six individuals. Governor Wike cried out that the APC had mobilised the military into Rivers State so as to rig and defeat the PDP in their strong hold. He believed that despite peaceful voting at polling units in Rivers State, the Army occupied collation centres to cart away EC 8C Form for the governorship and EC 8b1 Form for the State House of Assembly elections by arresting electoral officers and beating and arresting about 200 PDP agents, while the Army refuted the allegation and argued that a committee was set up to investigate misconduct against the killing of Lieutenant Gumi in Abonnema (Wike, 2019).

In addition, there were a lot of recorded politically instigated attacks during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, as observed by the Situation Room Report (2019). As against other years, where 100 people were killed during the 2003 general elections, more than 290 people were killed during the 2007 general elections, more than 500 people were killed, which included ethno-religious instigated violence during the 2011 general election, and 106 people were killed during the 2015 general elections. It was

recorded and confirmed that 161 cases of attacks occurred within the period from the official commencement of the campaign in October 2018 to the finalisation of the election result declaration in March 2019 that led to the death of 626 individuals. All these happened during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Hence, the attacks were termed to be political because of the nature in which they were carried out, and comparatively, there were more attacks and deaths than in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Not only politicians belonging to different political parties were attacked; security officers like Army and Police were killed; others, including INEC staff and members of the electorate, were also part of the people killed during the election cycle; valuable properties belonging to the election management body, government, security personnel, political parties, candidates, the electorate, and media and election reporters were destroyed and burned. Properties lost included smart card readers, election result sheets, ballot papers, ballot boxes, utility vehicles, INEC offices, houses, campaign offices that belonged to different political parties, and many other individuals.

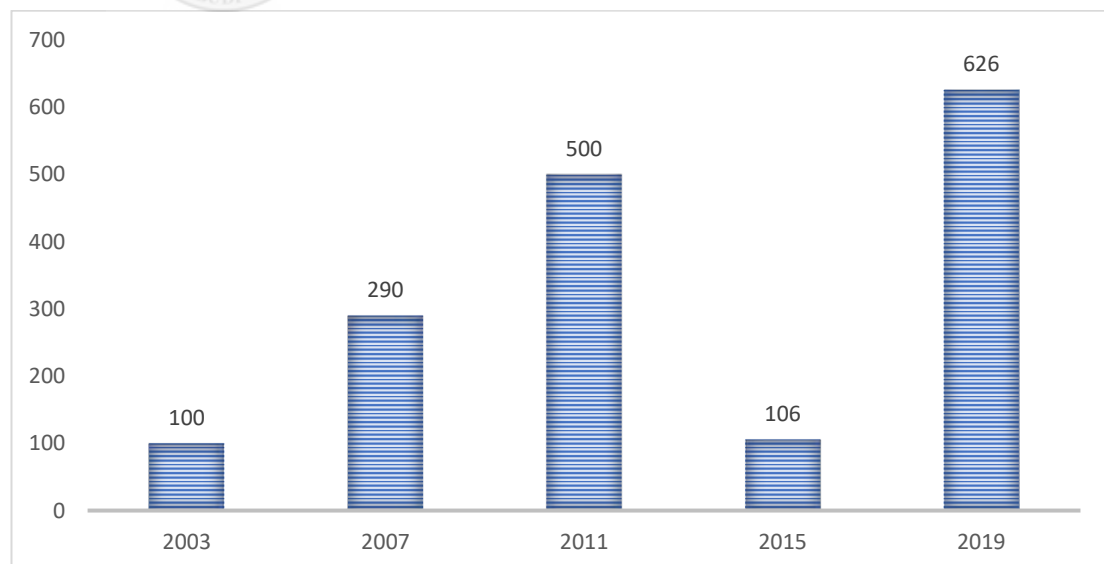


Figure 2.2 Rates of Deaths by Thuggery over Five Elections 2003-2019
Source: Researcher's Design, 2024

During the February 2019 general elections, there were presidential and national assemblies (senatorial and house of representatives) in Nigeria. The violent character of such elections cannot be over emphasised, but political thugs attacked and killed individuals in different parts of the country. For instance, scores of killings were recorded during governorship elections in Akwa Ibom, Benue, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Kogi, Oyo, and Rivers states. Specifically, five individuals were killed in Khana Local Government Area, one individual in Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers State, and two individuals were killed in Kogi and Katsina states and in other places. During the supplementary elections in Kano, Benue, and other states, cases of deaths were similarly recorded (CLEEN Foundation, 2019).

In addition to the presidential election, it was reported that political thuggery had worsened insecurity across the country (HWR, 2019). High contests and tensions affected transparency and a free and fair election, which devalued election credibility. Politically influenced attacks on politicians, the electorate, political party supporters, media reporters, election observers, and security officers are the major incidents that characterised the elections in different parts of the country. It was reported that over 145 people were killed during elections, most especially in the highly contested states of Kano, Rivers, Kogi, Benue, Imo, Lagos, Zamfara, and Bauchi. Kano State took the major share of the recorded cases of violence after Rivers State (HWR, 2019).

It was further reported that despite increasing security measures by INEC, the police and other officers were unable to provide full security, yet political thugs continuously posed threats to election areas through attacks, killings, and the destruction of properties. Policemen and other security personnel compounded the problem of election security as they either fled polling units or collation centres, remained

onlookers without arresting perpetrators, or even protected thugs and other criminals from disrupting election processes or fired rifles to dissuade electorates from the scene of elections (HRW, 2019).

Notably, on Election Day in Rivers State, after a clash between security forces and political thugs, one army officer was killed. This generated high tension as policemen and soldiers shot live bullets everywhere in Abonnema, which led to the death of six people, as declared by the Army. The incidence occurred because political thugs belonging to the APC attacked a collation centre where election materials are kept, but police and other security did not stop them. This triggered PDP political thugs to block access roads into that community in order to prevent any criminals from accessing the community. It was the army officer who tried to remove the barricade that the PDP political thugs killed. It was a similar scenario in Kano State where political thugs belonging to the APC infiltrated all the areas of voting and collation of results during gubernatorial elections, especially during the supplementary election. In Gama and Dala areas, political thugs armed with deadly weapons patrolled every polling unit even a day before the election, scaring the electorate, ensuring that only APC voters joined the queue, and preventing any PDP supporters from leaving the scene of the election; security officers did nothing to arrest the situation (HRW, 2019).

It was further reported that from the official commencement of the campaign for the 2019 general elections in October 2018 to the conclusion and declaration of election results by INEC in March 2019, no fewer than 626 people were killed within the reporting period of 127 days (Situation Room, 2019). On this account, the EU Report (2019) stated that politically instigated attacks and intimidation of voters abused electoral integrity and frightened the electorate from active participation during the

2019 general election, whereby political parties and candidates allowed their supporters to get involved in such violent activities, and more than 150 people died as a result of political thuggery and other related violent activities in the country. Situation Room (2019) reported extensively on the number of cases of violence that 96 incidents or cases of electoral violence were confirmed, which resulted in 361 deaths in the country only between November 16th, 2018 and February 23rd, 2019. In a detailed explanation, 162 cases of violence were recorded, and 626 people died as a result of violence (from October 2019 to March 2019) during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

More often than not, reports further indicated that INEC recorded casualties and attacks on its staff, offices, and utility vehicles. Political thugs moved freely with deadly weapons on election days. In many collation centres, results were torn and destroyed by political thugs and politicians, especially in Kano, Rivers, Bauchi, and many other places in other states. Yet, security agents were either reluctant or inactive to prevent attacks, destruction, and intimidation of voters. This led to a high number of result cancellations and subsequent declarations of inconclusive elections in some places and specifically in the states where results of gubernatorial elections and others were declared inconclusive, leading to supplementary elections or re-run elections so as to determine the winner arising from margin incidents between two major candidates that contested elections. Elections in seven states were declared inconclusive by returning officers of Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Kano, Plateau, Rivers, and Sokoto states during the gubernatorial election in the March 2019 general election in Nigeria, but later, a court order and fact-finding committee directed INEC to continue collating election results in Bauchi and Rivers; thereafter, the Bauchi State election was declared inconclusive (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019; E U, 2019).

The 2019 general elections were further characterised by high competition, whereby candidates who contested most seats basically belonged to two dominant political parties, the All Progressive Congress (APC), the ruling party, and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the leading opposition party. There were other contestants who belonged to unpopular opposition political parties. Out of the 91 political parties that were duly registered by INEC, 73 candidates contested for the seat of president, representing different parties. Political parties ran their primary elections to choose their appropriate candidates for the contest.

However, most parties' primaries, especially the two major political parties, APC and PDP, were marred by serious irregularities, including non-compliance with either party principles or INEC guidelines and election regulations. Most political parties restricted members from free contest in elections because party leaders, the elite, and caucus resolved to consensus as against members' free choice of representatives; the absence of transparency and change of candidate by party leaders blurred the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019; European Union, 2019).

On election days, the EU Report (2019) noted the late commencement of elections at various polling units across the nation. This created uncertainty on the part of voters since there was no sufficient information and update on voting provided to the public by the INEC. A joint statement by the International Election Observer Mission together with the UN faulted the decision of INEC on the postponement of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria due to logistics and operation challenges as unrealistic because INEC failed to regularly communicate to the general public on the state of election processes and its preparations as of when due for the purpose of transparency with the aim of achieving credible elections in the country (Reliefweb, 2019). Late

commencement of voting processes in many states during the 2019 presidential election led to delays in voting, collation, and declaration of election results and winners across the country (Situation Room, 2019). Thus, this raises so many questions about the neutrality of INEC in conducting free, fair, and credible elections in Nigeria.

It was further observed from the polling units that voting procedures were not totally adhered to. As important as smart card readers were to the 2019 elections, the devices were mostly not used in so many places across the country. As such, a lot of discrepancies existed between the total votes cast and the number of accredited voters recorded by smart card readers during the count and sorting process, especially at the collation centres. These created a lot of tensions that subsequently aggrieved and self-centred politicians found ways to manipulate the election processes and results. Though presidential results were open to party agents and observers in some places or aired on television from the collation centres, in other places, observers and some party agents were barred. Inadequate explanations to the general public and inconsistency in record presentation by INEC led to the cancellation of results for over 150 polling units, and the failure of smart card readers was referred to as the reason for the cancellation of not less than two million votes across the country. INEC also announced a discrepancy of more than one million, six hundred and sixty thousand (1.66 million) registered voters, less than the initial number of total voters registered, which was stated before the commencement of the election (European Union, 2019).

Similarly, voter turnout in the 2019 elections was very low, standing at 34.96% compared to 43.7% in the 2015 general elections, despite an increase in the total number of registered voters. This reflected on both federal and state-level elections

that included presidential, national assembly, gubernatorial, and house of assembly elections. Afterward, INEC declared President Muhammadu Buhari of the APC the winner of the election for the second time. INEC declared President Muhammadu Buhari, the APC candidate, as re-elected with 56.1%, while the PDP candidate secured 41.2% of valid votes. However, this declaration made PDP presidential aspirant Atiku Abubakar to instantly reject the election result and seek legal action at the tribunal for redress. In total, there were eight hundred and eleven (811) election petition cases channelled to tribunal committees alone across the country, challenging electoral processes (European Union, 2019). Whereas, during party primaries, there were 890 petitions channelled to INEC and the court for redress (Premium Times, 2019d; KDI, 2019; Omenma, 2019).

In the light of the election petitions channelled to tribunal committees and the electoral body during the 2019 general election in Nigeria, Omenma (2019) and KDI (2019) reported that litigations on electoral disputes posit legal rejection of election results and electoral processes within the ambit of law as against the use of violence and violent behaviour that affect peace, tranquilly, and the democratic sustainability of a polity. During the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, eight hundred and eleven (811) cases of electoral petitions were recorded by tribunals across the country, which confirmed the fact that the 2019 general elections were marred by malpractices and other irregularities. The elections' results and conduct were challenged by candidates and political parties who were not satisfied with the outcome of the elections following the declaration of results for presidential, senatorial, House of Representatives, gubernatorial, and state House of Assembly elections. The 2019 general elections witnessed the highest number of petitions since the 2007 general elections, which justifies nonsatisfaction with the election processes, from party primaries to the

declaration of results. Cases of election petitions recorded over five terms (2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019) are presented in Figure 2.3.

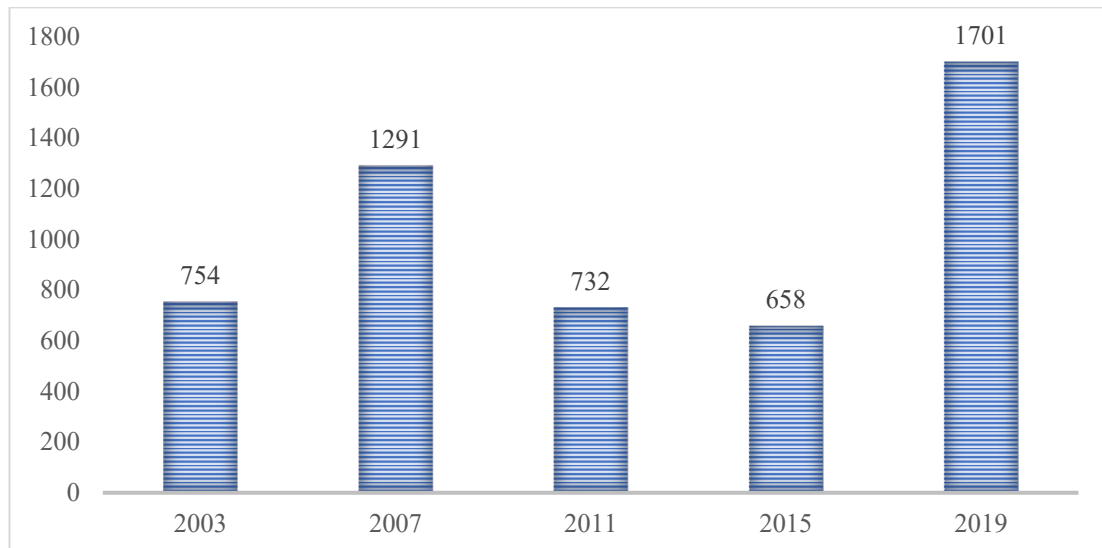


Figure 2.3 Election Petition Cases for Five Election Periods, 2003-2019

Source: Omenma (2019), KDI (2019), Premium Times, (2019d)

Furthermore, the incessant violence and worrisome nature of the use of political thugs by politicians led to the inauguration of a National Peace Committee to avert electoral violence and other malpractices so as to ensure violent-free elections, credibility of elections, and sustainable democracy in the country. The Committee was under the chairmanship of former President General Abdulsalam Abubakar, saddled with the responsibility to bring presidential candidates to sign a 'peace accord' in order to avoid violence and ensure peaceful elections at the federal and state levels in Nigeria (Premium Times, 2019f). Despite the signing of the 'peace accord' on December 11th, 2018 by the presidential candidates, the 2019 general elections are still marred by a number of malpractices and violence. As such, the 'peace accord' proved ineffective in curtailing violence and political thuggery in the 2019 general elections. The most aggressive act of political thuggery was the use of political thugs who attacked and destroyed voters and political opponents at different places, especially in Kano, Imo,

Rivers, Bauchi, Sokoto, Gombe, Kogi, Kwara, Niger Ekiti, and Ogun states (Situation Room, 2019). Thus, the 'peace accord' did not succeed in solving the menace of political thuggery as the 2019 general elections were flawed by the violent activities of political thugs in Nigeria.

On a practical note, a number of politically instigated attacks on candidates, electorates, staff of the election management body, supporters of different political parties, election observers, and journalists were recorded, which were in an attempt to fuel electoral malpractices and rigging during elections in Nigeria. In Kano State, for instance, it was reported that political thugs took over the electoral process as many political thugs armed with weapons like knives surrounded polling units, threatening electorates and thereby attempting to change election results (DW, 2019). It was also reported that political thugs attacked the governorship candidate of the People Democratic Party (PDP) of Kano State, Abba Kabir Yusuf. His house was set ablaze, and a car was vandalized. Political thugs who belonged to the All Progressive Congress (APC) were accused of wanton destruction of all the PDP formations in Kano, despite the fact that Governor Ganduje of the APC has appended his signature to the 'peace accord' resolution (Premium Times, 2019).

In addition, Premium Times (2019) further reported that suspected political thugs patrolled streets with deadly weapons. However, neither the police nor the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) could contain violent attacks and destructions by political thugs. Political thugs and people with party tags (as party agents) brutally intimidated and harassed voters with machetes, knives, and clubs on the streets and in voting areas. INEC staff were also attacked by groups of political thugs, and election

materials were destroyed, particularly in Dala and Nasarawa Local Government Areas (Premium Times, 2019).

Similarly, in Kogi State, it was also reported that a PDP Woman Leader was burned alive in her house by political thugs loyal to the APC. Mrs. Acheju Abuh, was the Woman Leader of the PDP in Wada/Aro Campaign Council, Ochadamu Ward, who was burned alive by these suspected political thugs in her house around 2:00 p.m. Political thugs blocked every exit and entrance to the house, poured petroleum, and set fire to the house while the woman cried for help, but no one could rescue her as the political thugs surrounded the premises armed with heavy weapons, and people stayed far away as they were afraid of being killed too (Vanguard, 2019).

More so, the destruction of election materials, killings, and other electoral malpractices in the 2019 general elections were deadly in nature. It was reported that the 2019 general elections were marred by widespread irregularities and deadly violence in Rivers State, whereby in many areas, elections did not hold as a result of political thuggery. Many people were injured, and sixteen (16) people were killed, including two (2) security officers. Both the APC and PDP blamed each other for the violent nature of the elections. The Governor of Rivers, Mr. Nyesom Wike, who belonged to the PDP, accused the Nigerian Army of supporting the killings (due to the fact that the state is a PDP stronghold). Meanwhile, the Nigerian Army replied that they only arrested the governor's political vanguards in their attempt to cause violence and rig the election (Premium Times, 2019f). Therefore, acts of political thugs pose a danger to election credibility and democratic sustainability, especially during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

2.5.3 Electoral Malpractice and Funds Management

President Buhari has on several occasions reiterated his commitments to ensure credible elections at various public gatherings, while he was in office (2015 – 2019). Buhari was furious and so empathic, and made a declaration while addressing the public that anybody caught stealing ballot boxes and election materials should be killed by security officers (Africanews, 2019). This statement seems to be dictatorial and anti-democratic because a civil and democratic president should not encourage the extra-judicial killing of the electorates since there are stipulated rules for addressing such incidents.

On the basis of election malpractice, the United States of America and Britain threatened to deny visas to their countries to any politician who is caught and involved in any act that causes violence, fraud, rigging, or related malpractice during the 2019 general election in Nigeria. Both the APC and PDP members accused each other of political thuggery and vote-buying during the election (Africanews, 2019). In addition, provisions of the law on inconclusive election status were manipulated by frustrated politicians, who were desperate to win elections, to form a strategy and rig elections through violence and destruction. This caused excessive cancellation or postponement of elections so that a clear winner cannot be announced because the number of votes cancelled may change due to the differences in votes between two candidates or political parties (IFES, 2019).

Accordingly, INEC Returning Officers of the seven states, including Rivers, Sokoto, Kano, Plateau, Bauchi, Benue, and Adamawa, declared governorship election results inconclusive, which led to a supplementary election that was necessary so as to determine the winner of the election. INEC announced that the result was inconclusive

because Smart Card Readers failed to work in many polling units and voting centres; overvoting was recorded; and above all, political thugs disrupted election processes in many areas as staff, security personnel, and the electorate were intimidated, harassed, abducted, and killed. It was added that there was non-compliance with the margin of lead principles of the 2010 Electoral Act derived from Sections 26 and 53 and Paragraphs 41(e) and 43(b) of the INEC regulations and guidelines for the conduct of elections. The commission was forced to conduct supplementary elections in the affected seven states to determine a clear winner of the governorship election (Situation Room, 2019).

On the other hand, the 2019 general elections stands as the most expensive election so far recorded throughout election history in Nigeria (European Union, 2019; Sule et al., 2020). The Federal Government funded the election with a whopping sum of N242.4 billion (while INEC received N189 billion and the security personnel were allotted N53 billion). Apart from this allocation by the Federal Government, donor agencies contributed to the body to ensure a hitch-free election. For instance, the European Union alone contributed N170 million. Despite these funds, INEC was unable to adequately handle the election properly as logistical and other challenges proved its inability, which made the body postpone the election just six hours before the commencement of polling (European Union, 2019; INEC, 2019; Abiola, 2019). Equally, smart card reader machines failed to capture the biometric information of voters in many areas across the country.

In addition, considering the huge amount of money allocated to the security officials in ensuring violent free elections, the activities of political thugs manifested with increased attacks and destruction. Political thuggery smeared the elections, and the

security officers lackadaisically failed or were unable to curtail perpetual attacks that included intimidation, molestation, abduction, and killing of voters, candidates, election staff, security officials, observers, and journalists across Rivers, Kano, Kogi, Akwa Ibom, Imo, Bauchi, Ebonyi, Zamfara, and Lagos states. This consequently resulted in the killing of about 145 people in different areas of the aforementioned states. Equally around the riverine states, for instance, soldiers were deployed and involved in the election, which scared voters from exercising their civil right to vote during elections. This situation created a highly tense environment in Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Imo states (Abiola, 2019). It is therefore imperative to state that in spite of receiving a huge amount of money, security officials could not secure the 2019 general elections in Nigeria against incessant attacks and destructions instigated by political thugs who enjoyed the support from frustrated politicians who were desperate to win the election at all costs.

2.5.4 Political Attacks across Geo-Political Zones in Nigeria

Political thuggery widely occurred during the conduct of the 2019 general election in Nigeria. There were confirmed 96 cases of violent attacks that resulted in the death of 361 people within the period between the commencement and end of the 2019 general elections, that is, between November 16th, 2018 and February 23rd, 2019 in Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019). Analysing the intrigues and activities of political thugs in the South-South during the presidential election of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, Timothy & Omolegbe (2019) stated that political thugs killed ad-hoc staff, many staff sustained different degrees of injuries, and election equipment and other materials were destroyed and burned in Rivers State. While in Delta State, five individuals were killed in a clash between political thugs affiliated with the two major opposing political

parties, the APC and PDP, just five days before the presidential election. During the gubernatorial elections, political thugs fired gun shots at the electorate, killing one voter and injuring many others in the Ughelli South Local Government Area. In Akwa Ibom State, similarly, six individuals were brutally killed, and a ballot box snatcher was gunned down at the polling unit in Ikot Udo Ossiom village of Ukanafun.

In a similar report on the South East, armed political thugs killed two individuals in the Obosi area in the course of the State House of Assembly election, and 47 people were confirmed arrested by the police for political thuggery, upsetting, and destruction of election processes all in Anambra State. In Enugu State, an electoral observer was killed by stray bullets in Umuida Community during the gubernatorial election. While in Imo State, 105 suspected political thugs were arrested for a number of electoral offences, ranging from ballot snatching, impersonation of police officers, harassment of election management staff, and other malpractices. It was also reported that political thugs burned the INEC office in Ngor Okpala Local Government during the Governorship and State House of Assembly elections (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019).

In the South West, political thugs and hoodlums strategically destroyed and burned down the INEC office, ballot boxes, ballot papers, and other election materials in Oriade Local Government Area of Osun State; two individuals were killed while many others were injured. Three vehicles were set ablaze by political thugs in the course of an attempt to snatch election results at the collation centre for the State House of Assembly election in Oba Akoko Area of Akoko South West Local Government in Ondo. It was equally reported that a serving House of Representatives member from Lagelu/Akinyele in Oyo State was confirmed killed by political thugs during the governorship and state house of assembly elections (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019).

In the North Central, political thugs attacked a serving senator representing Nasarawa South Senatorial Zone just a day after the election, but he survived with some injuries. It was also reported that the Police Command of Kogi State reported the murder of three individuals, including an inspector of police, during the presidential and national assembly elections. Equally in Benue State, during the governorship supplementary election, political thugs burned election materials and injured election management staff in Azendeshi Ward in Ukum Local Government Area (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019).

In the North East geopolitical zone, the activities of political thugs demonstrated a similar pattern with other zones in the country. It was reported that 128 people were arrested for multiple acts of electoral misconduct, while the region recorded a number of violent attacks that cannot only be attributed to political thugs. The region was also faced with a lingering insurgency related violence associated Boko Haram crisis, especially in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States. The election processes in these states were also marred by a lot of irregularities. While in Bauchi and Adamawa States, inconclusive declarations of results led to supplementary elections that were characterised by violence (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019).

The development in the North Western region was not far from the realities of the other five regions. Political thuggery, tension, and other violent threats were high in the states of Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara, revealing the activities of political thugs during elections. There was a clash between the two dominant political parties (APC and PDP) during campaign rallies just after the presidential elections, that is, a few days before the governorship and state house of assembly elections. Three election management staff (ad hoc) were missing, the voting process was disrupted,

and the electorates were dispersed. A Police corporal died due to the activities of political thugs in Danmusa Local Government Area of Katsina State. In the same pattern, a group of political thugs roamed the streets, polling units, and collation centres, attacking the electorates, supporters of the opposition political party (PDP), and other stakeholders in the election, such as observers, journalists, and INEC staff, in different places, especially in Nasarawa and Dala Local Government Areas of Kano States, during the supplementary election, which resulted in an inconclusive announcement (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019). Table 2.5 presents 161 incident attacks that led to 626 recorded killings across geopolitical zones during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Table 2.5
Incidents of Attacks and Deaths across Geo-political Zones in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

Category	Regions in Nigeria	Incident	Death
1	North Central	23	111
2	North East	16	146
3	North West	20	172
4	South East	7	14
5	South South	59	120
6	South West	36	63
Total		161	626

Source: Situation Room Report, 2019

Table 2.5 revealed 161 cases of attacks that occurred, resulting in 626 deaths during the 2019 general elections. It is therefore important to categorically state at this point that the use of political thugs or vanguards by political elites and politicians has become pervasive during the 2019 general elections with negative consequences on election credibility, which has raised questions on the electoral processes in Nigeria. Political thuggery is the most complex and violent character among other challenges surrounding the 2019 general elections in Nigeria that led to compromising election standards and its credibility.

Other challenges included poor management of elections by an election management body called INEC, a high level of ethnic bias, religious sentiments, and sectional bias, which affected voters' choices and party affiliations and consequently influenced daily attacks by political thugs. This resulted in malpractices in the form of overt rigging and manipulation of election results; the use of money to induce voters; violations of electoral acts; and manipulation of security and other political institutions, which were believed to hollow electoral processes and their credibility. Thus, previous studies failed to address the stated objectives because there is no available work that studied the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It is on this premise that the study investigates the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, determined factors that influenced political thuggery in the 2019 general elections, and analysed the role of political thuggery in the worsening of security after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

2.6 Research Gap

The research basically revolved around political thuggery and election credibility in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the conduct of the 2019 general elections. The work consulted and reviewed the available previous studies, which included Sule (2018), Salihu & Yakubu (2021), Olu (2020), Ojukwu et al (2019), Sule et al (2020), Michael (2011), Rasak (2017), Shankyula (2019), May (2016), Paul (2013), Mohammed (2015), Ja'e & Lukman (2021), Adeleke (2016), Kabiru et al (2015), Onapajo & Babalola (2020), Omomia (2015), Usman & Dangiwa (2018), Ali (2014), Abubakar et al (2016), Agba et al. (2010), and Abubakar et al (2018). Though these scholars studied issues related to elections and political thuggery, attention has not been paid to

the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria on the one hand and the role of political thuggery in the worsening of insecurity after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. As such, a research gap existed that required scientific inquiry since no available work has been done so far on the topic.

Furthermore, the methodological consideration of the study focused on the combination of fieldwork and a qualitative approach to the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria as a whole. It focused on data generated from relevant sources and stakeholders who have first-hand information for the purpose of quality research processes and findings. This was achieved through interviews and focus group discussions with key informants totaling seventeen (17). This helped in validating other data generated through a review of literature, which included published reports, newspapers, books, and journal articles that are related to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The data was analysed qualitatively using a content analysis approach with the help of a thematic presentation. In addition, tables, diagrams, charts, and numerical values were also used in the analysis and presentation of the findings.

Likewise, the periodization and theoretical consideration of this research focused on the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. This helped in investigating the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Studies previously conducted on political thuggery and the 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 general elections in Nigeria as their case studies included Mohammed (2015), Ja'e & Lukman (2021), Adeleke (2016), Onapajo & Babalola (2020), and Kabiru et al. (2015). These studies were not directed at the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. In the theoretical framework, however, the

research adopted a combination of frustration, aggression, and broken window theories as the tool of analysis. This helped to explain the ways in which vicious politicians and political elites lure youth, called political thugs, into politics and elections and become agents of political manipulation and electoral rigging, influencing the victory of their political masters at all costs (do or die) against other political opponents. This serves as a departure from previous studies, to a lesser extent, in which elite theory, relative deprivation theory, rational theory, social control theory, game theory, and social learning theory were used in the analyses (Ali, 2014; May, 2016; Naziru, 2020; Iyekekpolo, 2020; Abubakar et al., 2018; Ayegba, 2015; Ja'e & Lukman, 2021; Sule et al., 2019). Thus, frustration aggression theory and broken window theory were used as the tools for analysis in explaining the stated objectives.

In addition, it is evident that a research gap exists because there is no available research focused on the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Previous works attempted to academically diagnose the 2019 general elections depending on their research interests, methodological purview, and theoretical spotlight. Notably, previous studies on the 2019 general elections included elections and democratic consolidation (Ojukwu, Mazi-Mbah & Madueke, 2019); election violence and voter turnout (Salihu and Yakubu, 2021); causes of post electoral violence (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019); Nigerian state and electoral violence (Obiam, 2021); observers' report and election (Olu, 2020); elite and politically related violence (Moliki, 2021); election and politics of inconclusiveness (Sule & Sambo, 2020); political party finance and transparency in question (Sule, et al., 2021); issues, challenges, success and lessons of election (Sule, Adamu & Sambo, 2020); comparing management of 2015 and 2019 general elections (Onapajo & Babalola, 2020); and

voting patterns and its implications (Sule, 2019). None of these works examined the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Furthermore, other previous studies on political thuggery but not focused on the impact of political thuggery on the 2019 general elections in Nigeria included political thuggery and democratic dividends (Michael, 2011); political thuggery and women participation (Rasak, & Garuba, 2017); political thuggery and law (Shankyula, 2019); political thuggery and crisis of confidence among youth (May, 2016); implications of political thuggery on socio-economic and political development (Paul, 2013); causes of political thuggery in the 2011 election in Bauchi State (Mohammed, 2015); political thuggery as a threat to democratic consolidation (Mohammed, 2015); Effects of Poverty on '*Yan Kalare*' thuggery in Gombe (Ja'e & Lukman, 2021); and political thuggery and democratic dividends in Nigeria (Agba et al., 2010).

Others are political thuggery and voters' turnout (Adeleke, 2016); implication of political thuggery (Kabiru et al., 2015); arresting political thuggery and other vices (Austin, 2015); drug abuse and political thuggery among youth (Ali, 2014); effects of political thuggery on sustainable democracy (Abubakar, Ahmed & Babayo, 2016); and political thuggery and violence (Abubakar et al., 2018). None of these studies demonstrated an attempt to look at the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. However, from the available literature and previous studies consulted, there is no work that combined the use of frustration aggression theory and broken window theory together in their attempt to analyse political thuggery and elections in Nigeria. It therefore can be categorically stated, based on literature, knowledge, and practical evidence, that the research is original.

Consequently, what differentiated this research with the previous studies conducted are seen from the research findings. Firstly, political thuggery contributed to general insecurity after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It was discovered that political thuggery hugely contributed to deteriorating national security through growing criminality and resurgence of criminal groups, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, illicit drug use and trafficking, aggressive political behaviour, corruption in the security sector, and the weakening internal sovereignty of the country. Secondly, political thuggery adversely impacted on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria through volatility of the political environment with civic unrest, excessive cancellation and postponement of elections, high cost of electoral expenditure, low voter turnout and participation, inconclusive rigging of election results, outright rejection of election results and excessive tribunals, high cost of electoral expenditure and corruption, and disenfranchisement and poor political culture.

Thirdly, political thuggery dominated events of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria due to structural imbalance and frustration, politics of clientelism or patronage, politics of do-or-die affairs, absence of political parties' ideology, politics as a business venture and investment, weakness of the electoral managing body, inadequate electoral laws and regulations, weak security and judiciary, and unpatriotic attitudes that thereafter created chaotic and violent atmosphere to aid rigging and manipulation of electoral processes through attacks and destructions across the country.

Lastly, the menace was primarily ignited due to frustration and aggression coupled with the failure of the security and authorities concerned to tackle it which thereafter gradually degenerated to the bigger security threats in Nigeria like bandits, Boko-haram terrorists, Niger Delta militants and IPOB as argued by the theories of

Frustration Aggression and Broken Window (Battigalli et al., 2019; Olaoluwa, 2018; Abdullahi et al., 2016). During the 2019 general elections, political thugs were employed to cause violence by the frustrated politicians through attacks and destructions of political processes which helped them to win elections even against the principles of free, fair and credible elections in the country. After the 2019 general elections in the country, the authorities concern failed to tackle political thuggery which gradually accelerated membership recruitment and formations of criminal groups of bandits, Boko-haram terrorists, Niger Delta militants and IPOB that constituted national security threats in Nigeria. This explained the position of the Broken Window Theory which advocated that when a minor security threat is left unresolved, it will grow to become a bigger threat (Abdullahi et al, 2016). Many abandoned thugs gradually joined bigger criminal groups of bandits in the North West and North Central, *Boko Haram* in the North East, IPOB in the South East and Niger Delta militants in the South-South of the country.

2.7 Summary

It is broadly noted that electoral violence entails any form of violence related to elections with the sole aim of disrupting electoral activities when it occurs either pre-election, during the election, or post-election period (USAID, 2010), and that electoral violence paved the way to election malpractices, which meant to inflict fear or injure an individual or group of individuals in order to maximise chances of victory by creating an unstable political atmosphere for someone or group of other individuals (Taylor, 2018). Accordingly, political thuggery is a major political tool (whether legitimate or illegitimate) used by politicians to cause violence during elections to ensure rigging and victory, especially in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. During

the entire electoral process, political thugs disenfranchised, intimidated, injured, or killed electorates, candidates, supporters of different political parties, and security agents, in addition to the destruction of election materials and the burning of houses and other valuable properties across the country during the 2019 general elections. However, since, from the available literature, previous studies failed to investigate the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, a wide research gap existed that provoked this research to investigate the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.



CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The study used a combination of frustration aggression theory and broken window theory to explain and analyse the phenomenon of political thuggery and its impact on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. However, it is important to note that there are other theories used to explain political thuggery by previous scholars based on their objectives of study. Such theories may be less important to this research because a theory like the relative deprivation theory is inadequate and incapable of explaining the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Relative deprivation theory was used in the works of Ja'e & Lukman (2021), Effects of Poverty on '*Yan Kalare*' Thuggery in Gombe Local Government Area 2007-2015; Ayegba (2015), Unemployment and Poverty as Sources and Consequences of Insecurity in Nigeria: The Boko Haram Insurgency Revisited; and Ezemenaka (2021), Youth Violence and Human Security in Nigeria. Therefore, what is the relative deprivation theory?

3.2 Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative deprivation theory is a social science tool developed to analyse conflict and violence-related matters (Ayegba, 2015). This is used to connect social realities with their actual causes in relation to violent behaviours instigated by the comparative needs of human beings as a result of social deprivation compared to scarce resources (Agri

& Agri 2021; Ja'e & Lukman 2021). The theory was popularised by the work of a great scholar, Ted Robert Gurr (1970), in his famous book *Why Men Rebel*. The theory is connected to poverty and social segregation as a result of inequality. Gurr (1970), cited by Agri & Agri (2021), believed that, as a substitute for the complete standard of deficiency, a gap between estimated and accomplished happiness fallouts in displeasure. Thus, the main root of violence according to this theory is dissatisfaction and displeasure, which consequently result in frustration in the long run (Ezemenaka, 2021; Agri & Agri, 2021). It is therefore believed that relative deprivation is used to illustrate how tension emerges from what 'ought to be' and 'is or the reality' of the whole value of human satisfaction. For instance, if person B feels deprived of, say, object Y, person B may not have it, person B knows other individuals who have it, and person B is confident that getting it is attainable.

3.2.1 Basic Assumptions of Relative Deprivation Theory

The theory is propounded on its basic assumptions that

- a) People in most social organisations are engaged in violent and deviant behaviour when they cannot achieve their desired goals.
- b) An individual believes he is deprived when he is segregated from material beings.
- c) Individuals who feel deprived of valuable things usually join criminality or tend to use violence to achieve it.
- d) Individuals who are deprived usually have less inspiration due to their limited thinking.

3.2.2 Criticisms of Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative deprivation theory is criticised for its assumption that not all individuals who are relatively deprived are involved in violent attitudes that cause violence. It was also believed that some people are not truly deprived due to material value but suddenly resort to violence to achieve their desired goals. Relative deprivation is not a major determinant factor to understand frustration by individuals. However, considering perpetrators of violent attacks and destructions during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, not all political thugs were deprived. In some cases, top-ranking politicians included deputy governors, commissioners, and the rest of the joint political thugs in violent attacks and destructions across the country, particularly in Kano, Rivers, and other states in Nigeria.

3.2.3 Explanation to Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation Theory is unable to explain the phenomenon of political thuggery because of its assumption that people in most social organisations are engaged in violent and deviant behaviour when they cannot achieve their desired goals, especially political power. This position is seen as shallow because there are many groups of individuals in different societies that are not engaged in violent and deviant behaviour, even if they are unable to achieve their desired goals. For instance, in developed democracies like the United States and the United Kingdom, individuals hardly embark on violent attitudes because they have lost elections or their ambition for political power. Politicians believed that everyone has the capacity to rule because leadership is contested in a free-ground contest that is open.

It is against the general interest when elections are characterised by a number of irregularities in many developing societies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Elections are usually marred by violence, rigging, and many sorts of political manipulation. This cannot be disconnected from the failure of political systems, not because people are relatively deprived. For instance, Agri et al. (2020) believed that systemic failure of government and security in Nigeria, especially the 'I don't care' attitude to address minor security threats, has degenerated into major security problems like Boko Haram in the North Eastern region. Thus, the pervasive nature of political thuggery during and after elections is becoming a danger to peace and stability in the country, thereby thwarting democratic consolidation, election credibility, and economic development.

In addition, political violence and electoral crises arise from the general belief that democracy alone cannot ensure their wellbeing because other people have a relative advantage over others (Ayegba, 2015). It is, however, important to note that some groups of terrorists, insurgents, and armed thugs have a condition of living better than other groups of individuals in many societies. Thus, these groups always incited violence not because of the relative consideration of the standard of living of others but because of frustration or the government's failure to tackle the phenomenon when it is due. During elections, for instance, politicians and political elites recruit militias in an attempt to disrupt the election process so that such an attempt will give them maximum chances of winning elections against their opponents because governments are not severely punishing them. This act is done by political parties in power and also by those that are considered opposition political parties. It is therefore clear that relative deprivation theory is inadequate and incapable of explaining the phenomenon of political thuggery, especially its impact on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The need for another theory to analyse the phenomenon is immensely needed.

3.3 Frustration Aggression Theory

Frustration aggression theory was developed by Dollard in 1939 with a view to explaining violence in the field of social sciences (Olaoluwa, 2018; Emma & Aloysius, 2017). The theory aimed at explaining violence and related violent behaviours. Breuer & Elson (2017) noted that the theory suggests aggression is usually a result of frustration, and frustration leads to aggression. The theory therefore believes that frustration always results in aggression due to the fact that certain conditions of human life lead to frustration and thus result in violent behaviour.

Furthermore, the theory believes that an individual's desires and needs are usually affected by events, which consequently result in dissatisfaction. Individuals may respond to situations in anger in an attempt to meet the desired goals (Olaoluwa, 2018). This condition is perceived as aggression in many instances. For example, electoral violence is attributed to a condition of anger where electorates or politicians become frustrated due to unsatisfactory election results. The electorate employed violent behaviour as their votes seemed to have been manipulated by some individuals in power or frustrated politicians who incite violence through political thugs against political opponents. It was also suggested that opposition political parties tend to use violence with the help of political thugs to thwart election processes, or that when a given candidate of a political party senses losing an election, he or she may decide to employ political militias to rig election results (Olaoluwa, 2018; Halliru, 2012).

Violent behaviour in the form of political thuggery is used by a group of political thugs who are believed to be loyalists to politicians as a result of patronage. This group of individuals want to change their status in society through violent means (Joshua, 2013). Political elites usually recruit political thugs or militias to cause violence during

elections because of economic frustration based on their relatively disadvantaged class in society. Most political thugs are living in poverty (though there are a few others who are doing well, especially loyalists that are closer to politicians and were given political appointments like special assistants and political assistants), and to change such conditions, it needs a proper struggle that entails the use of violence to oust a group of people from attaining political power.

3.3.1 Basic Assumptions of Frustration Aggression Theory

Frustration-aggression theory basically suggests that frustration and aggression are the key elements to determining violence (Battigalli, Dufwenberg, & Smith, 2019). The theory further assumed that:

- a) Aggression is basically a result of frustration. Aggression is the act of hostile behaviour by the electorate, candidates, or political parties where a perceived threat trying to affect a desired goal is anticipated and thus becomes a justified reason to use violence so as to get things right.
- b) Frustration leads to aggression: Frustration is a psychological imbalance of mind-set caused by a conditional dissatisfaction to attain or achieve certain goals being desired.
- c) Frustration becomes a basic element that makes a group of people or a person act violently or use violent behaviour. In violence, frustrated individuals are always aggressive, and they become aggressors.
- d) Most violent behaviours are the product of aggression and frustration. Conflict and violence of any kind, such as electoral violence, communal violence, religious violence, ethnic violence, and so on, are the reflection of a real colour of frustration and aggression.

It is further believed that the central idea of frustration, which the theory suggests, is directly connected to aggression and violence (Olu-Adeyemi, 2017; Horgan & Horgan, 2004). Frustration and aggression are guided by certain factors that include but are not limited to poverty, inequality, illiteracy, lack of accessibility to political power, alienation, diseases, unemployment, cultural decadence, family upbringing, injustice, and other sentiments (Olaoluwa, 2018). These factors usually push groups of individuals to use violent behaviour to achieve their goals. It is on this note that people in power or opposition use political thugs to cause violence during elections in Nigeria. Olaoluwa (2018) added that when those in government manipulate election processes or results, the opponents tend to use militias to counter the manipulation through violent means. Perhaps when the ruling party perceived a threat of losing the election, they usually use security personnel so as to maximise their chances of retaining political power.

3.3.2 Criticism of Frustration Aggression Theory

Frustration aggression theory is criticised on the ground that frustration is insufficient to explain aggression but is not necessarily a condition because individuals can be aggressive without being frustrated. That is, to throw away the belief that frustration leads to aggression because aggression is not always a function of frustration. However, this criticism is insignificant because political thugs and politicians were perhaps frustrated during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

3.3.3 Strengths and Applications of Frustration Aggression Theory

Frustration aggression theory is relevant to studies in the field of social sciences and political science in particular, most especially studies of violence, conflict, electoral

violence, and other social malaise. Despite its weaknesses, the frustration aggression theory is applicable in the studies of political thuggery as a form of electoral violence in Nigeria (Emma & Aloysius, 2017). The theory enabled us to understand how aggression is a major factor in frustration and, thus, how frustration leads to aggression. It exposed us to the knowledge that most acts of violence are a result of frustration by the aggressors (Inyang, 2018) and that political thuggery as a form of violence is also linked to frustration because either the opposition or those in power experienced frustration during the election and thereafter found it necessary for them to employ political thugs or militias to disrupt election processes and aid rigging and other forms of manipulation. A study by Iheanacho (2015) used frustration aggression theory to explain how democratic consolidation is affected by electoral violence. He added that the attitude of political elites with regard to the rule of law thwarts democracy and affects people's participation in democratic rule in Nigeria.

Furthermore, both the ruling and the opposition political parties accuse each other on the use of political thugs to win election. For instance, the ruling political party in Kano State, the APC, was accused of causing violence by employing political thugs to disrupt election processes during the 2019 general election. Similarly in Rivers State, PDP was accused of using political militias to cause violence and protect the interest of their party (PDP) that resulted to loss of lives during the 2019 general election. Out of frustration, PDP political thugs were accused of killing members of the electorate and a soldier so as to ensure the PDP won the election in Rivers State against the interests of the ruling party, which was the APC in the country. As a strategy adopted to win elections by all means in Nigeria, political parties use political thuggery as a means to manipulate elections by causing electoral violence. This has been the trend in the Nigerian history of elections, which became more devastating in the 2019

general elections as the number of recorded violence and attacks doubled the 2015 general election in terms of the number of individuals killed from the beginning of the election to the announcement of the final results (Situation Room, 2019).

Apart from that, the APC, as a ruling party, employed the services of political thugs, as reported in many states like Kano, Kogi, Katsina, and Lagos, to disrupt election processes. It was the same scenario with the PDP as an opposition political party but a ruling party at state level in Rivers, Sokoto, Delta, and Adamawa. PDP members were accused of using political militias to get control of the election process to their advantage, against the interests of the APC, which was the ruling party at the centre (Situation Room, 2019). Where a political party is in control of the affairs of the state (the ruling party), the use of political thugs to manipulate elections is just a normal affair, but the political party in control of the centre usually uses federal security agencies to abuse election processes to their advantage. Example, Governor Wike of the PDP cried against the presence and deployment of military personnel during the 2019 general elections. The federal government responded that the military was there to ensure a smooth, free election. Governor Wike accused the APC of deploying military personnel for partisan politics to help the APC rig the election in Rivers State (IRI & NDI, 2019; Wike, 2019).

Consequently, frustration aggression theory alone can't provide a convincing explanation for the phenomenon of political thuggery, considering an attempted explanation for the role of political thuggery in the growing insecurity after the 2019 general elections in the country. Thus, another social science theory of crime and violence, called the broken window theory, is adopted as a tool of analysis to complement explanation and analysis. What is the broken window theory?

3.4 Broken Window Theory

Broken window theory is a social theory used in political analysis to explain crime and violence. The theory was developed by Wilson & Kelling in 1982 as an analogy of a window building to explain minor and major acts of violence that are unattended to by the security personnel in societies (Abdullahi et al., 2016). It was added that a minor act of crime or violence, if not tackled, may lead to bigger violence with a huge impact. In a clear sense, if a broken window is left without repair, other groups of the population may assume such a thing is without care, which will attract the attention of other individuals to break more windows from the building beyond control. In the long run, the building will end up without windows.

3.4.1 Basic Assumptions and Strength of Broken Window Theory

The basic assumption of the theory, to the understanding of crime and violence, is that where and when a minor incident of crime, crisis, violence, protest, or demonstration is not attended to, managed, or controlled by the security agencies, it will lead to a bigger crime or violence (Abdullahi et al., 2016). The theory also suggests that a lack of control to check illegal gatherings, abuse of the law, routine supervision of unused structures, and patrol of the nearby environment and neighbouring societies will open up greater risks and dangers to violence. It also suggests that a lack of social control mechanisms always aggravates crises and violence (Abdullahi et al., 2016). For instance, if a thief is not punished for stealing a chicken, he may turn out to be an armed robber or gangster in the future. On this note, we can say that if political thuggery is not controlled at an early stage, it may lead to full violence consuming a wide range of society. It may even degenerate into civil war or ethnic cleansing by affecting a whole ethnic group through genocide. When political thugs are not

controlled, they may become a bigger security threat and form a larger group of insurgents, bandits, terrorists, etc. In a study of Borno State, Paul (2013) revealed how political thugs in Maiduguri called 'Ecomog' transformed and joined a group of insurgents called Boko Haram.

3.4.2 Criticisms of Broken Window Theory

Although the fact that broken window theory highlights its importance to study crime and violence, it was criticized by its subjecting a society to a mere dilapidated building with broken windows. It was also criticized with the question of why broken window in the first place? The theory also relegated the causes of violence to a simple broken window. The prototype cannot be sufficient enough to make generalisation in all acts of violence serving as a major challenge to its applicability. It is on this basis Abdullahi et al (2016) cited (Bratton & Kelling, 2006; Gault and Silver, 2008; Xu, Fiedler and Flaming, 2005) who argued that the broken window postulation never suggested a straight line between disorder and youth violence. It rather stressed that the line was incidental and irregular to the explanation of violence and crime in society. However, this theory helped us to understand the role of security officials in contributing to insecurity after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria because security failed to address the menace at lower stage that thereafter transformed to big criminal groups of criminals like Boko Haram terrorists, bandits, militants, secessionists and other forcing national security threats in Nigeria (Moliki, 2021; Paul, 2013; Rosenje, 2020; Austin, 2015; Inyang, 2018; Omomia, 2015; Iyekekpola, 2018; Obiam, 2021; Sule *et al.*, 2020a).

3.5 Theories of Frustration Aggression, Broken Window and Political Thuggery

The Frustration–Aggression Theory, originally developed by Dollard et al. (1939), posits that aggression is often the result of frustration that arises when individuals or groups are blocked from achieving their goals. This theory has since been refined by Berkowitz (1989), who argued that frustration does not always lead directly to aggression but creates an aggressive drive that is expressed when situational cues permit violence. However, the Broken Window Theory, advanced by Wilson and Kelling (1982), suggests that visible signs of disorder and weak enforcement of law encourage further deviance and criminality. Tolerating minor offences creates an environment that signals lawlessness, leading to the escalation of more severe crimes.

In the context of Nigeria's 2019 general elections, political thuggery can be explained through this framework. Many Nigerian youths, who constitute the bulk of political thugs, are socio-economically marginalised due to poverty, unemployment, and exclusion from mainstream politics (Alemika, 2011; Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). Their frustration over structural inequalities and lack of access to political power or economic opportunities makes them vulnerable to recruitment by politicians. Accordingly, broken window theorists believed that tolerance of impunity, corruption, and weak institutional enforcement created conditions conducive to political thuggery. For example, the failure of security agencies and the judiciary to adequately prosecute perpetrators of past electoral violence signalled that such acts could be carried out without consequence (Omilusi, 2016).

Furthermore, it is institutional weakness that emboldened political actors to sponsor thugs to snatch ballot boxes, attack voters, and destroy electoral materials, knowing enforcement would be minimal or selective, as noted by the broken window theory.

The “broken windows” of Nigeria’s governance system—corruption, weak rule of law, and electoral malpractice—thus normalised violent behaviours during the elections (Ibeanu, 2007). As such, frustrations were redirected into aggression during the elections, manifesting in attacks on polling stations, intimidation of voters, and destruction of electoral materials. The theory thus explains political thuggery as an outlet for accumulated frustration, exploited by political elites who provide financial inducements and protection (Omodia & Egwemi, 2011).

Frustration aggression theory and broken window theory demonstrated the fact that human societies always experience violence. While frustration is the major source of violence, when individuals are frustrated, they become aggressive and act violently in many situations (Agri & Agri, 2021; Ja’e & Lukman, 2021; Olaoluwa, 2018). Thus, violence is inevitable regardless of the system of government being practiced in society, and political thuggery is therefore regarded as a major form of electoral violence, whereby political thugs are used as agents of electoral rigging to cause violence during elections (Taylor 2018). This suggested that even countries that serve as the role models of democratic consolidation, like the United States of America, experience cycles of electoral violence, especially the activities of political thugs as in the recent 2020 presidential election, where political thugs believed to be supporters of the Republican Party aggressively disrupted parliamentary sittings in the Capitol. Likewise, in many developing democracies in Africa and Asia, the activities of political thugs and militias have become rampant, with both ruling and opposition political parties supporting political thugs to serve their interests. These have been seen in Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, and many other countries in the world (Taylor, 2018).

The fact that frustration and aggression view society as composed of individuals with violent and aggressive tendencies to respond to different conditions that lead to violence, but broken window theory, it is perhaps noted that where minor cases of violence are unattended to by the authorities concerned, they will degenerate into full-scale major violence (Abdullahi et al., 2016; Battigalli et al., 2019; Olaoluwa, 2018). Thus, much tension escalate because people become frustrated and violent behaviour becomes imminent. In democratic societies, elections are usually marred by electoral violence, where political thugs armed with deadly weapons launch violent attacks and destructions to achieve political goals. So, in any attempt to domesticate one's interests, a politically armed group must be used to ensure it. It is apparent that politicians openly or covertly support and institutionalise political thugs as their security guards in their quest to domesticate their leadership over and above oppositions (Taylor, 2018).

Violence and the use of political thugs have become legitimate political tools to achieve a desired goal in societies. The broken window theory believed that crime and violence, if not addressed, would degenerate from a minor to a big security threat (Abdullahi et al., 2016). Since politics, corruption, and unpatriotic attitudes undermined the arrest and punishment of offenders who support political thugs and electoral violence, politicians are not willing to change their violent political behaviour and culture because the use of threats guaranteed a better chance to get or retain their political position. This implies that what motivated the recruitment and sponsorship of violent armed groups was to ensure election victory with the help of political thugs who attacked and destroyed election processes so as to get maximum chances of winning elections over political opponents. This explains the recurrent nature of destruction and attacks in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. However, it is difficult

for politicians to restrict the use of violence and threats only to the general public. It is apparent that these political actors used such actions to create an enabling political atmosphere for private gain and selfish interests in order to maximise the chances of election victory at all costs; most times, it is desired to dominate political positions with a 'zero sum game' approach (Sule, 2019).

Frustration aggression theory assumes that crimes and violent behaviours are a result of frustration due to the systemic condition of a given society, where people who feel deprived become aggressive. Therefore, frustrated youths become vulnerable to being used as agents of violence to disrupt elections, who are supported by desperate and frustrated politicians to win elections at all costs in order to access the public treasury so as to loot resources and continue to control other groups. For example, Obi (2004) noted that the oligarchical consolidation of the elites to control political power in Nigeria demonstrated a centric political power vested in the office of Mr President that holds unilateral control of the oil and gas sector. To this end, much of the revenue generated from the mono-economic structure is in the hands of the president, who mostly shares it with friends and immediate family due to corruption in the country.

Furthermore, frustration aggression and broken window theories conditioned democratic stability to changing situations, which included political actions, inner dynamics, shifting structural patterns, and alternating principles that always open space for rights, freedom, and competition, and at the same time perpetually lock the chances through violence and related political actions (Abdullahi et al., 2016; Olaoluwa, 2018; Taylor, 2018). This relate to why security personnel, who are the custodians of law, culture, and norms need to enforce obedience using laws and decrees, were unable to create, protect, and ensure political order. Perhaps, it becomes

apparent that political disorder can be created and defended not only by security personnel but also by politicians, who must desist from the use of violence (Taylor, 2018). However, recruitment and support given to political thugs who are either owned by the state or independent of the state to disrupt elections put a great danger to the election process, democracy, and national security, especially during and after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Consequently, armed groups operate either temporarily or permanently in society. The groups operate due to lackadaisical attitudes of government authorities and security agencies, who show an 'I do not care attitude' to address violence or criminality at the right time when it emerged from a minor case before changing to a big issue within or outside the state, as revealed by the broken window theory (Abdullahi et al., 2016). Hence, the two theories highlight both the micro-level psychological drive (frustration leading to aggression among marginalised youths) and the macro-level institutional conditions (tolerance of lawlessness and weak enforcement) that sustained political thuggery during the 2019 general elections. Hence, electoral violence in Nigeria cannot be understood only as a product of individual aggression but as an outcome of structural frustrations, political manipulation, and systemic institutional failure, especially security agencies and other authorities. Thus, political thugs were created and supported by politicians to serve as agents or tools of election malpractice through the use of violence and violent threats against the opposition, candidates in an attempt to maximise election victory in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Perhaps Figure 3.1 presents a general summary of theories used.

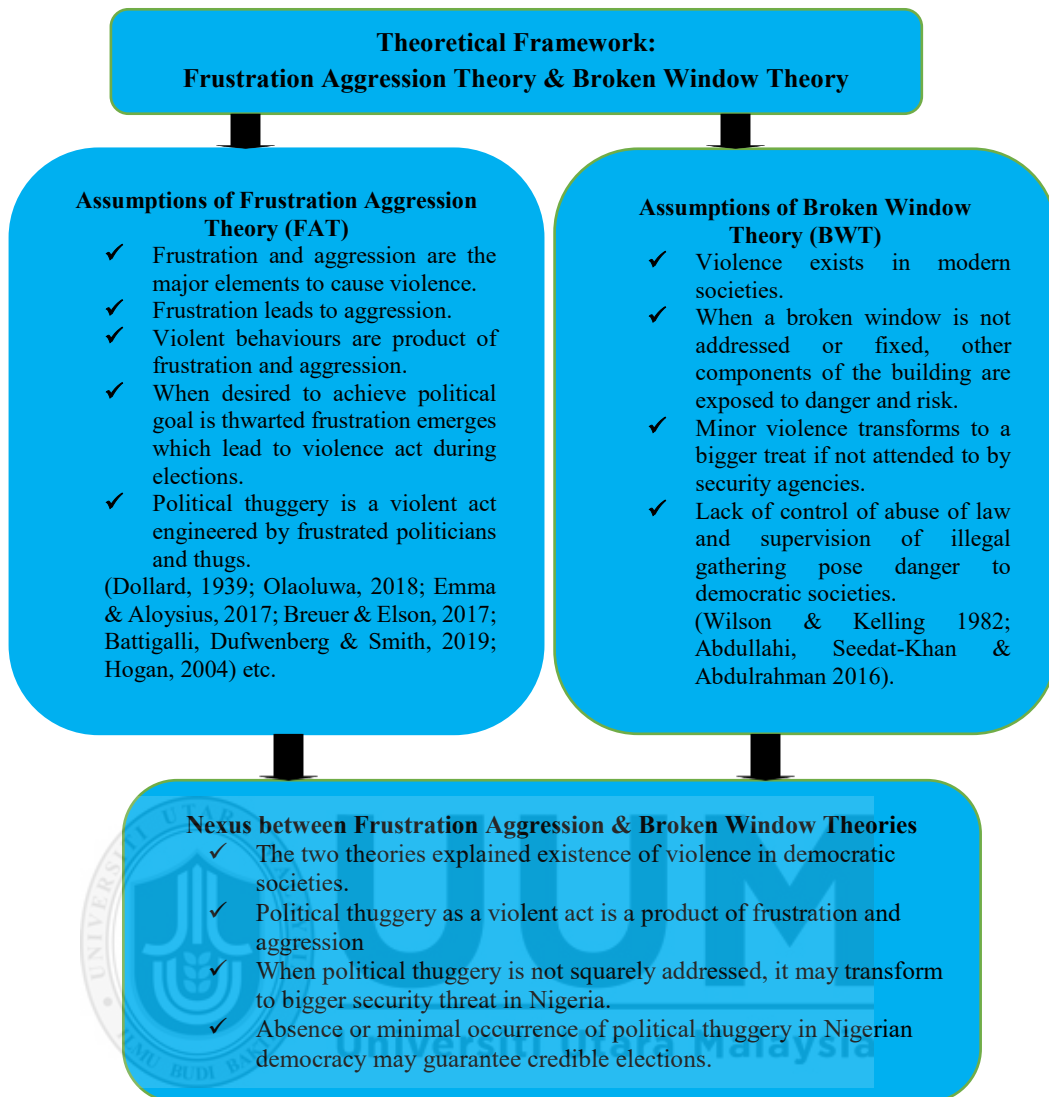


Figure 3.1 Frustration Aggression Theory versus Broken Window Theory

3.6 Summary

Frustration aggression theory and broken window theory are used to explain and analyse the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Though a theory like relative deprivation theory is important to the study but seems inadequate and incapable of explaining the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, as demonstrated by the explanatory powers of frustration aggression theory and broken window theory, Frustration aggression theory enables us to understand how aggression becomes a major factor in frustration and, thus, the way frustration leads to aggression. It exposes

us to the knowledge that most acts of violence are a result of frustration by the aggressors (Inyang, 2018), and thus the attitude of politicians with regard to elections, rule of law, and peaceful coexistence thwarts election credibility and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Similarly, broken window theory notes that when a minor incident of crime, crisis, violence, protest, or demonstration is not attended to, managed, or controlled by the security agencies, it will lead to a bigger crime or violence, and thus, a lack of social control mechanisms always aggravates crises and violence. When political thugs are not controlled, they may become a bigger security threat and form a larger group of insurgents, bandits, and terrorists in the country.

Finally, the use of political thugs or militias has become a legitimate political tool to achieve a desired goal in most developing democracies. It is believed that political thuggery and other related crimes, if not addressed, will degenerate from a minor to a big threat. Since there is not much political will to punish offenders for the use and support of political thugs due to political undertones, politicians are not willing to change the pattern of political behaviour towards 'politics of bitterness' because the use of political thugs in elections guarantees them a better chance to get or retain political position. This implies the motive behind the recruitment and sponsorship of violent armed groups to disrupt most political activities, like elections, in order to get maximum chances of winning elections over political opponents in Nigeria.

CHAPTER FOUR

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED POLITICAL THUGGERY DURING THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

4.1 Introduction

The 2019 general elections were conducted in a highly tensed atmosphere of violent attacks, mostly perpetrated by politicians through political thugs (Moliki, 2021; Obiam, 2021; Sule et al., 2020). Accordingly, the European Union (2019) reported that the 2019 general elections were marred by violent attacks by political thugs and other irregularities, which included late distribution of election materials, lack of transparency, inadequate supply of information or update to the public on election preparedness, vote buying, low voter turnout, excessive use of money beyond limit, trade of hate speeches among party supporters, failure of smart card readers during voting, abrupt postponement, and cancellations of the election and results.

Equally, a civil society organisation revealed the tension of the electoral conduct with massive political attacks perpetrated by political thugs who were supported by frustrated politicians with a high sense of desperation to win elections at all costs, which has often exacerbated massive killings, intimidation, and kidnapping of candidates, voters, election staff, security personnel, observers, and journalists, in addition to the destruction of properties that included election materials, campaign offices, and personal belongings (Situation Room, 2019).

Further reports indicated that political thugs moved openly on the streets in possession of deadly weapons, targeting and destroying election processes at various polling units and collation centres where they intimidated and disenfranchised citizens from exercising their constitutional rights (HRW, 2019, IRI & NDI, 2019; CLEEN Foundation, 2019). Meanwhile, in just 127 days from the official commencement of the election process to the announcement of results (October 2018 to March 2019), political thugs launched 161 politically motivated attacks on supporters of different political parties and properties that resulted in the killing of 626 people across Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019). The cases occurred in the course of the elections conducted during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. (INEC, 2019).

These attacks by political thugs were instigated, supported, and funded by politicians who were usually frustrated with a strong desire to desperately win elections at all costs (European Union, 2019). During the course of the 2019 general elections, it was not only political thugs who were frustrated, but also politicians and supporters of different political parties who became frustrated due to one or two reasons (Situation Room, 2019). For political thugs, frustration was imminent because of economic and political imbalances like poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and marginalisation; while for politicians, frustration arose from desperation and a strong desire to win elections at all costs but were unable to do so due to unpopularity, limited funds, and inaccessibility to state machinery over political opponent(s).

Whereas for the supporters of political parties, frustration came as a result of rigging, attempts to manipulate the electoral process, or deprivation of franchise (Battigalli et al., 2019; Breuer & Elson, 2017). These reasons usually promote aggression, thereby prompting politically motivated attacks, violence, and rejection of election results or

processes that cause the loss of lives and properties across the country (Olaoluwa, 2018). This confirmed the assumption of the Frustration Aggression Theory that frustration mostly led to aggression, and afterward, aggression eventually resulted in violence (Breuer & Elson, 2017; Olu-Adeyemi, 2017).

Consequently, this chapter encapsulates factors that influenced political thuggery in the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The factors are believed to mainstream political thuggery into political activities and election cycles, which invariably paved the way for rigging, manipulation, and other malpractices. Politicians employed the services of political thugs to inflict violent attacks and maximise the chances of winning elections, regardless of the principles of free, fair, and credible elections. The factors included structural imbalance and frustration, politics of clientelism or patronage, politics of do-or-die affair, absence of political parties' ideology, politics as a business venture and investment for personal gain, weakness of the electoral managing body, inadequate electoral laws and regulations, weak security and judiciary, and unpatriotic attitudes. These factors therefore prompted political thuggery, which thereafter created an enabling environment for the rigging and manipulation of electoral processes through attacks and destruction across the country during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

4.2 Structural Imbalance and Frustration

Structural imbalances arose from marginalisation or hardship conditions, which left many people in frustration, thereby pushing them into political thuggery and thereafter exposing them to exploitation by desperate politicians who used them to cause violence during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It was argued that ethnicity, poverty, illiteracy, and social injustice are the main driving forces that cause electoral

violence and political thuggery, which are mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing democracies in the world (Taylor, 2018).

Nigerian unemployment data revealed relative growth from 2018 to 2020 but declined from 2020 to 2022 based on a World Bank report (2023) of economic indices of growth and unemployment (World Bank, 2023). In spite of 7.5% economic growth, insecurity increased across the country, especially during and after the 2019 general elections (NST, 2023). Figure 4.1 indicated that the unemployment rate stood at 12.16% while criminal attacks were recorded at 1,170 incidences in the year 2018; in the year 2019, unemployment stood at 12.59% but records revealed 1,549 attacks; whereas unemployment stood at 14.35% with 1,868 incident attacks in the year 2020; in the year 2021, unemployment declined to 13.65% with a growing record of 2,284 attacks; and unemployment kept declining at 13.44% with a similar decrease in incident attacks at 1,923.

Based on this, there is a relationship between unemployment and growing criminality, yet COVID-19 restrictions in the year 2020 increased unemployment in Nigeria but, at the same time, did not stop criminals from growing and launching violent attacks. In fact, the records show an increase in violent attacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite movement restrictions enforced by the government. Therefore, Figure 4.1 revealed that though unemployment pushed some individuals to criminality, it was the frustration of politicians and political thugs that also influenced political thuggery, particularly during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

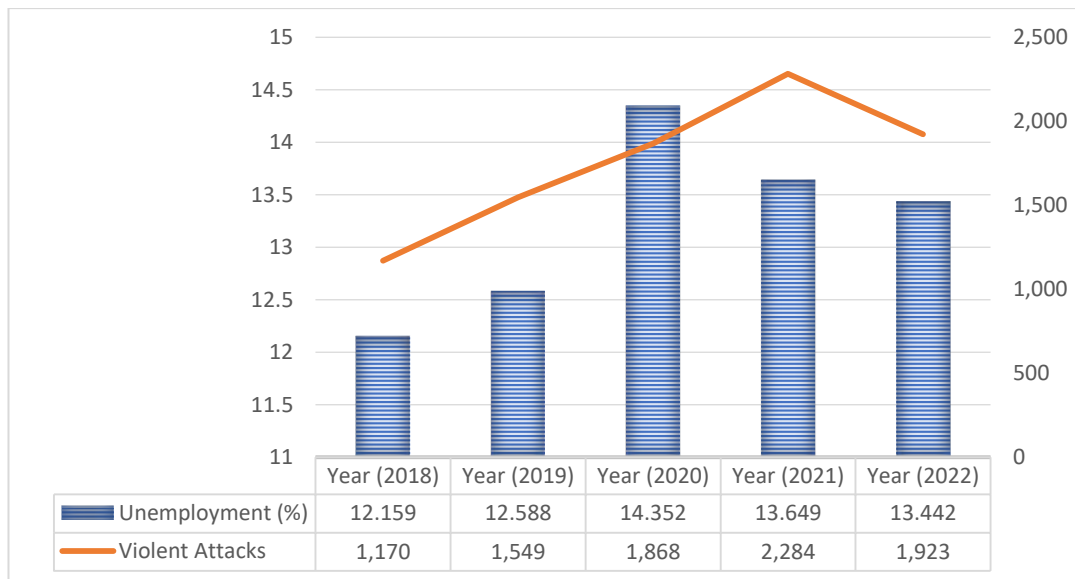


Figure 4.1 Unemployment rate in relations to violent attacks in Nigeria
Source: The World Bank (2023) and the NST (2023)

In the events of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, most political thugs were said to be jobless, and that condition pushed them to join different groups of political thugs for survival (Ja'e & Lukman, 2021). Political thugs became vulnerable and were easily exploited by frustrated and desperate politicians to win elections at all costs. It was stated that

“The issue of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty are the major factors that contribute to the menace and its cycle. If you are not employed, if you are not educated, or you are suffering from poverty, you can easily be recruited into the act of political thuggery; they (politicians) don't formulate policies that will empower the youth” (Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

It is on this note Agri & Agri (2020) argued that structural imbalance from systemic failure in Nigeria resulted in a high number of security challenges caused by unemployment, poverty, and diseases. This manifested in the high rate of insecurity and insurgency in the East; excessive kidnapping and banditry in the North West and

Central; internet fraudsters, assassinations, and ritual killings in the South East, South South, and South West; and above all, the pervasive nature of political thuggery and of political militias during and after elections have become a clear picture of the Nigerian polity. These crises have, more often than not, thwarted democratic sustainability and, in particular, election credibility.

Some individuals, groups, or societies in Nigeria feel aggrieved, marginalised, and relatively deprived, especially those who are far away from the corridors of political power or have no access to resources. These people become frustrated during elections because they feel that their potential to rule is blocked by certain factors, including but not limited to poverty, ethnicity, religions, sectional politics, or group interests. Thus, it is what Frustration Aggression Theory postulates that frustration usually leads to aggression and thereafter will lead to violence (Battigalli et al., 2019; Breuer & Elson, 2017). As a result of these and other political reasons, they resort to the use of violence and cause destruction and attacks in order to facilitate rigging and win elections for their political godfathers at the detriment of other opponents.

Accordingly, frustrated politicians induced political thugs with little money, illicit drugs, and sometimes deceitful promises just to cause violence on election days. This too creates chances of electoral manipulation and rigging to favour a given candidate over political opponents; and thereafter, the political thugs accept to intimidate voters, security personnel, election staff, candidates, observers, and media reporters with kidnapping, injuries, threats of death, and even killings.

“Politicians need them (thugs) for intimidation and other things in order to push their popularity or intend to instil fears in people so as to bring out the support in them or fight rival political parties and others” (Interview with Informant in category A1, 2023).

In addition, frustration and desperation among politicians also trigger violence during elections against the relative standard of living. During the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, evidence emerged whereby top-ranking politicians, whose standard of living was high and they were believed to be economically and politically well-doing were arrested while disrupting election processes (at polling units and collation of result centres) in Kano and Rivers States (European Union, 2019). The arrested politicians moved around with political thugs, jointly attacked people, and destroyed election results and materials across the country.

For instance, the Deputy Governor of Kano State (Nasiru Gawuna), the Commissioner for Local Government and Rural Development (Murtala Sulen Garo), and the Chairman of Nasarawa Local Government Area (Lamin Sani) were arrested over the destruction of result sheets at Gama Ward in Nasarawa Local Government Area during the 2019 general elections (The Guardian, 2019b). However, it was the frustration accompanied by desperation that led these top-ranking politicians in Kano State to destroy election results. They were supported by their political thugs to ensure violence at the collation centre, which forced INEC to announce an inconclusive election in the state because of violence.

It can therefore be stated that relative conditions as argued by Ayegba (2015) alone can't influence political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, but frustration and aggression must be considered because top-ranking politicians are well-

doing individuals, and others have worse conditions of living compared to political thugs, yet they did not join political thuggery in Nigeria. Although Ezemenaka (2021), Ja'e & Lukman (2021), and Agri & Agri (2020) believed that high levels of poverty and increasing unemployment forced youths into political thuggery in Nigeria, it is beyond such explanations because poverty and unemployment alone can only serve as push elements that force youths into political thuggery but can't provide an explanation to why politicians routinely used and supported political thugs during the 2019 general elections or why politicians used political thugs to cause violence so as to rig and win elections in Nigeria.

However, a convincing explanation revealed that it was frustration from politicians and political thugs that genuinely served as the basic element that influenced political thuggery during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. This is accompanied by a high level of desperation to win the election by all means. In this direction, the final reports of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, which emanated from INEC (2019), the European Union (2019), Situation Room (2019), Human Rights Watch (2019), and the CLEEN Foundation (2019), revealed that desperation among politicians to win elections at all costs resulted in the use of political thugs who were directed to instigate abduction of election staff, snatching of election materials, malfunction of smart card readers, destruction of election materials and properties, killings, and intimidation of people during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Contrary to Ezemenaka (2021), who believed that unemployment is linked to the reasons that pushed youths to violence and create human insecurity in Nigeria, it is believed that frustration and aggression of both politicians and political thugs led to violent attacks and destructions during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in

Nigeria. Indeed, it is because of frustration that politicians recruited, supported, and funded political thugs to cause violence so that maximum advantage of victory will be created through rigging and other forms of manipulation during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. On a number of occasions, politicians instigated thugs to launch violent and perpetual attacks on candidates, voters, election staff, security personnel, observers, and journalists (Situation Room, 2019; HRW, 2019). Perhaps, top-ranking politicians that are well doing who supported political thugs also joined in some of the attacks and destructions, sometimes with the help of security personnel, during the conduct of the 2019 general elections (DW, 2019; European Union, 2019). Perhaps, it was gathered during focus group discussion with informants that

“At times even the educated people are even part of the political thuggery because we can see in so many places whereby it has been engineered by an educated person then he would push the illiterate person to go for the act. So it is political calculation...” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

Politicians recruited political thugs during the 2019 general elections to aid election rigging and manipulation of result through violent attacks just to win election against political opponents at all cost. It was revealed in an interview that

“It is open and known that they (politicians) usually recruited them (political thugs), when they recruited them, they give them money, they buy intoxicant for them so that they will be in a frame of mind where they do not even know what they are doing, whether is good or bad, and then they buy some locally-made weapons such as knives, matches, sticks, knives, horns and other locally-made weapons and give them. So, by giving them drugs, they abuse drugs,

and by giving them these locally made weapons, they now roam the streets.” (Interview with informant in Category E, 2023).

During the conduct of the 2019 general elections, particularly on the Election Day, political thugs intimidated and terrified individuals all over election areas. For instance, in an interview with academic informant, he added that

“They (political thugs) came out with weapons in a terrifying outlook, terrifying and horrifying voters. So, in this way, what they do in an area where for example an opposition or a particular candidate has strength, they come out in large number, in mass, they horrify people to the extent that either they refuse to come out and cast their votes or once they see them, they will disperse. And apart from that also, they directly sometimes even thumb print ballot papers, they hijack ballot boxes or even alter the result by displaying these weapons (Interview with informant in Category E, 2023).

Furthermore, political thuggery led to the cancellation of 2,497,181 votes due to violent attacks and destructions, which affected 3,519 polling units across Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019). This is in addition to the re-run elections of two senators, 13 members of the House of Representatives, and 15 members of the State House of Assembly ordered by the courts from different tribunal committees across the country (KDI, 2019), as well as the re-run elections for the seven governors as ordered by the INEC after a controversial and inconclusive announcement from the Returning Officers of Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Kano, Plateau, Sokoto, and Rivers states (Situation Room, 2019). Thereafter, political thuggery was blamed for the low voter turnout, which stood at 34.96%, the lowest among the six rounds of elections conducted in 20 years, during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019).

4.3 Politics of Clientelism or Patronage

The politics of clientelism is a situation in which individuals called patrons become dominant in politics and exercise more political power and control than other individuals. They usually became patrons, masters, or principals in all political activities and therefore controlled segments of the population who became loyalists or even servants. It was opined that political patronage or god-fatherism gives a person access to positions that may eventually impact his decision to be involved in election-related violence (May, 2016). It is on this note that during the conduct of the 2019 general elections, some politicians owned people as their loyalists, and at the same time, the loyalists were employed to protect the master afterward turned to be political thugs and were directed to attack and destroy political processes on behalf of their master so as to win the election at all costs (Moliki, 2021).

During election cycles, political thugs offered their services to the master, the master in turn promised employment, money, contracts, or certain basic needs to his loyalists after victory, but the master dictated to them what to or not to do based on their personal and political interests, even if it was against the general interest. For example, it was stated from interview that

“Some of our boys in the South East are doing it (political thuggery). There are some groups called Nnamani group and others like Rochas group. Nnamani group had their job to move away with the ballot box and called visionary groups. They normally do it and they are well organized groups.” (Interview with Informant in Category A2, 2023).

Based on political patronage, it was also gathered that all political parties, without exception, recruited and funded political thugs with little money, fake promises, and

hard drugs to launch attacks on political opponents, especially where a political party or candidate realised that he has a weak political base, that is, where his opponent(s) has strong supporters in an area and may likely emerge as the winner during elections.

It was stated in an interview that

“The prime supporters are actually the politicians. They are actually the politicians because they are the ones either contesting or strongly supporting candidate of their own political party. Politicians cut across either the party officials or the stakeholders or the candidates.” (Interview with Informant in Category G, 2023).

In view of this, most politicians acquired political power and wealth to continue subjecting others as their loyalists, and in return, the loyalists surrendered their rights and means of livelihoods to the master as their ‘god-father’. It was stated that “major political parties deployed this means of rigging elections using political thuggery... Political thuggery has been institutionalized in part of our political system.” (Interview with Informant in Category C, 2023). The master instructed political thugs and other loyalists to do anything to his satisfaction. Based on this, it was narrated during an interview that

“Political godfathers use those political thugs to rig election even before the voting process started. They run away with the ballot box. At times the cause confusion during the voting that gives them the room to manipulate on their ways. They have some extra ballot papers that they want to put into ballot box...” (Interview with Informant in Category D, 2023).

Consequently, May (2016) stated that political patronage, clientelism, or god-fatherism in Nigerian politics has encouraged politicians to engage and mobilise not

only political thugs but also commissioners, special advisers, special assistants, personal assistants, and other designated personalities to enable rigging and cause violent attacks to win positions during elections. Indeed, Nigerian politics is based on the popular belief that ‘anyone who does not have a godfather in politics might seem to have failed or no longer possess a lasting career’ in politics. Other individuals with a similar but narrow opinion believed that ‘political connection is better than a certificate’ and, in the same vein, some believed that “skills rather than just degrees” (Ibrahim, 2022) in the Nigerian contemporary political system. It is based on these popular views that most individuals and political thugs became enslaved to politicians and elites during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Politicians turned political thugs and other loyalists (human beings for that matter) into mere commodities who were used and dumped, bought and sold, or regarded and disregarded during and after the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. In short, political thugs are introduced into political activities, especially electoral cycles, just to fulfil a clear political reason—that is, to serve as agents of electoral rigging in the interest of their principals so as to cause violence and win elections. Political thugs are priced like commodities, bided like contracts, and negotiated just in trade so as to carry out a given assignment. For instance, it was stated that political thugs

“...will only play their card based on what they are assigned to do. So, I think with this, they only played the cards of their godfathers, not the cards of the community.” (Interview with Informant in Category G, 2023).

After negotiation or agreement, political thugs were instigated to carry out attacks that ranged from warning, intimidation, dissuasion, injury, kidnapping, and total

elimination of a given target, individuals. Yet, security personnel become reluctant to address the menace across the country. In some cases, security officers were accused of conniving with politicians to allow thugs to launch attacks on election-specific areas and individuals to cause unrest without showing effort to arrest the situation.

“...security officials at times connive with politicians especially the ruling party. For instance, when ruling party commit offence is worthy to security but when opposition commit same offense, they are found guilty and they be arrested. This is selective treatment and it in biasness.” (Interview with Informant in Category B1, 2023).
“...politicians instructed security on what to do or disperse people to allow their thugs achieve their interest during elections or even informed them to protect their thugs, or even release their thugs when arrested.” (Interview with Informant in Category B2, 2023).

Politicians and political elites perpetually recruited and dragged political thugs into the political processes during elections with the sole aim of maximising political chances to win elections and retain or control political power at all costs in the country (Abubakar et al., 2018; Paul, 2013). Therefore, the use of political thugs to create violence becomes unavoidable for politicians, especially where and when money fails to influence voters, election staff, and security personnel to allow electoral rigging. As such, politicians have no option but to direct political thugs to frighten, terrorise, intimidate, harass, or kidnap anyone against their political interests (Ahmed, 2019). This action is mostly carried out through violent attacks in order to inflict high degrees of injuries, killings, and destruction of properties during and after the 2019 general election.

Available evidence from the 2019 general elections revealed that politicians and political thugs were arrested for instigating violent destruction at different polling units and collation centres in Kano, Rivers, and other states (Situation Room, 2019). Similarly, Human Rights Watch further reported that political thugs armed with deadly weapons patrolled every polling unit a day before and during the election, scaring the electorates, ensuring that only APC voters joined the queue, and preventing any PDP supporters from entering the venue of the election. Whereas, security officers did nothing to arrest the situation (HRW, 2019). Therefore, politicians enslaved their loyalists, and in turn, the subordinates followed the dictates of their master to ensure their victory.

Thereafter, subordinates expected appointments in return so as to remain in power and have access to state resources. This influenced electoral violence, which triggered deadly attacks as different groups of politicians and political thugs fought to be in control of the government during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. This has redefined the mind-set of politicians and political elites, most especially the ruling class, towards winning elections with a zero-sum-game approach across the country. This also revealed why the ruling political party or incumbent candidate fought with opposition and was determined to control all polling units and votes during elections in a do-or-die fashion of politics.

4.4 Politics of ‘Do-or-die’ Affair

The politics of the ‘do or die’ affair is guided by a poor political culture orchestrated by way of violent attacks and destructions with uncherished democratic values in the country. This attitude demonstrated a high level of desperation by frustrated politicians who desired to win elections at all costs, including violent attacks and destructions,

just to win elections through rigging during the 2019 general elections (HRW, 2019). This political behaviour is widely conceived as part and parcel of Nigerian politics, whereby an average citizen believes that without political thuggery one can't win elections and thus has to employ the services of political thugs as much as desired to win elections at all levels in the country. It was stated that

“Our political culture has it that we usually have what is called “political violence”. And because we are used to that, it has become part of us. It reached an extent where by even before an election, people will always anticipate that there would be violence.”
(Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Simply put, do-or-die politics is a state of desperation whereby individuals' political norms are guided by the fact that elections are just an end in themselves and not a means to an end. Nigerian politicians believe that recruiting political thuggery is a necessary political strategy in order to deploy them at various places to win elections through violence so as to survive the risk of losing elections at free contest and get perished in politics (Moliki, 2021). Frustration made politicians to device many strategies so as to win election even through violence because individuals mostly respond to situations in anger as stated by Frustration Aggression Theory (Battigalli et al., 2019; Breuer & Elson, 2017; Olaoluwa, 2018; Halliru, 2012). As such, during the conduct of the 2019 general elections, most if not all politicians and political parties employed the services of political thugs who launched violent attacks under the guidance and directives of their godfather for greater advantage to win positions against political opponents. It was believed in an interview with informant that

“All politicians used it as an opportunity and it became part and parcel of the Nigerian politics up till today. This has been instituted by all as a political tradition. As I am telling, opposition mostly approached and informed me their secret meetings on killing of individuals including myself but it is the work of God who saved me that made them to reveal their plan to me. Some of the suspects were even brought to this house (prison).” (Interview with Informant in category B1, 2023).

Similarly, it was further stated that “politicians of all categories, do not say it is only the ruling party, the ruling party, the opposition party, from all angles, they have their own thugs.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023). More so, it was testified that

“...as a former LGA Secretary, before I moved into politics, in those days, we used to be forced by the government of the state, when the Governor was contesting, that we should be paying the gangs the sum of N5,000 naira in each LGA to sponsor and finance the activities of the thugs of which I regretted doing it up to this time, as a sensible and intellectual people to finance the people that went into killing and destroying people’s property” (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

In addition, politicians and political elites employed both soft and hard strategies to survive the political wings and win elections during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Soft strategies included inducements, promises, bribery, gifts, and propaganda during and after the election. Whereas, hard strategies included the use of force, either by security apparatus or political thugs, to intimidate, frighten, dissuade, terrorise, injure, and eliminate a political opponent and supporters of different political parties, particularly those that resisted political pressure arising from soft strategies in

an anticipation of becoming a perceived threat to their political interests. By using hard strategies, political thugs were employed and financed by desperate and frustrated politicians and instigated to attack and destroy numerous places, including polling units and collation centres across the country. It was stated that there are two levels to achieve attack on target which included primary and secondary levels as

“Primary level begins with destruction of materials like offices, banners, posters, using money to influence a person but someone disobeys or refused to cooperate, then politicians felt otherwise; the use of secondary level is compulsory, which has three stages. Firstly, it begins with intimidations because intimidation deters some to obey and even leave politics. Secondly, when first stage failed, attack will be launched on him, his family, parents or close associates. When all these stages failed, then finally, elimination is necessary which is adopted as a last resort.” (Interview with Informant in Category B1, 2023).

Beside the violent strategies explored during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, politicians further utilised other strategies that included vote buying, ethnicity, religious sentiment, changing electoral laws while in power, and hate speeches against the principles of free contest and competition that guarantee free, fair, and credible elections in all democratic countries (Sule et al., 2020). The INEC Final Report (2019) further revealed that do-or-die politics among politicians desperately resulted in the abduction of election staff, the snatching of election materials, and the theft of smart card readers during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The operation was carried out by political thugs employed by politicians to ensure that their political principal or patron secured maximum advantage to win elections regardless of free and fair principles to ensure election credibility. Elections are a

means through which citizens choose their representatives; however, the 2019 general election was characterised by perpetual violence. The contentious nature of that election registered the use of threats causing killings and destructions during and after the cycles of elections across the country.

Consequently, uncherished democratic values prevailed in Nigerian politics and electoral activities to the extent that an average citizen tended to believe that a military regime is better than a democratic government in addressing security challenges, of which political thuggery is part. To these individuals, democracy contributes to immorality, especially violence arising from the activities of political thugs. Due to do-or-die factor, politicians devised any available means who ensure political thugs widely launched deadly attacks on individuals and, at the same time, destroyed properties that were not only limited to election cycles but spread even after elections across the country. It was observed that politicians

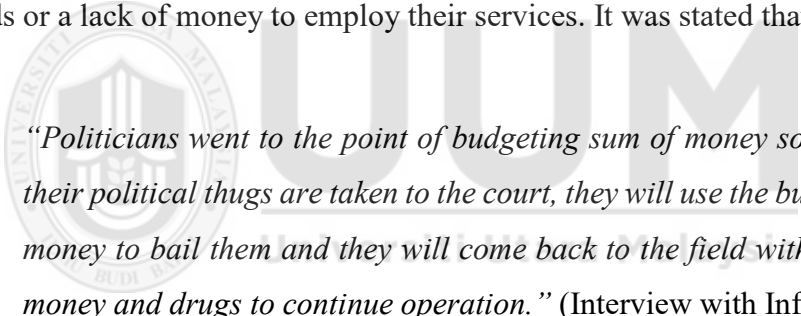
“By all means, they want to emerge victorious. So, they will devise some means in order to win the election by do or die, that's by all means. So, by so doing that the political aspirants will use less privilege youth to achieve their aim in political manipulation.”

(Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

Furthermore, the political thugs were identified by bushy hair and spongy barbing. They routinely insulted people, beat individuals, snatched money and phones, smoked marijuana and hard drugs, took alcohol, raped women, robbed business areas, and injured and killed people, including innocents (HRW, 2019). In spite of atrocities committed by political thugs, politicians were identified with the groups of political thugs who were given t-shirts, clothes, motor cycles, cars, phones, etcetera, painted

with political party logos, and candidates' pictures marauding the nooks and crannies during campaigns. These groups possessed dangerous weapons and launched attacks on perceived enemies of their principal master at the detriment of the general population and the polity at large (Moliki, 2021).

In other words, the do-or-die nature of politics made it so that no political party or politician could claim sanctity over criminalities committed by political thugs in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Neither the party in power nor those in opposition can be exonerated from electoral wrongdoing, particularly involving political thugs as a political strategy to win elections in the 2019 general elections across the country; if a candidate or political party has no political thug at a particular time, it is just a paucity of funds or a lack of money to employ their services. It was stated that



“Politicians went to the point of budgeting sum of money so that if their political thugs are taken to the court, they will use the budgeted money to bail them and they will come back to the field with arms, money and drugs to continue operation.” (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

It was further added that “A politician gathers like 50 or 100 political thugs at his home to give them like 500, 1,000, or 2,000 naira only to spend” (Interview with Informant in category B2, 2023). For instance, as the elections commenced, reports indicated that political thugs moved freely on the day of the elections in most polling units and collation centres, trying to protect the interests of their party or candidate (CLEEN Foundation, 2019). These people disenfranchised voters, attacked candidates, targeted election management staff, and chased away media reporters and election observers for the purpose of disrupting election processes or changing election results to give

their preferred candidate a strong advantage over and above other political opponents (European Union, 2019). There were 161 incidents of violent attacks recorded in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, as presented in Figure 4.2.

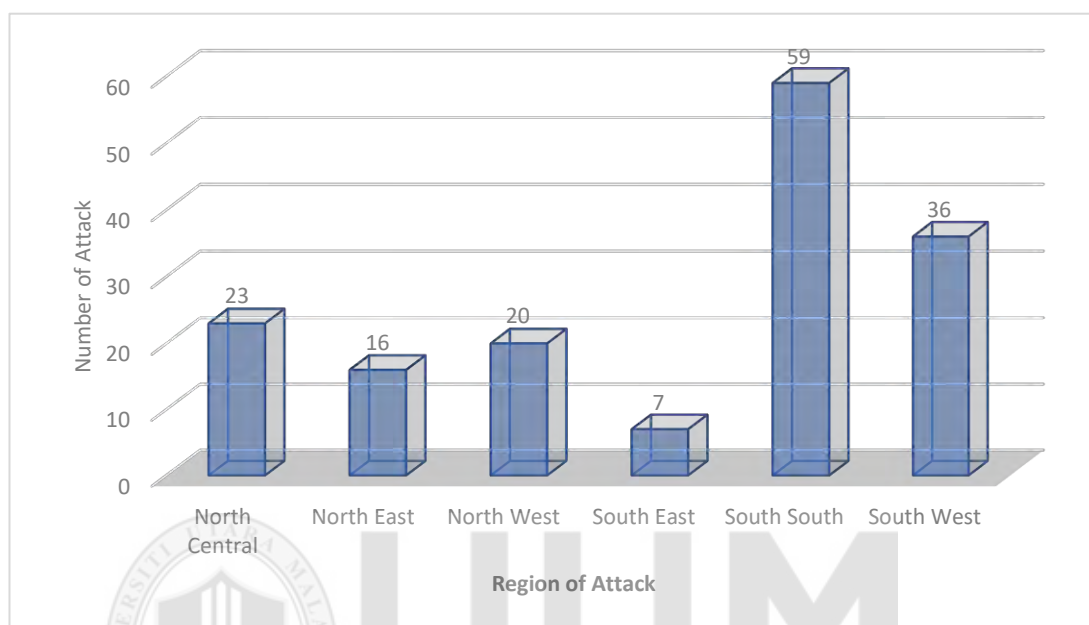


Figure 4.2 Violent Attacks during the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

Figure 4.2 revealed incidents of violent attacks recorded from the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, which included 23 incidents in the North Central, 16 in the North East, 20 in the North West, 7 in the South East, 59 in the South-South, and 36 in the South West. Among other tragic events was the killing of a woman leader (Mrs. Acheju Abuh) of the PDP in Wada/Aro Campaign Council, Ochadamu Ward, who was burned alive by suspected political thugs of the APC in her house around 2:00 p.m. in Kogi State. Political thugs blocked every exit and entrance to the house, poured petroleum, and set fire to the house while the woman cried for help, but no one could rescue her because political thugs surrounded the premises armed with heavy weapons (Vanguard, 2019). Reports further indicated that the do-or-die attitude of frustrated politicians led to the killing of 626 individuals in just 127 days. That is from

the official commencement of elections to the announcement of winners, October 2018 to March 2019, during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019). Figure 4.3 provides details incidents based on geopolitical zones.

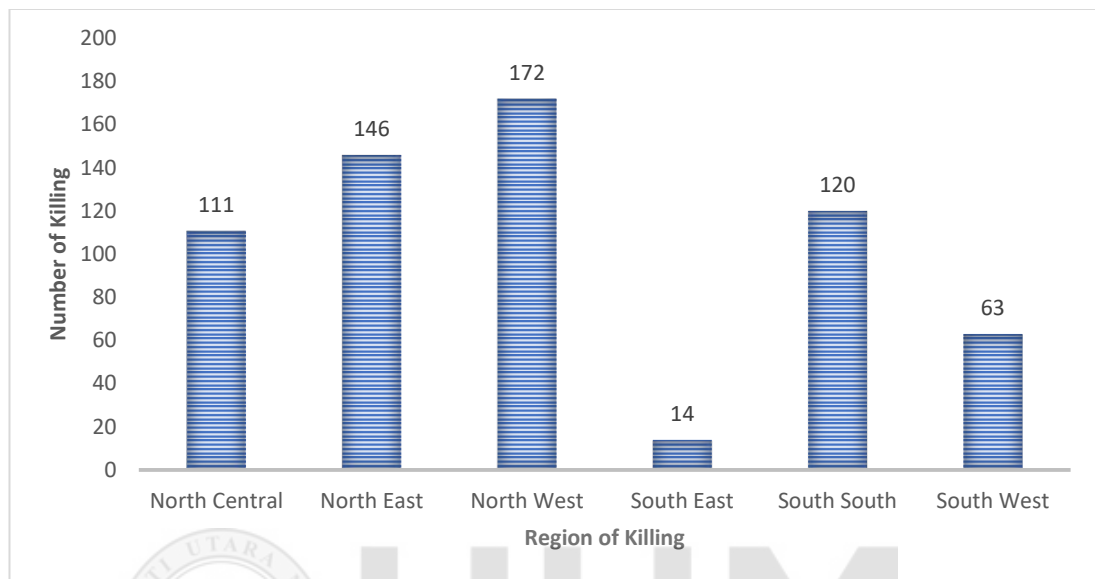


Figure 4.3 Killings during the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

Figure 4.3 explains the number of dead individuals during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The 626 deaths were due to violent attacks by political thugs recorded from pre-election, Election Day, and the post-election period, which were confirmed during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019). The northern region has the highest number of combined killings (429), compared to the southern region, with only 197 individuals killed. In the North, the North West recorded the highest number of dead individuals (even in the entire country), which explained the volatility of the region during the election, just like South-South in the Southern region, which recorded 120 people killed.

In another development, do-or-die politics also made the two major political parties (APC and PDP) and the two major contenders in the presidential election spend huge amounts of money beyond the official limit during their campaign in their quest to win the election (Sule et al., 2021). Most political parties and candidates exceeded financial

limits, which were officially tagged for campaign expenditure, and thereafter, it became difficult for INEC to track and uncover all spending linked to the conduct of the 2019 general elections. As such, desperation to win at all costs made politicians spend money in unlawful ways, either to corrupt or sponsor covert activities, in an attempt to win the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Sule et al., 2021). It was clear that the expenditure was centred on supporting political loyalists and political thugs, advertisements, vote-buying, sponsoring court cases, inducements, and other related expenditures.

Reports further revealed that the two major political parties, APC and PDP, violated the campaign limit of official expenditure during the 2019 general elections (Daily Trust, 2022; Punch, 2022). The two political parties failed to submit their audit reports to INEC (Sule et al., 2021). In general, out of 91 political parties that participated in the 2019 general elections, only 34 submitted their audited financial reports, of which only nine complied with the 2010 Electoral Act as amended. Although the exact figures and details of all expenditures by the major political parties can't be determined, the APC and PDP spent beyond one billion naira (1,000,000,000.00) as the official limit of election expenditure approved by the Commission (INEC). It was exposed further that APC and PDP spent 4.6 billion and 3.3 billion naira, respectively, as linked to a few expenditures, just including billboards, print and electronic media advertisements, and coverage of programmes for the two major political parties, respectively (Situation Room, 2019; Punch, 2022). In the same vein, the 2010 Electoral Act spelled the limit of expenditure of presidential candidates to not more than five billion (5,000,000,000.00) naira, but it was revealed that both President Muhammadu Buhari and Atiku Abubakar spent beyond the official limit (Sule et al., 2021; Situation Room, 2019; Punch, 2022).

It can therefore be stated categorically that do-or-die politics influenced political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. This is because politicians spent money in support of political thugs, and thus political thugs ensured a volatile political environment during the conduct of elections. This was characterised by incessant killings and violent acts of destruction across the country. Not only was spending money beyond the limit, but supporting political thugs to cause violence was also an act of criminality. This indicated a clear violation of electoral laws, which were meant to not only safeguard but also enhance the principles of democratic sustainability and election credibility through free, fair, and credible elections in Nigeria. Thus, these attempts justified the general belief in Nigeria that political thuggery is a necessary strategy employed by desperate and frustrated politicians to use political thugs and win elections by all means. Most politicians routinely state in Hausa language that “*ko da tsiya-tsiya, sai munci zabe*” which means we must win the election at all costs.

In view of this, the presidential candidate of the ruling party, who was also the incumbent president, Muhammadu Buhari, informed his supporters by directing them to ignore and defy security personnel in order to protect votes at all costs. This was always stated in a Hausa slogan by Mr. Buhari to his teaming supporters: “*a kasa, a raka, a jira*” (be vigilant of your votes, escort your votes, and guard your votes) at voting points, collation centres, and wait till election results are announced and declared. Some people believed that votes of electorates don’t count in these cases; politicians and their political thugs basically maintained that ‘whether to vote for their candidate or not, it is assumed you have voted for their candidate, which was said in Hausa language as “*ko ka zaba, ko kar ka zaba, munza ba maka*”. Consequently, do-or-die politics also led to hostility and acrimony when politicians made unguarded utterances, which are unhealthy for democratic governance and election credibility.

The implication was that a lot of individuals joined political thuggery out of frustration during an election with the belief that it would protect the interests of their principal candidate or party. Thus, all 91 political parties that participated in the 2019 general elections lacked ideologies, which might serve as their guiding principles to members during the campaign and also provide the foundation for policy making and implementation after winning elections in Nigeria.

4.5 Absence of Political Party Ideologies

Political parties are the fulcrum of ensuring free, fair, and credible elections when guided by clear ideologies in democratic societies. During the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, however, all registered political parties that participated in the election lacked ideologies as their guiding principles (European Union, 2019; Sule et al., 2021). Accordingly, political party ideologies are basic principles in directing and shaping the affairs of the party and candidate with a view to achieving the desired goal of promoting democratic governance and election credibility. In most developed democracies like the United States and European countries, party or candidate inclination towards the 'left or right' wing of affiliation or ideology dominates the scene of politics (Kevin & Tony, 2018). Indeed, political party ideology like liberalism or conservatism shapes candidates' political behaviour, norms, and socialisation towards political actions, which in turn provide a major source for policy direction, political action, and inaction when in government (Kevin & Tony, 2018). Paradoxically, this is not the same with political parties in developing countries, especially in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Nigerian political parties have no ideologies to guide candidates on political actions but rely upon personal caprice to decide on issues that affect political action (Sentell, 2018; Odigwe, 2015).

In developed democracies, liberalism as political party ideology entails ideas like equality, justice, fraternity, freedom, reforms, rights, progress, and internationalism, while conservatism depicts notions of order, authority, tradition, hierarchy, reaction, duty, and nationalism (Kevin & Tony, 2018; Taylor et al., 2017). As such, political ideologies emanated from these principles, which served as the major political blueprint for parties, candidates, and supporters. For instance, as party ideology reflects liberalism, conservatism, and socialism, other parties might believe in nationalism, communism, populism, and even Islamism. This allows different political parties to extend their focus to either protecting the environment, society, or fauna and flora, apart from political leadership and discourse. Therefore, the idea to vote and be voted for during elections heavily depends on the principles of a given political party or its ideology as opposed to primordial interests as obtained in Nigeria during the 2019 general elections. This allowed politicians to invest in financing political thugs, who in turn created violent scenarios for electoral rigging in order to win elections. It was stated that

“Political parties have been eroding, parties are not functional or in existence institutionally. Individual is contesting and financing his campaign independent of his party while the party cannot account for his campaign expenditure because none of them cares about the law or supremacy of the party.” (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

In addition, as political parties lacked ideologies during the conduct of the 2019 general elections, the major driving factors towards party membership, support, and political decisions were based on personal gains as opposed to the general interest. Afterward, politicians mobilised supporters not because of existing party principles or

ideologies. Rather, it is how influential the candidate is able to organise and gather supporters and political thugs along with primordial sentiments and personal gains across the country. This situation deepened the recruitment of political thugs into electoral processes to cause violence and destruction during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

It was the ability of politicians to recruit, sponsor, and pay political thugs rather than party ideology in order to win elections that reigned during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It was revealed that politicians calculated the use of political thugs before taking any action or decision at any point in time. As such, politicians may decide to decamp from the political party to which they belonged and switch to another party, even for a limited time before elections. This is done with the belief that political thugs will be used to win elections (This Day, 2022). This is because candidates and members of political parties were only guided by personal interest (not party ideology), and thus the interest encouraged those employed by political thugs to coerce, intimidate, and frighten oppositions with violent threats and destruction in order to have full control of electoral scenes to rig and win elections. This resulted in incessant political defection, coalitions, and alliances by the members of different political parties, even a day before the polls.

More so, a member of a political party who contested the primary election and lost may switch to another political party on the belief that political thuggery and other means of election malpractice will guarantee his victory since there are no party ideologies. For instance, when Alhaji Atiku Abubakar realised that President Buhari wouldn't keep to his promise of a single tenure in office, he (Atiku) left the All Progressive Congress to join the Peoples Democratic Party with a view to becoming a

presidential contestant to win the 2019 presidential election. Atiku Abubakar joined the PDP and later became a presidential candidate under the PDP to defeat President Buhari of the APC (Premium Time, 2021).

Equally, serving governors, senators, members of the House of Representatives, and state houses of assembly quit their initial parties to other political parties either to contest or support them and wait for a 'juicy' appointment when government is formed. In view of this, Governors of Zamfara, Bello Matawalle; Ebonyi State, Dave Umahi; and Cross River, Prof. Benedict Ayade, along with substantial state and federal lawmakers, defected from the opposition party, the PDP, and joined the APC (Premium Time, 2021). This accelerated political thuggery during and after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria because it led to an intraparty crisis within the APC.

Consequently, the absence of political party ideology turned the Nigerian political environment so volatile, characterised by political survival and upheaval, that people began to believe that the stronger a political party is in terms of finance, the greater its ability to mobilise political thugs, and a higher chance to win elections against political opponents. On this note, a non-governmental organisation known as the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) requested the International Criminal Court to probe APC and PDP officials over killings and the repeated failure of the authority to address violent crimes against humanity (SERAP, 2019). It was also reported that a political murderer, Abdulkareem Abubakar, popularly called *Ijogbon* (the trouble) in Kogi State, was mobilised by the APC, and he joined the campaign team of President Buhari and Governor Yahaya Bello in the 2019 general election in Kogi State (Sahara Reporters, 2019). Equally, PDP also accused APC of hiring political thugs who attacked its members in Idanre, Ondo State (Vanguard, 2019b).

Similarly, the APC accused the PDP of using dynamite, which exploded at its offices in Adet Akpan, Uyo, and Akwa Ibom State on March 9th, 2019 (Daily Post, 2019). In Akwa Ibom State, the PDP further accused the APC of using political thugs to exterminate their senior officials and the governor's supporters in the state (The Cable, 2019). So also, the PDP accused the APC of a planned attack to disrupt the election of governorship candidate Ifeanyi Okowa in Delta State by deploying armed political thugs who were ex-militants around the riverine areas of the state (This Day, 2019). Above all, President Buhari's campaign team Director on Strategic Communications, Festus Keyamo, accused the PDP of a planned disruption to election processes aimed at attacking all collation centres across the country during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (The Eagle Online, 2019). These political upheavals were rooted in poor political behaviour exhibited by the supporters of different political parties, which the parties were unable to control due to the absence of ideologies in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Perhaps, the absence of party ideologies significantly contributed to the incessant political thuggery and violent threats during the 2019 general election because politicians and political parties do not have any guiding principles or ideologies to follow other than using political thugs as against free, fair, and credible elections. Candidates and supporters of political parties, to a greater extent, relied on political thugs to cause violence in an attempt to maximise their chances of winning elections against opponents. The idea is to win the election by all means. This influenced the involvement of political thugs and militias during the 2019 general elections, bearing diverse names derived from cultural backgrounds. For example, in Kano State, political thugs are called *Yan Tauri* or *Yan Jagaliya*; in Bauchi State, they are called *Yan Daba* or *Yan Sara-Suka*; in Adamawa and Taraba states, they are called *Yan*

Daukan Amarya or Yan Shunko; in Gombe State, they are called *Yan Kalare*; in Lagos State, they are called *Area Boys*; in Bayelsa State, they are called *Egbesu*; in Abia, they are called *Bakassi Boys*; and many others. Thus, the only ideology of these groups of political thugs is to specialise in election wrongdoing and malpractices characterised by harassment, intimidation, and terrorising of individuals through politically instigated attacks to inflict injuries and kill political opponents. This is in addition to the destruction of properties during and after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, and thus most politicians see politics as a business venture to realise gain at all costs.

4.6 Politics of Business Investment

Politics has become a business-oriented venture for investment, whereby politicians count losses and profits, which are the major determinants of participating in elections in Nigeria. During the course of the 2019 general elections, politicians invested a lot of money to cater for their election bid both legally and illegally by supporting political thugs and promoting corruption in order to win the election at all costs (The New York Times, 2019). Accordingly, the major contenders for the presidential positions of the APC and PDP, Muhammadu Buhari and Atiku Abubakar, respectively, accused each other of using huge amounts of money and aiding corruption to win the election. While President Buhari was accused of using public resources as the incumbent president to fund his campaign, Atiku Abubakar used personal money to finance his campaign, and the two exceeded the official campaign limit stipulated by INEC (Daily Trust, 2022).

In view of this, a former governor of Kaduna State, Balarabe Musa (now late), stated that the 2019 general elections will be costly due to rigging and other malpractices in favour of those with money, against the principle of a free, fair, and transparent election to ensure credibility. The election thrives on the possession of huge amounts

of money for bribery, political thuggery, and rigging, so that each presidential candidate of the APC or PDP has to spend not less than 500 billion naira, equivalent to 1,387,347,391.79 United States dollars, in order to win the presidential election (Daily Post, 2019).

Michael (2011) observed that elective positions attracted high financial gains, and most, if not all, politicians supported political thugs to win elections at all costs because of the financial gain attached to them. Politicians and political elites joined politics in order to control or retain political power, partly to have access to state resources and public treasuries, with the sole aim of accumulating more money and other privileges for personal gain as opposed to the general interest. Politicians have become addicted to political investment because they can't bear the consequences of losing elections or being out of government. This made them invest a huge amount of money during elections so as to win elections against electoral rules that were designed to guide elections and electoral conduct. As such, it was stated in an interview that

“Politicians went to the point of budgeting sum of money so that if their political thugs are taken to the court, they will use the budgeted money to bail them (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

However, in an effort to address excessive use of money and corruption during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, INEC clearly stated the amount a candidate or political party is allowed to spend in the course of campaign *vis-à-vis* penalty on a given position as contained in the 2010 Electoral Act as amended in 2015 (the Electoral Act, 2019). This is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Limit in Electoral Expenses and Penalty during 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

Offences	Penalty	References
A Presidential candidate incurring more than N1,000,000,000 as election expenses.	Presidential election, to a maximum fine of N1,000,000 or imprisonment for a term of 12 months or both.	Section 90 (1-10) E.A 2010
A Governorship candidate incurring more than N200,000,000.	Governorship election to a fine of N800,000 or imprisonment for a term of 9 months or both.	Section 90 (1-10) E.A 2010
A Senatorial and House of Representatives candidates exceeding N40,000,000 and N20,000,000 respectively.	Senatorial election to a fine of N600,000 or imprisonment for a term of 6 months or both; House of Representatives election to a fine of N500,000 or imprisonment for a term of 5 months or both.	Section 90 (1-10) E.A 2010
A candidate for State Assembly election spending more than N10,000,000.	State House of Assembly election to a fine of N300,000 or imprisonment for a term of 3 months or both.	Section 90 (1-10) E.A 2010
A candidate for Chairmanship of an Area Council incurring more than ten million naira N10,000,000.	In the case of Chairmanship election, to a fine of N300,000 or imprisonment for a term of 3 months or both.	Section 90 (1-10) E.A 2010
In the case of Councillorship election to an Area Council, exceeding more than the maximum of election expenses of one million naira N1,000,000.	Councillorship election, to a fine of N100,000 or imprisonment for a term of one month or both.	Section 90 (1-10) E.A 2010
An individual or other entity donating more than N1,000,000 to any candidate.	A maximum fine of N500,000 or imprisonment for a term of 9 months or both.	Section 91 (9) E.A 2010
Aiding a candidate to forge or falsify a document relating to his expenditure at an election.	Imprisonment for a term of 10 years.	Section 91 (12) E.A 2010
Refusal by a political party to submit its election expenses to INEC in a separate audited return within 6 months after an election.	A maximum fine of N1,000,000 and in the case of failure to submit an accurate audited return within the stipulated period, the court may impose a maximum penalty of N200,000 per day on any party for the period after the return was due until to the Commission.	Section 92 (3,4,7) E.A 2010
A political party shall not incur election expenses beyond the limit stipulated in this Act. A political party which contravenes this subsection commits an offence and is liable on conviction.	A maximum fine of N1,000,000 and forfeiture to the Commission of the amount by which the expenses exceed the limit set by the Commission.	Section 92 (3,4,7) E.A 2010

Source: Culled from the 2010 Electoral Act, 2019

As politicians invested much money during the 2019 general elections through legal and illegal ways in Nigeria, the electoral body, INEC, unequivocally stated that the two major political parties abused the 2010 Electoral Act by failing to submit audit reports to the Commission (The Punch, 2022; The Daily Trust, 2022). The Commission added that APC and PDP had exceeded the official campaign limit in the election as the only tracked expenditure was linked to a few spending on billboards, print and electronic media advertisements, and coverage of programmes by the two major parties, which amounted to 4.6 and 3.3 billion naira, respectively, as opposed to the one (1) billion naira official limit of expenditure for a political party (Daily Trust, 2022; The Punch, 2022).

The whooping expenditures on party loyalists, political thugs, vote buying, court cases, hiring of jets and cars, campaign offices, feeding, accommodation, settlement of election staff, and security agents are clandestine operations that are unaccounted for by the party or candidate during and after the election. All these are expenditures that one has to keep in mind before calculating and contesting any political position. Without money to cater for these and many other things, one must reason before any attempt to contest an election in Nigeria.

Furthermore, most Nigerians believe that politics is a perfect business that yields profit after winning an election, just like any business venture where a person can invest and later realise profit as a reward (Arise, 2013). Equally, politicians have the notion that after winning an election, they will recover all their expenses and still count profits. It is a law that public officers are to declare assets or liabilities (through the Court of Conduct Bureau) they actually own at the time of filling out the form before contesting an election. Also, all properties and assets acquired outside Nigeria must also be stated

clearly with the value of the said assets in the currency of the country and where the property is situated, as stated in the 1999 Constitution (The Guardian, 2020). However, the law on public declaration of assets and liabilities does not compel a public officer to declare his or her assets publicly. The intent of such a law is to make public-facing assets declared by the public officer for transparency and to avoid corruption through the Code of Conduct Bureau, but the agency failed to prosecute top-ranking public officers (The Guardian, 2020).

Accordingly, some politicians declared wrong information, while others refused to declare their assets during the 2019 general elections so as to avoid investigation. For instance, President Muhammadu Buhari and Vice President Yemi Osibanjo refused to publicly declare their assets to Nigerians, yet no legal action was taken against them because paragraph 3(c) of the Third Schedule, Part I of the 1999 Constitution as amended, provided that the Code of Conduct Bureau shall make asset declarations of public officers available for inspection by any citizen of Nigeria only on the terms and conditions prescribed by the National Assembly (The Guardian, 2020). But the same President Buhari and his vice president had forgotten the fact that they all declared their assets and liabilities in 2015 immediately after assuming office to demonstrate to Nigerians that they were actually ready to fight corruption and run a transparent government. They, however, refused to do so in 2019 after assuming office.

In the history of Nigerian elected presidents, only the late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua declared assets and liabilities to the public precisely on June 28th, 2007 to fulfil his campaign promise of anti-corruption (The Guardian, 2020). It is worthwhile to understand that leading opposition parties (PDP) and civil society organisations like the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) accused President

Buhari of avoiding declaring his assets and liabilities as an attempt to hide financial information linked to unlawful acquisition of money as the President of the country, which made him fail to declare assets and liabilities in 2019 (The Guardian, 2020). This act is a punishable offence if found guilty by the court of law, yet it was committed by the president and vice president, who are supposed to ensure compliance with the law of the land that will enhance accountability and guarantee democratic sustainability and election credibility in Nigeria (The Guardian, 2020).

In addition, it was realised that the politics of business investment made politicians accumulate unlawful assets after winning elections. This made them turn the government into a cash cow for family and friends by positioning them in high-profile positions. Secondly, to reward his absolute loyalists and political thugs who sacrificed their time and energy in ensuring election victory for their patron. Thirdly, to pay back in return those that were financially committed to the victory of such government during campaign rallies and other activities. Finally, to continue accumulating more money for the support of election wrongdoings like political thuggery. It is therefore gathered that

“Nobody would come and beat his chest and say he won this election fairly and credible or free and fair, that is not true. We deployed resources, money have been given. Materials have been distributed, coercive principles were applied.” (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

It is therefore understood that politics as business investment prompted politicians and elites to accumulate huge amounts of money (legal and illegal) to continue supporting political thuggery and other election wrongdoings during the 2019 general elections in

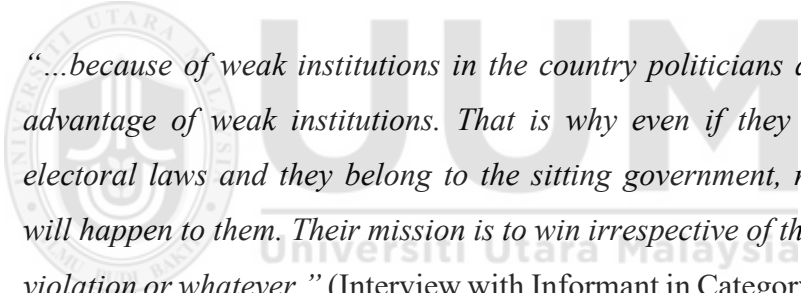
Nigeria. Politicians spent money above the official campaign limit in support of election rigging and malpractices through violent destructions during the campaign, voting, and collation of results, which were characterised by intimidation, kidnapping, killings, and destruction of properties. Thus, when political thugs were recruited, they were given political cover, money, gifts, drugs, and sometimes promised appointments by their master, who needed their services to cause violence and the threat of violence during election cycles for his greater advantage at the detriment of his opponents. Hence, after investing so much money and later realising that there is no possibility of winning an election, politicians became frustrated and mobilised political thugs to cause violence and rig elections that resulted in rampant cancellations across the country by forcing a weak electoral management body to call for a re-run election at later dates.

4.7 Weak Electoral Management Body

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is a single entity responsible for the conduct of national elections in Nigeria (INEC, 2019). The body is expected to conduct free, fair, and credible elections without inference from any superior authority based on its defined responsibilities in line with its constitutional status as an independent electoral body. Since the return to the Fourth Republic in 1999, the Independent National Electoral Commission has organised a series of elections (six rounds of general elections in the years 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019) with slide modifications ranging from manual to computer mode of elections as attempts to improve election quality, acceptability, and credibility within and outside the country. Hence, electoral proceedings were developed from paper voting and the collation of results to the introduction of information communication and technology using smart

card readers (SCRs) and other related computer technology into the electoral processes (INEC, 2019). This was exercised from voter registration to declaration of election results. All these were made to enhance free, fair, and credible elections in Nigeria.

Efforts to improve election credibility by the Independent National Electoral Commission faced serious challenges during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria due to the fact that frustrated and aggressive politicians exploited INEC's weaknesses to rig the election. This was achieved by introducing political thuggery into the main stream of electoral processes, which inflicted fear and intimidation into the minds of major election stakeholder groups and instigated destruction and killings across the country (European Union, 2019). It is stated that



“...because of weak institutions in the country politicians do take advantage of weak institutions. That is why even if they violate electoral laws and they belong to the sitting government, nothing will happen to them. Their mission is to win irrespective of the laws, violation or whatever.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

As an Institution, INEC suffered from the inability to apprehend and punish all violators of electoral laws, especially political thugs and their perpetrators. The commission was also unable to administer the whole election by its permanent staff but relied on recruiting ad hoc staff at any given time and election. The commission was also unable to produce and transport all election materials and equipment but relied on contract and supply from other organisations like the National Union of Transport Workers (NUTRW) and the Nigerian Army jets to transport them to various states, local government areas, collation centres, and polling units across the country (INEC, 2019).

Further to that, the Commission was unable to provide effective security but relied on national security organisations like the police, civil defence, army, and other paramilitary personnel during elections (INEC, 2019). Similarly, the Commission was unable to adjudicate on lingering pre- and post-election litigation but relied upon tribunal committees to decide and adjudicate on matters surrounding election petitions (INEC, 2019). Thus, these challenges weakened INEC as an independent electoral body to conduct credible elections, which more often than not influenced the involvement of political thugs during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Since the Independent National Electoral Commission has no power to apprehend and punish any candidate, member of a political party, or voter who commits or supports acts of political thuggery to cause violence during elections, the Commission heavily relied on the services of security personnel from the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and other para-military agencies to provide election security against culprits of electoral offences. Similarly, the Commission also relied on the staff of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practice and Other Offences Related Commission (ICPC) to arrest anyone involved in vote-buying, money laundering, and other financial crimes surrounding elections for onward presentation to the court of law and trial.

However, the Independent National Electoral Commission was constrained from arresting political thugs during the 2019 general elections and had no constitutional power to arrest and punish any candidate, voter, or political party but completely relied upon the services of some security agencies and courts. As such, this created a huge vacuum in arresting and transmitting election offenders to court for judgement due to

the selfish interests of politicians, which led to the high number of court cases, and that led to the excessive ligations surrounding the conduct of the 2019 general elections, with the highest recorded court cases in the history of elections in Nigeria.

In view of that, there were 1,701 court cases resulting from the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (KDI, 2019; Premium Times, 2019d). This included 890 petition cases surrounding the primary elections of political parties and 811 petitions filed with the election tribunal committees after the announcement of election results across the country. The petitions were filed by the political parties or contestants who were dissatisfied with the outcome of the 2019 general elections (KDI, 2019; Premium Times, 2019d), partly caused by attacks and destructions from the activities of political thugs on attempted electoral rigging and manipulation in the country (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019). The pre-election petitions in 890 cases represented 52%, while 811 petitions resented 48% of the total litigation cases in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Figure 4.4 presents pre-election (party primary elections) and post-election petitions on the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

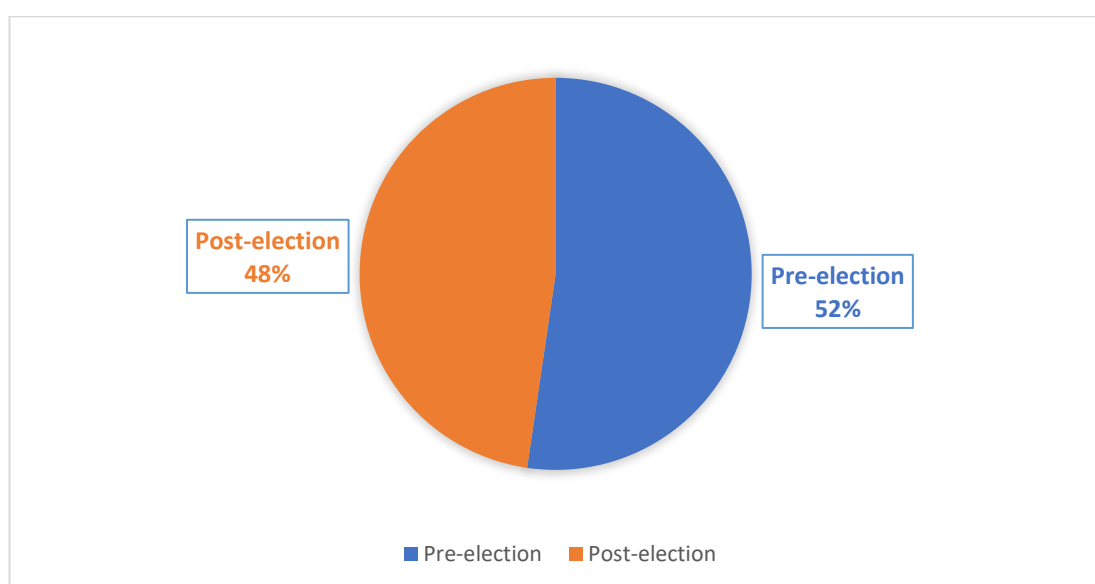


Figure 4.4 Pre and Post-election Litigations in the 2019 General Elections

Furthermore, the INEC Chairman lamented the high rate of court cases and delay in the delivery of judgements before and after the 2019 general elections, which he regarded as a major challenge to ensuring justice, neutrality, and integrity of the Commission (Vanguard, 2019c). He added that necessary documents were provided to judges to avoid conflict and delay in the delivery of judgements with regard to the 2019 general elections. He also noted that the lack of consequential orders from the court stalled the conduct of credible elections because the Commission mostly relied on the previous decisions of the courts to act. Whereas, 'maintaining status quo order' by courts also challenged the efficacy of the Commission's ability to deliver credible elections. He enjoined the judges to act promptly in addressing such challenges (Vanguard, 2019c).

Similarly, a statement by the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad, affirmed the weakness of INEC as he argued that recent events in the country revealed a romantic relationship between frustrated politicians and judges to pursue their vested political interests. He added that judges should handle election petition cases without influence or pressure from political elites, politicians, or other stakeholders or groups. That is, judges should guard judicial integrity and avoid affairs with lawyers, no matter their innocent faces (Vanguard, 2019c).

On the appointment of managerial staff, the Independent National Electoral Commission depended upon the President for the appointment of its Chairman, who is in charge of the running of the organisation and is assisted by National and State (resident) Commissioners of the Commission. The President is a single arbiter to nominate and appoint INEC Chairman, subject to the approval of the National Assembly (the Senate), as stated in Section 154(1) of the 1999 Constitution. However,

the President was accused of appointing partisan individuals (politicians) to manage the positions of national and state (resident) commissioners at various levels of the federation (Newsday, 2020). Although these appointments are based on merit, opposition parties emphatically accused the ruling party of appointing party loyalists rather than neutral people in politics.

The implication implies that some managers may be partisan and influence collation and declaration of election results to suit the interests of a candidate or political party whom they like rather than a clear winner. For instance, opposition political parties accused President Buhari of nominating a partisan member, Lauretta Onochie, to the position of National Electoral Commissioner during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Onochie was the personal assistant to President Buhari on social media, whose political affiliation revealed membership in the All Progressive Congress from the South-South Zone (Newsday, 2020).

In a similar instance, the former INEC Chairman, Prof. Maurice Iwu, who served from 2005 to 2010, was accused of favouring the then incumbent PDP government to announce and declare election results before the complete collation of all results from the entire country. Maurice announced and declared the then PDP presidential candidate, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yaradua, as the winner of the election, while other results remained uncollated from other states of the federation. The Chairman of the Transition Monitoring Group called for a new election and argued in the Guardian Newspaper that Maurice can't use election results from half of the states of Nigeria to declare a winner in the 2007 presidential election. But Maurice strongly defended his action, saying the election was credible because the clear margin of lead between the PDP candidate and the leading opposition party candidate was wider, and even if the

remaining uncollated results were merged in favour of the leading opposition party candidate, the ruling party would still win the election. He therefore described the comments of both local and international observers as biased and unjustifiable (The Guardian, 2007). Thus, this kind of manipulation routinely influenced opposition political parties to use political thugs in elections so that maximum chances to win elections would be created through violence and destruction.

Since the Commission was unable to produce and transport election materials and equipment to various locations and centres, for the 2019 general elections, INEC thus depended on contracts to supply print ballot papers, ballot boxes, result sheets, and other equipment and materials, both sensitive and insensitive, and distribution to polling and collation centres during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (INEC, 2019). In the course of distribution, the Commission further relied upon contract (hiring) commercial transporters under the National Union of Transport Road Workers (NUTRW), who can be partisan and can't guarantee safety in transporting staff and election material to various destinations. This allowed frustrated politicians who connived with few drivers to allow political thugs to steal election materials; where strong resistance was shown, political thugs perpetrated killings and destructions to ease rigging for their master.

On many occasions, politicians, political thugs, and security personnel were caught with printed ballot papers labelled "genuine or fake" and other sensitive materials for elections across the country (The Cable, 2019; European Union, 2019). It was gathered that two (2) men were arrested with fourteen sacks of ballot papers in Kano on February 13th, 2019, just three days (initially) before the election was postponed. Later, the police came out to the public and announced that the arrested ballot papers were

‘fake’ specimens (posters) that were in transit to Jigawa State for public awareness and display (The Cable, 2019; Vanguard, 2019b). However, it was revealed by people and opposition parties whose statements noted that the ballot papers were thumb-printed in favour of the APC (The Cable, 2019). It further revealed that the ballot paper specimen never replicated the names of the existing political parties that participated in the 2019 general elections. The question is, how can specimens of ballot papers be distributed just three days before the election given the ninety (90) day limit for campaigning and public awareness to poll as stated in the 2010 Electoral Act as amended?

More so, production and transportation of election materials and equipment carried out via contract did not serve well for the security of election materials during the 2019 general elections because political thugs and politicians used it to manipulate and rig electoral processes. Perhaps this also provided room for frustrated politicians to mobilise their political thugs and cause violence through destruction, intimidation, kidnapping, and killing of voters, candidates, election staff, security, observers, and media reporters during and after elections. Politicians were arrested together with political thugs for attempted destruction at various election areas to ensure rigging (Vanguard, 2019a). For instance, security arrested Rivers State’s Commissioner for Urban Development (Williams Reason), an incumbent member of the State House of Assembly (Wanaka Opokri), an Army Major, and three police officers (connived with political thugs) on possession of illegal ballot papers. It was revealed that politicians bribed security personnel who compromised their duty to safeguard election material. This occurred during the Presidential and National Assembly elections on February 23rd, 2019, where election materials were kept in the Central Bank of Nigeria, Port Harcourt Branch.

However, the PDP accused the Nigerian Army of partisan politics to favour the ruling party, which disrupted election processes in Rivers State and created an advantage for the APC to win (Vanguard, 2019a). Consequently, this weakness of the electoral management body influenced political thuggery during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. This led to the postponement and cancellation of elections because the commission was unable to manage the production and distribution of election materials and, at the same time, faced major challenges in securing polling units and collation centres across the country. This created an unnecessary delay in the commencement of voting processes as well as the collation, announcement, and declaration of the winners all over the country.

Consequently, the weakness of the Commission in having full control over election security personnel created another gap in ensuring a free and credible election. This is because security officials received directives from their organisational structure, not INEC, which made it difficult for INEC to dictate to security what to do during elections. This made frustrated politicians bribe some security personnel so as to allow rigging and manipulation of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It was stated that

“It is hardly to see a political thug belonging to ruling party been shot by security or arrested because an instruction from the above may come for the release of such thugs.All these are planned and strategize by politicians just like filming scriptures, with a lot of money been put aside for that purpose to corrupt security, election staff, voters, other political thugs and other stakeholders.”
(Interview with Informant in category B2, 2023).

The Commission relied on the police, civil defence, immigration, road safety, and other paramilitary officers to provide security at all election scenes, in addition to

Army officers who were deployed in highly volatile areas like the riverine areas to safeguard the peaceful conduct of elections. Yet, political thugs launched deadly attacks and destructions with intimidation and killings in Rivers, Imo, Kano, Delta, Kogi, Adamawa, Plateau, Kaduna, Sokoto, and other parts of the country (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019). It was gathered that a Police Commissioner, Mohammed Wakili (who was generally believed to be an incorrupt police officer) of Kano State, refused to dance to the tune of politicians in Kano State, but he was weakened as three senior officers (a Deputy Inspector General and three Assistant Inspector Generals of Police) were deployed specially to oversee the affairs of the rerun election in the state. However, opposition parties, especially the PDP believed that deployment of senior police officers was to ensure that Governor Umar Ganduje of the APC won the election and returned to office as Governor of Kano State (Premium Time, 2019a).

Convincingly, this was justified in the reports of independent election observers, including but not limited to the European Union (2019), Situation Room (2019), CLEEN Foundation (2019), and IRI and NDI (2019), that during the rerun, political thugs took control of polling units during the governorship rerun election in Kano State and that voters who intended to vote for the opposition candidate of the PDP were chased away, intimidated, threatened, and injured mostly from the attacks of APC-led political thugs. Therefore, one can state that frustrated politicians and political thugs who were desperate to win elections connived with unpatriotic security personnel to manipulate election processes and rig in favour of a given political party or candidate as against their political opponents. This and other attitudes of frustrated politicians influenced the recruitment of political thugs to serve as agents of electoral violence and launch violent attacks and destruction during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Hence, the weakness of INEC to effectively control production, transportation, and

distribution of election materials and equipment, in addition to appointing staff and providing security during voting, collation, and declaration of winners, paved the way for political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

4.8 Inadequate Electoral Law and Regulation

The 2019 general elections were guided by a defined blueprint called the 2010 Electoral Act, which was amended in 2015, and the Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of the 2019 Elections (INEC, 2019). These guidelines categorically stipulated how INEC should carry out its task in discharging electoral duties. These constituted the way political parties should act, candidates should participate, voters should behave, security agents should respond, and observers should witness and report successes and failures over the conduct of elections, among many others (INEC, 2019). In view of this, the Electoral Act 2019 was expected to deal with all necessary requirements arising from the general activities surrounding elections with a view to improving the quality, acceptability, and image of elections within and outside the country. Thus, election credibility is linked to a sound electoral law.

However, where electoral law depicts inadequacy, the election will be affected by wrongdoing, irregularities, and malpractices that include cases of political thuggery that reflect the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It can therefore be categorically stated that the inadequacy of the 2010 Electoral Act and the Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of 2019 Elections opened a window to accommodate political thuggery into the conduct of the 2019 general elections, where inconclusive provisions of law helped politicians to rig elections, which was reflected in excessive cancellations due to violent attacks and disruptions across the country. It was stated that the aggressive activities of politicians and political thugs

“...go a long way in violating the rules and regulations designed for free and fair elections. So when they alter all the regulations meant for the election, it is impossible to have a free and fair election because they are egocentric. Their ego also goes a long way in dominating electoral processes and even the system.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

The provisions of the 2010 Electoral Act in relations to political thuggery are barely shallow and weak to dissuade offenders from committing electoral crimes and to permanently address political thuggery manifesting in election processes in Nigeria. It perhaps encourages political thuggery because the penalties were easy to overcome during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Accordingly, Section 119 of the 2010 Electoral Act states that

“Any person who, at a political meeting held after the date for an election has been announced, (a) acts or incites another to act in a disorderly manner for the purpose of preventing the transaction of the business for which the meeting was convened; or (b) has in his possession an offensive weapon or missiles; commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of N500,000 or imprisonment for 12 months or both” (The 2010 Electoral Act, 2019).

Based on this, frustrated politicians opted to illegally relate with security officials so as to avoid being arrested and convicted when it comes to political thuggery and electoral violence. For instance, it has been observed that security officials were unable to arrest all perpetrators of political thuggery because of corruption and the unprofessional attitudes of security agencies in dealing with the menace. It was narrated that there are

“...cases where people who commit active political crime will be apprehended to either headquarters of the Police and it is the matter of phone call, they will be released. They tell them that these are our boys within two hours, they are back. Even the security agencies are made to compromise and allow political thugs to go back even after arrest, they can’t be prosecuted. ...even if the Police are willing to take action, they will draw their attention and instruct not to harm their boys (political thugs).” (Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

In addition, Section 131 of the 2010 Electoral Act states that

“a person who (a) directly or indirectly, by himself or by another person on his behalf, makes use of or threatens to make use of any force, violence or restrain; (b) inflicts or threatens to inflict by himself or by any other person, any minor or serious injury, damage, harm or loss on or against a person in order to induce or compel that person to vote or refrain from voting, or on account of such person having voted or refrained from voting; or (c) by abduction, duress, or a fraudulent device or contrivance, impedes or prevents the free use of the vote by a voter or thereby compels, induces, or prevails on a voter to give or refrain from giving his vote; and (d) prevents any political aspirants from free use of the media, designated vehicles, mobilization of political support and campaign at an election; commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N1,000,000 or imprisonment for 3 years.” (The 2010 Electoral Act, 2019).

Politicians are making it difficult for security agencies and other authorities to arrest, try, and convict all suspects in connection with election criminality because even where security officials manage to arrest a suspect, a directive from above will make

an officer release the suspect(s) or face consequences of his action, like transfer and others.

“...at times the government use security personnel in rigging, not only the political thugs, because in terms of posting, the security personnel will be posted and right from the office, they will be advised. If you see certain things, close your eyes. If the security personnel are doing their work, they will avert the thuggery. But thugs will come, security personnel will see them, and nothing will be do. Whatever thugs want to do, security personnel are there reluctantly.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

On the conduct of political rallies, processions, and other gatherings, Section 94 sub-section 2 of the 2010 Electoral Act states that

“a person who, while present at a political rally or procession or voting centre, has with him any offensive weapon or missile otherwise than in pursuance of a lawful duty is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a maximum fine of N2,000,000.00 or imprisonment for a term of 2 years or both” (The 2010 Electoral Act, 2019).

However, it was revealed that politicians are the prime sponsors of political thuggery. It was also revealed that political thugs were mobilised with little money, promises, or illicit drugs to cause violence during campaigns, rallies, and the voting process, so that when violence is triggered, the chances of election rigging are higher. Politicians bribed security personnel to allow their political thugs to cause rowdiness or chaos and ensure election rigging, particularly where money failed to induce voters to vote for a desired candidate or political party. It was believed that Nigerian rules and regulations governing the conduct of elections are weak for which it was stated that

“...because of fragile laws. Our laws are not serious. If to say those that are involved or those that are sponsoring are punished severely, they would not do it, but because they escaped, the law is not trapping them in their actions, so they do it.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Evidence emerged that security officials did their best to ensure the peaceful conduct of the election. A notable example of a commended officer by the general public was the Commissioner of Police, Mohammed Wakili (Singam) in Kano State, who happened to be one of the good officers that supported the cause of true democracy and peaceful election, but his enthusiastic effort was truncated and overpowered by the deployment of senior police officers above him: a Deputy Inspector General and 3 Assistant Inspector General of Police to inspect and oversee the conduct of re-run gubernatorial elections in Kano State (Premium Times, 2019a). Often, even when security officers arrest some political thugs, a directive may come from above directing the release of such political thugs. This attitude was mostly exhibited by the ruling party (either at the state or federal level), whereby they used incumbency and connived with security officials to arrest opposition political thugs and order the release of their loyal political thugs.

Thus, the inadequacy of the 2010 Electoral Act gave room for frustrated politicians to support and finance political thugs during the 2019 general elections in a bid to maximise their chances of winning elections through violence against political opponents. Therefore, frustrated and aggressive politicians mobilised political thugs into the political arena, mostly as private guards but clandestinely used to attack and destroy election processes, including rallies, campaigns, public meetings, primaries, voting at polling units, and the declaration and collation of results at various centres.

On the other hand, the 2010 Electoral Act and the Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of 2019 Elections allowed INEC staff to declare election results with inconclusive status during the 2019 general elections (INEC, 2019). However, this technically provided a loophole for manipulation of election processes by frustrated politicians with the help of political thugs who were used to cause destruction and killings so as to create chances of winning elections through violence since the law provided an inconclusive declaration of the status of the election result.

“...because of fragile laws. Our laws are not serious. If to say those that are involved or those that are sponsoring are punished severely, they would not do it, but because they escaped, the law is not trapping them in their actions, so they do it.”(Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Accordingly, frustrated politicians used the law to ensure electoral rigging through violence and destruction with the help of political thugs across the country. In view of this, sections 26 and 53 of the 2010 Electoral Act and paragraphs 41 (e) and 43 (b) of the Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of the 2019 Elections revealed that certain challenges, including “natural disasters and violence of emergencies” and “over-voting” situations, are addressed by postponing the election to another date. Section 26(1) revealed that “in the event of an emergency (natural disaster or violence) affecting an election, the Independent National Electoral Commission shall, as far as possible, ensure that persons displaced as a result of the emergency are not disenfranchised.”(The 2010 Electoral Act, 2019). Equally, Section 53 (1-3) further states that

“(1) no voter shall vote for more than one candidate or record more than one vote in favour of any candidate at any one election; (2) where the votes cast at an election in any polling unit exceed the number of registered voters in that polling unit, the result of the election for that polling unit shall be declared null and void by the Commission and another election may be conducted at a date to be fixed by the Commission where the result at that polling unit may affect the overall result in the constituency; and (3) where an election is nullified in accordance with subsection (2) of this section, there shall be no return for the election until another poll has taken place in the affected area.” (The 2010 Electoral Act, 2019).

Whereas, paragraphs 41 (e) and 43 (b) of the Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of the 2019 Elections provides a way to address margin of lead challenges between two leading candidates arising from inconclusive announcements before making the declaration of the winner during the 2019 general election in Nigeria. As such, paragraph 41(e) states that

“where the margin of lead between the two leading candidates is not in excess of the total number of registered voters of the polling unit(s) where the election was cancelled or not held in line with Sections 26 and 53 of the Electoral Act, the returning officer shall decline to make a return until polls have taken place in the affected polling unit(s) and the results are incorporated into the new form EC 8D and subsequently recorded into the new form EC 8E for Declaration and Return” (INEC Regulations and Guidelines, 2019).

Equally, paragraph 43(b) states that

“where the margin of lead between the two leading candidates is not in excess of the total number of registered voters of the polling unit(s) where the election was cancelled or not held in line with sections 26 and 53 of the Electoral Act, the returning officer shall decline to make a return until polls have taken place in the affected polling unit(s) and the results have been incorporated into the new Form EC 8C(I) and subsequently recorded into Form EC8E(I) for Declaration and Return” (INEC Regulations and Guidelines, 2019).

However, frustrated politicians who were desperate to win elections at all costs abused the provisions of the 2010 Electoral Act and the Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of 2019 Elections, which allowed inconclusive declarations of election through manipulative tendencies for the purpose of rigging. This was achieved through violent attacks and destructions perpetrated by frustrated politicians and their political thugs through intimidation, threats, kidnapping, injury, and killing of voters, election staff, security personnel, observers, and journalists, in addition to the destruction of election materials and equipment across the country. These actions led to inconclusive declaration of election for the four (4) Area Council in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja; forty one (41) seats for members of the State House of Assembly elections; six (6) gubernatorial elections in Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Kano, Plateau and Sokoto states; 35 seats for the members of the House of Representative elections in Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Cross River, Gombe, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Kogi, Lagos, Niger, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers and Sokoto states; and nine (9) seats for the Senatorial Districts elections of the Abia South, Bauchi South, Imo West and North, Kogi East, Ondo South, Plateau South and Rivers East and West senatorial zones (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019; Legit, 2019).

This also shows that the activities of political thugs succeeded in forcing election staff to declare elections with inconclusive status due to either over-voting or violence arising from disruption of the voting process and collation of results at various centres across Nigeria. Therefore, INEC declared re-run elections in all 95 seats affected by the inconclusive announcement and a court order in one district across the federation of Nigeria during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in the country. Table 4.2 presents the inconclusive elections announced at the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Table 4.2

Inconclusive Elections Announced during the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

Type of Election	Number of Seat	Announcement
Area Council Elections	4	Inconclusive
State House of Assembly Elections	41	Inconclusive
Gubernatorial Elections	6	Inconclusive
House of Representative Elections	35	Inconclusive
Senatorial District Elections	9	Inconclusive
Total	95	

Source: Researcher's Design, 2024

In response to criticisms regarding the rate of inconclusive elections during the 2019 general elections, the INEC Chairman responded that an inconclusive election is one in which a winner has not emerged at the first ballot (The Nation, 2019). He added that Section 26 of the 2010 Electoral Act states that in the event of violence or a natural disaster, INEC should not proceed with an election, and again, if the total number of registered voters in the place affected is more than the margin of victory where you conducted the election, then don't make a declaration until you go back and complete the election. He further stated that Section 53 provides that in the event of over-voting, INEC is prohibited by law from making a declaration until you go back to those polling units and conduct elections where the registered voters will make a difference to the

margin of lead (The Nation, 2019). Furthermore, the Chairman of INEC noted that the circumstances that led to the inconclusive declaration of election results are inevitable, and it is as a result of violent acts and political thuggery, which are not only peculiar to Nigeria; thus, no one has accused the Commission of acting contrary to the provisions of the electoral act when it comes to the issue of inconclusive elections in Nigeria (The Nation, 2019).

In fact, it is obvious to understand that the 2010 Electoral Act and the Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of the 2019 Elections revealed the inadequacy of the law to ensure violent free elections in a way to guarantee free, fair, and credible elections during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the laws encouraged political thuggery during the 2019 general elections, as seen in Sections 26 and 53 of the 2010 Electoral Act and Paragraphs 41(e) and 43(b) of the Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of the Elections, which allowed return elections affected by emergency situations (natural disasters and violence) on the one hand and the provision of lead margin, which centred on the inconclusive declaration of results on the other (the 2010 Electoral Act, 2019; Regulations and Guidelines, 2019).

In view of this development, political thugs were therefore mobilised to disrupt places of voting or collation of results so as to ensure over-voting and violence to cancel the election and result by over-voting, while at the same time narrowing the margin differences between two leading candidates to allow for an inconclusive declaration and return to the election. For instance, during elections, 2,497,181 votes were cancelled arising from violence, disruptions, and malfunctioning of card readers caused by violent attacks and destructions (Situation Room, 2019).

Consequently, inconclusive election strategy is a clear form of electoral manipulation and rigging in Nigeria, which was aided by frustrated politicians through the recruitment of political thugs to cause violence during polling and collation of results.

It was states that

“The inconclusive happened because it's not in their favour (ruling party). So it's not totally free of rigging, that's why often now we will still continue having this issue (political thuggery) as long as government don't want to announce what people voted for, so they pay thugs for themselves. That's why you heard them say inconclusive. That's why if the ruling party loss, they insist on inconclusive. Instead of them to announce their opponent, they will say inconclusive. They will try to manipulate.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

It was similarly observed in an interview with informant that

“...as a politician and as a stakeholder of a political party, we have never come across a word in politics that is called inconclusive. ...it is just of recent terminology in 2019 called inconclusive. And this is also a thuggery because they manipulated their ways to rig the election and get what they want. That was why they use the thugs, after using the thugs to cause confusion at some polling units afterward, that political unit automatically will be suspended.” (Interview with Informant in category D, 2023).

This political action always forces election officers, by law, to cancel affected polling units because a clear winner cannot be determined due to the number of cancelled votes at that instance. It is clear that frustration and desperation by politicians exploited inconclusive provisions in the 2010 Electoral Act and rigged elections. So, that when the return election is announced, they get additional time to re-strategize towards

victory mostly through ‘do-or-die’ actions, even if it means against the popular votes or candidates. This is in line with the postulation of Frustration Aggression Theory that when people became frustrated they tend to use aggressive way to achieve their interest especially through violence (Olaoluwa, 2018). Hence, cancellations arising from violence and disruption of election processes at polling and collation centres were mostly perpetrated by the activities of political thugs across Nigeria (INEC, 2019; Situation, 2019).

4.9 Weak Security and Judiciary

Nigerian security operatives were saddled with the responsibility to handle election security in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Yet, due to political thuggery, weak security personnel and judges negatively impacted on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Accordingly, Section 29(3) of the 2010 Electoral Act as amended in 2015 states that

"notwithstanding the provisions of any other law and for purposes of securing the vote, the Commission shall be responsible for requesting the deployment of relevant security personnel necessary for elections or registration of voters and shall assign them in the manner determined by the Commission in consultation with the relevant security agencies." (The 2010 Electoral Act, 2019).

In fact, weakness of election security personnel was identified in the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. This is because election security personnel were infiltrated to aid electoral rigging by frustrated politicians who were desperate to win elections at all costs, regardless of existing principles, provisions of law, and security

architecture. In defence of the need for the involvement of political thugs during elections in Nigeria, it was believed that politicians

“...needed some extra forces and that is the thugs because sometimes the politicians also believed that the police men or any security agents don’t protect them the way they are supposed to be protected because when they see people stoning them or attacking them, or abusing them, they normally give half cover.” (Interview with Informant in category B2, 2023).

Similarly, it was gathered that frustrated politicians perpetrated violent attacks and destructions through the involvement of political thugs and sometimes connived with selfish, unprofessional, and corrupt security officials to create a favourable atmosphere to win elections for a given candidate or political party against other political opponents. It was narrated that politicians

“Without political thugs, even the politician can’t be able to do their campaign rallies without intimidation or attack from the opposition in all areas. It is the thugs that provided for security and protection to their masters which even security can’t do what thugs are doing to politicians because the security men like soldier or police might play with his life and are very few and their law may not necessarily allowed them to commit atrocities.” (Interview with Informant in category B2, 2023).

On this note, political thuggery becomes a necessary tool for politicians to cause violence so as to manipulate electoral processes and win elections during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Politicians and political parties strategised to connive with security personnel for the involvement of political thugs to attack voting points and

collation centres during collation of results at different units and centres in the country.

It was further revealed in an interview with informants that politicians

“...strategize to connive with security for a plan attack so as for instance to leave a given point of election for 30 minutes or 1 hour then the thugs will be opportune to arrive and attack the place in order to give chance for politicians to rig election in the form of changing result sheet, thumb printing all ballot papers or to destroyed all materials in favour of their political master. The way they do it is that a political thug, will just abuse a voter or other thug, and from then they ignite the fight and before you know it they attack everyone there as planned by politicians.” (Interview with Informant in category B2, 2023).

The 2010 Electoral Act provided that the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) personnel are the frontline election security providers, while other para-military officials like the Nigeria Immigration Service, the Nigerian Correctional Service, and the Nigerian Road Safety Corps served as supportive security officials. The 2010 Electoral Act further indicated that “the Commission shall only request the deployment of the Nigerian Armed Forces for the purpose of securing the distribution and delivery of election materials and the protection of election officials” (The 2010 Electoral Act, 2019). Perhaps early security warnings of threats of violence in the volatile areas towards the 2019 general elections were either neglected or proved to be the weakness of the concerned authority to take necessary measures with a view to preventing destruction and killings during elections.

The INEC final election report (2019) correspondingly proved the inability of security agencies to holistically curtail and secure all the polling units and the collation centres because many areas witnessed election-related violence in the form of destructions,

kidnappings, intimidation, killings, and injuries to election staff, voters, candidates, security officials, observers, and media reporters due to inadequate security personnel, corruption, or unprofessional attitudes exhibited by the security officials in spite of the huge amount of money allocated to security agencies for ensuring a free, fair, and credible election in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (INEC, 2019). It was added that

“There are cases where even the security agencies are made to compromise and allow political thugs to go back even after arrest, they cannot be prosecuted. Very few of them, especially if you are with the government they will be reluctant to arrest thugs by Police. Even if the Police are willing to take action, they will just draw their attention and instruct them not to do anything that will harm their boys (thugs).” (Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

The International Crisis Group earlier reported in 2018 that election stakeholders should be vigilant in states that portrayed high levels of electoral violence or security vulnerability towards the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The report further stated that due to the high risk of bloodshed across the country, multiple factors could trigger acts of electoral violence because of desperation by politicians and support given to political thugs, especially in states like Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, and Rivers. The report also added that politics of ‘win or die’ behaviour by politicians, acrimony between PDP and APC supporters that led to fighting, distrust in securities, doubt on INEC neutrality, and excessive use of political thugs in the country (especially where the two major political parties showed strength of supporters that may lead to a tie in votes margin between two candidates) are the major points of concern to achieve a free, fair, and credible election during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (ICG, 2018). Similarly, the INEC final election report

(2019) shows that a lack of synergy between its officials and security personnel deployed during the election triggered harassment, intimidation, and attacks by political thugs at polling units and collation centres in various areas during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

In addition, security officials appeared ineffective during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria because security personnel were unable to holistically address the activities of political thugs and frustrated politicians who perpetually instigated violent attacks and destructions to facilitate electoral rigging and win elections at the detriment of their political opponents by all means. The rigging caused excessive cancellations of votes in many polling units, which led to postponement of elections in some areas, whereas other elections were declared inconclusive and forced the Commission to fix a return of elections to other days (Situation Room, 2019). Accordingly, reports further indicated that some security officials were seen as partisan during election cycles, contrary to their formal responsibilities for securing elections and protecting lives and properties (Situation Room, 2019). In some areas, security personnel were arrested because they joined some politicians to participate in election rigging and other malpractices in an effort to favour a political party or candidate to win the election against their political opponents. It was observed that

“...at times the government use security personnel in rigging, not only the political thugs, because in terms of posting, the security personnel will be posted and right from the office, they will be advised. If you see certain things, close your eyes. If the security personnel are doing their work, they will avail the thuggery. But thugs will come, security personnel will see them, and nothing will be done. Whatever thugs want to do, security personnel are there reluctantly.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

Available evidence indicated that security officials, including policemen and Army officers, were caught releasing sensitive materials that were kept in the branch of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, to politicians. This occurred on the day of the presidential and national assembly elections on February 23rd, 2019, when the arrest was made, which included a major in the Nigerian Army and three police officers who connived with politicians (Honourable Williams Reason, who was the Rivers State's Commissioner for Urban Development, Honourable Wanaka Opokri, who was the incumbent member of the State House of Assembly) in support of the PDP's victory in the state (Vanguard, 2019a).

Nevertheless, a police officer was caught casting ballot papers during the APC primary election in Kano, which indicated unprofessional ethics or corruption within security personnel that manifested in politics. The primary election of political parties only concerned party members alone, but due to security weakness, an officer was sighted as an active participant in partisan politics, whereas his responsibility was to protect lives and properties and remain neutral in politics (The Eagle, 2021). In a nutshell, the participation of the security operatives was weak in an attempt to ensure optimum protection of lives and properties, particularly the civic right to vote and be voted for during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Cases of partisan politics, corruption, and unprofessional ethics by security officials manifested, which at the same time influenced political thuggery during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

In a statement, the sitting Governor of Rivers States, Nyesom Wike, believed that the role the Nigerian Army played during the 2019 election in Rivers was negative and the worst in the history of elections in Nigeria. He added that the Army Division became

the operational base of the APC as a political party in Rivers State. He further noted that despite peaceful voting during the day at polling units in Rivers State, the Army occupied collation centres to cart away EC 8C Forms for the governorship and EC 8b1 Forms for the State House of Assembly elections, arrested electoral officers, and molested about 200 PDP agents. But the Army refuted the allegation and constituted a committee to investigate the killing of an Army officer, Lieutenant Gumi, by political thugs in Abonnema (Wike, 2019).

In another development, the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (2019) equally reported the presence of heavily armed military officers at various places of polls, including collation centres and polling units, which inflicted fear in the minds of voters in the riverine areas. Because of the crises emanating from the two dominant political parties (APC and PDP) as they struggled to control the lead in votes. This led to the killing of an army officer by political thugs, and thereby the Nigerian Army raided the entire community and killed individuals (IRI & NDI, 2019). On the other hand, judicial adjudication during the 2019 general elections also influenced political thuggery. Although the 2010 Electoral Act states in Section 133 (2b) that

“In the case of any other elections under this Act, the election tribunal established under the Constitution or by this Act,” Section 133 (3) further adds that “the election tribunals shall (a) be constituted not later than 30 days before the election; and (b) when constituted, open their registries for business 7 days before the election.” (The 2010 Electoral Act, 2019).

Equally, it is a conventional belief that prompt and objective rulings on all litigation cases related to election processes enhance election credibility in democratic societies.

This puts confidence in the minds of citizens that democracy and its sustainability can be safeguarded and achieved with an effort to ensure justice for all citizens. As such, the political interests of all candidates, parties, and electoral management bodies are vehemently considered without selective treatment on the part of the judiciary.

However, politicisation of the judiciary and interference in justice delivery weakened judicial rulings and led to a loss of confidence in the judiciary on the part of citizens, which in one way or another influenced political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. In view of this, political powers given to the chief executives (the president and governors), especially to appoint, promote, suspend, or remove judges, eventually become a strong challenge to the independence of the judiciary in Nigeria. For instance, it was gathered that civil society organisations and the leading opposition party (PDP) strongly condemned the removal of Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Walter Onnoghen, by President Buhari just a few weeks before the 2019 general election in Nigeria (Premium Times, 2019c). The PDP believed that the removal of Chief Justice was based on a political attempt to rig the 2019 general elections in favour of the ruling party and President Muhammadu Buhari's re-election bid (Premium Times, 2019c).

The Chief Justice of Nigeria, Walter Onnoghen, was removed from office on January 10th, 2019, just four weeks before the general elections, based on the allegation that Walter failed to publicly declare his assets and liabilities to the Court of Conduct Bureau, an act that President Buhari and his vice president failed to do after the 2019 elections (Premium Times, 2019c). This allegation was filed by Buhari's campaign team supporters, who accused Walter of violating the provisions of the 1999 Constitution and asked the court to sack him. Sources further revealed that APC and Buhari felt that Walter was a difficult person and could not succumb to APC interest

in the event that the 2019 elections were rigged to favour APC and Buhari. The Chief Justice will deliver a true judgement that might favour opposition parties, especially the PDP. This was a calculated attempt to see if the APC rigged the election and won, but a petition was filed with the tribunal challenging Buhari's victory by the opposition party, the PDP, what would be the final judgement (Premium Times, 2019c).

In addition to the removal of judges, it was further revealed that manipulation and delay in the delivery of judgements based on technical grounds influenced political thuggery because many politicians felt that justice was not guaranteed at the court of law and therefore resorted to employing thugs to win elections first at all costs. In view of this, the INEC Chairman once noted that, in spite of the necessary documents and laws provided to judges to avoid delay or delivery of conflicting judgements with regard to the 2019 general elections, delay and delivery of conflicting judgements prevailed before and after the 2019 general elections (Vanguard, 2019c).

Equally, Chief Justice of Nigeria, Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad, observed that recent events in the country revealed romantic relationships between politicians and judges to pursue their vested political interests. He warned judges to handle election petition cases without influence or pressure from elites, politicians, or stakeholders, because judges should guard the judicial integrity and avoid affairs with lawyers, no matter their innocent faces during judgement (Vanguard, 2019c). Indeed, romantic relationships with politicians indicated influence to corrupt judges to cover election malpractices, especially anomalies perpetrated by political thugs and frustrated politicians, in an attempt to ensure election victory over justice for political opponents. Since corruption and influence of the ruling party played a vital role during judgements at the tribunal, frustrated politicians didn't hesitate to use political thugs to win

elections at all costs during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Thus, frustration led manipulation of security personnel and judges to favour a given candidate or political party during elections and judgment as part of postulations of Frustration Aggression Theory that where a person is frustrated, he becomes aggressive and uses even violent means to achieve his need (Battigalli et al., 2019; Olaoluwa, 2018).

The weakness of the judiciary further encouraged politicians to use political thugs, which eventually led to the quantum of appeals channelled to different tribunal committees across the country during the 2019 general elections. Accordingly, it is evident that the 2019 general elections witnessed the most intense litigation cases ever recorded in the history of elections in Nigeria, which stood at 1,701 cases. The cases of appeal were a result of electoral violence, among other things, which manifested in the form of destructions, killings, and intimidations during the conduct of the election perpetrated by political thugs and frustrated politicians (KDI, 2019). INEC alone recorded 890 litigation cases arising from the conduct of the political parties' primary elections towards the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Premium Times, 2019d).

In another verified and confirmed record, 811 cases of election petitions were filed with different tribunal committees, challenging the conduct of the 2019 general election in Nigeria. The cases were filed against INEC, candidates, and political parties in relation to election anomalies, especially the cancellation of votes and results emanating from the election of the president, governors, and members of the National and State Houses of Assembly in the country (KDI, 2019). Table 4.3 below presents a summary of petitions during the 2019 general elections.

Table 4.3

Petitions Filed during the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

State	Senatorial	House of Reps.	States Assembly	Governorship	Total
Abia	4	9	15	4	32
Adamawa	2	7	11	3	23
Akwa-Ibom	2	8	24	1	35
Anambra	8	9	25	No Election	42
Bauchi	7	8	12	4	31
Bayelsa	4	9	15	No Election	28
Benue	4	9	18	1	32
Borno	2	2	3	0	7
Cross River	4	8	16	2	30
Delta	5	9	37	1	52
Ebonyi	1	3	1	2	7
Edo	2	5	7	No Election	14
Ekiti	2	3	0	No Election	5
Enugu	3	7	2	2	14
FCT	2	1	0	0	3
Gombe	1	2	1	3	7
Imo	7	15	48	9	79
Jigawa	0	0	0	0	0
Kaduna	4	6	9	1	20
Kano	0	12	23	4	39
Katsina	0	0	1	1	2
Kebbi	0	0	2	1	3
Kogi	4	8	6	No Election	18
Kwara	0	0	1	2	3
Lagos	2	12	1	2	17
Nasarawa	6	6	12	4	28
Niger	2	0	6	3	11
Ogun	3	3	19	3	28
Ondo	1	3	3	No Election	7
Osun	2	3	0	No Election	5
Oyo	4	12	15	1	32
Plateau	4	8	10	1	23
Rivers	2	6	11	5	24
Sokoto	3	10	22	1	36
Taraba	3	4	14	1	22
Yobe	1	2	0	0	3
Zamfara	6	7	27	5	45
Presidential					4
Total	105	215	420	67	811

Source: Kimpact Development Initiative, 2019

Consequently, it was also gathered that a number of judicial sittings for the tribunal committees were moved to hidden places or transferred from one place to another, especially the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, due to fear of insecurity, specifically attacks perpetrated by political thugs and frustrated politicians (Channels, 2019). The

governorship election petition tribunal of Katsina State moved to Abuja. It was also gathered that a petitioner sought transfer of his case to Delta State, but before the transfer, the tribunal committee dismissed his petition for being “abandoned” by the appellant (Channels, 2019; Punch, 2019a). It was noted that Nigerian politicians believed in winning elections first rather than losing to political opponents and then seeking redress in court, and confidence in true judgement does not exist.

Thus, the weaknesses of security and the judiciary forced members of political parties and candidates to employ the services of political thugs to cause violence and rig elections against political opponents to avoid losing to political opponents in free contests. This significantly influenced politicians to use political thugs during the 2019 general election in Nigeria. Thus, political parties and candidates, especially the ruling ones, used political thugs to attack and destroy election-related areas so that the result would be cancelled and the return of the election would be announced or fixed at a later date, which would give them an added advantage to re-strategize for victory since security officials demonstrated weakness to holistically address the menace of political thuggery during and after the 2019 general election in Nigeria.

4.10 Unpatriotic Attitudes

The unpatriotic behaviour of politicians (especially those in power or incumbents), who were frustrated and desperate to win elections, influenced the use of political thugs during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. This is because frustrated politicians who were desperate to win elections employed the services of political thugs and instructed them to carry out deadly attacks and destructions at polling units or collation centres in attempts to rig elections to favour a particular party or candidate (European Union, 2019; HRW, 2019). It is in line with this attribute that

Taylor (2018) noted that unpatriotic attitudes exhibited by incumbent politicians (political parties and candidates) are a well-known tradition in most developing democracies, which has created a greater advantage for leaders in continuing control of political power and access to state resources. When this is achieved, it definitely adds political advantage in controlling all necessary political institutions, which include not only security, the electoral body, the judiciary, and the state media but also other related organisations responsible for ensuring periodic and credible elections (Taylor, 2018).

Ruling political parties and candidates in most African countries, especially Nigeria, are actively involved in creating undue political advantage through violence. Incumbent leaders routinely support and fund political thugs so as to influence election victory regardless of the existing principles, at the detriment of political opponents, who have no access to power or state resources in that material time (Clayton, 2021). Accordingly, elected executives and legislators who are also incumbents have a greater advantage in winning elections than their opposition counterparts who are not in office. Usually, incumbent candidates were accused of unpatriotic behaviours because of incumbency factors using such advantage to influence election victory, even with violence perpetrated by political thugs during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Bello, 2020). For instance, during the conduct of the 2019 general elections, a sitting governor of Rivers State and other independent bodies accused the APC and the Presidency of using incumbency to influence elections in favour of their party and candidates by using state institutions under their control, like security agencies and electoral bodies (Wike, 2019; CLEEN Foundation, 2019).

The presence of the military at the various polling units and collation centres across the riverine areas eventually frightened voters whose political affiliations were largely in support of the opposition parties, particularly the PDP, which was against exercising their franchise (IRI & NDI, 2019). Afterward, the APC attempted deployment of the military to polling units and collation centres, prompting opposition parties to mobilise their political thugs (militant groups like Niger Delta militants and the rest) to secure their votes and to resist military intimidation that eventually led to violence between party supporters and the Nigerian Army, which led to excessive cancellations of votes and postponement of elections around the riverine areas, particularly Rivers State (CLEEN Foundation, 2019).

A government reaction towards outright condemnations for the deployment of military personnel to polling units and collation centres was made to address the security challenges in response to the growing activities of militant groups like IPOB and Niger Delta militants whose intention was to stop and sabotage elections in the riverine areas (IRI & NDI, 2019). Meanwhile, the 1999 Constitution clearly states that the military is prohibited from partaking in election processes and that election security is basically a civic affair that should be overseen by members of the Nigerian Police Force, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, and other related civic security organizations. In view of this, Section 29(3) of the 2010 Electoral Act provides that

“Military involvement in the elections shall only be at the request of INEC and only for the purpose of securing the distribution and delivery of election materials and the protection of election officials” (The 2010 Electoral Act, 2019).

It is against this provision of law and coupled with the incumbency factor that President Muhammadu Buhari directed the Nigerian Army to shoot and kill anybody (political thugs) who attempts to snatch ballot papers and boxes during the election. In compliance with the directive of the President, the Chief of Army Staff reiterated that people who attempt to snatch ballot boxes during the election risked their lives (Premium Time, 2019c). Thus, President Buhari's statement was considered undemocratic who derived his desperation for being the incumbent President contested under the APC so as to be re-elected during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Unpatriotic behaviour of incumbent politicians further deteriorated national consciousness that influenced political thuggery during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Belief in nationhood posters election credibility in democratic societies, however, far beyond the ideal (when it matters on the realities during elections), unpatriotic or deteriorating national consciousness exhibited by candidates, members of political parties, security personnel, and voters immensely puts strong challenge on credible election in the year 2019. It was pointed out that

“All these things contribute to broken home in our community. We have millions of broken homes, most of those children who grew up in that family, they tend to be hired or easily be used by these politicians in any time.” (Interview with Informant in category H, 2023).

Unpatriotic behaviours led frustrated politicians who employed political thugs to cause violence and rig elections against national interest; most frustrated candidates were desperate to win elections at all costs. Because of their unpatriotic attitude, frustrated politicians supported political thugs with cash, promises, and hard drugs, and together

they launched violent attacks and destructions at rallies, campaigns, voting, and collation, resulting in attempted electoral rigging. The reported cases revealed that political thugs were seen together with their godfathers disrupting voting processes and collating results in many areas of Kano, Rivers, Kogi, Katsina, and Benue states (Situation Room, 2019).

The incumbent Governor of Kogi State, Yahaya Bello, who belonged to the APC, stated that politicians recruited political thugs to win elections, and for any aspirant to win an election, he or she must support and recruit political thugs, touts, militias, or criminals so as to intimidate people during the election. He further stated that Kogi State had several armed groups, or political thugs. Once the election is over, these groups of political thugs become obsolete and rendered useless by politicians, thereby creating greater danger and a threat to security in society. Afterwards, the political thugs metamorphose into different criminal groups with devastating effects that are difficult to address in society, and for societies to be safer, Nigerian politicians must stop using political thugs, touts, militias, and criminals during elections (Bello, 2020). Because of the unpatriotic behaviour of some politicians in Osun State, the PDP printed fake observer tags and customised INEC materials to gain access to restricted areas, which only duly accredited observers can enter. This was exposed by the police during 'stop and search' duty (Sahara Reporters, 2018).

Consequently, unpatriotic security personnel also collaborate with desperate politicians to allow political thugs to cause violence in order to create an enabling atmosphere for electoral rigging during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. In view of this, it was revealed that police and Army officers were arrested due to a compromise of duty by releasing sensitive election materials to politicians in Rivers

State (Vanguard, 2019a). Similarly, a police inspector was caught voting for a member of the APC in Kano during primary elections against the law, though an investigation was carried out by the Nigerian Police Force on the said officer, yet the public has not been informed of the prosecution or any developments for the said arrest (The Eagle, 2021).

Likewise, it was revealed that “security personnel didn’t arrest political thugs who cut someone’s hands on the day of voting in his presence at the polling unit in Gombe State (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023). Also, political thugs

“...came out with weapons in a terrifying outlook, terrifying and horrifying voters. So, in this way, they do in an area where for example an opposition or a particular candidate has strength, they come out in large number, they horrify people to the extent that either they refuse to come out and cast their votes or once they see them, they disperse them. They directly sometimes even thump print ballot papers, they hijack ballot boxes or even alter the result by displaying these weapons. Where I even cast my votes, thugs were there, they hijacked the vote and thorn it and threw it away because I was not voting for the candidate of their principal that instructed them to stay in that polling unit.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Hence, unpatriotic attitudes exhibited by election stakeholders against the principles of free, fair, and credible elections influenced political thuggery during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The activities of political thugs and frustrated politicians led to excessive destruction and attacks on the polling units, collation centres, and other places across the country, which eventually impacted the credibility of the 2019 general elections.

4.11 Summary

The factors that influenced political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria included structural imbalances arising from ethnic marginalisation and poor living conditions, the politics of patronage, the politics of the do-or-die affair, absence of party ideologies, politics as business venture, weakness of INEC, inadequate electoral laws and regulations, weaknesses of security and judiciary, and unpatriotic behaviour of politicians. Figure 4.5 outlines the factors that influenced the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

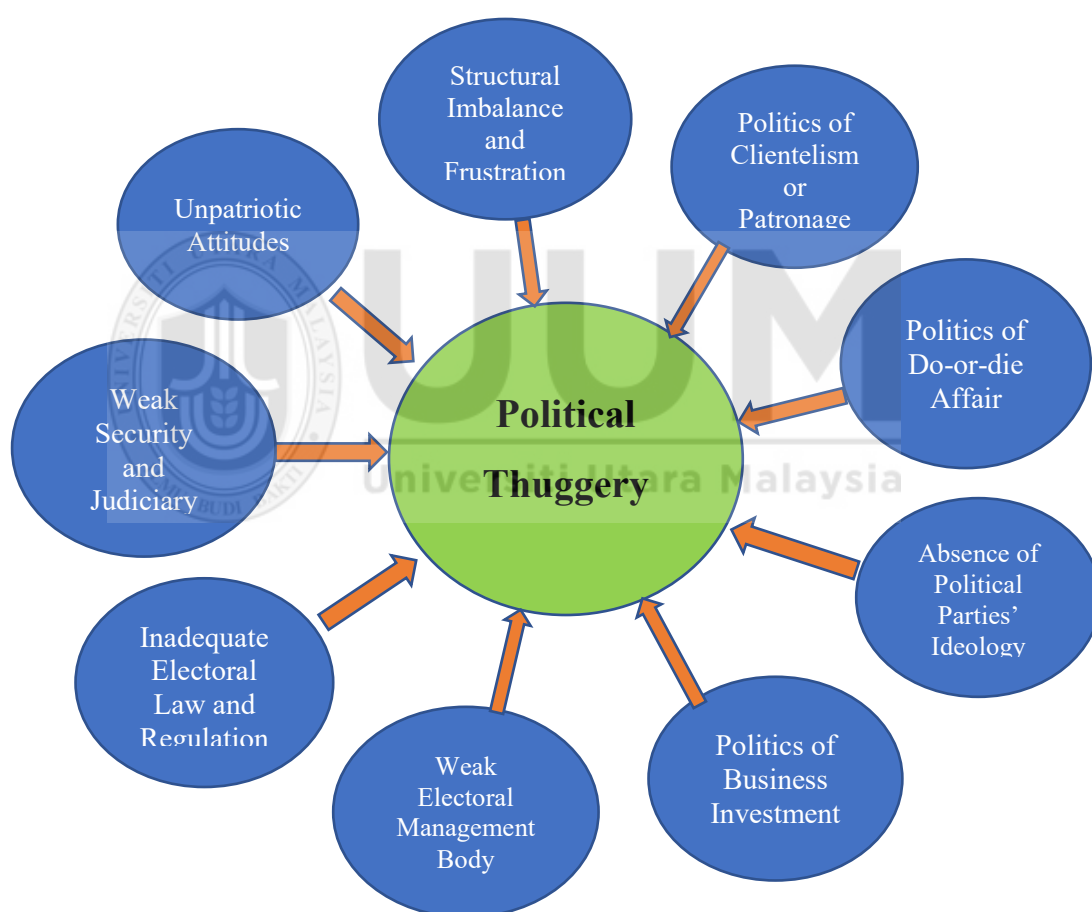


Figure 4.5 Factors that Influenced Political Thuggery in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

Accordingly, evidence emerged that the 2019 general elections were affected by political thuggery where political thugs perpetually attacked polling units and collation centres, and other electoral irregularities included late distribution of election

materials, lack of transparency, lack of information or updates to the public about election preparations, vote buying, low voter turnout, excessive use of money beyond the approved limits, exchange of hate speeches among party supporters, failure of smart card readers during the voting process, and abrupt postponement and cancellation of the election and results (European Union, 2019). Eventually, instigated violent attacks were in the form of intimidation, threat, abduction, assault, and killing of candidates, voters, election staff, security personnel, observers, and journalists, in addition to the destruction of properties that included campaign offices, personal belongings, and election materials like ballot papers, boxes, smart card readers, result sheets, and other hardware, both sensitive and non-sensitive to elections across the country (Situation Room, 2019).



CHAPTER FIVE

IMPACT OF POLITICAL THUGGERY ON THE CREDIBILITY OF THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

5.1 Introduction

The 2019 general elections witnessed a number of unfolding events and challenges that characterised the elections, including but not limited to the threat of political thuggery and violence, cancellation of votes or results, postponement of elections, late distribution of election materials, expenditure above the official limit, lack of transparency by the INEC, delay in delivery of judgements by the judiciary, partisan bias by security personnel, and malfunctioning of smart card readers to verify intending voters in one way or another, which affected the credibility of the elections (European Union, 2019; INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019). It is critical to argue, among other things, that political thuggery played a significant role in undermining the credibility of the 2019 general elections. It was stated that political thuggery

“...has not only affected the credibility, it even altered the result, because in Kano State, the supposed winner has now lost, because the thugs were now used to dismantle the entire electoral process on the run day. It happened in Rivers, Benue, Gombe and Bauchi, Lagos and Delta states. ...even the international observers like Human Rights Watch, European Union, African Union, NDI, IRI, all reported that the credibility of the election was affected by the violence.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

More importantly, it was understood that political thuggery was influenced by a number of factors during the 2019 general elections, which included structural imbalance and frustration, politics of clientelism or patronage, politics of do-or-die affair, absence of political parties' ideology, politics as a business venture and investment for personal gain, weakness of the electoral managing body, inadequate electoral laws and regulations, weak security and judiciary, and unpatriotic attitudes. These factors significantly paved the way for political thuggery and provided a smooth ground for election rigging through violence and manipulation of electoral processes, which consequently flawed the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Election credibility is therefore recognised when a credible election is achieved. A credible election is one that is trusted or believed (Collins, 2023) by all people involved. In view of this, a credible election is all inclusive; it is an election that carries stakeholders along who are treated equally, and they believe that the foundation for a free and fair contest is guaranteed to all candidates and political parties without any form of irregularity or malpractice. Any election that is not trusted, believed in, or recognised for being credible by all stakeholders fails credibility. In addition, it was further narrated that

“...if people were not allowed to freely express their mind, make their choice freely, without intimidation, without harassment, then you can be rest assured that that particular outcome (election) is already compromised. Once the outcome is compromised, it means the entire process is actually questionable. (Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

Election credibility is compromised or damaged by any act of malpractice either caused or aided by an electoral institution, political party, candidate, electorate, security official, or election management staff in an attempt to either favour or harm a candidate or political party at all levels in election cycles. As such, election credibility comes as a result of credible conduct of the election; it is the one that is free from any act of rigging leading to protest, contest, or rejection either before or after the declaration of the candidate as the winner of the election. In respect of the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, it was clearly that:

“Normally, the environment is chaotic and elections conducted on that atmosphere cannot be said to be credible. So the whole essence of democracy is at most defeated. The atmosphere is not actually stable. Because how can you vote in an echo environment and expect that your vote will count? So, we have cases where political thugs will come and snatch ballot box, will come and scare away voters and others.” (Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

Nonetheless, in a situation where the guiding rules are tampered with or manipulated to favour a given candidate or political party, such elections are said not to be credible because clear evidence of electoral malpractices and irregularities exists during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It is further narrated that the activities of frustrated politicians and political thugs

“...go a long way in violating the rules and regulations designed for free and fair elections. So when they alter all the regulations meant for the election, it is impossible to have a free and fair election because they are egocentric. Their ego also goes a long way in dominating electoral processes and even the system.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

Moreover, strong evidence revealed that multiple impacts of political thuggery manifested to undermine the credibility of the 2019 general elections during the conduct of events that happened at all levels of elections in Nigeria. Eventually, the events negatively affected the credibility of the 2019 general elections, considering the scores of conduct that occurred through the instigation of violence that led to massive rigging and manipulation of electoral processes. Perhaps, it was frustration and aggression that made politicians to use political thugs to cause violence during election processes. This substantiate the postulations of the Frustration Aggression Theory which argued that frustration normally leads to aggression and aggression leads to violence (Battigalli et al., 2019). Thereafter, people respond to situation in anger that resulted to violent attacks especially when situations are not favourable to one's desire (Olaoluwa, 2018). Thus, politicians and members of different political parties who were mostly desperate to win election and employ the services of political thugs aided election rigging through violent attacks. This has ensured maximum benefit of victory against political opponent(s) or the general interest of society (Moliki, 2021).

Consequently, reluctance of authority and security personnel to address the menace created a gap to be filled in achieving peaceful conduct of elections and election credibility, which the authority concerned claimed to have achieved but did not achieve, considering events in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. In view of this, Broken Window theory believed that a minor act of crime or violence, if not tackled, may lead to bigger violence with a huge impact. In addition, the lack of vigilance to check illegal gatherings, abuse of the law, routine monitoring of unused structures, and surveillance of the nearby environment and neighbouring societies have open up greater risks and dangers to violence. Also the lack of social control mechanisms always aggravates crises and violence (Abdullahi et al., 2016). Thus, when political

thuggery is not checked at an early stage, it may lead to a big security threat consuming a wide range of society. Where political thugs are not checked, they may become a bigger security threat and form larger groups of criminals like insurgents, bandits, terrorists and so on. On this note, political thuggery therefore adversely impacted on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in several ways. These included the volatility of the political environment with civic unrest, excessive cancellation and postponement of elections, low voter turnout and participation, inconclusive rigging of election results, outright rejection of election results and excessive tribunals, high cost of electoral expenditure and corruption, and disenfranchisement and poor political culture.

5.2 Volatility of Political Environment with Civic Unrest

Political thuggery created a volatile and hostile political environment that was characterised by a series of attacks, disputes, and turmoil that led to enmity and frustration during the 2019 general election processes in Nigeria (Sule *et al.*, 2020; European Union, 2019; Situation Room, 2019). The 2019 European Union Election Observer Mission reported that the Nigerian political environment becomes volatile during rallies and elections, especially in the event of the 2019 general elections. It added that political thugs moved freely, armed with weapons, on the streets, at polling units and collation centres, and they disenfranchised voters, attacked candidates, targeted election management staff, chased media reporters and election observers by disrupting election processes in an attempt to change election results just to give their preferred candidate a strong advantage to win elections over and above other candidates during elections (European Union, 2019). It was stated that

“...whenever a contest is close, there is this volatility. And then at the state level also, is the same thing. In almost all the states, you would find out that the governors whether APC or PDP, where APC is ruling, PDP as opposition, or PDP is ruling, APC as opposition, there is always this close contest.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Perhaps, this was as a result of the mind-set of politicians who are in support of political thuggery and who desire to win elections by all means. When the election approached, the environment was uncertain with respect to public security and tranquilly, whereby members of political parties, candidates, and the rest of the citizens experienced politically motivated attacks by militias and political thugs. Businessmen expressed worry over shoplifting and stealing. Individuals were afraid to move freely, especially at night, due to fear of attack and operations by political thugs. In addition, the Nigerian political environment was highly volatile due to the activities of political thugs in almost all the states, whether dominated by the ruling or opposition parties. It was added that such volatility reflects

“...the incidents of snatching of mobile phones, burglary, daylight clash, stealing and all these continued on daily basis all over the country. As I am talking to you now, this area where we are sitting, do not be surprised in the night, once it passed 9 O'clock, one or two thugs may follow this street, and if they see you with your mobile phone, they will just bring out a matchette and say surrender it or you risk losing your hand or life, and if you did not give, they would attack you, you have to simply give. This has been taking place now in everywhere in the country.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Moreover, a civil society organisation that observed the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria reported that during the election cycle alone, in just 127 days (October 2018 to March 2019) from the official commencement of the election process to the announcement of the winner, political thugs launched 161 politically motivated attacks on supporters of different political parties and others that consequently killed over 626 people across Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019). This incidence is worrisome because the deadly reported political attacks stood at 161 incidences, and the number of days that took INEC to conclude the election was 127. Thus, almost every day, there are one or two politically motivated attacks by political thugs, and this figure statistically revealed that on every attack, about 4 people were killed, and thereafter, in every day, about 5 people were killed by the same political thugs during the election cycles of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It was observed however that political thugs enjoyed cover by politicians whereby

“...even if they are apprehended, at the end of the day some politicians would go and rescue them, they would go and bail them, they would go and block the process of their trial or taking them to prison, then they will continue to roam free, they will give security money.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Throughout the election period, political thugs enjoyed the support of politicians and elites, who in one way or another directed them to continually attack and destroy people, especially political opponents and their properties. Political thugs attacked and destroyed election materials and equipment, burned houses that belonged to different candidates, destroyed offices that belonged to candidates, the election management body, security personnel, and political parties; they equally injured or even killed supporters or candidates of political parties, set campaign vehicles ablaze, and engaged

in physical confrontation with other groups of political thugs across the country during the election (Situation Room, 2019). This is because politicians and political parties mostly become frustrated due to the fact that they need to win election by all means. Based on this, politicians hired political thugs to disrupt election areas to give the advantage over political opponents which led to the volatility and civic unrest in the political environment. It was argued by the Frustration Aggression Theory that frustration leads to aggression due to the fact that certain conditions of human life lead to frustration and thus result in violent behaviour (Breuer & Elson, 2017). Hence, desire to win election by frustrated politicians led to the volatility of the Nigerian political environment and the civic unrest during election which included disruption of electoral processes, hostile political relationships, and constraints to free movements that thereafter flawed the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. These are further explained below.

5.2.1 Disruption of Electoral Processes

Political thuggery impacted badly on the credibility of the 2019 general elections through disruption of electoral processes, which was perpetuated by political thugs. Due to violent attacks rising from frustration, frustrated politicians hired political thugs to disrupt electoral processes during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Disruption of electoral processes was recorded in many areas during electoral cycles, especially at the scene of political parties' campaigns and rallies, and polling and collation of election results across the country (European Union, 2019; CLEEN Foundation, 2019; INEC, 2019; IRI & NDI, 2019). The report of these election observer organisations highlighted major intrigues surrounding the disruption of the electoral process during political parties' campaigns, rallies, voting, and collation of results at various centres

across the country. In view of this, political thugs were seen around with deadly weapons, intimidating and attacking political opponents during voting and the collation of results in the country. It was revealed that political thugs

“...disperse people who are genuinely there to vote and take over the place to vote and rig because even the officers employed by INEC are helpless, they cannot do anything because they have no security cover to protect them and they cannot risk their lives by complying with what these boys are doing. These boys were always available during campaign, during elections and other public gathering to distract the process, they shout and abuse everybody they found.”
(Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

Similarly, it was also gathered that most rallies and campaigns of political parties were characterised by intimidation, hostility, use of threats, attacks on political opponents. The activities of political thugs were initiated by politicians who are mostly frustrated and enjoy the support of naïve security personnel who are corrupt in discharging their official duties. It was stated in an interview that

“Politicians supported political thuggery due to selfish reasons, and this affected ability of security officials to effectively discharge their civic responsibilities to protect lives and properties” (Interview with Informant in category F, 2023).

On the rise in volatility of the Nigerian political environment, police and military officials released a joint statement on the arrest of a total of 1,119 suspects linked to civic unrest and violent behaviour at different cycles of the 2019 general elections in almost all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The arrest of 323 suspects was during the presidential and national assembly elections, while 796 people were

arrested linked to the governorship and state house of assembly elections. Adding to the scope, the statement further provided that some of the suspects would be released without charges; others may be implicated, and some may require further arrest and investigation. For instance, only three states accounted for the arrest of 482 suspects, which included 256 suspects arrested in Akwa Ibom, 117 in Imo, and 109 in Kaduna states. (Pulse, 2019). Thus, levels of destruction in relation to electoral processes was observed and explained under political parties' campaigns, rallies, polling, and collation of election results as follows:

5.2.1.1 Political Parties' Campaign and Rally

Before the polling days, political thugs took over the electoral processes of campaigns and rallies. Political thugs, in large numbers, formed groups and, armed with weapons like knives, surrounded different areas of the election in Nigeria (DW, 2019). It was indeed revealed that politicians

“...go to their campaign places with them (thugs), exhibiting and displaying weapons, and they do not hesitate to unleash terror when anyone that they perceive as opposition of that particular principal that employed or engaged them. They are in various groups, so, they fight each other. If this group is for this party or for this candidate, this group is anti that party and that candidate, they fight, because normally, they support them by placing their posters, billboards and they guard them. So, if you touch it, they will not hesitate to harm you. And if they go out campaigning, and anyone insult them or is not supporting them, they will not hesitate to harm him/her.”
(Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

In view of this, political thugs who belonged to the ruling party, the All Progressive Congress (APC), were accused of wanton destruction of all the PDP formations in

Kano, where they attacked the governorship candidate of the People Democratic Party (PDP) of Kano State, Abba Kabir Yusuf, and set his house ablaze, and a car was also vandalised (Premium Times, 2019). It was also revealed that a clash between political thugs affiliated with the two major opposing political parties, the APC and PDP, killed five individuals at rallies just five days before the presidential election in Delta State (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019). It was further added that politicians

“...provide special vehicles for them during campaign, provide almost everything, sponsor their movements from one place to another and they go to campaign with them anyway. And they even send them to go and destroy or move billboard, destroy office of another political party.” (Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

In addition, unknown political thugs who were APC supporters burned the PDP woman leader, Mrs. Acheju Abuh, in her house in Wada/Aro Campaign Council, Ochadamu Ward, in broad daylight in Kogi State (Vanguard, 2019). During the attack, political thugs blocked every exit and entrance to the house, poured petroleum, and set fire to the house while the woman cried for help, but no one could rescue her as the political thugs surrounded the premises armed with heavy weapons, and people stayed far away as they were afraid of being killed too (Vanguard, 2019). Likewise, police officials confirmed the arrest of 47 t political hugs for upsetting and destroying election processes in Anambra State (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019).

It was further gathered that while the North east region recorded a number of violent attacks which cannot only be attributed to political thugs, from the time when it faced the lingering *Boko Haram* crisis, 128 people were arrested for multiple acts of electoral misconduct. The PDP accused APC of hiring thugs to attack its members a few days

to election in Idanre, Ondo State (Vanguard, 2019b). Likewise, PDP accused APC of using political thugs to exterminate their senior officials and supporters of the governor in Akwa Ibom State (The Cable, 2019); and in Delta State too, PDP accused APC of a planned attack to disrupt the election process of the governorship candidate by deploying armed political thugs who are ex-militants around the riverine areas in the state (This Day, 2019). Finally, it was believed that

“Politician at the beginning will tell you that he does support thuggery, but truly he can’t operate without them. He supported them in secret because even security can’t help through his campaign smoothly like thugs did. You even see thugs physically being supported by politicians in his campaign teams with weapons because of fear of attack by the opposition thugs during rallies.” (Interview with Informant in category B2, 2023).

5.2.1.2 Polling and Collation of Results

On the polling and collation days, it was gathered that political thuggery resulted in the destruction of lives and properties during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Political thugs attacked political opponents, voters, staff of election management bodies, security personnel, observers, and media reporters to maximise their chances of election victory by all means (EU, 2019; Situation Room, 2019; HRW, 2019; INEC, 2019). Similarly, evidence revealed numerous destructions at polling units and the collation of results at various centres across different areas in the country.

“...thugs rig election even before voting process started. They run away with ballot box. At times, they cause confusion at voting that gives room to manipulate their ways. Maybe they have some extra ballot paper that they want to put into or to insert inside that political box.” (Interview with Informant in category D, 2023).

On this note, political thugs destroyed and stole election materials, insulted, assaulted, and killed people during the 2019 general elections. It was also revealed that political thuggery made voters

“...refused to come out and vote even though he/she possesses voter card. Because of fear of attack, some directed others even not to go out for voting during Election Day due to fear of attack. Thus, elections materials are snatched, ballot papers thumb-printed by thugs and election result rewritten in favour of the master or political party. These are done in my presence uncountable because police and election staff were induced with money or threatened.”
(Interview with Informant in category B1, 2023).

Similarly, atrocities committed by political thugs were high and dramatic especially in riverine areas of the southern region of the country. This was revealed during an interview that abduction of INEC staff were strategized to fulfil their ambition of manipulation which stated that

“Political thugs usually kidnapped the INEC officials and also kidnapped political party agents. This happens mostly in the riverine areas of the country where they put INEC officials in a boat and kidnap them inside the rivers. You either do what they want or capsize the boat. So out of fear election staff succumbs to their request.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

In many instances, vehicles carrying Smart Card Readers were burned in Dekina LGA; a power generator was burned and another one stolen in Ankpa and Olamaboro LGAs, respectively; a motor cycle belonging to Ad-hoc staff and four other hired vehicles were stolen and damaged in Ajaokuta LGA; and a number of election staff and electorates were seriously injured while ten people died. The Commission also

reported the loss of 69 smart card readers (SCRs), 6 Z-pads, 16 power banks, mats, and buckets at the state office in Kogi State (INEC, 2019).

INEC (2019) further reported abductions of its staff a Supervisory Presiding Officer and a Assistant Presiding Officer by political thugs in Gwamba of Demsa LGA while political thugs also caused violence and disruption of polls in Demsa, Hong, Jada, Lamurde, Michika, Mubi North, Numan, Sheleng and Yola South LGAs in Adamawa State. Meanwhile, political thugs also disrupted polls, kidnapped Area Collation Officer in Bali LGA, snatched and destroyed 23 SCRs across the state in Taraba State. Likewise in Zamfara, political thugs disrupted voting and collation of result processes through violence in Mada of Gusau LGA where 2 Smart Card Readers (SCR) were snatched in Danjiba of Tsafe and Alibawa Dangaladima of Kauran Namoda LGAs of Zamfara State. It was however, reported that killing of an election staff in Borno State and a series of attacks in Yobe State were caused by *Boko Haram* terrorists, not political thugs.

In addition, political thugs disrupted the voting and collation processes in Anambra State, where they destroyed election materials, delayed the collation of results, and caused the relocation of election staff from some registration areas to local government collation centres in Ogbaru, Onitsha North, and Onitsha South LGAs. The menace also adversely resulted in severe threats and violence that occurred during presidential, national, and state House of Assembly elections and affected the collation of results in Anambra East, Idemili North, Ihiala, Ogbaru, and Orumba North LGAs (INEC, 2019). While in Imo State, political thugs harassed and assaulted election staff and violently vandalised and burned the INEC office in Isiala Mbano, which led to the loss of all sensitive and non-sensitive materials. Equally, political thugs harassed, intimidated,

assaulted, beaten, and vandalised election staff and materials in Abak, Eket, Esit Eket, Essien Udim, Ikono, Itu, Ndung Uko, and Obot Akara LGAs, which led to 13 vehicles being burned, staff being wounded, and others being held hostage; 98 SCRs were also snatched and destroyed; and an INEC office was burned down in Ibesikpo/Asutan LGA in Akwa Ibom State (INEC, 2019).

Whereas in Ebonyi State, the violent nature of political thuggery extremely affected the voting and collation of results in registration areas and local government collation centres due to random shootings, snatching of ballot boxes, destruction of sensitive materials, harassment, and killings of election staff. Thereafter, two election staff were killed, a few were stabbed, and many were harassed in Ikwo LGA during the presidential and national assembly elections, which occurred at the Amainyima, Echialike, Enyibichiri, Igbudu II, Ndiagu Amagu I, and Ndufu Echara registration areas. Equally, there were cases of shootings, snatching of sensitive and non-sensitive materials, and harassment of voters, INEC staff, and other stakeholders in Ezza North, Ezza South, Ikwo, and Izzi LGAs that occurred at Amagu, Amana, Ekka, Nkomoro, Ogboji, Okposi/Umuoghara, Omege, and Oriuzor registration areas that led to the postponement of the State House of Assembly elections to March 23rd, 2019 (INEC, 2019).

In Rivers State, INEC (2019) reported that during Presidential and National Assembly elections, political thugs, ex-militants, and men in military uniforms posed a greater degree of violence with threats, intimidation, harassment, abduction, grabbing, injuring, and killing either voters, INEC staff, security personnel, or other stakeholders. The attackers also vandalised election materials and equipment that occurred in Emouha, Khana, Etche, Ikwerre, Ahoada East, Ahoada West, Obio/Akpor,

Abua/Odual, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Andoni, Akuku Toru, Asari Toru, Ogu/Bolo, Okrika, Omuma, Opobo/Nkoro, Oyigbo, Port Harcourt, and Degema LGAs. The result of these included the killing of election staff called Mrs. Ibisaki Amachree Dapre in Degema. In another development, soldiers stormed the collation centre of Opobo/Nkoro LGA, sent all people away, and directed election staff to change the election results on the collation sheets. Similarly, shootings did not allow elections to take place in the entire Okrika LGA; while two election staff sustained injuries due to shootings and elections did not hold in Bonny LGA; snatching of materials and beating of election staff occurred in Asari Turo; thugs overwhelmed security in Asari Akuku LGA, which resulted in postponement of election; two Presiding Officers were abducted in Abua/Odual LGA; three SCRs were stolen in Tai LGA; men armed in military uniform disrupted the collation of results in Ikwerre LGA; collation result sheets (EC8B and EC8C series) of election were stolen in Khana and Emouha LGAs; and hoodlums snatched election materials in Etche LGA (INEC, 2019).

At the voting and collation of results process still in Rivers State, the conduct of gubernatorial and state house of assembly elections was marred with attacks, intimidation, harassment, and vandalism of election materials, in addition to the abduction and killing of people. This occurred in Gokana, Khana, Ogu/Bolo, Abua/Odual, Opobo/Nkoro, Ahoada, Eleme, Tai, Asari Turo, and Port Harcourt local government areas. Due to the sporadic shootings and killings (and the safety concerns of election staff), elections were suspended and later collated for declaration in 17 LGAs. These areas included Ahoada East, Akuku Toru, Andoni, Bonny, Eleme, Emouho, Etche, Khana, Obio/Akpor, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Ogu/Bolo, Okrika, Omuma, Oyigbo, Opobo/Nkoro, Port Harcourt, and Tai LGAs (INEC, 2019). However, the election in Ogu/Bolo was disrupted by the interference of armed men in

military uniforms, which dispersed everyone at the centre. Based on attacks during elections in Ahoada LGA, election officers disappeared, and this resulted in the postponement of the election to April 2nd, 2019 so as to conclude the process, thereby prompting the re-run election for the State House of Assembly on April 13th, 2019 with a view to determining the winner because of inconclusiveness arising from political thuggery (INEC, 2019).

During the conduct of the Presidential and National Assembly elections in Lagos State, there were cases of political attacks in Okota and Oshodi-Isolo, a kidnapping of election staff by men of the Nigerian Army in Eti-Osa, and the detention of two registration area technologists by the military in Agege and Mushin LGAs (INEC, 2019). Similarly, in Ondo State, political thugs took over electoral processes with attacks, vandalism, and the snatching of election materials during the 2019 general elections in the state. The particular scenarios occurred in Akoko South-West, Ondo West Ilaje, Odigbo, and Owo LGAs. A lot of SCRs were snatched, stolen, and destroyed, which resulted in the cancellation of 136 polling units across the country (INEC, 2019).

In Osun State, INEC also recorded disruptions in voter accreditation and voting processes due to gunfire by political thugs in Atakunmosa East and Ede South LGAs. There were killings and destruction of election materials in Ife; political thugs also snatched ballot papers in Iwo LGA; they destroyed and burned six SCRs, two generator sets, ballot papers, and sheets (EC Forms) in Oriade LGA; and political thugs massively disrupted polling and collation of results in Ife Central, Ife North, Ife South, and Ife East LGAs (INEC, 2019). More so in Oyo State, the election was disrupted by political thugs through snatching of ballot paper and boxes, destruction of SCRs in

Egbede LGA, and stabbing of election staff in Oyo West LGA; a political thug was also killed by the rival groups in Ibadan South East LGA, and a collation officer was kidnapped but released in Ibadan North LGA (INEC, 2019).

Consequently, the Situation Room (2019) reported a wide range of attacks and destructions launched by political thugs during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. There were a total of 161 violent attacks recorded, which led to the death of 626 people across six geopolitical zones in the country. The distribution of the figures revealed that North East has 16 incidences and 146 deaths, North Central has 23 incidences and 111 deaths, North West has 20 incidences and 172 deaths, South East has 7 incidences and 14 deaths, South South has 59 incidences and 120 deaths, and South West has 36 incidences and 63 deaths. Most of the incidences and killings occurred during the process of distribution of materials, voting, and collation of results, in addition to political parties' rallies and campaigns during the conduct of the 2019 general elections. It was then revealed that

“Where I even cast my votes, these thugs were there, they hijacked the vote and tore it and threw it away. They did not allow me to cast that vote because I was not voting for the candidate of their principal that instructed them to stay at that polling unit.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

It is necessary to state that political thuggery affected the credibility of the 2019 general elections through creating a volatile political environment with civic unrest that led to disruptions in the electoral processes during campaigns and rallies of political parties and voting and collation of results across the states in the country. The activities of political thugs and frustrated politicians affected a free, fair, and credible

election in a wide scope of distraction with intimidation, attacks, killings, hostage taking, and perpetual threats of violence to election staff, politicians, and other stakeholders, in addition to the destruction of election materials, both sensitive and non-sensitive, across the country during the 2019 general elections. The lives of individuals were not safe and guaranteed so as to freely participate in all election cycles due to fear, anxiety, panic, frustration, and uncertainty that openly explained the mindset of Nigerians in dictating political behaviour and culture.

5.2.2 Hostile Political Relationships

Political thuggery succeeded in creating hostile political relationships among Nigerians during the conduct of the 2019 general elections. As part of the volatility of the political environment during election caused by frustration and aggression, political thuggery aided public abuses, insults, blackmail, cruelty, and enmity in political debates, discussions, and arguments at gatherings or through media broadcasts in many instances. The situation exacerbated destructive political propaganda between party supporters and candidates, which led to rancour and severe hate speeches, undemocratic utterances, and political insults in trying to impeach the personality of a given candidate or promote their popularity during election cycles, which more often than not undermined the credibility of the 2019 general elections in the country (Aboh & Odeh, 2021; Ezeibe, 2021). Because of hostile political relationships, a lot of lingering crises compounded the volatility of the Nigerian political environment with highly tensed electoral violence through excessive attacks and destructions by political thugs that consumed the lives of individuals and property. It was observed that political thuggery ignited hostile relationships which resulted to

“...fight for a power, battle between the principal officers, and rivalry between political parties who are contesting. Whoever needs power can deploy any means to secure it. Sometimes politicians used stick and carrot where necessary in their desire to control resources.” (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

In the course of politics, frustrated politicians and elites explored opportunities through hostility of relationships in mobilising political thugs to assault, intimidate, and abuse political opponents, which led to pandemonium not only during campaigns and rallies but also during the process of polling and collation of results in many centres across the country. During the high tense of election cycles during campaigns, rallies, and debates, either in physical or media correspondence before election days, politicians became frustrated and thereby traded insults with each other with the intention of blackmailing their political opponents using hate speeches so as to increase their chances of winning the election (Ezeibe, 2021). This ignited attacks on supporters of different political parties during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It further revealed that

“...fighting between them (politicians) sometimes cause a lot of insecurity because it caught up with innocent people and they do a lot of fighting from one area to another. It causes a lot of damages of life and properties of the people, they cut innocent people. They attack areas in the name of looking for their opponents.” (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

Afterwards, hostile political relationships provided a foundation to politicians in dividing Nigerians along ethnic and religious lines. People tend to vote not because of competency or merit but because of sentiment, which is a major factor in determining election success or victory (Nwozor et al., 2022). Consequently, provocations and

utterances of the supporters of two major presidential candidates of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari and Atiku Abubakar, consistently uttered hate speeches along economy, personal life or cultural affiliation in Nigerian politics. For instance, PDP supporters continually uttered that ‘*Buhariya*’ reflects recession, poverty, hunger and high cost of living, if you vote for Muhammadu Buhari during the 2019 general elections, you voted for these vices to stay in the next four years (Nwozor et al., 2022). Equally, supporters of the APC advocated that the Atiku Abubakar administration will bring back massive public corruption. If you vote for Atiku Abubakar in the 2019 presidential election, you voted for corruption.

However, hate speech also goes hand-in-hand with fake news published by politicians in order to dent political opponents during the 2019 general elections (Ezeibe, 2021). On this note, a political aide of President Buhari published road construction done in other countries and attributed it to the ruling government, while the opposition posted troop casualties of war from other countries and labelled it as government troops killed by terrorists just to attract support (Situation Room, 2019). This created hostile relationships between supporters of the APC and PDP, which prompted politicians to incite their political thugs to attack each other through violence. It was argued in an interview that

“Political thugs always fight with their political rivals, kill one another while security men were given money to cover atrocities committed by thugs that share same political interest or supported by politicians. The security also helped politicians to arrest opposition thugs while allowing thugs that belonged to the ruling party and when parent of the opposition thugs come to bail them, security personnel abused and insulted them.” (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

As hostile political relationships persist, most political thugs believe in self-defence since they believed that security personnel are weak to deal with them. Thus, political thugs launch attack and reprisal attacks that cause killings and destruction in Kano, Rivers, Delta states and many other states in the country. Based on the failure of security authorities to address political thuggery, Broken Window Theory argued that where and when a minor incident of crime, crisis, violence, protest, or demonstration is not attended to, managed, or controlled by the security agencies, it will lead to a bigger crime or violence (Abdullahi et al., 2016). This incidence, of course, derailed the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

5.2.3 Constraint to Free Movements

Besides creating hostile political relationships among Nigerians, political thuggery adversely constrained the free movement of election materials, results, election staff, voters, observers, and media reporters during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. During election cycles, especially on the day of voting and the collation of results, a series of reports revealed that political thugs, together with politicians, perpetually prevented free movements of election materials and people who are the major stakeholders in elections, which truncated ‘all-inclusive’ and participation in exercising franchise (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019; CLEEN Foundation). In an interview with the informants, noted a constraint to free movement of people either to the polling unit for voting or those involved in campaign, most experienced road blockage at the various areas. In this regard, it was stated that

“If you want to move to a particular area for campaigning and if you don’t have full security/government security officials to give you protection, you will be attacked in that place.” (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

Similarly, political thugs blocked INEC staff on the way to transport election results. During the incidents, election materials like smart card readers, ballot papers, and phones were either stolen, snatched, or destroyed by the political thugs. Election staff and security personnel were equally kidnapped, injured, or killed by political thugs on their way to or from the polling units and collation centres. The attacks created so much hostility during the election, especially on election days in Kano, Plateau, Rivers, Delta, Taraba, Adamawa, Ogun, and many other states across the country during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (INEC, 2019). Election observers and journalists (both national and international) too revealed constraints to free movement in the course of reporting and observing the election processes in many areas, mostly in Kano and Rivers, during re-run elections of the members of national and state assemblies and governorship elections (European Union, 2019; CLEEN Foundation, 2019; Situation Room, 2019).

In view of the incidents, INEC (2019) reported disruptions in the free movement of election materials and staff in some areas. For instance, in Akuku Toru LGA of Rivers State, political thugs barricaded roads and disrupted the movement of election materials and staff to polling units by shooting everywhere, and as a result, bus drivers left vehicles carrying materials and staff to run for their lives. Equally, political thugs attacked a convoy of vehicles conveying the results of the Senate to the collation centre, which led to the death of a police officer in Ipokia LGA of Ogun State. During the gubernatorial election in Kano State, especially on the day of the supplementary election, political thugs who were believed to be supporters of the APC moved freely on the streets of Kano City in Nasarawa and Dala LGAs, attacking voters that supported the opposition candidate of the PDP, Abba Kabir Yusuf. It was even reported that political thugs beat and chased away voters all around the street who

intended to vote or had voted for the PDP at various polling units; they also dictated to electorates to vote only for the APC candidate (ICIR, 2019; Situation Room, 2019).

Constraints in the free movement of election materials and staff significantly contributed to the volatile political environment, which, from a practical perspective, adversely impacted on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It was shown that election staff were abducted on the way to polling units and collation centres. Equally, election materials and results were confiscated, stolen, and damaged on transit, and of course, voters, observers, and media reporters were attacked on the way to vote, observe, or report the election, as the case may be. Partisanship in politics and unprofessionalism in service delivery exhibited by security personnel affected election credibility in the 2019.

5.3 Low Voter Turnout and Participation

Political thuggery unfavourably impacted the credibility of the 2019 general elections by creating low voter turnout and participation. The election was the lowest ever recorded in two decades of election history in Nigeria. The voter turnout recorded stood at 34.96%, which represents 28,614,190 voters out of 84,004,084 registered voters (INEC, 2019). Beyond any doubt, the violent nature of political thuggery through incessant attacks undesirably forced intended voters and candidates to shun away from electoral participation, either to vote or be voted for, during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. On election days in particular for example, it was argued that electorates who possessed their voter cards were reportedly afraid to go to polling units in order to cast votes for their preferred candidates for fear of intimidation, assault, and other forms of attacks by political thugs (Sule et al., 2020). It was further revealed that

...because of the political thuggery, the voters' turnout was over 40% in 2015, but in 2019 it was just below. Meaning that many voters refused to come out and vote because the thugs have been intimidating and terrorising them, they are afraid that if they come out to cast their votes, possibly, they might be attacked and injured. So, it affected the credibility by leading to low voter turnout."
(Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Based on this, politicians continuously instigated violent attacks to cause chaos so that voters will be discouraged to go to polling units to cast votes during elections which will lead to manipulation and rigging to suit their interest. As provided by the Frustration Aggression Theory that an individual's desires and needs are usually affected by events, which consequently result in dissatisfaction. Such individuals may respond to situations in anger in an attempt to meet the desired goals (Olaoluwa, 2018). Equally, not only the ruling party but even the opposition political parties tend to use violence with the help of political thugs to thwart election processes, or that when a given candidate of a political party senses losing an election, he or she may decide to employ political militias to rig election results (Olaoluwa, 2018; Halliru, 2012).

Similarly, groups of election observers under the auspices of the European Union (2019) reported lower voter turnout across the nation. Low voter turnout and participation during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria was indeed linked to fear of politically motivated attacks on the streets, at polling units, or collation centres by hoodlums and political thugs who were instigated by the support of politicians to cause violence on election days (European Union, 2019). Even before Election Day, the International Crisis Group (2018) reported the risk of politically motivated attacks in about 28 states (ICG, 2019), and based on this report of early warning of attacks, most voters became reserved in their willingness to vote during the

election. Due to lack of confidence in Nigerian security, many voters have indicated their unwillingness to participate in the forthcoming elections. Violent attacks on individuals forced a number of voters to stay indoors rather than moving freely to the polling units to exercise their franchise (European Union, 2019).

The growing incidence of political thuggery has forced citizens to intentionally abandon their constitutional rights in order to save their lives from deadly attacks by political thugs. Low voter turnout was also linked to fear of attacks coming from political thugs in their attempt to cause violence and rig elections for the benefit of their master or godfather. Due to frustration and desire to win election by all means, politicians trained their political thugs and supported them with insignificant money, illicit drugs and sometimes unfulfilled promises just to cause violence and rowdiness on election days so as to create chances of electoral manipulation and rigging to favour a given candidates over political opponents. This was believed that political thugs

“...do not hesitate to unleash terror when anyone that they perceive as opposition of that particular principal that employ or engage them. And apart from that also, they are in various groups, so, the fight each other. If this group is for this party or for this candidate, this group is anti that party and that candidate.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

In addition, Adeleke (2016) reported that the electorates in South Western Nigeria were scared to participate in elections because of area boys (thugs) who attacked any individuals that are not voting for their interests, and with this, many voters tend to sit at home on election day rather than risk their lives just to vote for someone who may not come to their aid when needed. The consequences of this act was voter apathy towards the Nigerian political system, in which millions of intended voters chose not

to vote during the 2019 general election. Beside election credibility, this might also have affected the choice of a good and democratic candidate who would listen to the yearning and demands of his people.

Political attacks on specific candidates and voters also indicated discrimination and exclusion over political opponents who are supposed to freely participate with all sense of inclusiveness, which really created apathy that adversely affected the credibility of the 2019 general elections. It is on this basis that voters did not show strong concern and interest towards electoral participation, either to vote or be voted for in the election. This demonstrated the fundamental reason for low voter turnout and participation in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Available statistical records from the reports of INEC (2019), the European Union on Election Observer Mission (2019), and civil society organisations like Situation Room (2019) fantastically revealed that out of the 84,004,084 registered voters, only 29,364,209 were accredited, and of course, only 28,614,190 were able to vote during the general elections.

Further to that, as only 34.96% of registered voters cast their votes, the remaining 64.4% did not vote due to certain challenges arising from security issues. This caused voter apathy, for which the voter turnout drastically declined from 43.7% in 2015 to 34.96% in 2019, even though there was a significant increase in the number of new registered voters from the vault of voter registration, at the sum of 14,283,734 new registered voters which was added to the record of the 2015 general election (69,720,350 voters). This stood at a total of 84,004,084 registered voters in the 2019 general elections. (INEC, 2019; European Union, 2019). Thus, records also exposed that the 2019 general elections had the lowest voter turnout, standing at 34.96% compared to the previous elections conducted in 2015, 2011, 2007 and 2003 (Situation

Room, 2019). Figure 5.1 revealed a perfect linear decline in voter turnout and participation of general elections in Nigeria.

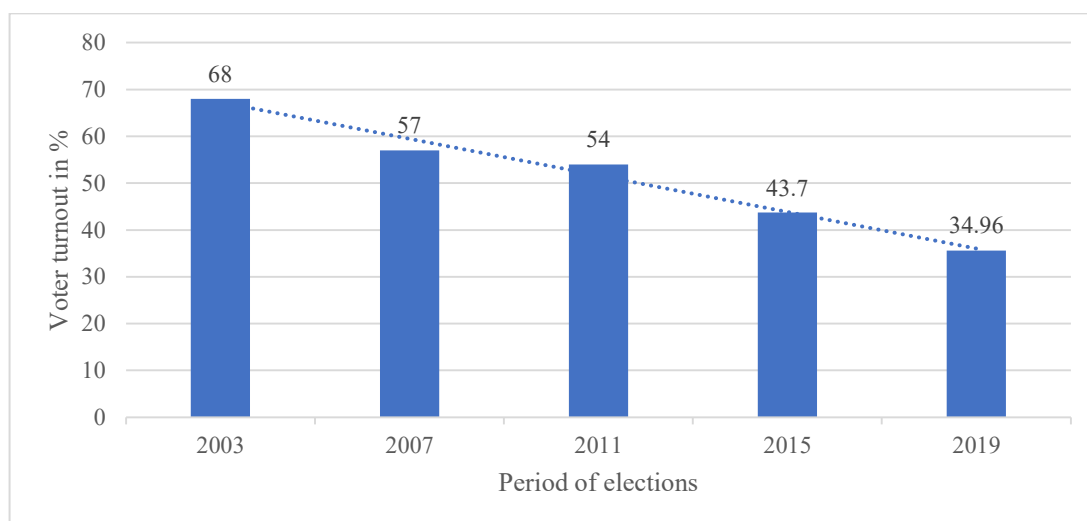


Figure 5.1 Voter Turnout of the Five Elections 2003-2019

Source: Researcher's Design, 2024

It is apparent to note that political thuggery hugely caused low voter turnout, thereby leading to low political participation and voter apathy across the country. This situation in itself drastically ruined the credibility of the 2019 general elections, whereby most electorates were unable to come out and vote for their prepared candidate; voters were disenfranchised and forcefully made to stay indoors during the election due to fear of attacks, intimidation, and assault by political thugs who destroyed polling and collation centres to favour their desired godfather in an attempt to win the election via rigging, violence, and other malpractices. Most politicians were frustrated and desperate to win elections by all means, as it was a do-or-die affair in politics. This resulted in the substantial killing of voters across the country. It is also confirmed that 161 cases of violence were recorded within the period of October 2018 to March 2019 (that is, the official commencement of the campaign and finalising of the election result declaration), which led to the deaths of not fewer than 626 individuals during the 2019

general election alone. This is far more than 106 killings from the records of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019).

Accordingly, in an election where voters and candidates are afraid to come out in public and to freely vote and contest for their prepared candidate or position because of attacks perpetrated by political thugs and frustrated politicians, the credibility of that election is ruined, and as such, it attracted a lot of negative comments about having a below-standard standard from election analysts across the world. Thus, political thuggery ruined the credibility of the 2019 general election, in which voters were afraid to come out and vote for their candidates, created discriminatory attacks, prevented free involvement, and brought about the absence of fair treatment for all members of political parties, which consequently led to low voter turnout, a decline in political participation, and thereafter established voter apathy towards the Nigerian political system.

5.4 Excessive Cancellation of Results and Postponement of Elections

Political thuggery succeeded in creating low voter turnout and participation, which led to apathy during the conduct of the 2019 general elections. Apparently, political thuggery drastically caused excessive cancellations and postponement of elections in many areas during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. These cancellations and postponements arose from the incessant attacks of political thugs that afterward cast doubt on the reliability of election results, which prompted the rejection of elections for being unfair, unacceptable, and above all, incredible to many candidates, political parties, the election management body, and other stakeholders. In view of this, it was stated that frustrated politicians

“...used political thugs in manipulation which led to the cancellation of so many polling units and results because whenever there is violence, the votes cast cannot be counted. So, if it is not counted, it's also affecting the political standard of the election in the country.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

The 2019 general election in Nigeria witnessed rampant cancellations of elections and postponements, and even on the eve of the election, INEC itself rescheduled the entire election just six hours before the polls (European Union, 2019). The whole election was postponed to other dates, including the presidential and national assembly elections (Senatorial and House of Representatives), which were initially slated for February 16th but shifted to February 23rd, 2019. Meanwhile, the gubernatorial and state house of assembly elections, which were slated for March 2nd, were rescheduled for March 9th, 2019 (INEC, 2019). Accordingly, rampant cancellations of election results and subsequent postponements of elections to different dates attracted negative comments that adversely impacted the credibility of the election, which was affected by massive rigging and manipulation through attacks on voters, candidates, election staff, security, observers, and media reporters. Based on this, it was stated that political thugs

“...denied many polling units to cast their votes which led to cancellation of some polling units affecting some people's franchise. And there are some places where cancellations led to inconclusive for a new election and all these.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Although rescheduling of the entire election is not new in the history of the elections in Nigeria as even the previous 2015 general election was totally rescheduled, what is

significant here is that all election stakeholders were fully mobilised to the field with all preparation, personnel, materials, and security deployed to various areas around 1:00 AM. Just six hours before the polls, INEC decided to reschedule the whole 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019). This alone casts doubt in the minds of people about the ability of INEC to ensure free, fair, and credible elections in Nigeria. It unequivocally created loss of confidence on the part of candidates, voters, observers, and other stakeholders for the level of election preparedness by the Commission in conducting credible elections (European Union, 2019). Beside the general postponement of elections due to transportation challenges, as argued by INEC, which is always the usual explanation, there were rampant cases of cancellations of elections in spite earlier preparation linked to political thuggery through attacks by political thugs from the support of politicians to ensure a good atmosphere for election riggings during the 2019 general elections across the country (INEC, 2019).

Furthermore, the cancellations were as a result of violence and disruption of the election process at polling and collation centres, which occurred in the form of over-voting caused by the activities of political thugs across Nigeria. Based on this rigging strategy, it was revealed that a total of 2,497,181 votes were cancelled due to violent attacks and a few cases of card reader malfunctioning (INEC, 2019; Situation, 2019). It was also revealed that just in 18 states of the Federation, not less than 1,084,358 votes were cancelled from 1,175 polling units in the Presidential and National Assembly elections (Situation Room, 2019). As such, it was narrated that political thugs

“...can come and destroy or steal ballot box, which eventually will lead to the cancellation of the particular polling unit. And in turn, it will give their candidate a kind of upper hand over other contestants.” (Interview with Informant in category H, 2023).

At some places, collation centres were transferred to different locations without official notice. However, access to new location was not granted to observers, and the purpose relocation sometimes was not made known to the public. It was evident at the ward levels that collation of results was disrupted, suspended, and relocated in the Rivers, Ebonyi, Imo, Kogi, Delta, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Enugu, and Cross-River. Besides this, in Lagos and Kaduna states only, there were more than 300,000 votes cancelled due to either violence stemming from over-voting or ‘card reader malfunctioning’ (Situation Room, 2019). However, it is worthy to understand that ‘card reader malfunctioning’ is another form of manipulation caused by political thugs. They spoiled smart card readers and directed election staff to inform people that card reader machines malfunctioned. This is clear act of frustration and desperation in which the theory of frustration and aggression believed which led to aggression while aggression led to violence (Breuer & Elson, 2017).

5.4.1 Over Voting

In the Nigerian electoral context, over-voting occurs when the total number of votes recorded in a polling unit exceeds the number of accredited voters in that unit. Accreditation refers to the official process of verifying voters’ eligibility—usually through the use of the Smart Card Reader (SCR). Therefore, whenever the number of ballots cast is greater than the number of accredited voters, it constitutes over-voting and is considered an electoral malpractice (INEC, 2019). During elections and at polling in particular, intended voters formed and joined queues as early as possible

with the intention to vote for their prepared candidate(s). To politicians and their political thugs, it is considered the most important day in four years where all efforts are intensified to ensure victory. Amongst other ways to ensure rigging through violence is to promote over-voting of ballot papers cast, as more than the accredited voters, in the polling units. This results in the cancellation of the election of the whole unit; this is done when a candidate or political party perceives that his opponent is stronger than him at that unit. Thus, political thugs inflated ballot papers, and cancellation becomes imminent. It was observed that

“...some thumb-printed more once that led to multiple voting for their preferred candidates. By doing that act, they are denying opponent victory and when that result is being counted, their leader or their supporter will win.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

Political thugs penetrated voting points to cause confusion, where they overpowered election staff and security. They destroyed election materials and attacked people. Most importantly, during the sorting and counting of ballot papers, election officers discovered that the votes cast were higher than those of the accredited voters in that polling unit. This violent action invalidated the election, and the unit was cancelled (Situation Room, 2019). Independent election observer also and INEC revealed that political thugs prompted over-voting in Plateau State, with 65 units cancelled in Tudun Wada/Kabong, 2 units in Kanke, 28 units in Qua'an Pan, 3 units in Jos North, 8 units in Kanam, 9 units in Wase, and 1 unit in Jos South LGAs. Meanwhile, 45 units were cancelled in the same Plateau State, which thereafter led to inconclusive announcements in 10 LGAs during gubernatorial elections and re-elections that were announced in the state (Situation Room, 2019; INEC, 2019).

In Adamawa State, therefore, 44 polling units were cancelled due to over-voting across 29 registration areas of 12 LGAs, for a total of 40,988 registered voters during the gubernatorial elections; thereby, the election was rescheduled from March 9th to March 23rd, 2019. In the Uba-Gaya constituency of Adamawa State, 3 polling units were cancelled due to over-voting with 2,769 voters, and it was also rescheduled to March 9th, 2019. Whereas in Bauchi State, 5 units with 2,542 registered voters were cancelled due to over-voting in the Zaki Federal Constituency election, and the election was consequently rescheduled in the affected areas on March 9th, 2019 (INEC, 2019).

5.4.2 Violent Attacks

Apart from over-voting, political thugs violently disrupted the voting process across polling units in the country during the 2019 general elections. Many people included election management staff, security personnel, voters, journalists, observers, and candidates were reportedly attacked by political thugs during elections in Nigeria. In this regard, evidenced emerged that

“Desperation of the political aspirants of various offices goes a long way in attacking the electoral personnel. If they perceive that the results will not favour them, they use thugs to attack the electoral staff, even the security men, so that the results should be in their favour.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

Similarly, it was further observed that in many polling units and collation centres, political thugs and frustrated politicians planned strategic attacks due to the shortage of security personnel posted to polling units and collation centres in order to secure election activities. In many areas one to two or no security personnel were posted to

protect an area with not less than five hundred (500) voters. In this regard, it was stated in an interview that

“At a polling unit only few security are deployed and political thugs attacked the places to kill voters, election staff and others in order to disrupt the process to snatch the ballot boxes and papers. Even the security or election staff are kept in hostage or even ordered to thumb print the ballot papers to favour a given candidate of the thugs. Sometime even the opposition party agents were paid to participate and if they refused, thugs will chase them away or attack them so as to have smooth rigging process. The process takes place within 30 minutes to 1 hour operation and the balloting will end having rigged and thumb printed all the ballots and the boxes are filled up with votes.” (Interview with Informant in category B2, 2023).

In addition, it was gathered that violent attacks resulted in the cancellation of 2 polling units in Riyom and 3 units in Langtang South, and the election was rescheduled for the following day during the gubernatorial election in Plateau State (Situation Room, 2019; INEC, 2019). In Benue State also, the election was cancelled due to violent attacks, whereby the affected polling units recorded 121,685 registered voters against the margin difference between the two leading candidates for the gubernatorial seat, where the first secured 80,550 valid votes, and the re-run election was called up on March 23rd, 2019 by INEC in the affected areas (INEC, 2019). Whereas in Gombe State, it was stated that

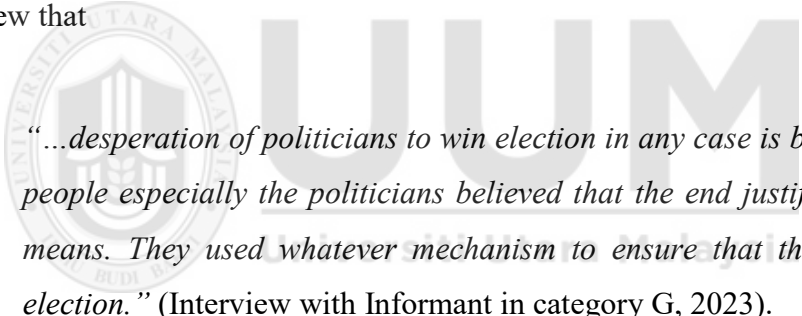
“At the eve of the election, the environment was so hot and to some extent unsecured because there were series of attacks in some LGAs. I can remember that APC was attacked in Tongo, it was attacked in Funakaye, and it was attacked in Nafada.” (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

In Bauchi State, the election in 36 units was cancelled due to violent attacks across 28 registration areas of 15 LGAs, with a total of 22,759 registered voters. This necessitated the re-run election on March 23rd, 2019 because the winner was unable to be determined by INEC. At the same time, the election of the State Assembly in Kirfi State constituency was cancelled in the affected polling units with 1,111 voters registered (against the leading candidate with a margin of 398 votes). Likewise, in Kano State, the gubernatorial election was marred by violence caused by thugs and frustrated politicians at polling and the collation process in Dala, Tudun Wada, Doguwa, Kumbotso, and Nasarawa LGAs. Thereafter, the result was declared inconclusive in the affected units, which led to a re-run election from March 9th to March 23rd, 2019 (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019). In Sokoto State, however, political thugs attacked polling and collation of results in Gada, Kebbe, Sabon Birni, Shagari, and Sokoto North LGAs with a total of 27 polling units, and then the election was cancelled in the state (INEC, 2019).

Furthermore, violent disruption at polling and collation centres resulted in the cancellation and postponement of elections in 1,402 polling units across Rivers State during the federal and state elections of the 2019 general elections. For instance, attacks on election officers resulted in the postponement of the election to April 2nd, 2019 to conclude the process, thereby prompting the re-run election of the State House

of Assembly on April 13th, 2019 to determine the winner in Ahoada LGA (INEC, 2019).

Accordingly, political thuggery has caused violent attacks, leading to excessive cancellations and postponements of elections and results. Olaoluwa (2018) added that when those in government manipulate election processes or results, the opponents tend to use militias to counter the manipulation through violent means. Frustration and aggression theory explained that frustration is a psychological imbalance of mind-set caused by a conditional dissatisfaction to attain or achieve certain goals being desired; thus, frustration becomes a basic element that makes a group of people or a person act violently or use violent behaviour (Battigalli et al, 2019). Similarly, it was stated in an interview that



“...desperation of politicians to win election in any case is because people especially the politicians believed that the end justifies the means. They used whatever mechanism to ensure that they win election.” (Interview with Informant in category G, 2023).

Accordingly, rampant cancellations of election results and subsequent postponements of elections to different dates attracted negative comments that adversely impacted the credibility of the election, which was affected by massive rigging and manipulation through attacks on voters, candidates, election staff, security, observers, and media reporters. Therefore, violent attacks resulted in 3,519 polling units being affected, with the total number of 2,497,181 registered voters in all. The summary of the cancelled votes arose from over-voting, due to attacks, and rigging are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Cancelled Votes of Federal Elections in the 2019 General Elections

States	Polling Units	Registered Voters
Abia	98	59,825
Adamawa	22	15,505
Akwa-Ibom	272	195,799
Anambra	114	69,395
Bauchi	53	29,660
Bayelsa	42	21,380
Benue	172	122,989
Borno	12	5,131
Cross river	243	132,189
Delta	87	Not stated
Edo	48	42,176
Imo	97	63,048
Jigawa	30	16,014
Kaduna	282	189,865
Kano	17	43,900
Katsina	20	12,027
Kebbi	13	6,293
Kwara	4	3,342
Lagos	128	141,256
Nasarawa	6	15,759
Niger	105	71,237
Ogun	11	9,680
Oyo	8	3,273
Plateau	126	146,355
Rivers	1402	942,368
Taraba	57	45,066
Zamfara	Not stated	60,592
Sokoto	50	33,057
Total	3,519	2,497,181

Source: Situation Room, 2019

5.5 Inconclusive Rigging in Elections

The 2019 general elections recorded a number of inconclusive declarations of results, which are the highest in the history of elections in Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019). These incidences come as a result of the excessive cancellation of elections (INEC, 2019), which was linked to several attacks launched by political thugs who enjoyed the support of politicians across the country during the 2019 general elections. This act also formed integral ways that adversely impacted the credibility of the 2019

general elections, whereby politicians and their allies manipulated election rules and regulations to ease rigging through inconclusive declarations of results, which favoured some candidates to win elections against other opponents. In view of this, loopholes in the electoral act, especially the 2010 Electoral Act, paved the way for rigging during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Precisely, Section 26 of the 2010 Electoral Act states that in the event of violence or natural disaster, INEC should not proceed with an election, and if the total number of registered voters in the place affected is more than the margin of victory where you have conducted the election, then don't make a declaration until you go back and complete the election (Electoral Act, 2010; European Union, 2019).

In addition, the act also states that an inconclusive declaration emerges when there is no clear winner among the contestants for which the margin difference between the leading and second candidates is less than the cancelled votes from the affected polling units (Electoral Act, 2010). At this juncture, the returning officer could not make a declaration of return but only announce an inconclusive election. It is therefore the responsibility of INEC to fix and arrange another date for the re-run election in the affected polling units so as to ensure the winner of that election and make a declaration. Although this law is made to ensure sanity and improve election credibility in the Nigerian political system to avoid cancellations of more votes, declaring a winner with few votes and emerging legal and political uproars in the polity. However, this legal provision has been manipulated by frustrated politicians who seek to win elections by all means, especially rigging and other forms of manipulation through violence. This action (inconclusive rigging) by itself unfavourably reduced the credibility of the 2019 election, which called for rejection and condemnation from election stakeholders because, in most of the places where the inconclusive result was announced, it was due

to violence and manipulative tendencies coming from politicians and political thugs.

It was observed in an interview that

“So, why inconclusive? The inconclusive happened because it's not in their favour. So it's not totally free of rigging, that's why often now we will still continue having this issue as long as government don't want to announce what people voted for, so they pay thugs for themselves. That's why you heard them say inconclusive. The word inconclusive is directly for them. That's why if the ruling party loss, they insist on inconclusive. Instead of them to announce their opponent, they will say inconclusive. They will try to manipulate. The issue of this inconclusive is a serious problem to our democracy.”

(Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

On the eve of Election Day, politicians who were ready for business (to win the election at all costs) employed the services of their political thugs. Political thugs were directed to disrupt election processes, especially voting and collation of results, whereby candidates, voters, election staff, security personnel, observers, and journalists experienced deadly attacks in the form of intimidation, kidnapping, and murder in areas where politicians sensed the danger of losing elections to their opponents. Thereafter, politicians succeeded in creating violence, and the election officers announced inconclusive results from the election conducted. INEC then either suspended the election or cancelled it and later fixed another date for re-election, which will give politicians another chance to re-strategize and get prepared for victory by all means during supplementary elections. This political rigging is masterminded by mostly the ruling party or incumbent candidate because of their political influence as opposed to the opposition parties or candidates.

In other words, an inconclusive election is a clear form of electoral manipulation and rigging in Nigeria, aided by frustrated politicians through the services of political thugs to cause violence during polling and collation of results. This political action always forces election officers by law to cancel the affected polling units because a clear winner will not be determined due to cancelled votes at that instance. Accordingly, desperate politicians who initiated inconclusive rigging get additional time to re-strategize towards victory mostly through ‘do-or-die’ actions during the re-run elections, even if it means against popular votes or candidates. This is revealed through the causes of inconclusive elections where cancellation arises, and this occurred due to either over-voting or violent disruption, which holistically resulted from the activities of political thugs during the voting process. It is evident that in all the areas where elections were cancelled, the reasons provided by INEC were either violent disruption of the election by political thugs, over-voting of ballot papers, or malfunctioning of smart card readers also aided by the same political thugs. This helped in discrediting the election credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019; INEC, 2019). Hence, it was believed that

“The 2019 election was really affected by the supremacy of government in power. They even declared result inconclusive in an area where they felt they will not win. This is a new terminology in politics, to declare an election inconclusive.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

The INEC Chairman believed that circumstances leading to an inconclusive announcement of election results are inevitable, which are as a results of violent acts by political thugs. It is not only peculiar to Nigeria, and as such, no one can accuse the Commission of acting contrary to the provisions of the electoral act when it comes to

the issue of an inconclusive announcement (The Nation, 2019). The violent actions of political thugs that forced excessive cancellation of elections to aid inconclusive rigging included disruption of the voting and collation process, destruction of ballot papers, prevented use of smart card readers, mutilation of election result sheets, over-voting, snatching of ballot boxes and papers, and abduction of election staff across the country (European Union, 2019; Situation Room, 2019; INEC, 2019). Accordingly, these reasons are conditions stipulated by the 2010 Electoral Act, which provided for the cancellation of elections and equally made the declaration of a winner impossible, thus warranting an inconclusive announcement and a re-run for elections in the affected areas.

Governorship elections in seven states were announced inconclusive by the returning officers of Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Kano, Plateau, Sokoto, and Rivers states. Whereas in Bauchi and Rivers states, after a fact-finding investigation by the Commission and the Court Order, it was later directed to complete the collation process. But an inconclusive outcome was later announced in Bauchi for the gubernatorial election and two state house members, whereas a four-state house member election was conducted on April 2nd, 2019 in Rivers State due to an inconclusive outcome (Situation Room, 2019). Therefore, there were 111 local government areas affected by inconclusive elections in a total of 262 registration areas with 667 polling units, which revealed a total of 438,108 registered voters in the six affected states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Kano, Plateau, and Sokoto. Similarly, there was also supplementary election conducted on 23rd March 2019 due to inconclusive announcement of the 41 members of State House of Assembly; whereas re-run election of the four members of state house in Rivers was conducted on the 2nd April 2019 (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019; European Union, 2019).

In Kano State, the tactics of inconclusive rigging were so violent during the supplementary election for the gubernatorial candidate on March 23rd, 2019. On the eve of the election, it was reported that desperate and frustrated politicians who were APC members mobilised political thugs and caused confusion in order to manipulate the polling and collation of results in most areas of Dala, Nasarawa, and Tudun Wada LGAs and a few polling units in other LGAs across the state (Situation Room, 2019). This violent attack on voters, election staff, and other stakeholders was engineered by the Deputy Governor, the Commissioner for Local Government and Rural Development, and other APC members. This disrupted collation of election results in Gama Ward and other centres, which led to the inconclusive announcement of gubernatorial election results and that resulted in a supplementary election on March 23rd, 2019 (Situation Room, 2019).

Accordingly, the manipulation of inconclusive law to rig elections was so obvious that the ruling party (APC) in the state realised unconditional failure to the opposition candidate of the PDP and resolved to destroy election results in some areas so that an inconclusive outcome would be announced, and by so doing, the ruling party would get more time to engage opposition with a do-or-die force during supplementary elections to win gubernatorial position in Kano State (Daily Trust, 2019d).

The Kano State Returning Officer, Prof. Bello B. Shehu, announced that there were 5,457,747 registered voters, 4,696,747 PVCs collected, 2,211,528 accredited voters, 2,155,128 valid votes cast, 49,761 rejected votes, and 2,184,889 total votes cast. It was further announced that Abba Kabir Yusuf of the PDP had 1,014,474 votes, while the incumbent governor, Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje of the APC, secured 987,819 votes. It is, however, impossible to declare the winner of such an election because the margin

of 26,655 votes is far less than the total number of cancelled votes across the 172 polling units in the state. It was also added that the result sheet of Gama Ward was mutilated and destroyed on which the Deputy Governor and the Commissioner for Local Government and Rural Development were arrested by the Nigerian Police (INEC, 2019; The Guardian, 2019b).

Meanwhile, the police reported arrest of Murtala Sulen Garo, the Commissioner for Local Government and Rural Development, and Lamin Sani, the Chairman of Nasarawa Local Government Area, over the destruction of result sheets. While the Deputy Governor was protected from mob action at the Nasarawa Collation Center. The police added that the two would be prosecuted according to the law after an investigation. Hence, after the re-run election, it was announced that the incumbent governor, Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje of the APC, secured 1,033,695 votes, defeating his closest opponent, Abba Kabir Yusuf of the PDP, with 1,024,713 votes (INEC, 2019; The Guardian, 2019b; Daily Trust, 2019d). It was resolved that

“We see the impacts of political thuggery in 2019 elections where it leads to a kind of inconclusive election because of the crisis or because of the tension that they created. I think there may be no any other kind of rigging than Kano because political thugs are there and the government that is on power is using them so that it even gives a room for them to manipulate election.” (Interview with Informant in category D, 2023).

In Plateau State, results of the election revealed that there were 2,480,455 registered voters, 2,095,409 PVCs collected, 1,157,025 accredited voters, 1,138,987 valid votes cast, 15,691 rejected votes, and 1,154,678 total votes cast. The returning officer, Prof. Richard Kimbir, announced an inconclusive governorship election in the state because

the 44,929 votes difference is less than the 49,377 cancelled votes in the 14 local government areas. It was further revealed that the incumbent governor, Simon Lalung of the APC, secured 583,255 votes against his closest opponent, Jeremiah Useni of the PDP, who polled 538,326 votes. After the re-run election, Simon Lalung of the APC was declared the winner and returned to office having secured the highest votes and constitutional requirements. It is, however to note that Governor Lalung of the APC won the election with 595,582 votes to defeat Useni of the PDP with 546,813 votes (INEC, 2019; The Guardian, 2019b; Situation Room, 2019).

Similarly, in Sokoto State, it was revealed that there were 1,903,166 registered voters, 1,726,887 PVCs collected, 1,033,081 accredited voters, 987,952 valid votes cast, 30,082 rejected votes, and 1,018,024 total votes cast. The Kano State Returning Officer, Prof. Fatima Mukthar, announced that the election was inconclusive because 3,413 margin votes couldn't determine the winner between the leading candidate of the PDP, Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, and that of the APC, Alhaji Ahmad Aliyu, who polled 489,558 and 486,145, respectively. This could not allow the Commission to announce the winner as the margin of lead votes was less than the 75,403 cancelled votes in the 136 polling units of the state (INEC, 2019; The Guardian, 2019b). It is, however, to state that after the re-run election, the PDP candidate returned elected with 512,002 votes against his closest opponent of the APC, who polled 511,600 votes. Hence, Governor Aminu Waziri Tambuwal of the PDP was re-elected as the governor of Sokoto State for his second tenure, defeating his close rival Alhaji Ahmad Aliyu of the APC by a slighted margin of just 342 votes in the 2019 gubernatorial election in Sokoto State.

In Benue State also, result of the election revealed that there were 2,480,131 registered voters, 2,244,376 PVCs collected, 816,969 accredited voters, 790,102 valid votes cast, 14,460 rejected votes, and 804,662 total votes cast. The returning officer, Prof. Sebastien Maimako announced that PDP candidate, Samuel Ortom scored 410,579 votes, while Barrister Emmanuel Jime of APC scored 329,022 votes but the lead margin between of Ortom and Jime was just 81,554 votes which is less than 121,019 cancelled votes. Thus, the election was announced inconclusive as it is impossible to declare the winner because the volume of the cancelled votes were high. It was further revealed that the affected places included 22 local government areas, 49 registration areas, and 204 polling units, for a total of 121,019 registered voters (INEC, 2019; This Day, 2019). It is, however, to state that after the re-run election, the Commission consequently announced that Governor Ortom returned to office having secured the highest votes and constitutional requirement, with a total of 434,473 votes, above his closest opponent Jime of the APC with 345,155 votes. Whereas, the difference in votes stood at 89,318 (The Guardian, 2019b).

In Bauchi State, the returning officer, Prof. Muhammed Kyari, announced 2,462,843 registered voters, 2,335,717 PVCs collected, 1,056,729 accredited voters, 1,026,901 valid votes cast, 21,419 rejected votes, and 1,048,220 total votes cast. (INEC, 2019; the Guardian, 2019b). The election was declared inconclusive because the incumbent governor, Barrister Mohammed Abubakar of the APC, polled 465,453 votes below Senator Bala Mohammed of the PDP, who secured 469,729 votes, with a margin difference of 4,059 votes less than 139,240 cancelled votes, including that of Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area (where 45,312 votes were cancelled). Thus, declaration of the winner was impossible and a re-run election was necessary. After the re-run election, Senator Bala Mohammed of the PDP was declared the winner,

having secured the highest votes of 515,113 against his closest opponent, the incumbent governor, Barrister Mohammed Abubakar of the APC, who secured 500,625 votes (INEC, 2019; The Guardian, 2019b; Situation Room, 2019).

In Adamawa State, the returning officer, Prof. Andrew Haruna, announced 1,973,083 registered voters, 1,788,706 PVCs collected, 894,481 accredited voters, 860,724 valid votes cast, 27,523 rejected votes, and 888,247 total votes cast (INEC, 2019; Tribune Online, 2019). The returning officer further added that Umar Fintiri of the PDP secured 367,471 votes against his closest opponent, the incumbent governor, Mohammed Jibrilla Bindow of the APC, who polled 334,995 votes with a margin difference of just 32,476 votes, which is less than 40,988 cancelled votes across the 44 polling units in the state. After the re-run election, the returning officer declared Umar Fintiri of the PDP as the winner, having secured the highest votes of 376,552 against the closest opponent, the incumbent governor, Mohammed Jibrilla Bindow of the APC, who polled 336,386 votes.

Thus, Fintiri was declared winner, having satisfied the requirements of the constitution, secured the highest votes, and returned to office as the Governor of Adamawa State (INEC, 2019; Tribune, 2019). Therefore, Table 5.2 revealed total number of cancelled votes which stood at 438,108 in the 667 polling units of 262 registration areas across the 111 local government areas from the inconclusive elections in Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Kano, Plateau, and Sokoto states.

Table 5.2

Inconclusive Governorship Elections of the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

State	LGA	No. of RAs	No. of Pus	No of Reg. Voters
Adamawa	14	29	44	40,988
Bauchi	15	28	36	22,759
Benue	22	49	204	121,299
Kano	29	76	208	128, 831
Plateau	9	19	40	48,828
Sokoto	22	61	135	75,403
Total	111	262	667	438,108

Source: Situation Room, 2019

Inconclusive rigging of elections abused by desperate politicians who triggered attacks on voters, election staff, security personnel, observers and journalists with help of political thugs also affected the conduct of election of 41 members of state house of assembly members across 17 states in addition to the four Area Council Chairmen of the Federal Capital Territory in Abuja (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019). The act of political thugs succeeded in forcing election staff to declare the election inconclusive due to over-voting, disruption of the voting process, and collation of results at various centres across Nigeria. Table 5.3 shows affected voters across the country.

Table 5.3

Inconclusive State Constituencies Elections in the 2019 General Elections

State	Constituency	LGAs	RAs	Pus	Voters	
Adamawa	Nassarawo-Binyeri	Mayo Belwa	7	92	46,819	
	Uba/Gaya	Hong	2	3	2,769	
Bauchi	Kirfi	Kirfi	2	2	1,111	
Bayelsa	Brass I	Brass	1	6	2,076	
	Southern Ijaw IV	Southern Ijaw	2	53	31,077	
	Ogbia II	Ogbia	4	65	25,117	
Benue	Ukum	Ukum	3	27	15,768	
	Ado	Ado	3	15	9,921	
	Gboko East	Gboko	1	9	8,437	
	Gwer East	Gwer East	3	13	7,753	
	Katsina-ala West	Katsina-Ala	2	3	2,723	
	Konshisha	Konshisha	3	49	29,665	
	Obi	Obi	1	4	3,852	
	Okpokwu	Okpokwu	4	24	11,921	
	Otukpo/Akpa	Otukpo	2	3	1,101	
	Ebonyi	Izzi East	Izzi East	6	11	10,048
		Ezza North-East	Ezza North-East	1	26	12,803
		Ezza North-West	Ezza North-West	2	47	23,589
	Edo	Urhinmworn II	Urhinmworn	4	12	6,764
Ekiti	Ekiti East I	Ekiti East	2	4	2,244	
Imo	Ngor Okpala	Ngor Okpala	11	49	31,499	
	Orlu	Orlu	8	12	9,190	
	Oguta	Oguta	7	53	37,622	
	Isu	Isu	8	15	7,245	
	Ikeduru	Ikeduru	8	48	32,816	
Kaduna	Kagarko	Kagarko	5	8	7,514	
Kano	Nasarawa	Nasarawa	1	62	40,821	
Kogi	Lokoja I	Lokoja	2	4	5,396	
	Igalamela/Odolu	Igalamela/Odolu	6	19	14,145	
	Omale	Omale	3	9	5,096	
Lagos	Ibeju I	Ibeju	2	9	12,711	
Nasarawa	Karu/Gitata	Karu	1	7	33,714	
	Keffi East	Keffi	1	1	1,052	
	Nasarawa Eggon	Nasarawa	4	4	6,451	
	Obi II	Obi II	2	2	2,657	
Osun	Oriade	Oriade	1	5	2,485	
Plateau	Langtang South	Langtang South	6	6	5,501	
Sokoto	Goronyo	Goronyo	7	8	4,387	
	Kebbe	Kebbe	7	35	20,105	
Taraba	Ardo kola	Ardo kola	4	4	4,742	
	Ussa/Likam	Ussa	4	11	15,170	
FCT	FCT Area Council	Abaji	1	1	1,111	
		Bwari	4	16	12,406	
		Gwagwalada	1	1	1,703	
		Kuje	5	22	14,576	
		Total	45	164	879	585,673

Source: Situation Room, 2019

More so, violent actions of political thugs also forced the cancellation of elections to aid inconclusive rigging, which included disruption of the voting and collation process, destruction of ballot papers, prevented use of smart card readers, mutilation of election result sheets, over-voting, snatching of ballot boxes and papers, and abduction of election staff during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Accordingly, INEC declared a rerun election in nine senatorial districts due to an inconclusive court order in one district. The announcement arose from violence during elections. All the cancelled elections came as a result of political attacks by political thugs in the affected areas of Abia South, Bauchi South, Imo West and North, Kogi East, Ondo South, Plateau South, and Rivers East and West senatorial zones. This is presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4
Inconclusive Senatorial Zones in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

State	Zone	Declaration
Abia	South	Supplementary
Bauchi	South	Supplementary
Imo	West	Supplementary
	North	Supplementary
Kogi	East	Supplementary
Ondo	South	Supplementary
Plateau	South	Supplementary
Rivers	East	Supplementary
	West	Supplementary
Total	9	9

Source: Researcher's Design, 2024

Similarly, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced supplementary elections for the members of the House of Representatives across the country. The announcement followed electoral crises from attacks and other related violence, which affected 35 seats of the federal representatives in the 17 states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Cross River, Gombe, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Kogi, Lagos, Niger, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, and Sokoto (Legit, 2019). Thus, the reason provided

included disruption of voting and collation process, destruction of ballot papers, prevented use of smart card readers, mutilation of election result sheets, over-voting, snatching of ballot boxes and papers, and abduction of election staff. Table 5.5 revealed affected seats for the members of the House of Representatives elections.

Table 5.5

Inconclusive House of Representatives in the 2019 General Election in Nigeria

State	Constituency	Declaration
Abia	Aba North/Aba South	Supplementary
Akwa Ibom	Mbo/Okobo/Oron/Udung Uko/Urue	Supplementary
Anambra	Aguata	Supplementary
	Edemili North/Edemili South	Supplementary
	Njikoka/Dunukofia/Anaocha	Supplementary
Bauchi	Zaki	Supplementary
Benue	Apa/Agatu	Supplementary
	Konshisha/Vandeikya	Supplementary
	Oju/Obi	Supplementary
Cross River	Yakurr/Abi	Supplementary
Gombe	Akko	Supplementary
Imo	Ehime Mbano/Ihite-Uboma/Obowo	Supplementary
	Isiala Mbano/Okigwe/Onujimo	Supplementary
Kaduna	Igabi	Supplementary
	Kachia/Kagarko	Supplementary
	Lere	Supplementary
Kano	Kano Municipal	Supplementary
Kogi	Bassa/Dekina	Supplementary
Lagos	Eti-Osa	Supplementary
	Shomolu	Supplementary
	Ojo	Supplementary
	Ajeromi/Ifelodun	Supplementary
	Oshodi/Isolo I	Supplementary
	Oshodi/Isolo II	Supplementary
Niger	Gurara/Suleja/Tafa	Supplementary
	Kontagora/Wushishi/Mariga/Mashegu	Supplementary
	Magama/Rijau	Supplementary
Oyo	Ibarapa Central/Ibarapa North	Supplementary
Plateau	Jos North/Bassa	Supplementary
Rivers	Ahoada West/Ogba Egbema Ndoni	Supplementary
	Akuku Toru/Asari Toru	Supplementary
	Bonny/Degema	Supplementary
	Emehua/Ikwerre	Supplementary
	Okrika/Ogu Bolo	Supplementary
Sokoto	Bodinga/Dange Shuni/Tureta	Supplementary
Total	35	35

Source: INEC, 2019

From the foregoing revelations, it is now clear that legal provisions from the 2010 Electoral Act have been manipulated by frustrated politicians and their political thugs, who seek to win elections by all means, especially through rigging. This act is propelled through violence and other manipulative ways to favour a given candidate, which unfavourably reduced the credibility of the 2019 elections and prompted calls for rejection and condemnation, especially by candidates, voters, political parties, observers, journalists, and analysts. It is also understood that in almost all the places where inconclusive elections were announced, it was due to violence and manipulative tendencies created by politicians and political thugs. Inconclusive elections are a new form of election rigging by all means that politicians, especially the ruling party used to ensure rigging elections where they face strict resistance from voters.

In addition, where politicians have less popularity in certain communities or polling units, especially in places where opposition dominated the political scene, they resorted to mobilising political thugs to cause violence, which will give them the upper advantage to win elections through 'do or die' tactics in politics (Moliki, 2021). Most politicians became desperate to win elections, and this led to frustration and aggression, which in turn mobilised political thugs who attacked anyone who did not share a similar interest in their party or candidate. This explanation conforms with the postulation of the Frustration Aggression Theory that frustration results in aggression due to the fact that certain conditions of human life lead to frustration, especially when an individual's desires and needs are usually affected, then dissatisfaction arises (Battigalli *et al.*, 2019; Breuer & Elson, 2017). These individuals respond to situations in anger with an attempt to meet desired goals, which is usually through violence (Olaoluwa, 2018; Halliru, 2012).

5.6 Outright Rejection of Election Results and Excessive Tribunals

The 2019 general elections were highly contested (European Union, 2019), immediately rejected, and excessively arbitrated at tribunals (KID, 2019), mostly by candidates and political parties who felt dissatisfied, frustrated, and became aggressive following the outcome of election results or processes. The rejections and tribunals emanated from the outcome of the elections, which was mostly affected by inconclusive announcements due to excessive cancellations of elections following attempts to rig elections by politicians with the support of political thugs. In view of this, outright rejection of the election by itself demonstrated imperfection as a result of certain factors surrounding the conduct and outcome of elections that invariably derailed its credibility, specifically the 2019 general elections. Throughout election history, the 2019 general elections were the most rejected, partly due to rigging and other irregularities that were achieved through violence (Omenma, 2019).

Immediately after the declaration of election result, the PDP presidential candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, rightly condemned the process and rejected the outcome of the 2019 presidential election result which was declared by the returning officer and Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Professor Mahmoud Yakubu. Mahmoud declared that Muhammadu Buhari of the APC got 15,191,847 votes, while his closest opponent, Atiku Abubakar of the PDP, polled 11,262,978 votes. In a statement, Atiku instantly rejected the election result and stated that it was unacceptable and would be legally challenged in court (INEC, 2019; Premium Times, 2019e). Atiku further added that if he had lost in a free and fair contest, he would have called the winner, congratulated his victory, and also offered his service to unite and develop the country ahead. Atiku lamented that he had never seen a debased democracy like that of the 2019 general elections (Premium Times, 2019e).

Atiku however, added that there was clear evidence of manifest and premeditated malpractices, which contradicted the announcement across the federation. Firstly, the outrageous volume of votes (voters' turnout) from the affected states with terror attacks as against his stronghold states like Akwa Ibom, with less voter turnout even below the 2015 general elections. Secondly, he intended to disrupt the election process with violence, militarization, and the use of other forms of malpractice to subdue PDP interest and votes in his known popular states of Lagos, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, and many other places across the federation, while authorities did nothing to stop it. Thirdly, many Democrats condemned such electoral incidences and malpractices including national and international observers. Lastly, Atiku assured Nigerians and his supporters that Nigerian democracy can't be allowed to be emasculated in the hands of selfish politicians (Premium Times, 2019e).

The National Electoral Commissioner, Mohammed Haruna, who was in charge of Nasarawa, Kogi, and Niger, stated that INEC (in particular) recorded 890 litigation cases where by such litigation cases arose from the conduct of the political parties primary elections towards the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Premium Times, 2019d). Nonetheless, the Kimpact Development Initiative (2019) similarly reported that there were 811 cases of election petitions filed in tribunals on the conduct of the 2019 general elections, which were beside the 890 cases from parties' primaries in Nigeria (KDI, 2019). This revealed the level to which candidates and political parties legally rejected the outcome of the electoral processes recorded before and after elections (from polling to the declaration of results) across the country. The cases were filed either against INEC, candidates, or political parties in relation to the technical breach of electoral principles for the Presidential, Governorships, and members of the

National and State House of Assembly elections (KDI, 2019). Figure 5.2 presents election petitions during 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 general election in Nigeria.

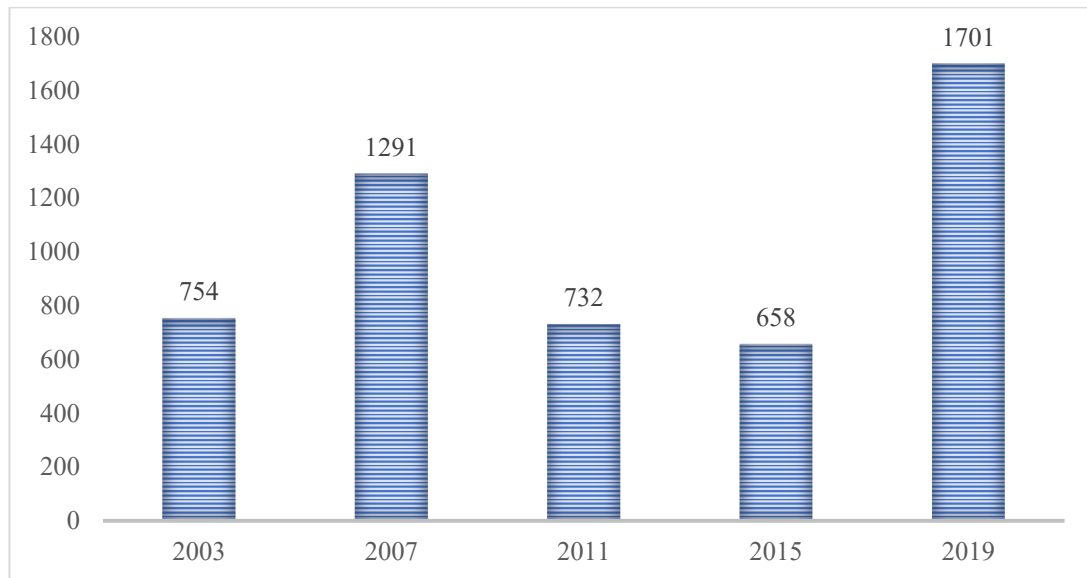


Figure 5.2 Election Petition Cases of Five Election Periods, 2003-2019
Source: Omenma (2019), KDI (2019)

Beside the 890 petition cases surrounding the conduct of primaries by political parties, 811 petitions were filed in election tribunals by the political parties or contestants who were dissatisfied with the outcome of the 2019 general elections across the country (KDI, 2019; Premium Times, 2019d). More often than not, the rejection (petitions) was mostly triggered by the activities of political thugs in attempted electoral rigging and other forms of manipulation at all levels in the country (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019). Thus, this also explained that political thuggery triggered outright rejection of elections and excessive tribunal cases, which thereafter ruined the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. However, after adjudication, the tribunal committees ordered INEC to hand over the certificate of return to the most meritorious and also directed INEC to conduct a re-run election in 30 cases, whereby in some areas, a few polling units were affected while in other cases, INEC conducted elections in entire constituencies across the country.

Furthermore, outright rejections and excessive petitions in tribunals emanating from the outcome of the conduct and process of the 2019 general elections have further revealed that political thuggery became a basic fulcrum for all malpractices committed during the elections. It is worthy of note to statistically explain from the record that there were 1,490 positions contested during the 2019 general elections. These included a presidential position, 109 senators, 360 members of the House of Representatives, 991 members of the State House Assembly, and 29 governors. Comparatively, having 1,490 seats contested, which is compared with the 1,701 petition cases filed during the election, it is now revealed that almost all the seats contested were challenged and petitioned either to the court of law or to the INEC itself, seeking redress arising from objections. Simply put, if you divide 1,701 cases by 1,490 seats, it will give you 1.14 cases per seat contested. This is to say that for every seat contested, there was a petition filed to that effect.

As a result, it is so apparent to say that the entire outcome of the election results was obviously rejected by candidates and political parties. This is in addition to verbal rejections arising from the candidates, political parties, and voters; the reports of most election observer missions like the European Union (2019); civil society organisations like Situation Room (2019), CLEEN Foundation (2019), Human Rights Watch (2019), Kimpact Development Initiative (2019), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI (2019) also revealed that the 2019 general elections were far from being credible in all senses of objective assessments. Equally, information gathered from interviews with informants similarly indicated that not all candidates, electorates, and political parties accepted the outcome of the election, including the winners. It was argued that

“...in a true sense of it if you could analyse the outcome of the election, it could not be taken anywhere universally as a credible election because of political thuggery, vote buying, etc.” (Interview with Informant in category C, 2023).

Perhaps, as the election outcome was condemned verbally, through press briefings, reports, or legal suits in courts, it is further detailed that out of 811 petitions that were channelled to tribunal committees at various levels across the federation, 67 cases were filed by political parties, while the remaining 744 were believed to have been filled by candidates. The breakdown of petitions filed in tribunals after the elections across all levels is presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6
Petitions Filed in Tribunals after the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

Electoral Position	Petitions	Destination
Presidential	4	Tribunal
Senatorial	105	Tribunal
House of Representatives	215	Tribunal
Governorships	67	Tribunal
State Houses of Assembly	420	Tribunal
Total	811	

Source: Researcher’s Design, 2024

Table 5.6 revealed a breakdown of 811 cases of petitions filed in tribunals across the country. The courts ordered INEC to conduct re-run elections for the 30 positions after a series of adjudications. The verdict was accepted by the Commission, which it complied with and fixed for November 30th and January 25th, 2020, to conduct elections in 2 senatorial districts and 13 members of the House of Representatives on the one hand and 15 members of the State Houses of Assembly in the affected 12 states. Details of re-run elections conducted as ordered by the tribunal committees during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria are presented in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7

Re-Run Elections by Order of the Election Petition Appeal at Tribunals

State	Senatorial/Constituency	Scope of election
Abia	Arochuku State Constituency	Partial (10 PUs)
	Aba South State Constituency	Partial (15 PUs)
Akwa Ibom	Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District	Partial (159 PUs)
Ibom	Ikot Ekpene/Obot Akara/Essien Udim Federal Constituency	Partial (159 PUs)
	Essien Udim State Constituency	Partial (137 PUs)
	Gamawa Federal Constituency	All (256 PUs)
Bauchi	Zaki Federal Constituency	Partial (3 PUs)
Benue	Ohimini State Constituency	Partial (2 PUs)
Cross	Abi-Yakurr Federal Constituency	Partial (18 PUs)
River	Abi State Constituency	Partial (15 PUs)
Imo	Oru East/Orlu/Orsu Federal Constituency	Partial (18 PUs)
	Isiala Mbano/ Okigwe/ Onuimo Federal Constituency	All (346 PUs)
	Njaba State Constituency	Partial (6 PUs)
Kaduna	Sanga State constituency	Partial (14 PUs)
	Kagarko State Constituency	Partial (22 PUs)
Kano	Bebeji/ Kuru Federal Constituency	All (326 PUs)
	Dogwo/Tudun Wada Federal Constituency	All (357 PUs)
	Kumbotso Federal Constituency	Partial (2 PUs)
	Bunkure State Constituency	Partial (1 PU)
	Rogo State Constituency	Partial (5 PUs)
	Minjibir State Constituency	Partial (2 PUs)
Kogi	Madobi State Constituency	Partial (4 PUs)
	Kogi West Senatorial District	All (560 PUs)
	Ajaokuta Federal Constituency	Partial (22 PUs)
	Agwara State Constituency	All (56 PUs)
Ogun	Ijebu Ode/ Odogbolu/ Ijebu North East Federal Constituency	Partial (13 PUs)
Sokoto	Isa/Sabon Bimi Federal Constituency	Partial (3 PUs)
	Sokoto North/ Sokoto South Federal Constituency	All (412 PUs)
	Sokoto North II State Constituency	Partial (6 PUs)
	Binji State Constituency	Partial (4 PUs)
Total	30	2,920

Source: Kim pact Development Initiative, 2019

The details of re-run elections also statically revealed that out of the 36 states of the federations, re-run elections were conducted in 12 states, which signified that re-run elections were conducted in one-third of the entire states of the federation (that is, 12 states out of 36 states in Nigeria) affected by legal rejection as ordered by court sittings of different tribunal committees across Nigeria during the 2019 general elections.

It should however be noted that considering the high number of outright rejections for the outcome of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, which proved to be the effect of the activities of political thugs who were supported by frustrated politicians, it is worthy to conclude that political thuggery impacted unfavourably on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria through condemnation, outright rejection (verbal and written in the form of reports and media briefings), and above all, legal suits channelled through courts of tribunals across the country.

5.7 High Cost of Electoral Expenditure and Corruption

Political thuggery proved to be the genesis for the high cost of electoral expenditure, which was engineered by politicians and other stakeholders during the conduct of the 2019 general election. The high cost of electoral expenditure by candidates, political parties, and the government further created alienation and exclusion for interested citizens who wish to contest positions at different levels across the federation during the 2019 general election. This is contrary to the principles of all-inclusiveness and free competition, where equality among citizens governs democratic systems. This action further rendered imperfection to the credibility of the 2019 general elections caused by political thuggery. Thus, on the part of citizens, a number of popular and honest politicians who wished to participate and contest positions in elections are limited and disqualified financially due to the high cost of election expenditure. Partly because they did not have money to purchase forms and support political thugs, who in turn provided services to their master during campaigns, rallies, and on election days because electoral participation turned into a 'do or die' affair (Abubakar et al., 2018; Paul, 2013; Ahmad, 2019).

Over the years, the Federal Government has been budgeting money to fund elections, among other interventions from national and international donors. But the 2019 general elections remained the most expensive election ever conducted in Nigeria (Sule, 2019). Though there had been a steady increase in election spending by the government with a little increase in voter registration, yet, voter turnout declined drastically on Election Day. In fact, credible elections remain a strong desire for Nigerians especially the 2019 general elections. As high cost of electoral expenditure is rooted in the activities of political thugs supported by politicians as their godfather, political thuggery contributed high spending and burden to the government, INEC, candidates, and political parties.

Spending increased to settle services of employed political thugs, bribe voters, and corrupt security and election staff, in addition to extra money reserved for judgement where elections are challenged in the court of law (Sule et al., 2021; Sule et al., 2017). At the end, most political parties and candidates exceeded their official financial limits for campaigning, and it was difficult for authorities to expose all spending linked to corruption and other covert operations in an attempt to win elections by all means by desperate politicians during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (Sule et al., 2021). As such, it was gathered that

“Most of these politicians are guided by their selfish ambition, private gain and corruption not for public interest by private gain...whereas on the credibility, most politicians engaged in politics based on integrity but frustrated politicians used thugs to destroy the image of opponents in politics so that the community may reject him and his ambitions...” (Interview with Informant in Category B2, 2023).

Sequel to the high cost of electoral expenditure, Sule (2019) noted that the 2019 general elections were the most costly ever held in the history of elections in Nigeria, both for INEC, candidates and political parties. INEC alone spent 189.2 billion Naira on the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Yet, the credibility of such elections was not clearly ascertained by the election analysts and other concerned bodies (Sule et al., 2021). Figure 5.3 presented election spending from 1999 to 2019.

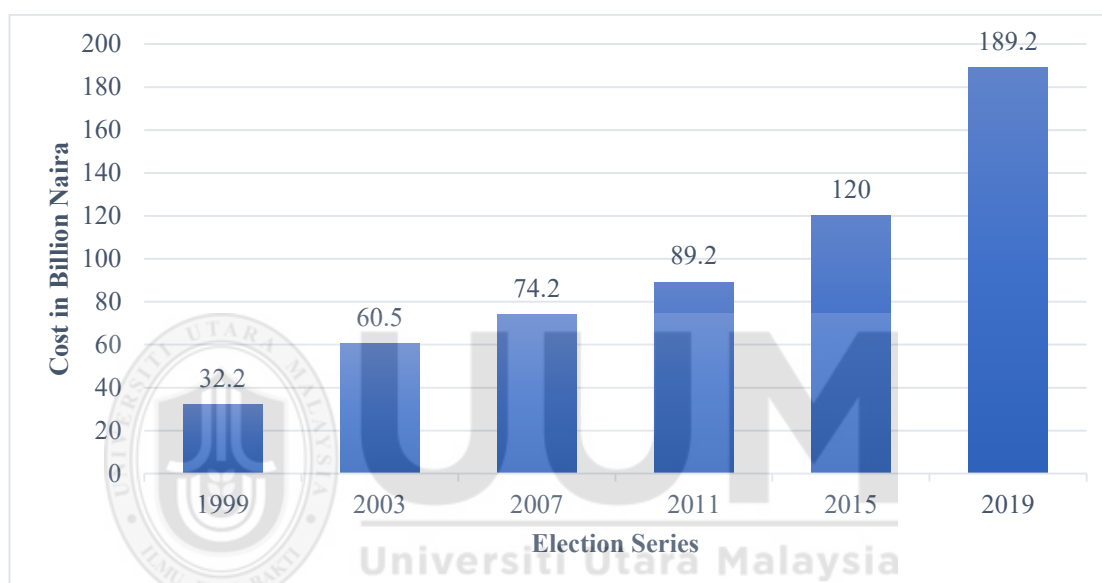


Figure 5.3 Election Expenditure from 1999 to 2019 in Nigeria

Source: Researcher's design, 2024

The Chairman of INEC stated in the Guardian Newspaper that the Commission spent a total of 2,249 Naira per voter, which was equivalent to 6.24 Dollars at the exchange rate of 360.42 Naira per US Dollar. He added that the figure fell within the average of international acceptance as measured by the Average Cost per Registered Voter Index (ACRVI), which ranges from 1-3 dollars in established and stable democracies; 4-8 Dollars in transitional democracies; and above 9 dollars in post-conflict transitional democracies (The Guardian, 2020a). It is clear, however, that the total loss in expenditure accrued from the high cost of the 2019 general elections is not only linked to volume alone but also to the amount of money wasted on voters who were unable

to vote or were disenfranchised due to fear of attack and intimidation caused by political thugs during elections.

In this vein, records further indicated that only 29,364,209 voters from the 84,004,084 registered voters diligently accredited to vote on Election Day, which represented 34.96% voter turnout (Sule et al., 2021; Victor, 2022). Indeed, the trajectory of this figure also exposed that the country wasted a huge amount of money, more than 122 billion Naira (340,952,820 US dollars), on the 54,639,875 voters who refused to vote comparatively due to political thuggery or other reasons but caused voter apathy during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Thus, Figure 5.4 presents total expenditure in relation to total registered votes, votes cast, accredited but not voted voters, and voters who failed to vote completely.

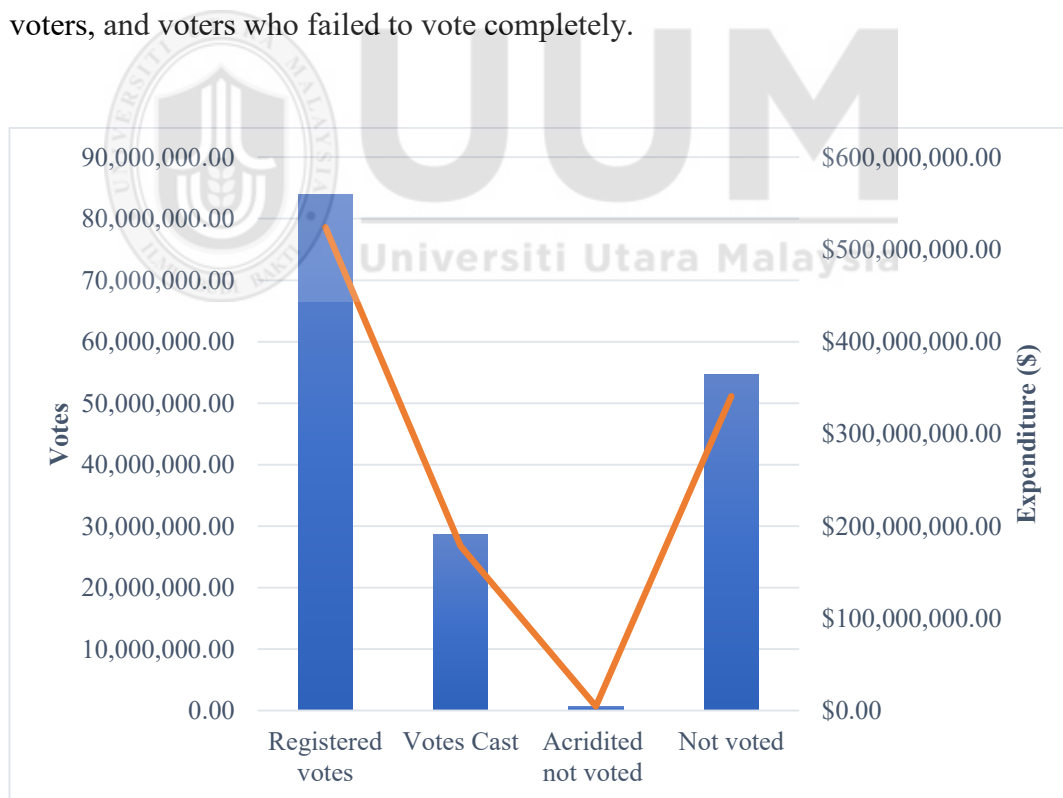


Figure 5.4 Votes vis-à-vis Cost Expenditure in the 2019 General Elections

It can be seen that Figure 5.4 indicates that 84,004,084 total registered votes consumed the sum of N188,925,184,916 which is equivalent to \$524,185,484.16. Out of these registered voters, only 29,364,209 voters came out for accreditation; from the accredited voters, only 28,620,190 voters cast their votes, which cost the sum of N64,353,313,310 (\$178,552,545.60). In addition, there were 750,019 voters who were accredited but failed to vote, which cost the sum of N1,686,792,731 (\$4,680,118.56). Meanwhile, 65.04% of the total registered voters, which stood at 54,639,875 voters, did not come to vote completely during the election, which represented the sum of N122,885,078,875 (\$340,952,820.00). The record thus revealed that the political thuggery fundamentally succeeded in creating fear in a majority of voters, which deterred them from exercising their franchise, leading to a waste of money for the federation.

Analytically, political thuggery has become a bigger pillar that caused a volume of financial spending during the 2019 general elections in many ways. Firstly, violent attacks and destruction at polling and collation centres led to excessive cancellations and postponements of elections. This added to the financial burden and mandated the Commission to fix and reschedule yet another round of re-run and supplementary elections in many areas across the country during the 2019 general elections. Yet, the conduct of the election was doubted and contested legally and illegally, which adversely impacted its credibility. Since INEC stated that for each election, the Commission spent N2,249 per voter (\$6.24), For the 2019 general elections, the Commission reported a cancellation of 2,497,181 votes, which was statistically calculated at the sum of N5,616,160,069, equivalent to \$15,582,409.44. This amount of money has been wasted on the cancellation of elections, which was linked to political attacks and destruction at polling units and collation centres.

Beside the amount being wasted on cancelled votes, there were 750,019 voters who went to the field (different polling units) to exercise their franchise, but after accreditation, they failed to vote either due to fear of attack, intimidation, or unknown reasons during the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly elections alone. These voters also wasted the sum of N1,686,792,731 which is equivalent to \$4,680,118.56. Equally, it was also revealed that 54,639,875 voters, representing the sum of N122,885,078,875 (\$340,952,820.00), did not show up completely to vote during the 2019 general elections. However, only 28,614,190 voters cast their votes, which represented the sum of N64,353,313,310 (\$178,552,545.60). Thus, the total wasted expenditure on cancelled votes and those accredited but unable to vote caused by the activities of political thugs stood at N7,302,952,800 (\$20,262,528.00). This is in addition to the 54,639,875 voters who did not come to vote completely, which represented the sum of N122,885,078,875 (\$340,952,820.00). The total amount of wasted money on the cancelled votes, those unable to vote after accreditation, or those that did not show up completely during voting is presented in Figure 5.5.

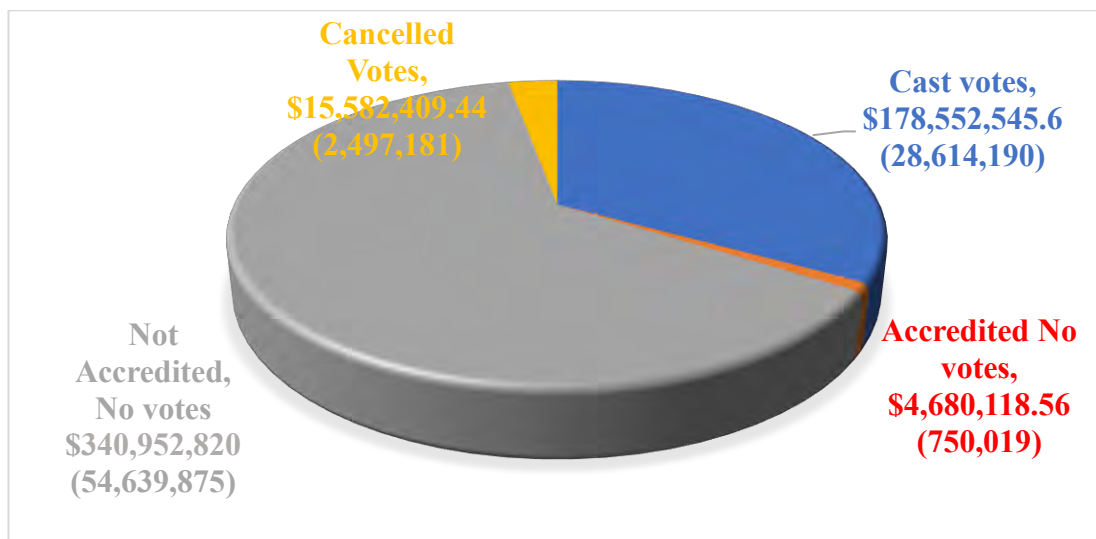


Figure 5.5 Cost of Wasted Votes in the 2019 General Elections

Secondly, violent attacks and rigging perpetrated by political thugs and frustrated politicians necessitated extra expenditure on the part of candidates and political parties for the re-run elections during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. On a general note, a former governor of Kaduna State, Balarabe Musa, stated that the election is mostly rigged in favour of those with money, which is a major deciding factor against the principle of a free, fair, and transparent election in determining its credibility. Unfortunately, the credibility of the 2019 general elections was sacrificed at the expense of money for bribery, political thuggery, and rigging, on which either the APC or PDP candidate would spend not less than 500 billion Naira (\$1,387,347,391.79) in order to win the 2019 presidential election (Daily Post, 2019c).

In another development, INEC lamented the failure of major political parties to submit their audited financial reports. INEC further revealed that the APC and PDP exceeded their spending on official campaign limits during the conduct of the 2019 general elections. In fact, where the Commission carefully followed their expenditure, it was discovered both political parties spent huge amounts of money only linked to billboards, print advertisements, electronic advertisements, and media coverage. The programmes alone amounted to 4.6 and 3.3 billion naira, respectively, as against one (1) billion Naira for the official limit of expenditure for a political party (Daily Trust, 2022).

Similarly, beside the track records of few expenditures incurred by political parties, an independent investigation revealed that a presidential candidate under the People Democratic Party spent a huge amount of money pursuing the course of his election bid. The report revealed that PDP presidential candidate Alhaji Atiku Abubakar spent 16.5 million USD to get the US visa alone. The deal was sealed with the US-based

consultant company known as KM Investment, LLC (a Texas consultancy firm), admitted by Sada Cumber, who is a Pakistani-American diplomat and former US Special Envoy to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference under President George W. Bush (People Gazette, 2021). The deal was also contracted to facilitate along with Legacy Logistic, an Abuja-based integrated services venture that was linked to Samuel Cornelius and Joseph Nzequome, who were Atiku's associates, just to secure entry visas to the United States in an attempt to defeat propaganda from the supporters of his opponent, President Muhammadu Buhari of the APC, over the ban on Aitiku entering the US (People Gazette, 2021).

Further to the report, Cumber signed a sub-contract with Holland and Knight (the top Washington lobbyists), where they agreed upon the payment of \$75,000 seeking their services to help Atiku secure a visa to enter the United States. As part of the APC campaign comments against Atiku, the APC believed that Atiku can't visit the US due to corruption charges or allegations and fear of arrest by the US authorities (People Gazette, 2021). In another development, it was reported that Atiku spent over \$10,000,000 buying and bribing party delegates at the party national convention held in Port Harcourt (each delegate was said to have received \$5,000 dollars where 3,274 accredited delegates attended) to emerge as the party candidate during the PDP primary election towards the 2019 general elections; not only that, Atiku also spent about 120 million dollars on the day of the 2019 presidential election alone (Pulse, 2023).

Nevertheless, it was unclear on what President Muhammadu Buhari spent during the course of his campaign for re-election. Atiku criticised President Buhari for using his position and state resources to fund his campaigns for re-election into his second tenure

as president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with public treasury and other privileges (Punch, 2019). It was also reported that his party associates and APC governors also supported Buhari's second tenure in a number of ways to ensure Buhari was re-elected, even through electoral wrongdoing and other malpractices (Punch, 2019). As an act of election wrongdoing, political thuggery was basically employed as part of political strategy to win the election by all means during the 2019 general elections. The money spent on political thuggery and other election wrongdoings can hardly be accounted for by any politician because of the high level of desperation and frustration that led to the quest for the election at all costs. Politicians spend money without tracing it to records, and they are afraid of being investigated by the authorities for charges or punishment.

More so, in a study by Sule et al. (2017) titled "Independent National Electoral Commission and Campaign Financing Monitoring in Nigeria: The 2015 General Elections," exposed that political parties exceeded the approved financial limit of expenditure during the 2015 general election, which in turn affected the integrity and credibility of the election. A similar result of that nature was also observed by Sule et al. (2021) and Sule et al. (2020), revealing that political parties still exceeded their spending limit of finances as officially approved by INEC in the 2019 general elections, and thus it affected the transparency, integrity, and fairness of the election. However, these studies were unable to assess the remote causes of politicians' spending money beyond the approved limit during elections.

It is fundamental to reveal that what made politicians spend money beyond the official limit was the support given to political thugs who are used to cause violent attacks due to their desperation to win elections by all means during the 2019 general elections in

Nigeria. The huge money spent on these violent acts is always kept secret without traceable records during the elections. In other words, high cost of election expenditure by the government is the consequence of political thuggery which instituted corruption into the main stream of elections and public service that flawed the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Thus, frustrated politicians developed strong desire to accumulate more money to be used and funded political thugs during elections.

5.8 Disenfranchisement and Poor Political Culture

In stable and strong democratic states, citizens have constitutional rights to vote and be voted for during elections (Taylor, 2018). Equality is the utmost right enjoyed by citizens who freely decide to contest for a position or to vote for somebody to represent them and defend their interests at various levels in countries with a good democratic culture. It is, however, institutionalising political thuggery with widespread and violent attacks against electoral processes that has considerably affected citizens' franchise and led to poor political culture, especially during the conduct of the 2019 general elections. This act therefore resulted in unfavourable effects, including disenfranchisement, killings, destruction of properties, and, above all, a poor political culture that afterward flawed the credibility of the 2019 general elections. More importantly, credible elections improve the quality of leadership and provide necessary foundations for good governance, transparency, inclusiveness, and equality, among others, so as to attain stability, national growth and development. It was stated in an interview that

“The norms and culture of the Nigerian democracy is basically that of political thuggery and it has been one of the defining characteristics of Nigerian politics. Politicians normally recruit youths that are mostly unemployed to serve as their fighting political

dogs, to intimidate their opponents and in order to advance their interest. Generally, it has become a habit in Nigerian politics. ...engage political thugs so that they can scare away voters, they prevented people actually from exercising their franchise.”

(Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

In view of this, individuals were disenfranchised through violent and perpetual attacks from political thugs, and this affected their political participation, either to vote or to be voted for during elections. The violent attacks targeted not only voters, election management staff, candidates, observers, and journalists but also security personnel who were intimidated, harassed, kidnapped, injured, and even killed, in addition to the massive destruction of properties, particularly election materials, campaign offices, and other personal belongings, during the cycle of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria (HRW, 2019; Situation Room, 2019; Sule et al., 2020). It was therefore believed that “franchise and rights of Nigerians have been sold” (Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

The perpetual attacks were mostly deadly and occurred at polling units during voting and the collation of results at various centres across the country. As against right to live, a total of 626 individuals lost their lives (Situation Room, 2019). For instance, during the supplementary election of governorship positions in Kano, a lot of voters from the opposition party (supporters of the PDP) were harassed, abused, intimidated, insulted, and chased away by political thugs in an attempt to prevent them from exercising their constitutional rights (Premium Times, 2019b).

Equally, observer reports indicated that media and observers reporters were barred from the polling units either to observe or to report any incidence. Some people were

abused, harassed, and even beaten by the political thugs belonging to the ruling party of the APC in many places across the country (Situation Room, 2019; Voter, 2023; Candidate, 2023). In Kogi State, a woman leader of the PDP (Wada/Aro Campaign Council, Ochadamu Ward), Mrs. Acheju Abuh, was burned alive by suspected political thugs of the APC in her house (Vanguard, 2019). Security officials were killed in Rivers State as political thugs attacked a convoy of vehicles conveying the results of the Senate elections to the collation centre, which led to the death of a police officer in Ipokia LGA of Ogun State (INEC, 2019).

INEC (2019) testified on the kidnapping and hostage of its election staff across the federation. For instance, the Supervisory President Officer and Assistant Presiding Officer were kept hostage by unknown political thugs in Adamawa State. In Taraba, INEC reported the kidnapping of its Ward Collation Officer in Bali Local Government Area. It is against this that disenfranchisement of citizens by political thugs impacted woefully on the credibility of the 2019 general elections. These damaged the credibility of the election in the eyes of human rights groups and pro-democracy supporters, who always call for free, fair, and credible elections not only in Nigeria but in the world at large.

The Nigerian political environment became hostile during cycles of elections, (Sule et al., 2020). Rampant killings, violent attacks, hatred, unguarded utterances, hate speeches, and all sorts of propaganda among politicians and their supporters were recorded (Ezeibe, 2021; Nwozor et al., 2022), which in many instances unveiled long-existing differences in terms of religion, sections, ethnicity, or communality in the country. Thus, politicians and their supporters become frustrated, angry, and aggressive towards each other, and on so many occasions, people desert their

residences and seek safety at different places for their lives and properties, especially between Northern and Southern dwellers or between Christian and Muslim worshippers. But when politicians get elected, they become friends with each other at the national level, irrespective of differences arising from political party, ethnicity, or religion.

Furthermore, politicians introduced politics of bitterness into the cycles of election because of frustration and desperation. Political thugs are seen all over the country in possession of dangerous weapons. They attacked individuals and prevented others from exercising their political rights, either to vote or to be voted for during elections. In line with this, it is part of today's political norm that politicians feel it is necessary to recruit political thugs who, in turn, provide services in the form of attacks for many of them to win elections. This was confirmed in an interview which stated that politicians recruited political thugs during the 2019 general elections as

They gave them money; they bought intoxicating drugs for them so that they would be out of their mind and not even know what they were doing, whether it was good or bad; and then they bought some locally-made weapons such as knives, matchettes, sticks, horns, and others to roam the streets with. He further added that during campaigns, they got to their campaign places with thugs, exhibiting and displaying weapons, and they did not hesitate to unleash terror when anyone perceived as opposition to their principal (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

So, all these are because it has now become part of our culture, we are used to it, we feel that it is a normal business of elections, and we do not know that a peaceful electoral process is one of the requisites for democratic governance. For instance, during the 2019 general elections, the environment was highly volatile due to the

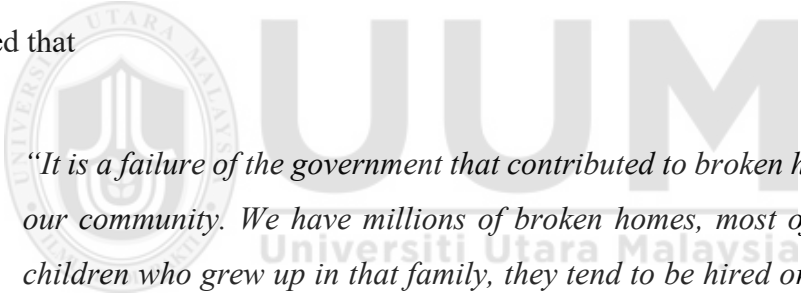
activities of political thugs. In almost all the states, whether dominated by the ruling or opposition parties, there was a tight contest. In fact, “the volatile environment led to the extent that the US, UK, UN, and others warned their citizens and personnel to leave Nigeria prior to the election or should avoid flashpoint areas” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Furthermore, hostile political behaviour imposed on the political scene of Nigerian democracy and electoral processes led individuals to question the reliability of democratic government in providing peace and sustainable development. Many citizens believe that military governance is far better than democratic governance in addressing major security challenges, which will basically ensure peace and tranquilly across communities in the country. Therefore, politicians who are mostly frustrated triggered electoral attacks because of their selfish interests, quest for power at all costs, domineering tendencies, and overzealous corruption, which put the country at risk of inviting military juntas into politics through coups. After elections, however, politicians divorce and abandon their political thugs as they can no longer sustain them with their needs (Moliki, 2021). Perhaps, it was stated that

“...because society abandoned them (political thugs), they are without quality education, they are without adequate home training, they do not have job mostly, they just became an easy prey, just they became restive youths roaming the streets without any job. So, the politicians found it very easy, they became vulnerable for recruitment into these activities.” (Interview with Informant in category H, 2023).

Eventually, political thugs remained frustrated and become vulnerable to desperate and frustrated politicians who desired to employ them in the event of election. This is

because frustration results to aggression and where certain conditions of human life are not met, especially when an individual's desires and needs are usually affected, then dissatisfaction arises and it lead to frustration (Battigalli et al., 2019; Breuer & Elson, 2017). Where desperation from politicians to win elections is affected, failed or election result sounded unfavourable, then politicians ignite their political thugs and supporters to cause violence. In most occasions, these individuals respond to situations in anger with an attempt to meet desired goals, which is usually through violence (Olaoluwa, 2018). The situation led to electoral violence with deadly attacks on voters, election staff, security personnel, observers, and journalists, in addition to destruction of election materials and properties to rig the election and favour their interested candidate or political party against opponents (Olaoluwa, 2018; Halliru, 2012). It was gathered that



“It is a failure of the government that contributed to broken home in our community. We have millions of broken homes, most of those children who grew up in that family, they tend to be hired or easily be used by these politicians in any time.” (Interview with Informant in category H, 2023).

Since government is unable to address growing security challenges especially political thuggery during election, many political thugs eventually joined petty crime and turned into big criminals after elections who operated as thieves, armed robbers, bandits, militants, insurgents, and terrorists. In other words, when political thugs become irrelevant to politicians after elections, they become thieves and engage in the stealing of properties, shoplifting, and robbery, thereby possessing light weapons to attack people in the form of armed robbery. Whenever security agencies and authorities fail to address these issues, political thugs shortly form and join groups of bandits to be

kidnapping and collecting ransom such as the bandits and cattle rustlers in the North West and Central (Nowak & Gsell, 2018; Sule et al, 2020a); insurgents or terrorists destabilize communities in an attempt to control government or territory as *Boko-Haram* terrorists in the North East (Iyekekpolo, 2018); militants to be stealing oil and kidnapping for ransom as Niger Delta militants in the South-South (Iyang, 2018; Rosenje, 2020); and secessionists to be agitating for territorial independence as the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB (Rosenje, 2020); Oduduwa People Congress in the South West (Omomia, 2015) and other criminal groups across the country.

Gradually, small groups of political thugs ascend to organized criminal and terrorist groups with the aim to form government in line with their perceived ideology or control political power and sometimes operate beyond national borders. Some members of the criminal groups join or seek allegiance to international terrorist organisations like Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State (IS), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), which makes it difficult for the Nigerian government alone to fight without international collaborations (Aboyade, 2018; Sule et al., 2020a). Hence, political thugs moved from politically related groups of criminals to terrorist organisations, and from simple attacks on political opponents to specialised criminals and launch deadly attacks on individuals, groups, and communities with high degrees of consequences even beyond national borders.

Unfortunate attacks by political thugs reflected immorality and bad attitudes amongst citizens, which afterwards may become the dominant political culture. This poses as the adverse impact of a hostile political system with clear consequences on free, fair, and credible elections in the country. Undeniably, it is realised from the assumption of

the Broken Window Theory that when a minor incident of crime, crisis, violence, protest, or demonstration is not attended to, managed, or controlled by the security agencies, it will lead to a bigger crime or violence (Abdullahi et al., 2016).

Since politics affected security, as security personnel and government are unable to take action on the activities of political thugs, it leads to a moral decadence among people that contribute to bad political behaviour. The theory further suggested that a lack of control to check illegal gatherings, abuse of the law, routine supervision of unused structures, and patrol of the nearby environment and neighbouring societies will open up greater risks and dangers to violence. It also suggests that a lack of social control mechanisms always aggravates crises and violence (Abdullahi et al., 2016). Thus, it was gathered that failure of the government contributed to broken homes in our communities as “we have millions of broken homes, most of those children who grew up in that family, they tend to be hired or easily be used by these politicians in any time.” (Interview with Informant in category H, 2023).

Consequently, a volatile Nigerian political environment with attacks, destructions, hostile relationships, and constraints on free movements during elections created unfavourable conditions against credible elections through low voter turnout, excessive cancellation of elections, inconclusive riggings, outright rejection of results, and high cost of electoral expenditure, which significantly proved disenfranchisement and poor political culture in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. These events adversely impacted on the credibility of election, for which most citizens believed that there would not be an election without political thuggery or that for any candidate to win the election, he or she must employ the services of political thugs. Perhaps political

thuggery is seen as part and parcel of elections, democratic norms, and political culture in contemporary Nigerian politics that usually manifest during and after elections.

In other words, political thuggery has produced and dictated a new violent political culture in Nigeria today that, beyond any argument, which has unfavourably affected the credibility of the 2019 general elections. This situation, if not squarely addressed, might prompt the intervention of military juntas into politics by overthrowing democratically elected governments, or civil war and thereafter, crises of transition and lingering agitation for secession by groups of individuals and a long-standing call for resource control continue to worsen national security challenges with significant threats to internal and external sovereignty of the country. Thus, political thuggery is indeed a threat, a 'virus carrier', and 'toxicant' to the credibility of the 2019 general elections and, of course, democratic sustainability, which further played a substantial role in deteriorating national security after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

5.9 Summary

Political thuggery has become a threat to democratic governance and elections in particular. It is gathered from the foregoing explanation that the menace adversely impacted on the credibility of the 2019 general elections on multiple occasions. These included volatility of political environment with civic unrest, low voter turnout and participation, excessive cancellation of results and elections, inconclusive rigging of elections, outright rejection of election results and excessive tribunals, high cost of electoral expenditure and corruption, and disenchantment and poor political culture. Figure 5.6 presents a summary of the impact of politics on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

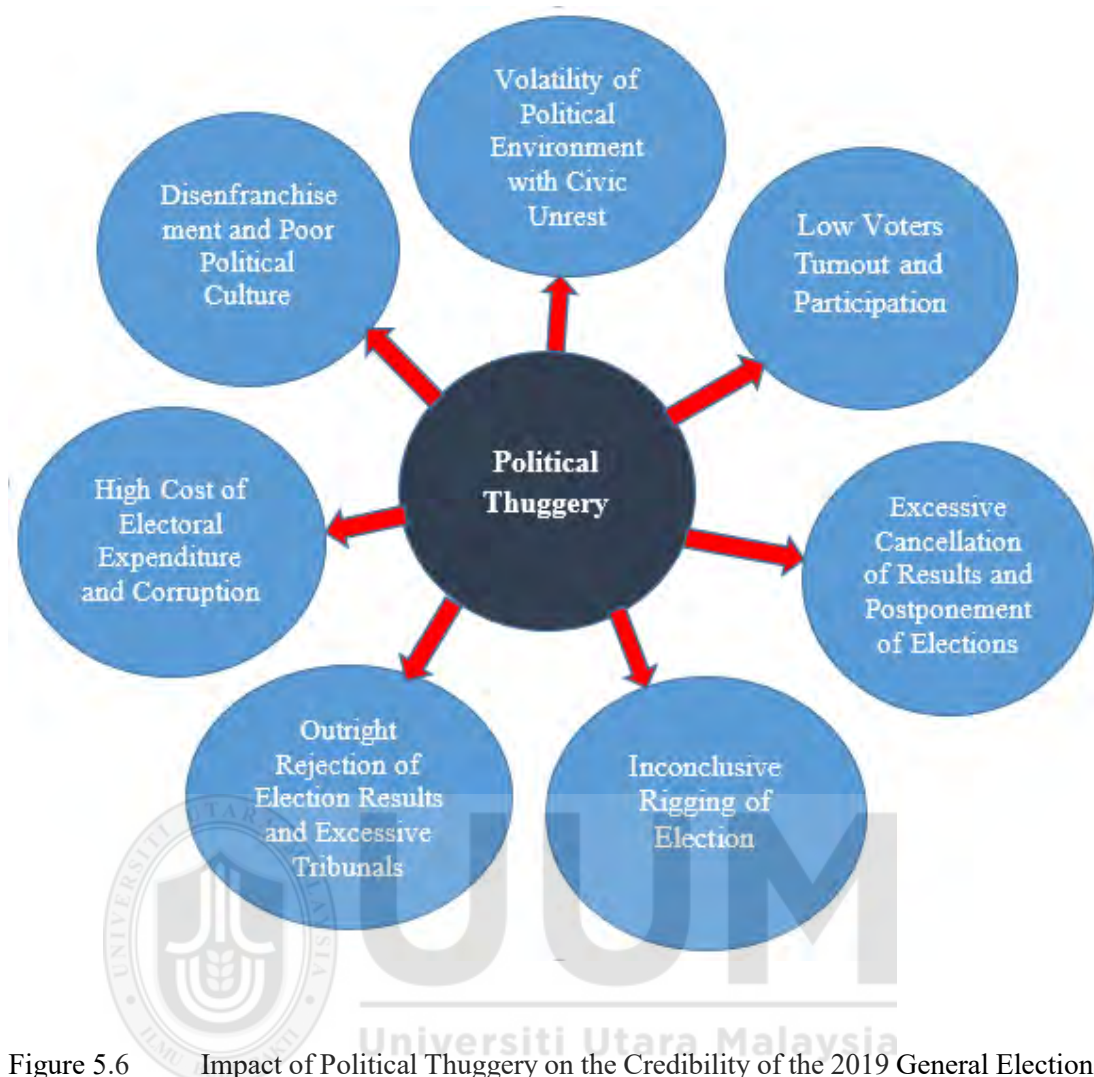


Figure 5.6 Impact of Political Thuggery on the Credibility of the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.

Moreso, the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria included: volatility of the Nigerian political environment with perpetual destruction and deadly attacks on voters, candidates, election staff, security personnel, observers, and journalists during voting and the collation of results, campaigns, and rallies across the country. The attack created hostile relationships amongst citizens, restrictions on free movement, which, in more elaborate reasoning, led to low voter turnout, excessive cancellation of elections with inconclusive riggings, and outright rejections of results, in addition to the high cost of electoral expenditure that generally revealed disenfranchisement and poor political culture during the

conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Considering the magnitude of the effect of political thuggery on cycles of electoral activities, it is therefore reasonable to conclude that the menace is a curse to election credibility, especially in the 2019 general election.

Furthermore, it was also gathered that frustration by politicians and thugs created a smooth foundation of electoral rigging through violence, which the security personnel were unable to address. It is believed that those who even celebrated after the election only celebrated their victory, not the credibility of the elections. After the election, candidates, political analysts, civil society organisations, and other concerned groups and nations to democracy openly lamented about the way politicians used political thugs who caused deadly attacks and destruction. Most observer groups like Situation Room (2019), CLEEN Foundation (2019), Human Rights Watch (2019), Kimpact Development Initiative (2019), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) condemned the election through their reports.

The positions was vindicated by a number of court cases and tribunals that annulled and cancelled elections and thereby directed INEC to organise re-run elections in affected areas across the county. Invariably, this made most Nigerians believe that there would not be an election without political thuggery, or that for any candidate to win an election, he or she must employ the services of political thugs. Thus, political thuggery not only flawed the credibility of the 2019 general elections but also became a threat to democratic sustainability, which played a major role in national insecurity after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL THUGGERY ON INSECURITY CHALLENGES AFTER THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

6.1 Introduction

The use of political thugs to manipulate and rig elections by frustrated politicians provided an enabling ground for social and political insecurity in the Nigerian political system, especially during and after the 2019 general elections. This was partly due to the fact that security personnel had reluctantly demonstrated their inability to address the menace. This is either because of partisan politics, an unprofessional attitude, or because they chose to be corrupted on service delivery in securing the Nigerian political environment against any criminality that might affect peace, tranquilly, growth, and development of the entire country. Political thuggery is thus a chief contributor to the insecurity challenges in Nigeria, especially after the 2019 general elections (Obiam, 2021).

Most security challenges facing Nigeria today are linked to the activities of political thugs. Politicians who are mostly desperate and frustrated choose to fund political thugs so as to instill fear and cause violence during elections just to get maximum advantage to win elections through rigging against political opponents in an attempt to control government machinery at all costs (Rosenje, 2020). It was stated that political thuggery

“has now led to a situation where by after the election, these thugs now continue with their petty and bigger crimes within the town and rural areas nonstop. So, it is a serious problem, it is a security threat.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Accordingly, the Nigeria Security Tracker produced by the African Programme at the Council for Foreign Relations (2023) reported that insecurity recorded a steady increase in the form of criminal attacks and killings in spite of efforts by the government and security personnel to address it (NST, 2023). After election cycles are completed, politicians can no longer support their political thugs even if they win elections; this is due to limited resources and insatiable demands from the general population (Paul, 2013). Even though some politicians make promises of employment, appointments, and empowerment to their supporters and political thugs, such promises are not always fulfilled because not everyone's desires can be satisfied. In this regard, it was believed that

“...many of them (political thugs) become jobless because there's no election, then they engage in snatching phones, handbags of ladies, committing petty crimes in the neighbourhood, burgling shops and other forms of insecurity.” (Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

Indeed, a serving Governor of Kogi State, Yahaya Bello, attested that politicians recruited political thugs to win elections; for any aspirant to win an election, he must support and recruit political thugs, touts, militias, or criminals and use them to intimidate people during the election. He also added that Kogi State is divided into varied armed groups, or political thugs, and once elections are over, these groups of

political thugs become obsolete and rendered useless by politicians, thereby creating greater danger and a threat to security in society. Afterwards, political thugs metamorphose into different criminal groups with devastating effects that are unable to be addressed in society (Bello, 2020). As such, political thugs gradually mutate from election offenders to socio-political delinquents that form big criminals and terrorists cells who are organised and specialised in robbery, shoplifting, kidnapping, rebellion, insurgency, militancy, and terrorism. As such, it was stated that

“...after the election, they already have weapons, whether those that were given locally made weapons or those that were given the sophisticated ones, they already have the weapons, they have already been introduced into dubious activities and criminal offences like drug abuse. So, they would have to source for money to continue with this drug abuse, and since they have weapons in their hands, why do you think the incidents of snatching of mobile phones, burglary, daylight clash, stealing are increasing on daily basis all over the country.” (Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

As political thugs graduate to big criminals, their target and mode of operation also change from being ‘political dogs’ to socio-political criminals. They are no longer targeting opponents of politicians but resorting to attacking all and sundry. They possess deadly and sophisticated weapons, which allow them to not just intimidate but also launch coordinated attacks on any individual, group, or community in line with their goals. Most attacks by big criminals are sometimes deadlier than political thuggery itself, affecting communities, individuals, and properties. However, since the authorities concerned are reluctant or fail to address the menace, it therefore provides a fundamental avenue for political thugs to change from small to big criminals, as postulated by the Broken Window Theory, that when a minor incident of crime, crisis,

violence, protest, or demonstration is not attended to, managed, or controlled by the security agencies, it will lead to a bigger crime or violence (Abdullahi et al., 2016). In other words, the inability of security agencies to tackle political thuggery led to the wide spread of crime perpetrated by political thugs who grow into big criminals like armed robbers, kidnappers, militants, and terrorists shortly after election cycles. Perhaps, it was reported that the activities of political thugs after election

“continue and when the money is no longer coming from politicians because the election period is over, they too will turn to the other people (criminals) in the community, start attacking, breaking houses, shops and so on” (Interview with Informant in category H, 2023).

Political thugs moved from politically related groups to criminals and terrorist organisations, and from attacks on political opponents to criminal or terrorist-specialised attacks. They launched deadly attacks on individuals, groups, and communities with high degrees of consequences across the country. For example, Paul (2013) and Iyekekpola (2018) linked *Boko-Haram* terrorism to political thugs who originated in Borno State, Nigeria. Equally, militancy in the Niger Delta and attempts at secession by the Indigenous People of Biafra are also linked to political thugs who were supported by politicians and elites (Inyang, 2018; Moliki, 2021). In the same way, bandits and kidnappers in Northern Nigeria too are believed to have been linked to the resurgence of criminal groups through political thugs in Northern Nigeria (Sule et al., 2020a; Nowak & Gsell, 2018). It was believed that

“These bigger insecurity challenges that we are witnessing today, some even believed that it was from this political thuggery. That politicians from 1999 started recruiting these political thugs, some of them (thugs) were even armed with sophisticated weapons like AK47, double barrel guns and others. After the election, these politicians that have been sponsoring them are no longer sponsoring them or giving them money, but they left them with these weapons. So, they now use the weapons to become Area Boys in Lagos, to become Militants in Niger Delta, to become thugs in the North, to the extent of giving an opportunity or open up a window for even banditry and insurgency and farmers-herders clashes and other bigger insecurity challenges in the country.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

In addition, the Nigeria Security Tracker produced by the African Programme at the Council for Foreign Relations (2023) reported a growing criminality perpetrated by criminal groups that caused excessive attacks and a high number of deaths across the country. The data revealed that criminality increased from 2019 to 2022 at an alarming rate, with consequences as presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1
Excessive Attacks and Deaths Recorded from 2018-2022 in Nigeria

Year	Attacks	Deaths
2018	1,170	6,545
2019	1,549	8,340
2020	1,868	9,695
2021	2,284	10,398
2022	1,923	9,080
Total	8,794	44,058

Source: Researcher’s Design, 2024

Records from Table 6.1 show that criminality made a steady increase from the year 2019 to 2021, and it is not surprising to see the number of attacks and deaths kept rising with the exception of the record from 2022, where a marginal decline was

observed in both attacks (with 361 incidences) and deaths (with 1,318 deaths) distribution when compared with the record of the year 2021. This is basically attributed to the fact that politicians began preparations for the 2023 general elections by mobilising their political thugs to focus on election matters. It is in this direction that the Chairman of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Buba Marwa, stated that 90 percent of insecurity in Nigeria is perpetrated by criminals who use hard drugs unlawfully (Marwa, 2021). Similarly, Transparency International Defence and Security on the one hand and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on the other hand reported growth in criminality across Nigeria (TIDS, 2023; UNODC, 2018).

Similarly, frustration and aggression will continue to remain in politics, especially during elections, which in turn force politicians and their supporters to be violent against each other, as postulated by frustration and aggression theorists (Battigalli, 2019; Olaoluwa, 2018; Breuer & Elson, 2017). It was believed that “...*politicians were making things so difficult on war against political thuggery because of the support and cover given to their loyal political thugs. This becomes a major setback to combating political thuggery and growing crime in the country* (Interview with Informant in category F, 2023).

Equally in most cases, these individuals respond to situations in anger with an attempt to meet desired goals, which is usually through violence (Olaoluwa, 2018). Therefore, it is the failure of government and authorities concern to curb major security threats that thereafter affect election and governance in a country. It was gathered that

“It is a failure of the government that contributed to broken home in our community. We have millions of broken homes, most of those children who grew up in that family, they tend to be hired or easily be used by these politicians in any time.” (Interview with Informant in category H, 2023).

Consequently, the theory suggested that a lack of control to check illegal gatherings, abuse of the law, routine surveillance of unused structures, and patrol of the nearby environment and neighbouring societies will check greater risks and dangers to violence. It further suggested that the lack of social control mechanisms always aggravates crises and violence (Abdullahi et al., 2016). However, the chapter therefore summarised the roles of political thuggery on the increasing security challenges after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. These roles are directly connected to insecurity across the country, which includes excessive criminality and resurgence of criminal groups, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, illicit drug use and trafficking, aggressive political behaviour, corruption in the security sector, and weakening internal sovereignty.

6.2 Excessive Criminality and Resurgence of Criminal Groups

Political thuggery basically contributed to national insecurity, especially after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Although the national security challenges are connected to limited funds to procure arms and ammunition for security personnel, the remote cause is linked to the formation and resurgence of varied criminal groups across the polity, which invariably results from the activities of political thugs who are funded by politicians and elites (Moliki, 2021). Beside support from politicians and elites, after elections are concluded, political thugs on their own join various criminal groups so as to get a means of survival and lively hood since their employers (politicians)

abruptly abandon them as their services are no longer needed after elections (Iyekekpolo, 2018; Paul, 2013). Thus, major security threats affecting national security today are basically linked to political thuggery, which routinely causes deaths of thousands of people and destruction of properties all over the country (Rosenje, 2020).

The security challenges include agitation for secession by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South East, kidnapping and oil theft by Niger Delta Militants in the South South, ethnic violence by the Oduduwa People Congress in the South West, banditry and cattle rustling by bandits in the North West and North Central, farmers-herder conflict in the North Central, *Boko-Haram* terrorism in the North East, and cybercrime and robbery by youth all over the country (Rosenje, 2020; Inyang, 2018; Omomia, 2015; Iyekekpolo, 2018). Since politicians succeed in recruiting political thugs to serve their interests during elections, it becomes a herculean task to continue supporting them with finances after elections, and thus political thugs resort to the formation of various criminal groups or gangs across the nation. A lot of criminal groups have their cradle in political thuggery even before the 2019 general elections. It is, however, paramount to understand that political thugs serve as a major source for recruitment into the big criminal groups in the country (Iyekekpolo, 2018).

It was reported by the Nigeria Security Tracker produced by the African Programme at the Councils for Foreign Relations (2023) that the increase in the number of crimes by the criminal groups accelerated deadly attacks on individuals and communities to a total of 7,624 incident attacks in Nigeria. The deadly attacks were launched by armed robbers, terrorists, and other criminal groups. five-year data for the increasing number of criminal attacks, but with a decline in frequency attacks in the year 2022, which explained the fact that politicians called back their political thugs and supported them

in preparation for the 2023 general elections in Nigeria since security personnel showed an inability to holistically address the menace from its initial stage, as believed by the Broken Window theorists (Abdullahi et al., 2016). Figure 6.1 presents a steady increase in attacks from 2018 to 2022.

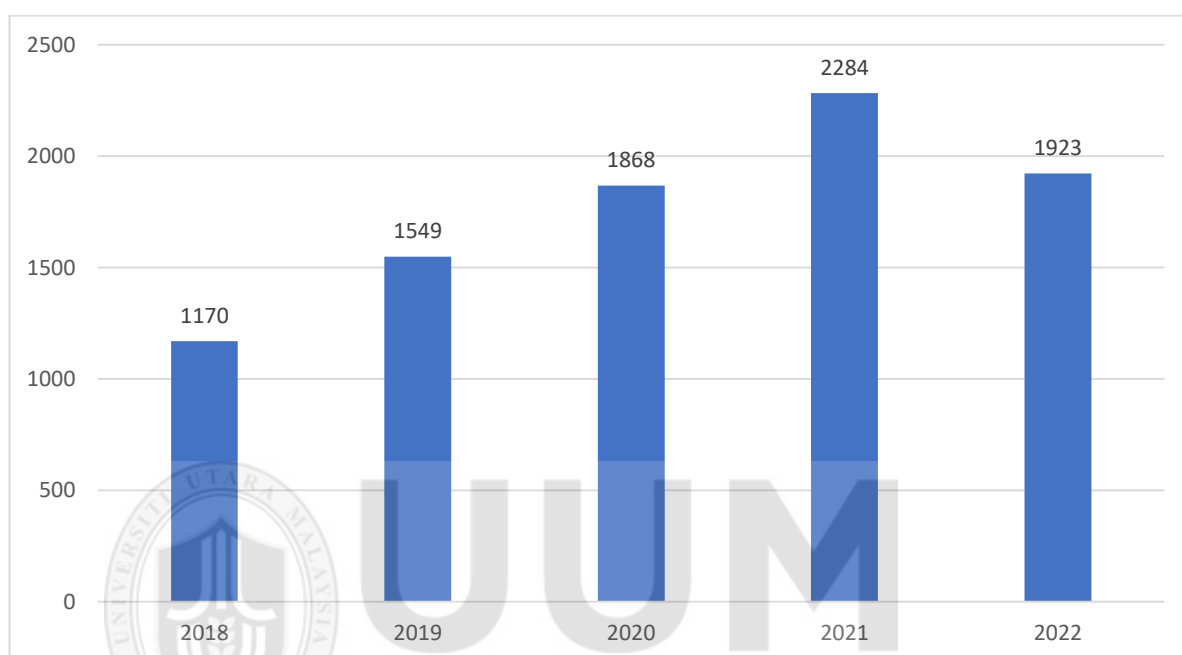


Figure 6.1 Resurgent Incidences of Criminal Attacks in Nigeria, 2018-2022
Source: Nigeria Security Tracker, 2023

Figure 6.1 reveals steady increase in criminal attacks from the year 2019 to 2021. While the number of attacks marginally declined with 361 incidences from the year 2021 to 2022, the decline is comparatively greater than the record revealed in the year 2019 with the marginal difference of 374 attacks. Before the 2019 general elections, insurgency became a general security threat in North East Nigeria and subsequently became a violent terrorist group which made the Federal Government of Nigeria to declare *Boko Haram* as a terrorist organisation because of their operational nature and of course declaring allegiance to other terrorist groups in the world like *Al-Qaeda*, the Islamic State, and ISWAP, whose operational bases are beyond national borders (Aboyade, 2018; Sule et al., 2020a). At inception, many political thugs joined *Boko*

Haram terrorist group as it became the major source for the recruitment of members in Borno State (Paul, 2013).

In this vein, Boko-Haram gathered momentum and membership as many political thugs joined the group. Thereafter, it became a strong security threat to the national sovereignty of the Nigerian state, whereby they took control of seventeen local government areas in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states in the North East (Iyekekpolo, 2018). They inflicted fear, intimidation, elimination, killing of security and civilian population in those areas. Properties were destroyed, communities were completely wiped out, and major towns and villages were razed down. About 20,000 people died, and others sought temporary shelter across neighbouring states like Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, Abuja, and Kano as local internally displaced persons, while others fled to neighbouring countries like Cameroun, Chad, and Niger international refugees, respectively (Iyekekpolo, 2018).

Furthermore, Iyang (2018) stated that politicians and elites supported political thugs in southern Nigeria, and in the long run, such political thugs metamorphosed into big criminal groups as armed robbers, while others turned to support secessionist groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) with the sole aim of creating their own independent state. The group is dominated by Igbo people from Enugu, Imo, Abia, Akwa Ibom, and Anambra states in the south-eastern region of the country. After the 2019 general elections, this group was also classified as a terrorist group in Nigeria by the Federal Government as it always attacked security personnel, civilians, traders and travellers, or non-Igbo businessmen. In their robbery operations, banks were attacked, police stations were burned down, INEC offices were set ablaze, innocent people were killed, and properties worth billions of naira were destroyed (Iyang, 2018). IPOB

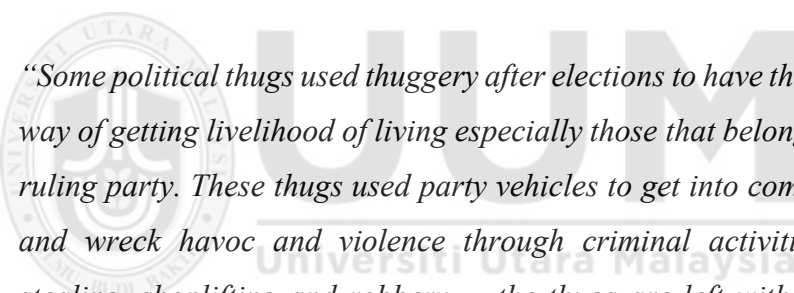
wants to control government buildings, political power, and the resources within their desired territory (Rosenje, 2020). This criminal group constitutes a major challenge to national security and the existence of the Nigerian state on many occasions, IPOB warned people against participating in all federal and state elections in areas under their operation.

Political thugs played a major role in the formation and recruitment of members into the criminal groups of bandits in the north-western and central regions of Nigeria. The resurgence of bandit groups is mostly linked to criminal groups and political thugs that enjoyed support from politicians who abandoned them shortly after the election and resorted to becoming bandits in Northern Nigeria (Sule *et al.*, 2020a). Several bandits and other criminal groups payed allegiance to their respective commandants which include but are not limited to Dogo Gide, Muhammad Bello known as Bello Turji (Zamfara and Sokoto axis), Ibrahim Kachalla Gudau (Fakai forest in Kaduna and Katsina), Isiya Danwasa (Kaduna State), Alhaji Auta, Halilu Kachalla (Zamfara and Katsina), Alhaji Nasham, Shingi, Ibrahim Dangawo (Katsina and Zamfara), Dogo Rabe (Zamfara and Katsina), Gwaska Dankarami (Zamfara), Alhaji Shanono (Kaduna), Buharin Daji (Zamfara), and Kachalla Gadda Turji in Zamfara (Idris *et al.*, 2023; Nowak & Gsell, 2018; Sule *et al.*, 2020a).

Others included Auwalun Daudawa (Zamfara), Kachalla Ruga (Zamfara), Abu Radde (Zamfara), Alhaji Goma Sama'ila (Zamfara), Yellow (Kebbi), Ali Dogo (Niger) and Ahmed Yunusa known as Yellow Ashana (Kaduna and Abuja axis). These groups of leaders, sub-leaders, and their followers routinely attacked and kidnapped security personnel, civilians, travellers, communities, and traditional leaders and collected huge amounts of money as ransom, rustled cattle, killed innocent individuals, and destroyed

properties in Northern Nigeria, especially in the North Western and Central regions of the country (Idris et al., 2023; Nowak & Gsell, 2018; Sule *et al.*, 2020a).

It is imperative to note that political thugs significantly caused the resurgence of big criminal groups in the country, which consequently led to breaches of peace and national security all over Nigeria. The activities of these criminal groups led to incessant criminal attacks, violent destruction, and upheavals, which caused the loss of lives and properties across the country. As much as politicians will continue to support political thuggery for election purposes, the political thugs won't relent to join major criminal groups after elections since their basic necessities can't be fulfilled by the godfathers (politicians and elites). It is believed that



“Some political thugs used thuggery after elections to have their own way of getting livelihood of living especially those that belong to the ruling party. These thugs used party vehicles to get into community and wreck havoc and violence through criminal activities like stealing, shoplifting and robbery. ...the thugs are left without any source of living and they must find a way of survival from their known business which is thuggery.” (Interview with Informant in category B2, 2023).

Subsequently, the political environment is overwhelmed by excessive criminality, the formation of criminal groups becomes easier, and the resurgence of insurgents and terror groups spreads all over. It was observed that “these political thugs now turn into criminals, and continue with their petty and bigger crimes within the town and rural areas non-stop. So, it is a serious problem, it is a security threat” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023). In addition, many politicians and political thugs ended

with frustration because they loss election or unable to secure popularity and this made them aggressors. For political thugs, it is stated that

“...you have been introduced into the click of criminals, when you are broke or money is no longer coming from politicians, thugs organize robbery to attack individuals and steal properties, money and other things. ...people begin to join other groups of high profile criminals from shoplifting within town to kidnaping in the bush. All these are happening, at last, people leave small businesses and engage in dubious criminalities just in anticipation of huge money.”

(Interview with Informant in category B1, 2023).

National security continues to deteriorate because authorities concern are weak to address the menace of political thuggery in the country, either due to politicisation (partisan), unprofessionalism in service delivery, or the tendency to be corrupt in discharging official duties. Based on this, it is believed that political thuggery “happens over the years due to the inability of government to ensure that those who commit such crimes are dealt with in accordance with the law” (Interview with Informant in category H, 2023). It was however stated that “though efforts were made to arrest criminals, politicians sometimes force security personnel to do what is not right for national security” (Interview with Informant in category F, 2023). Equally, sometime politicians connived with human rights groups to ensure the release of their clients (political thug). It was lamented bitterly on the habit of politicians towards security matters that

“Once a thief, a criminal or a thug is reported to the Police station, the human right will quickly rush and ensure that he is not tortured, he is not subjected to any punishment. In fact, they said sometimes they even feel relax and relieve when they release them to go than to keep them because of the too much disturbance of human right.”
(Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

It is therefore apparent to understand that political thuggery strongly contributed the national insecurity that caused high number of crimes and resurgent of criminal groups. Excessive criminality and resurgent of criminal groups was high because authority concern holistically failed to do their necessary jobs in combating political thuggery during and after election in Nigeria. As the Broken Window Theory believes where and when a minor incident of crime, crisis, violence, protest, or demonstration is not attended to, managed, or controlled by the security agencies, it will lead to a bigger crime or violence (Abdullahi et al., 2016). This leads to the reoccurrence of electoral violence during elections and other cases of criminalities after the 2019 general elections. This happens because there is lack of control to check illegal gatherings, abuse of the law, routine supervision of unused structures, and patrol of the nearby environment and neighbouring societies as advocated by the theory; then, the situation open up greater risks and dangers to violence which is very clear that political thuggery turned to banditry, Boko haram, Niger Delta militants and other groups in Nigeria.

The consequences of this action and inaction pushed criminal offences high, especially kidnapping, robbery, shoplifting, and attacks on human and security formations, causing the killing of innocent individuals, the destruction of properties, and the

elimination of communities. This has aided proliferation and widespread use of small arms and light weapons in the hands of criminals and political thugs.

6.3 Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Political thuggery advanced from being a political group of thugs intimidating political opponents during elections to big criminal groups specialising in violent and terror attacks, which have paved the way for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the hands of criminal groups across the country, especially after the 2019 general elections. The resurgence and development of ethnic armies, groups of political thugs, civilian-supported groups, and religious radicals who are armed with arms manufactured to unleash fear and terror attacks on desired individuals leading to crises, disputes, criminality, and clashes in the entire Sub-Saharan region of Africa (Ohene-Asare *et al.*, 2014).

This is sacrosanct from the work of Sule *et al.* (2020a), titled “An overview of the genesis, sources, manifestations, and impact of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in northern Nigeria,” who believed that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is as a result of the growing activities of bandit groups in Northern Nigeria. It was observed that politicians sponsored “political thugs, some of them (thugs) were even armed with sophisticated weapons like AK47, double barrel guns and others” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023). It was added that

“You even see thugs physically being supported by politicians in his campaign teams with weapons because of fear of attack by the opposition thugs during rallies.” (Interview with Informant in category B2, 2023).

Small arms and light weapons are believed to have been marketed both legally and illegally by state and non-state actors around the world. The deal consists of sales of guns, rockets, anti-aircraft machine guns, launchers, pistols, grenades, AK 47s, improvised explosive devices, rocket-propelled grenades, and the rest fall under small arms and light weapons, which are mostly used by groups of individuals to attack communities or individuals in many societies (SIPRI, 2019). The U.S. and Russia have become the major beneficiaries of arms deals that are traded internationally. Meanwhile, five countries that constitute global exporters of arms at 75 percent include the U.S., Russia, France, Germany, and China, with a scale of 202 states, 48 non-state armed groups, and five international organisations involved in the supply of total exports from the 2014 to 2018 arms trade deals (Durkin, 2019).

Correspondingly, Africa is believed to be the major recipient of illicit deals of small arms and light weapons in the world because of corruption, resurgence of criminal groups, prevailing violence, weak political institutions and attitude of leaders toward supporting political thugs and criminal groups. This has posed a great danger to African continental security on violence, conflict, war, terrorism and excessive criminalities which overshadow the political environment (Alusala, 2016). It is against this deal that out of 650 million, 540 million small arms deals remained in Sub-Saharan Africa which are linked to criminal armed groups such as *Boko Haram*, Al-Shabab, Al-Qaeda, and their subordinate criminal groups, and states to fight the situation with 70 percent domiciled in Nigeria (Sule *et al.*, 2020a; Nowak & Gsell, 2018).

In the Nigerian context, the resurgence of criminal and terror groups like *Boko Haram*, IPOB, bandits, Niger Delta militants, armed robbers, and other related criminal clusters across the country made it easier and faster for the proliferation of small arms

and light weapons. Politicians are directly involved in the recruitment of political thugs to cause violence during elections, and afterward, they resort to joining groups of big criminal and terror groups that invariably constitute major security threats (Moliki, 2021; Iyang, 2018; Iyekekpolo, 2018). It was similarly observed that

“...they now use the weapons to become Area Boys in Lagos, to become Militants in Niger Delta, to become thugs in the North, to the extent of giving an opportunity or open up a window for even banditry and insurgency and farmers-herders clashes and other bigger insecurity in the country.” (Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

This affected the Nigerian ranking at the Global Terrorism Index to stand at 3rd place in the year 2020 among other countries that are besieged with incessant terrorist attacks that damage human security (Sule *et al.*, 2020a; Waziri *et al.*, 2018; Olamide & Emanuel, 2018; Olayiwola, 2017; Moses, 2017; Eloma *et al.*, 2014; Malam, 2014). It is obvious to note that political thuggery immensely played a role in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the hands of criminals and their groups across Nigeria especially after the 2019 general elections. Perhaps, it is therefore understood that proliferation of small arms and light weapons makes groups of criminals to use illicit drugs in their attempt to harness psychoactive strength so as to launch deadly attacks on individuals and communities across Nigeria. Those criminals mostly rely on consumption of hard drugs like marijuana, tramadol, and other syrups like codeine to get high before embarking on a mission.

6.4 Illicit Drug Use and Trafficking

Illicit drug trafficking is an illegitimate trade of contraband, abused or prohibited drugs that are illegally used by individuals to boost psychoactive motion and reaction toward certain events and behaviours. Certain drugs are classified as being potential for abuse among youth such as narcotic and psychotropic substances (marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines, heroin and cough syrups and tramadol) that are under the control of international community (Ukwayi *et al.*, 2019). Since it is evident that politicians and elites support political thugs and later abandon them after elections, political thugs consequently venture into criminality and join groups of big criminals like *Boko-Haram*, IPOB, Niger Delta militants, bandits, armed robbers, and other criminal groups to cause violence, a threat of violence, and insecurity across the country (Moliki, 2021; Rosenje, 2020; Sule *et al.*, 2020a; Iyang, 2018; Iyekekpolo, 2018). It should be noted that higher usage of illicit drugs by criminals and liquid cash from drug trafficking exposes a country to complex security threats (Daily Trust, 2022a). Political thuggery paved way for illicit drugs use and trafficking after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria whereby political thugs needed it to carry out their criminality. It is observed that

“...criminals take drugs and other intoxicating substance so that they can use it and perpetrate their crime. ... once somebody is in the habit of taking drugs, if you don't have the drugs, you will look for money even if it means you go and steal money.” (Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

In studies of the correlation between illicit drug use and criminal behaviour amongst youth in Rivers State, Gbenemene (2019) argued that it is a crime to manufacture, distribute, possess, and use illicit drugs categorised as potential killers to use, like

marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines, and heroin. Drug use is also linked to crime, which is affecting the behaviour of addicts as it subsequently triggers violence and violent behaviour in communities. He also noted that the activities of criminal groups in Rivers State are aided by the high use of illicit drugs among youth, especially during their teens. The youths who commit various offences started as political thugs, then mutated to armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, and murder under the influence of psychoactive drugs like alcohol, marijuana, and tramadol (Aristotle *et al.*, 2021). Thus, the victims of these violent crimes mostly encounter torture, as the perpetrators do not care about the implications of their actions.

It was reported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) that 14.4 percent of the population in Nigeria, which is equivalent to 14.3 million people, used drugs that were not prescribed by medical specialists. The drugs included cannabis, opioids (largely tramadol, morphine, and codeine), and cough syrups like dextromethorphan and codeine (UNODC, 2018). The Director General of the National Drugs and Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Buba Marwa, stated that more than 90 percent of all criminalities in Nigeria that include kidnapping, insurgency, banditry, rape, and others are linked to drug abuse, and nobody in his real sense will take arms and weapons to attack others (Marwa, 2021). For instance, criminal attacks increased from 1,549 incidences in 2019 to 1,868 incidences in 2020 and 2,284 incidences in 2021. Likewise, the frequency of criminal attacks rose from 8,340 deaths in 2019 to 9,695 deaths in 2020 and 10,398 deaths in 2021 (NST, 2023).

In his statement on the relationship between the use of illicit drugs, wide-spread crime, and insecurity in Nigeria, the Director General of NDLEA, Buba Marwa, stated that 90 percent of crimes that cause havoc to national security are directly connected to

drug addicts who cause violence among people in the country. It is similarly reported that more than 75 percent of drug users arrested are linked to various offences like shoplifting, theft, burglary, and sex work (UNODC, 2018). Drug abuse is seen as the influencing factor in conflict and violence among youths in the north-western and central regions of Nigeria (Mercy Corps, 2022).

Similarly, illicit drugs use ensures behavioural upset to hold deadly weapons in order to enable attacks on individuals with high degrees of injuries, killings, and vandalism of properties. It is observed that

“The thugs are mostly mad after taking hard drugs like Exol-5 (a type of drug administered to horses) and tramadol for which some thugs will take 50, 10 or 5 tablets in one dose.” (Interview with Informant in category B2, 2023).

Though, in its effort to officially address the menace of illicit drug trafficking and consumption in Nigeria, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has arrested more than 100,000 people within two decades. Yet, hard drug deals and consumption keep increasing because criminality is always growing in the country. However, NDLEA Commandant in Borno State, Joseph Icha, lamented that weak laws are frustrating their war against illicit drug use and trafficking because Borno State Command alone has 123 cases in the Federal High Court for judgement out of the 561 people arrested in just 2022, but the court usually releases the culprits on bail, and thereafter you will see them on the streets back doing their illicit drug business (Joseph, 2022). Thus, illicit drug use and trafficking constitute part of the social vices that create bad political behaviour and poor political culture in politics among Nigerians especially after the 2019 general elections in the country.

6.5 Aggressive Political Behaviour

Political thuggery is a critical influencer to the poor political culture that produces aggressive political behaviour in contemporary Nigerian electoral cycles and politics, especially after the 2019 general elections. The menace of political thuggery is triggered by violent political behaviours and excessive criminality (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019), do-or-die politics and politics of clientelism or god-fatherism (Moliki, 2021; Ahmad, 2019; May, 2016; Paul, 2013), hate speech (Nwozor et al., 2022; Ezeibe, 2021), corruption, rigging, and other electoral malpractices (Sule et al., 2020; Situation Room, 2019; European Union, 2019) in the entire Nigerian political system and its environment (Obiam, 2021). The scale of vices in addition to a bad attitude towards one another in politics, definitely transmit poor political culture, especially during elections in the country. It was stated that

“The norms and culture of the Nigerian democracy is basically that of political thuggery and it has been one of the defining characteristics of Nigerian politics. Politicians normally recruit youth that are mostly unemployed to serve as their fighting political dogs, to intimidate their opponents and in order to advance their interest.” (Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

Political thugs supported by politicians created a violent political environment during and after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. A number of political thugs and militias inflicted fear in the minds of citizens through intimidation and abuse, which caused instability in the Nigerian political environment. People are afraid to criticise government policies in media and other gatherings; political associations like meetings are drastically reduced; businessmen complain of attacks in markets and shops; social gatherings like marriage ceremonies, festivals, and cultural gatherings turn bloody in

many cases. It is thus observed that an average Nigerian perceives political participation as just a process of contentious struggle with armed supporters to win elections, as opposed to seamless engagement by all. This has led to low voter turnout and electoral participation by all men and women during and after the election, which invariably creates electoral apathy.

Similarly, political thugs contributed immensely to deterioration of good political culture, which produces negative attitudes in political relationships, especially during elections. During elections, a number of individuals, including security personnel, electorates, candidates, members of INEC, journalists, and observers, lose their lives and properties. It was reported that political thugs killed 626 people during 161 election-related attacks in 127 days, from the official commencement of the election to the announcement of the winner (Situation Room, 2019). It was stated that

“Our political culture has it that we usually have what is called “political violence”. And because we are used to that, it has become part of us. It reached an extent where by even before an election, people will always anticipate that there would be violence.”
(Interview with Informant in category E, 2023).

Since security personnel are unable to totally stop the menace either due to politics, unprofessionalism, or corruption, individuals resort to owning arms in the name of self-defence across many communities. People believe that possessing weapons will guarantee peaceful coexistence, which will definitely deter criminals from launching an attack against any person, group of persons, or entire community. However, this has compounded security threats, growing insecurity, and public disorder among members of different communities, with scores of killings in the country.

6.6 Corruption in the Security System

Political thuggery has continued to operate because of corruption in the Nigerian security system, which has rendered it weak and unable to address excessive criminality and other vices even beyond the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Politicians connived with security officers to rig elections against other candidates and form alliances to loot security budgets (CDD, 2019). Human Rights Watch (2019) reported that corruption and partisan politics among security personnel compounded problems of insecurity because they were unable to address a number of violent attacks by political thugs at various polling units and collation centres. They tend to be partisan by protecting a given candidate and his political thugs to perpetrate rigging or pursue the arrest of opposition candidates and their supporters because of incumbency and access to government machinery (HRW, 2019). Based on this, it is believed that

“...the security agencies are made to compromise and allow thugs to go back even after arrest, they cannot be prosecuted. Very few of them, especially if you are with the government the police will be reluctant to arrest thugs. ...they will just draw their attention and instruct them not to do anything that will harm their boys (thugs).”

(Interview with Informant in category I, 2023).

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) reported that in many parts of the country, security officials were alleged to have intimidated election staff or done so. The report added that security organisations failed to set up a sufficient number of officials to protect election staff and materials, in spite of receiving huge funding from the government for election security. Beyond any doubt, security personnel actively participated in disrupting collation processes in some areas. For instance, security officials denied observers and media reporters access to the collation centres in

Ughelli, Delta State. Also, security officials chased everyone outside the collation centre during the collation of results in Lagos State. Similarly, in Rivers State, security personnel, especially the military in uniform, disrupted voting processes and the collation of results at ward levels, thereby disenfranchising a number of voters in the state. Soldiers also invaded collation centres, which shot firearms into the air, suspended elections, and took election results collated (CDD, 2019). Similarly, it is added that

“If the security personnel are doing their work, they will avert the thuggery. But thugs will come, security personnel will see them, and nothing will be done. Whatever thugs want to do, security personnel are there reluctantly.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

Human Rights Watch (2019) further added that clashes between political thugs and security officers like the Army and Police led to the death of an Army officer in Rivers State and a number of people in Kano, Katsina, Kogi, Plateau, Adamawa, Bauchi, Delta, Imo, Kaduna, Lagos, and other states. The PDP political thugs were accused of rigging through violence, which led to the intervention by the Army, which was also accused of supporting the APC in Rivers State during the 2019 presidential elections. Likewise, in Kano State, police were accused of supporting APC during the 2019 gubernatorial election, thereby allowing political thugs at polling units and collation centres in Gama Ward to cause violence and rig the election in favour of Governor Ganduje (HRW, 2019).

Beyond the 2019 general elections, security officers were arrested in different occasions and detained on criminal offences ranging from armed robbery, releasing criminal suspects or sensitive security information and selling of weapons to criminals like bandits, armed robbers, *Boko Haram* terrorists, and other criminal groups. On the arrest of robbery suspects, a Police Sergeant called Ibrahim Odege was arrested along with two others for robbery by the Elekadia Divisional Police Station in Rivers State on the 16th January, 2021 (Daily Post, 2021); and in Edo State, a Naval officer named Ibrahim Adamu and a Prison staff called Abdullahi Abdulwahab were arrested for robbery and car snatching from Sapele, Delta State (Business Day, 2023).

In Lagos State, a Police sergeant was arrested for car robbery and abduction alongside 30 other cultists (Tribune, 2023); in Kogi State, the Department of Security State Services arrested a retired Army Colonel called A. U. Suleiman alongside 5 gangs for robbery and possession of 1 pump action rifle, 4 cartridges, 1 AK47 with the sum of 11,030 naira at Gegu Beki, Abuja-Lokoja expressway on the 26th March 2023 (The Sun, 2023); and in Anambra State, Police officers attached to the 33 Division, Onitsha arrested two private security guards called Ogbang Clement and Udeh Orji for armed robbery of telephone and other belongings at the Independent Layout Estate, Nkwelle Ezunaka (Within, 2019).

Similarly, on the release of detained criminal suspects, security operatives were accused of releasing detained criminals or sensitive security information to bandits, *Boko Haram*, and other criminals in the country. Narrating the difficulties in addressing growing insecurity in the North Western region of the country, the committee of elders from the region accused security agencies of indiscriminate and incessant release of criminals who are detained for a number of offences. The

community elders pointed fingers at the authorities concerned with the way bandits and other criminals are released by security forces in Zamfara State; the act continued to pose a great security danger as the war against banditry and criminality surged (Dansadau, 2021). In this regard, it was observed that because of corruption

“...the security themselves sometimes connive with the families of these thugs collect money and release them secretly or collect money from politicians and release them even openly.” (Interview with Informant in Category FGD, 2023).

On the release of sensitive security information to criminals, two policemen were apprehended for possible links to criminals (via phone call tracking) during an attack that led to the freeing of 64 high-profile terrorists and 260 criminals out of Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre on the night of July 5th, 2022, in Abuja; the report was later debunked by the police but reliably verified as a true statement by the Leadership Newspaper (Leadership, 2022). In Enugu State, six members of the Vigilante Group known as Neighbourhood Watch, established to fight criminalities by the local communities, were arrested in the Akpawfu community for leaking security information (Sahara Reporters, 2023). This situation caused members of the House of Representatives to pass a vote of no confidence on security agencies for being reluctant to avert terrorist attacks across the country (This Day live, 2022).

In addition, security agencies were accused of selling weapons to criminals and terrorists in the country. The rising insecurity in Zamfara State is also linked to the supplies of weapons and ammunitions, by a member of the Nigeria Army who was arrested with his girlfriend in Zamfara State. The State Government stated through the Deputy Chief of Staff, Bashir Maru that the soldier was arrested supplying weapons

and military uniforms to bandits in the State (Maru, 2021). In Borno State too. The Nigerian Army arrested a soldier for stealing and selling weapons to *Boko Haram* terrorists. The suspect is named Iorliam Emmanuel of the 156 task force battalion in Mainok; likewise, in Zamfara State, police also arrested an ex-army officer named Saidu Lawal on August 27th, 2022, for supplying weapons to bandits (The Cable, 2022); and in Zamfara State, the Nigerian Army also arrested a soldier known as Bala Nura (with registration number 19NA/78/3870) on May 22nd, 2022, for selling million Naira worth of ammunition to bandits (Sahara Reporters, 2022).

It is against this situation that the Transparency International Defence and Security (2020) reported that corruption is the major impediment to the fight against insecurity in the entire West African region. Precisely, security operatives in one way or the other have been linked to selling or releasing sensitive security information and weapons to criminals and terrorist groups in Nigeria. For instance, *Boko Haram* alone is known to have accessed major security arsenals to wipe out weapons, which helped them launch deadly attacks on individuals and communities with the help of security personnel who conspired attacks on military formations across the north-eastern region of Nigeria (TIDS, 2020). Thus, it is believed that corruption in the security sector is what hindered Nigeria's effort against insecurity, whereby people entrusted to defend the country continue to loot monies allocated to their ministries meant for the purchase of military weapons and others.

Evidence clearly revealed a huge stealing of public funds budgeted for weapons procurement by security officials across the country. In a press briefing, the Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), in the person of Bolaji Owasanoye, stated that the Commission is worried by the

incessant corruption in the security sector, which he believed caused serious bottlenecks to the country's war against insecurity. He equally added that the Commission exposed a top ex-military chief who diverted 4 billion Naira from the budget of his agency, which he transferred to the accounts of two companies where he is the sole signatory. In 2021, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) charged Kenneth Minimah, a former Chief of Army Staff, alongside two others (Army Generals), for misappropriating 13 billion Naira budgeted for arms procurement (Punch, 2022a).

In the year 2022, the Military Court Martial charged and sentenced another top military officer (Hakeem Otiki, a former GOC with the 8th Division in Sokoto), who was guilty of stealing and diversion of military money, to be sacked with "disgrace and dishonour," and ordered him to return 135.8 million Naira to the military account. Yet, a former National Security Adviser, Sambo Dasuki, to President Jonathan was arrested over the diversion of 2.1 billion Dollars meant for the purchase of military weapons; still, a former Chief of Air Staff, Alex Badeh, was arrested and charged for the misuse of 3.9 billion Naira meant for military purchases before his miraculous death (Punch, 2022a).

Systemic corruption in the security sector continues to hamper security successes in the fight against insecurity. It is reported to the Senate Committee on the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association that Nigeria is losing not less than 400,000 barrels of crude oil daily to oil theft, which is believed to be a collaborative crime between the military and others who are responsible for protecting oil installations (Punch, 2022a). Likewise, a non-government organisation called Human and Environmental Development Agenda has believed that 13 security chiefs, together

with others, syphoned \$400 million and owned 216 of the 800 properties traced to Nigerians in the United Arab Emirates (Punch, 2022a). On a sad note related to corruption in the security sector, the former National Security Adviser to President Muhammadu Buhari lamented that the military could not account for the funds it received to purchase arms during the war against insecurity, which rampaged the whole country, thereby making a number of top military personnel, politicians, contractors, civil servants, and others create unlawful money for their private gain (Punch, 2022a).

In view of these proofs of corruption in the security sector, therefore, the war against insecurity, particularly Boko Haram, banditry, militancy, and other criminalities, obviously face a major setback since politicians have become chief perpetrators of supporting political thugs during elections whom they later abandon for protection. This subsequently leads political thugs to engage in criminality and join criminal groups with deadly attacks on individuals and communities across the country. It created a setback in the war against insecurity that politicians, security officers, contractors and civil servants evidently sabotage government efforts to secure Nigerians and communities through corruption in the form of misappropriation, looting of public treasury, fake contracts, embezzlement, and other unlawful acquisitions of money from the budget meant for security, defence, and the purchase of military hardware to ensure peace, stability, and territorial control of both internal and external sovereignty of the Nigerian borders; against any threat within national borders or threat of aggression from external boundaries threatening Nigerian sovereignty internally and externally.

6.7 Threatened Internal Sovereignty

Political thuggery has become a devastating security threat that is linked to be a rudiment of criminality and resurgence of criminal groups like *Boko Haram*, bandits, cattle rustlers, herdsmen, militants, secessionists, internet fraud stars, armed robbers, and other criminals across the country. The activities of these criminals compounded national security threats through excessive attacks on individuals, communities, and security formations that caused the loss of lives and properties, in addition to the internal displacement of a huge population within national borders. Data from the National Security Tracker (2023) revealed that from the year 2019 to 2022, there were 7,624 incidences of criminal attacks, which caused the deaths of 37,513 people across Nigeria. The data statistically indicated that out of the 1,440 days in four years (2019–2022), an average of 5 incidences of criminal attacks occur every day, compared to the 7,624 occurrences of criminalities in Nigeria.

Nigeria is transversely affected by a series of security threats that cut across all six geo-political zones with each zone having a specific threat or more than one threat. It is indicated that agitation for secession by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a dominant security threat in the South-eastern region; kidnapping and oil theft by the Niger Delta militias affected the South-south region; ethnic violence by the Oduduwa People Congress ravaged the South-western region; banditry, cattle rustling, and farmers-herders crises threatened the North-western and central regions; and of course, *Boko-Haram* terrorism spread across the North-eastern region as its epicentre; that does not mean they are the only security threats affecting the country. Other criminalities like cybercrime, internet fraud, and armed robbery perpetrated by youth engulf the entire country (Rosenje, 2020; Austin, 2015; Inyang, 2018; Omomia, 2015; Iyekekpolo, 2018). These criminals originate from the support enjoyed by political

thugs through politicians who later abandoned them. Their crimes begin with election periods spread over and beyond election cycles in the country (Moliki, 2021; Iyekekpolo, 2018; Rosenje, 2020; Paul, 2013).

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons, illicit drug use and trafficking, aggressive political behaviour and massive corruption in the security sector plague national sovereignty. These have invariably constituted fundamental threats which have ravaged internal security and at the same time weakened Nigeria's capability to strengthen its internal sovereignty by the authorities concerned. Obviously, when the government and security personnel inadequately address certain security threats within the country, such a country is facing the problem of internal sovereignty which in a wider consideration, may degenerate to affect its external sovereignty.

After the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, the authorities concerned was unable to totally tackle the issue of political thuggery which thereafter accelerated banditry, Boko-haram terrorism, Niger Delta militancy, IPOB and other security threats in the country. This is what Broken Window Theory advocated that when a minor security threat is left unresolved, it will move to a big threat (Abdullahi et al, 2016). Many political thugs are believed to have joined big criminal groups of bandits in the North Western and North Central Nigeria, Boko haram in the North Eastern Nigeria, IPOB in the South East and Niger Delta militants in the South South of the country.

The inability and reluctance of the security agencies and the government to address political thuggery have paved a way for deadly attacks beyond Nigerian borders which is affecting neighbouring countries like Cameroun, Niger and Chad republics. The *Boko Haram* terrorist group in particular paid allegiance to international terrorist

groups like Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State (IS), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), which made it difficult for the Nigerian government alone to fight and is forced to join hands with the international community to fight against terrorism globally.

6.8 Mitigation Strategies to Curb Political Thuggery in Nigeria

Curbing political thuggery in Nigeria requires a multifaceted reform agenda that strengthens legal, institutional, and socio-political frameworks. The establishment of an independent “Electoral Offences Commission” with prosecutorial powers would ensure accountability for sponsors of electoral violence, complemented by amendments to the 2010 Electoral Act that codify strict penalties such as permanent disqualification of offenders. Equally, empowering and reforming the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) through financial autonomy, technological innovation, and oversight of party primaries would enhance electoral credibility while reducing incentives for violence. Parallel to this, a robust election security framework—anchored on impartial law enforcement, intelligence-driven deployments, and community-based early warning systems—would deter violence and restore public confidence.

Beyond legal-institutional reforms, addressing the socio-economic roots of political thuggery through job creation, vocational training, and expanded educational opportunities can significantly reduce youth vulnerability to political manipulation. Similarly, community-based preventive approaches and the promotion of civic orientation alongside a democratic political culture can foster local ownership of peace, strengthen resilience against elite manipulation, and delegitimize violence as a political tool. Collectively, these measures illustrate that only a holistic strategy—

combining law, strong institutions, socio-economic empowerment, and civic reorientation—can effectively dismantle political thuggery and consolidate democracy in Nigeria.

6.8.1 Strengthening Legal and Electoral Reform

Strengthening legal and electoral reforms is a critical pathway to reducing political thuggery in Nigeria because weak legal frameworks and poor enforcement create an environment of impunity where political actors freely sponsor violence without any consequences. In view of this, establishing a specialized “Electoral Offences Commission” with prosecutorial powers would ensure timely investigation and prosecution of both political thugs and their sponsors, thereby deterring future acts of electoral violence. Codifying strict penalties in the Electoral Act—such as the permanent disqualification of candidates and parties found guilty of sponsoring violence—would hold politicians and political elites accountable and reduce the demand for thuggery as a political strategy.

Moreover, legal reforms can enhance the credibility of elections by closing loopholes that allow manipulation. For example, reforms mandating transparent primaries, electronic voting, and strict adherence to campaign finance laws would reduce intra-party conflicts and the resort to violence. Once political competition is governed by clear rules, enforced impartially and within defined timelines, the incentives for politicians to rely on thugs to intimidate voters or manipulate outcomes are significantly weakened. Thus, Nigeria needs an independent body to be established, a dedicated “Electoral Offences Commission” with prosecutorial powers would provide a framework for timely accountability. This body should investigate and prosecute sponsors of thuggery and electoral violence (Chatham House, 2024; National

Assembly of Nigeria, 2025). The body should be consolidated into a single, independent institution with transparent appointments and prosecutorial autonomy. The body should fast-track and adjudicate cases of electoral violence within a defined timeframe, ensuring accountability and deterrence.

Furthermore, reforms to the Electoral Act 2010 should codify penalties, including permanent disqualification for convicted candidates and parties, proven guilty of sponsoring violence to enhance political responsibility (PLAC, 2022). Accordingly, the law should clearly state any politician, candidate, or political party found guilty of instigating or causing attack or destruction in relation to elections is banned from participating in elections henceforth. Therefore, establishment of a specialized Electoral Offences Commission in Nigeria is critical. For example, Nigeria can learn from Mexico's Special Prosecutor's Office for Electoral Crimes (FEPADE/FEDE), which has prosecutorial powers to investigate and punish electoral crimes, including political violence and vote buying (Magar, 2019). Similarly, Ghana's National Peace Council has facilitated legally binding codes of conduct and pacts against vigilantism and electoral violence, creating accountability frameworks for political parties (Abdulai, 2020). These models demonstrate that specialized enforcement bodies and political compacts can provide deterrence and strengthen electoral credibility.

6.8.2 Strengthening INEC's Ability

Political thuggery in Nigeria is sustained by weak electoral institutions, poor enforcement of electoral laws, and a lack of credible election management. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), as the body mandated to conduct elections, plays a central role in addressing these structural weaknesses. Strengthening INEC through enhanced autonomy, professionalism, and financial independence

would ensure that elections are conducted transparently and free from political manipulation. When the electoral process is credible and technology-driven, the incentive for politicians to rely on thugs to manipulate outcomes is significantly reduced.

A stronger INEC is critical in curbing thuggery by means of enforcing strict compliance with electoral laws and sanctioning offenders. The establishment of special electoral offenses tribunals or the empowerment of INEC with prosecutorial powers would ensure that both political thugs and their sponsors face justice. Similarly, strengthening INEC's oversight of party primaries can minimize intra-party conflicts that often escalate into violent confrontations. As a result of holding political parties accountable and promoting internal democracy, INEC reduces the fertile ground upon which thuggery thrives. For instance, the 2019 elections exposed the vulnerabilities in INEC's card reader machines that failed to capture or recognise the fingerprint of several voters in addition to malfunctioning and delays (INEC, 2023; Premium Times, 2023; Punch, 2023). Strengthening the powers and independence of the Commission is therefore very vital. This includes ensuring transparent candidate selection processes, curbing electoral manipulation, and prosecuting electoral offenders. To strengthen credibility, the Commission should conduct public audits, implement redundant backup systems, and integrate paper trails for verification (INEC, 2022).

In this way, smart card reader machines should be upgraded to allow not only the accreditation of voters but also the electronic transmission of election results to the INEC national database, where votes and results are collated and stored. During voting, the machine should facilitate electronic voting and enable printing of hardcopy ballot papers that are thumb printed by the voter; the voter should thereafter put the

printed ballot paper into the ballot box for verification purposes when the need arises. In so doing, cybersecurity should always be improved with updates to avoid attacks by cyber criminals. Comparatively, Kenya provides a useful example, having integrated biometric voter registration (BVR) and electronic transmission of results after the 2007 post-election violence to restore electoral trust (Cheeseman, et al., 2018). Likewise, India's use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) with Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) ensures that electronic tallies can be independently verified, improving transparency and credibility (Pal, 2019). Both models illustrate how combining digital innovation with paper audits enhances integrity and reduces manipulation.

A credible and independent INEC fosters citizen trust in democratic processes, thereby weakening political elites' ability to mobilize communities into violence. Enhanced collaboration between INEC and security agencies ensures neutral protection of voters and electoral materials, while civic education initiatives sensitize citizens on the dangers of political thuggery. Collectively, these measures make violence both less attractive and less effective as a political strategy. Thus, strengthening INEC is not only an administrative necessity but also a critical pathway toward reducing political thuggery and consolidating Nigeria's democracy.

6.8.3 Strengthening Election Security Framework

Political thuggery in Nigeria is sustained in part by the complicity, weakness, or partisanship of security agencies during elections. It was reported that collusion between political actors and security forces served as a persistent threat to election integrity (CLEEN Foundation, 2023; ICG, 2022). When security forces fail to act impartially, politicians exploit this gap by mobilizing thugs with the assurance of

impunity. Reforming security forces to be professional, accountable, and insulated from political influence is therefore critical in reducing electoral violence. A reformed security apparatus that prioritizes neutrality and human rights would provide a credible deterrent, ensuring that thugs and their sponsors are swiftly apprehended and prosecuted rather than shielded.

Moreover, specialized election security training for the police, military, and paramilitary agencies can reduce excessive force while enhancing conflict management during elections. Building intelligence-driven security frameworks, early-warning and community-level monitoring systems could help pre-empt violent incidents that allow authorities to identify and pre-empt the mobilization of political thugs in high-risk hotspots (UNDP, 2017). Transparency measures, such as televising prosecutions of compromised officers, further reinforces public trust in security institutions and delegitimizes collusion between politicians and security operatives.

Credible security sector reforms would create an enabling environment for free and fair elections. When citizens believe that their votes will count and that law enforcement will protect rather than endanger them, the incentive for politicians to deploy thugs diminishes. Comparative lessons from countries like the Philippines and Mexico, where electoral security reforms reduced armed thuggery, show that impartial and professional security agencies are indispensable for electoral integrity and credibility. The Philippines provides a practical model for curbing electoral violence through security reforms. During election periods, the country enforces a nationwide gun ban, implemented through checkpoints and joint police-military patrols, which has significantly reduced armed thuggery and political killings (Atienza, 2020). This illustrates the importance of pre-emptive, intelligence-driven security measures in

reducing the availability of weapons and curbing violent mobilization during elections. Nigeria can adapt similar proactive restrictions, particularly in high-risk zones, to weaken the operational strength of political thugs.

Mexico, on the other hand, demonstrates the value of specialized electoral security institutions. Its Special Prosecutor's Office for Electoral Crimes (*Fiscalía Especializada para la Atención de Delitos Electorales* [FEPADE], *Fiscalía Especializada en Delitos Electorales* [FEDE]) possesses prosecutorial powers to investigate and punish electoral crimes, including political violence, vote buying, and intimidation (Esponda & Poulsen, 2019). This approach not only ensures accountability but also fosters public trust by guaranteeing that perpetrators face justice. For Nigeria, establishing a similar Electoral Offences Commission with security collaboration would deter impunity and reinforce the impartiality of law enforcement during elections.

Accordingly, reforming Nigeria's security forces to uphold law and order is not only a policing necessity but also a democratic imperative to dismantle political thuggery and foster stability. Together, these propositions highlight that effective security sector reforms require both preventive measures (as seen in the Philippines) and prosecutorial enforcement mechanisms (as practiced in Mexico). With combining proactive policing with robust legal accountability, Nigeria can significantly reduce political thuggery and strengthen democratic consolidation and sustainability.

6.8.4 Promoting Socio-Economic and Educational Opportunities

It is established that unemployed and undereducated youths are the most vulnerable to being used as political thugs, as they are easily lured by financial incentives (Aliyu,

2018). Political thuggery in Nigeria is strongly linked to socio-economic vulnerabilities, particularly youth unemployment, poverty, and lack of sustainable livelihoods. Many unemployed and underemployed young people are easily recruited as political thugs by elites who exploit their economic desperation with small financial inducements. Promoting economic interventions such as job creation, vocational training, entrepreneurship schemes, and microfinance opportunities reduces this vulnerability by providing youths with legitimate income alternatives. When young people are economically empowered, the incentives to engage in electoral violence diminish.

Furthermore, broad-based economic reforms that target inequality and social exclusion can address the structural drivers of political thuggery. Poverty alleviation programs, investment in rural development, and inclusive economic policies help integrate marginalized groups into the political and economic system, reducing their susceptibility to manipulation by political elites. In this way, economic empowerment does not only provide alternatives to violence but also fosters a sense of belonging and political responsibility among citizens.

Comparative lessons show that where states have invested in youth empowerment and employment schemes, incidence of electoral violence decline. For instance, Kenya's youth enterprise development funds and Rwanda's vocational training programs illustrate how economic interventions can strengthen democratic stability by curbing youth militancy (Cheeseman, et al., 2018). In Nigeria's case, targeted policies in agriculture, ICT, and small-scale industries could absorb unemployed youths who are often used as thugs, thereby weakening the supply chain of political violence. Thus,

economic interventions represent both a developmental necessity and a strategic security measure against political thuggery.

In addition, government should promote policies on education opportunities to the youth since lack of access to higher education is linked to factors influencing political thuggery. Education enhances literacy, civic awareness, and critical reasoning. An educated populace is less likely to be manipulated by political elites through misinformation, monetary inducements, or ethnic/religious sentiments. According to Omede and Bakare (2014), a lack of political literacy among citizens enables the persistence of electoral malpractices, including thuggery. By cultivating critical consciousness, education weakens the structural foundation of political violence.

Formal and informal education systems provide avenues for teaching democratic values, tolerance, and non-violent conflict resolution. Integrating civic education into school curricula promotes respect for rule of law, peaceful participation, and awareness of political rights. This reduces the likelihood of youth being recruited as political thugs since they are sensitized on the dangers of electoral violence (Ayoade, 2019). Thus, this can be in the form of scholarships and educational foundations for youths and women who are less advantage.

6.8.5 Community-Based Preemptive Measures

Political thuggery in Nigeria often thrives at the grassroots level, where unemployed youth, traditional loyalties, and weak law enforcement intersect. Because thuggery is locally organized, community-based preventive approaches are essential to breaking its cycle. These strategies rely on local ownership of peacebuilding, traditional

institutions, and civic engagement to prevent political elites from recruiting or mobilizing youths for violence.

Community-based preventive approaches can reduce political thuggery in Nigeria by addressing it at its roots: youth vulnerability, local elite manipulation, and weak institutional presence. By mobilizing traditional leaders, strengthening grassroots civic education, creating youth alternatives, and establishing local early warning systems, communities can prevent the recruitment and deployment of political thugs. In essence, a bottom-up approach complements national reforms by making violence socially unacceptable and practically difficult at the local level.

Therefore, there is a need to form effective community-based security committees with membership to include all security agencies, traditional rulers, security analysts, public figures, government officials, and representatives of residential areas across all villages, wards, districts, local governments, and state levels in Nigeria. The committee should, from parts of its responsibilities, fetch out, monitor, and report to appropriate authorities any pre-emptive threat to national security, perceived criminal, security danger, or suspicious movements and organisations within every community in the country.

6.8.6 Promoting Civic Orientation and Good Political Culture

Political thuggery in Nigeria thrives largely because of poor political socialization, weak democratic culture, and the normalization of violence in politics. Effective orientation, through civic education, voter enlightenment, and leadership training, can reshape attitudes toward politics and reduce the acceptability of violence. By educating citizens, especially youths, about their civic rights and responsibilities, orientation

programs help people understand that political participation should be based on ideas and policies rather than coercion or violence. This reduces the pool of vulnerable youths who can be recruited as thugs by political elites.

A good political culture further reinforces this shift by entrenching democratic values such as tolerance, respect for the rule of law, and peaceful conflict resolution. Where political culture emphasizes issue-based politics rather than patronage, voters can demand accountability instead of allowing violence to determine electoral outcomes. Likewise, when politicians themselves internalize norms of fair competition, they are less likely to deploy thugs as instruments of electoral manipulation. In this way, political culture directly influences both the supply (youths recruited as thugs) and demand (politicians hiring them) sides of the problem.

Indeed, effective orientation and democratic political culture strengthen community resistance to thuggery. When citizens view political thuggery as socially unacceptable, communities can impose social sanctions on both thugs and their sponsors. Similarly, voter education campaigns that promote peaceful participation and condemn violence build public trust in elections, reducing apathy and discouraging politicians from exploiting insecurity. Thus, the cultivation of civic responsibility and a culture of non-violence transforms elections into contests of ideas rather than battles of force, thereby reducing political thuggery and consolidating democracy in Nigeria.

Consequently, the National Orientation Agency should be up and doing to ensure public awareness towards good governance, national cohesion, patriotism, and political re-orientation for voters, leaders, and political parties during and after elections. This may involve a holistic effort, particularly involving the services of

religious leaders and traditional rulers to deliver sermons, preach, and provide counselling in various communities.

6.9 Summary

The inability and reluctance of the Nigeria security agencies to tackle political thuggery from its nascent stage has provided an enabling ground for the high growth of insecurity in the country. The roles of political thuggery in increasing insecurity challenges include excessive criminality and resurgence of criminal groups, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, illicit drug use and trafficking, aggressive political behaviour, corruption in the security system, and a threat to internal security in Nigeria. Figure 6.2 presents a summarise it.



Figure 6.2 Roles of Political Thuggery on Rising Insecurity after the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.

Accordingly, it is seen that political thuggery provided foundation and absolute support to criminality which included membership and recruitment, increasing deadly attacks especially those who joined after election cycles when politicians abandoned them and the political thugs are no longer getting support from their god-fathers. The security agencies and personnel mostly failed in their attempt to combat political thuggery due to corruption, partisan politics or unprofessionalism during and after elections. This helped political thugs to metamorphose from small groups of criminals of politically related attacks to the bigger criminals with organized attacks who specialised in kidnapping, cattle rustling, armed robbery, cyber-crime, militancy, rebellion, insurgency and terrorism not only within the country but also affecting the neighbouring countries like Chad, Cameroun and Niger Republic. Therefore, criminal groups like *Boko Haram*, aligned with international terrorist organisations including *Al-Qaeda*, the Islamic State (IS), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), get assistance in terms of finance, training, and weapons.

Equally, the strategies to mitigate political thuggery in Nigeria needs holistics efforts from the part of all stakeholder. However, certain ways are profer which included: strengthening legal and electoral reforms, strengthening INEC's ability, strengthening election security framework, promoting socio-ecomnomic opportunities, community based preventive measures, and promoting civic orientation and good political culture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the entire study. It was guided by three major objectives, which include factors that influenced political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, and the role of political thuggery in the dwindling security after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Accordingly, the study was framed and presented into seven interdependent chapters based on a qualitative research approach with the help of content and thematic analysis. The information gathered from the review of exiting documents, interviews, and focus group discussions were systemically analysed and presented using themes that were further described in tables, charts, and numerical values (where applicable) to ease understanding and illustration of ideas discussed. Thus, citations were made available as in-text reference which will guide further inquiries.

7.2 Summary

The study revealed devastating consequences of political thuggery on the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Records show that the 2019 general elections was the most violent election in the history of elections in Nigeria, whereby political thugs became the agents of electoral rigging through deadly attacks and destructions (European Union,

2019). The violent attacks and destructions were instigated by frustrated politicians who were desperate to win elections at all costs. Most attacks were on polling units, collation centres, and other political arenas during elections (CLEEN Foundation, 2019). Politicians supported political thugs who intimidated, frightened, molested, injured, kidnapped, and even killed voters, candidates, election management staff, security officials, observers, and media reporters on the one hand and destroyed election materials and equipment, included ballots, boxes, vehicles, smart card readers, offices, houses, and other belongings on the other hand (INEC, 2019; HRW, 2019; IRI & NDI, 2019). These terrible incidents attracted condemnations all over the world, especially with the killing of not less than 626 people in 161 incidents of violent attacks during the 2019 general elections across the country (Situation Room, 2019). Consequently, violent attacks and destructions led to the excessive cancellation of votes, election results, and postponement of elections to other dates (INEC, 2019).

However, Chapter One presented a general introduction of the entire research process, especially the logical steps followed in designing the research, which started with the background of the research, problem statement, research questions, objectives of the study, scope and limitation, significance of the study, research methodology, definition of key terms, and outline of chapters. Chapter Two offered the literature review that was systematically designed using a content approach with the help of thematic presentations of topics sourced from previous works of scholars, reports, and ideas generated in both hard and soft copies, including journals, books, newspapers, periodicals, magazines, and reports either published on the internet or in libraries. Accordingly, electoral violence and political thuggery were reviewed as the two major variables in the literature review. Electoral violence is a type of violence that is caused by an attempt to influence the outcome of elections at all processes. In this type of

violence, attacks are always carried out or instigated either by the government, civilians, political parties, candidates, or voters in their attempt to influence the election victory of a party or candidate against political opponents (Clayton, 2021). Political thuggery is a form of electoral violence where political thugs are used to inflict violent attacks and destructions towards electoral venues and cycles in an attempt to influence or change election results on behalf of a candidate of a political party against other opponents (Taylor, 2018).

Similarly, Chapter Three explained how frustration aggression theory and broken window theory were used as the tools of analysis in the study. Although relative deprivation theory showed little significance but was revealed to be inadequate to explain the work. However, frustration aggression theory enabled us to understand how aggression became a major factor in frustration and, thus, the way frustration leads to aggression and ignites violent attacks and destructions (Battigalli et al., 2019; Breuer & Elson, 2017; Olaoluwa, 2018) during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It further revealed that violent attacks and destructions were due to the frustration of politicians who became aggressors (Inyang, 2018), and thus the desperate attitude of politicians towards elections thwarted election credibility and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

On the other hand, the broken window theory postulated that when a minor incident of crime, crisis, violence, protest, or demonstration is not attended to, managed, or controlled by the security agencies, it will lead to a bigger crime or violence, and thus, a lack of social control mechanisms always aggravates crises and violence (Abdullahi, et al, 2016). In a situation where political thugs are not controlled, they may become a bigger security threat and form a larger group of insurgents, bandits, and terrorists in

the country. Therefore, the use of political thugs became a legitimate tool of electoral rigging so as to achieve the desired goal of winning the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Chapter Four discussed factors that influenced political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. These factors included structural imbalances arising from ethnic marginalisation and poor living conditions, the politics of patronage, the politics of do-or-die affair, absence of party ideologies, politics as business venture, weakness of INEC, inadequate electoral laws and regulations, weaknesses of security and judiciary, and unpatriotic behaviour of politicians. Thus, these factors influenced political thuggery in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Chapter Five analysed the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, which included the volatility of the Nigerian political environment with perpetual destructions and deadly attacks on voters, candidates, election staff, security personnel, observers, and journalists that occurred during voting and collation of results, campaigns, and rallies across the country; excessive cancellation and postponement of elections; high cost of electoral expenditure; low voter turnout and participation; inconclusive rigging of election results; outright rejection of election results; excessive tribunals and disenfranchisement; and poor political culture. Thus, considering the worrisome attacks and destructions by political thugs during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, it is therefore concluded that political thuggery is a curse to the election credibility. In other words, political thuggery flawed the credibility of the 2019 general elections.

Chapter Six explained the roles of political thuggery on insecurity challenges which included excessive criminality and resurgent of criminal groups, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, illicit drug use and trafficking, aggressive political behaviour, corruption in the security system and threat to internal security in Nigeria. Inability and reluctance of the Nigeria security agencies to tackle political thuggery from its nascent stage provided an enabling ground for the high increase of insecurity in the country. Shortly after elections, political thuggery provided the foundation of criminality ranging from membership recruitment to launching deadly attacks mostly when politicians abandoned their political thugs and were no longer getting support from god-fathers. This allowed political thugs to metamorphose from small groups of criminals with politically related attacks to the big group of criminals like *Boko-Haram* terrorists, bandits, Niger Delta militants, etc. *Boko Haram* for example, allied with international terrorist organisations such as *Al-Qaeda*, the Islamic State (IS), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), who eventually organised and specialised in highly skilled crimes like kidnapping, cattle rustling, armed robbery, cybercrime, militancy, rebellion, insurgency, and terrorism not only within the country but also in neighbouring countries of Chad, Cameroun, and Niger Republic.

However, security personnel showed a reluctant attitude to combat political thuggery, either due to corruption, partisan politics, or unprofessionalism, during and after elections. It thus provided a fundamental avenue for political thugs to mutate from small to big criminals, as postulated by the Broken Window Theory, that when a minor incident of crime, crisis, violence, protest, or demonstration is not attended to, managed, or controlled by the security agencies, it will lead to a bigger crime or violence (Abdullahi et al., 2016). In other words, the inability of security agencies to

tackle political thuggery led to the wide spread of criminalities perpetrated by political thugs, who eventually metamorphosed into big criminals like armed robbers, kidnappers, militants, and terrorists shortly after election cycles. Finally, Chapter Seven provided a general summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the entire research.

7.3 Conclusion

The research concludes that the 2019 general elections were marred by violent attacks and destructions perpetuated by the political thugs who enjoyed the support of frustrated politicians who were desperate to win the election at all costs, regardless of the existing rules and regulations guiding the conduct of the election and the existing democratic principles in Nigeria. Existing evidence revealed that there were 161 confirmed incidents of attacks that resulted in the death of 626 people across the federation during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The perpetual attacks targeted voters, candidates, election management staff, security personnel, observers, and media reporters in the form of intimidation, molestation, kidnapping, high degrees of injuries, and killings. This is in addition to the destruction of election materials and equipment that included ballot papers, ballot boxes, result sheets, smart card reader machines, vehicles, offices, houses, phones, generator sets, and other properties across the country.

All political parties employed the services of political thugs who caused violent attacks and destruction during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Accordingly, the incumbent Governor of Kogi State, Yahaya Bello, a member of the APC, stated that politicians recruited political thugs to win elections, and for any aspirant to win an election, he or she must support and recruit political thugs, touts, militias, or criminals

so as to intimidate people during the election (Bello, 2020). It was further established from the interviews that political parties, without exception, employed political thugs who attacked and destroyed election-related venues, especially polling units and collation centres. Political thugs are influenced by frustrated politicians with little money, promises, threats, and illicit drugs to carry out attacks. In some cases, politicians accompanied political thugs to carry out attacks and destruction just to ensure a smooth atmosphere for election rigging through violence. Since the 2010 Electoral Act and the Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of the 2019 Elections allowed the re-run of elections in an area where violence erupted (INEC, 2019). For instance, Sections 26 and 53 of the 2010 Electoral Act and Paragraphs 41 (e) and 43 (b) of the Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of the 2019 Elections allow that when there is an emergency resulting from “natural disaster and violence” and “over-voting” situations, INEC staff are directed to postpone such an election in the affected area to another date (The 2010 Electoral Act, 2019; INEC Regulations and Guidelines, 2019).

Politicians abused the provisions of the 2010 Electoral Act and Guidelines for the Conduct of the 2019 Elections, which allows inconclusive announcements of election results in a given area. Accordingly, Paragraphs 41 (e) and 43 (b) states that “where the margin of lead between the two leading candidates is not in excess of the total number of registered voters of the polling unit(s) where the election is cancelled or not held in line with Sections 26 and 53 of the Electoral Act, the returning officer shall decline to make a return until polls have taken place in the affected polling unit(s) and the results have been incorporated into a new form EC 8D and subsequently recorded into EC 8E OR new form EC 8C(I) and subsequently recorded into EC8E(I) for Declaration and Return” (INEC Regulations and Guidelines, 2019). Politicians used

such provisions to provoke violence through political thugs who attack and destroy election areas like polling units and collation centres, and thereafter, elections are cancelled in the affected areas. Therefore, politicians manipulated inconclusive provision as a means of electoral rigging through violence so that elections stood to be cancelled in areas likely to be won by political opponents. A re-run of the election must be announced by INEC, and another date must be fixed, which will create greater chances to re-strategize for victory over political opponents.

Political thuggery made the security agencies involved in partisan politics either due to corruption, unprofessionalism, or unpatriotic attitudes exhibited during the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Despite the fact that security personnel were expected to be neutral when it comes to discharging their duties as to protect lives and properties during elections, evidence emerged that security officials (including the Army and Police) were caught releasing election materials that were kept in the Central Bank Branch of Rivers State, Port Harcourt, to PDP members (Vanguard, 2019a). Equally, police officers joined politicians in casting votes for the APC primary election in Kano State (The Eagle, 2021). The Nigerian Army was accused of partisan politics when it raided several collation centres in different areas of Rivers State. The State Governor, Wike, believed that the Army supported the APC to rig elections against the PDP in the state (Wike, 2019). In many places, it was understood that security personnel were sighted being reluctant to prevent attack and destruction by political thugs during voting and collation of results and sometimes cooperated with frustrated politicians to allow political thugs to carry out violent attacks and destructions in an attempt of electoral rigging.

The 2019 general elections in Nigeria recorded the lowest voter turnout compared to the previous elections, with just 34.96%, which represented 28,614,190 voters who cast their votes out of the 84,004,084 total registered voters. (INEC, 2019). Evidence revealed that political thuggery immensely contributed to the low voter turnout because a lot of voters did not vote due to fear of intimidation, attack, molestation, kidnapping, and even killing perpetuated by political thugs who enjoyed the support of frustrated politicians. For instance, after the accreditation, 750,019 voters failed to vote due to certain reasons, mostly security issues across the country (Situation Room, 2019; European Union, 2019). Thus, political thuggery fundamentally succeeded in creating fear in the minds of the majority of voters, which deterred them from exercising their franchise. This also caused a waste of money (out of state resources) and created voter apathy across the country during the 2019 general election in Nigeria.

The outcome of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria was formally and informally protested and rejected due to violence and other anomalies by the election stakeholders, including candidates, INEC, political parties, voters, observers, and media reporters. Formal rejection entailed channelling petitions to the courts of law for different tribunal committees across the country. From the commencement of the election to the announcement of the result, there were 1,701 petitions recorded, including 811 cases filed with tribunal committees after the 2019 general elections, while 890 petitions were surrounded by pre-election cases (KDI, 2019). A number of votes and elections were cancelled by INEC, and court judgements and re-runs or returns of elections were announced for other dates across the country. The informal rejections were declared via verbal comments, on social and traditional media by supporters of different political parties who disputed the election result or winner declared across the country. Equally, reports from independent observers like the

European Union, Human Rights Watch, the CLEEN Foundation, the International Republic Institute and the National Democratic Institute, Situation Room, the Kimpact Development Initiative, and media reporters uncovered and cited a number of malpractices and riggings perpetuated by political thugs and frustrated politicians, which in one way or another flawed the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Election results, votes, and sometimes the entire election at a given place were cancelled while others were postponed to other dates by INEC or the court, mainly due to violence that arose from the rigging strategies employed by frustrated politicians and political thugs. Excessive cancellations weakened the credibility of the election all over the country, which resulted in the cancellation of 2,497,181 votes that affected 3,519 polling units across Nigeria (Situation Room, 2019). Subsequently, the total of 95 seats were declared inconclusive, and the return or re-run of elections thereafter was announced by INEC and a court order. These elections included four (4) Area Councils in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja; forty-one (41) seats for members of the State House of Assembly; six (6) gubernatorial elections in Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Kano, Plateau, and Sokoto states; 35 seats for the members of the House of Representatives elections in Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Cross River, Gombe, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Kogi, Lagos, Niger, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, and Sokoto states; and nine (9) seats for the Senatorial Districts elections of the Abia South, Bauchi South, Imo West and North, Kogi East, Ondo South, Plateau South, and Rivers East and West senatorial zones (INEC, 2019; Situation Room, 2019; Legit, 2019).

It is important to note that, due to political thuggery, the 2019 general elections in Nigeria were negatively affected by the high cost of electoral expenditure on the part

of INEC, candidates, and political parties. This was exacerbated by the activities of political thugs and frustrated politicians who desperately desired to win elections at all costs, which led the majority of political parties, including APC and PDP, to exceed their official limit for campaign expenditure. More often than not, APC, PDP, and other political parties failed to submit their financial audit reports to INEC (Daily Trust, 2022; Punch, 2022; Sule et al., 2021). For instance, INEC alone spent the sum of N188,925,184,916, equivalent to \$524,185,484.16, and security officials were allotted the sum of 53.2 billion Naira (\$146.6) to ensure peaceful conduct of elections, yet the political environment witnessed deadly attacks and destruction perpetuated by political thugs and frustrated politicians (Abiola, 2019; European Union, 2019). Similarly, though exact details of all expenditures incurred by the two major political parties were difficult to reveal, APC and PDP spent beyond the one billion Naira (N1,000,000,000.00) as the official limit of expenditure, as the Commission (INEC) monitored. INEC further reported that APC and PDP spent not less than 4.6 billion and 3.3 billion Naira, respectively, which was linked to few expenditures on billboards, print and electronic media advertisements, and coverage of programmes (Situation Room, 2019; Punch, 2022).

Political thuggery increased insecurity during and after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Shortly after elections, political thuggery provided the foundation for excessive criminalities in the provision of membership recruitment and launching deadly attacks, especially when politicians abandoned their political thugs and were no longer getting support from godfathers. This is because of the inability or reluctance of the Nigerian security agencies to tackle political thuggery at its nascent stage. However, the political thugs metamorphosed from small groups of criminals with politically related attacks during elections to the bigger group of criminals with

specialised attacks. They included bandits, Niger Delta militants, Independent People of Biafra and *Boko Haram* terrorists. The groups specialised in kidnapping, cattle rustling, armed robbery, cybercrime, militancy, rebellion, secessionist agitation, insurgency, and terrorism not only within the country but also affecting neighbouring countries like Chad, Cameroun, and the Niger Republic.

Furthermore, political thuggery increased the rate of crimes with the proliferation of small and light weapons across the country after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, which formed an integral national security threat. Political thugs possessed small and light weapons that helped them facilitate attacks on specific targets, particularly of kidnapping, robbery, cattle rustling, militancy, oil theft, and other forms of vices, compounding insecurity and national security challenges. More often than not, political thugs routinely used hard drugs in order to be ruthless during attacks on their targets. The drugs included cannabis, opioids (largely tramadol, morphine, and codeine), and cough syrups like dextromethorphan and codeine. The Director General of the National Drugs and Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), stated that more than 90 percent of all criminalities in Nigeria that include kidnapping, insurgency, banditry, rape, and others are linked to drug abuse, and nobody in his real sense will take arms and weapons to attack others (Marwa, 2021). For instance, criminal attacks increased from 1,549 incidences in 2019 to 1,868 incidences in 2020 and 2,284 incidents in 2021.

Consequently, political thuggery eroded public confidence in the conduct of the electoral processes amongst citizens in directed at the government and the election management bodies. Trust in the capacity of the security agencies in ensuring a free, fair, and credible election in Nigeria has also waned. Subsequently, it undermined democratic principles, governance, and sustainability by jeopardizing the will of the

majority against the vested interests of a few individuals who created violent situations that led to fear, frustration, and insecurity across the country. The 2019 general elections was 'far from being credible'. Beyond any doubt, political thuggery has obstructed the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, for which the outcome of the election result was condemned or even rejected (which included verbal, media statements, reports, petitions to tribunal committees, and protests) not only by the voters, candidates, political parties, election observers, media reporters, analysts, but also by the Independent National Electoral Commission and Court Order through cancellations, suspensions, and postponements of partial or full elections in different parts of the country.

Perhaps, the genesis of political thuggery is primarily frustration and aggression and desperation which eventually coupled with the failure of the security and authorities concerned to tackle it thereafter degenerated to bigger security threats in Nigeria. After the 2019 general elections in the country, the authorities concerned failed to tackle the issue of political thuggery which gradually accelerated banditry, Boko-haram terrorism, Niger Delta militancy, IPOB and other security threats. This is what Broken Window Theory postulated that when a minor security threat is left unresolved, it will move to a big threat (Abdullahi et al, 2016). Many political thugs were abandoned by frustrated and desperate politicians who were believed to have joined bigger criminal groups. Therefore, political thuggery contributed to general insecurity after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria through formations and recruitment into criminal groups like *Boko-Haram*, bandits, Niger Delta militants, IPOB and other groups of criminals.

7.4 Recommendations

The study proffered recommendations in order to improve future elections and national security by ensuring free, fair, and credible elections in Nigeria, as follows:

- a) That the 2010 Electoral Act should be further amended to holistically address political thuggery and its perpetrators or sponsors. This should focus on punishing the perpetrators of political thuggery, such as political thugs and their supporters involved in creating a violent political environment through attacks and destructions across the country. For instance, the law should clearly state that any politician, candidate, or political party found guilty of instigating or causing attack or destruction in relation to elections is banned from participating in elections henceforth.
- b) Smart card reader machines should be improved to allow not only the accreditation of voters but also the electronic transmission of election results to the INEC National Headquarters in Abuja, where votes and results are collated and stored. During voting, the machine should ensure electronic voting and enable printing of hardcopy ballot papers that are thump-printed by the voter; the voter should thereafter put the printed ballot paper into the ballot box for verification purposes when the need arises. In so doing, cyber security should always be improved with updates to avoid attacks by cyber criminals.
- c) The independence of INEC should be respected by the political leaders, especially incumbent politicians, in terms of appointments, and the Commission should be empowered with the capacity to print, transport, and deliver election materials and equipment to all areas without reliance on contracting third parties or private parties like the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NUTRW) or private companies for the printing and supply

of sensitive and insensitive election materials during future elections. Where an ad hoc staff is appointed by INEC during an election, such person should sign a document of oath to ensure proper prosecution if the accused is found guilty. Similarly, where political parties fail to submit financial audit reports, the Commission should bar the party from participating in future elections.

- d) Law enforcement agencies should desist from partisan politics, and when an officer is found guilty, a special legal unit for election purposes, handling election matters, should be established to prosecute such an officer immediately. The judgement should be televised to the general public as evidence of neutrality and transparency.
- e) The independence of the judiciary should be respected, and the party in power should not interfere with the delivery of judgement. Any person or political party found guilty of election-related violence should be banned from fielding a candidate in that particular elective position, and if it is a candidate, the person should be banned from participating in elections and even supporting the course of politics in the future.
- f) The inconclusive provision, particularly where it allows the re-run of elections due to violence, should be amended to provide that only natural disasters are considered, and where violence erupted, the election stands cancelled, winners should be declared, and perpetrators should be prosecuted accordingly.
- g) The National Orientation Agency should be up and doing to ensure public awareness towards good governance, national cohesion, patriotism, and political re-orientation for voters, leaders, and political parties during and after elections. This might involve a holistic effort, particularly involving the

services of religious leaders and traditional rulers to deliver sermons, preach, and provide counselling in various communities.

- h) The government should form effective community-based security committees with membership to include all security agencies, traditional rulers, security analysts, public figures, government officials, and representatives of residential areas across all villages, wards, districts, local governments, and state levels in Nigeria. The committee should, from parts of its responsibilities, fetch out, monitor, and report to appropriate authorities any pre-emptive threat to national security, perceived criminal, security danger, or suspicious movements and organisations within every community in the country.
- i) The government should ensure the creation of skills and training centres to engage youth in value creation, particularly in areas of agriculture, artisanship, and fabrication, with the help of skills in modern information, communication, and technology, so that wealth creation becomes a major priority through employment opportunities.

REFERENCES

- Abdulai, A. (2020). Electoral violence and party vigilantism in Ghana: Explaining the persistence of an institutionalized menace. *African Studies Review*, 63(4), 701-723. <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2020.34>
- Abdulkadir A. & James A. (2018). State Intervention as a Panacea for Youth Restiveness in Nigeria: Lessons and Challenges from Gombe, *African Journal of Management*. 3(3) 101-117 <https://saheljournalonline.org.ng>
- Abdullahi, A. A., Seedat-Khan, M., & Abdulrahman, S. O. (2016). A review of youth violence theories: developing interventions to promote sustainable peace in Ilorin, Nigeria. *African Sociological Review/Revue Africaine de Sociologie*, 20(2), 40-60. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/asr/article>
- Abiola O. (2019). That Nigeria's 2019 General Election is still seen as an outlier – for good or bad – amongst the six general elections conducted in the Fourth Republic of the nation is not a misplaced misgiving, *the Cable Newspaper*, <https://www.thecable.ng>
- Aboh, S. & Odeh, B. (2021). Discourse structures of hate discourses in Nigeria. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics*, 10(1), 276–304, <https://gjl.laghana.org>
- Aboyade, A. S. (2018). “States’ Attitudes to International Boundaries and Africa’s Challenging Integration: CUES from Pre-1945 Europe”. *Journal of International Studies*. 14(1), 1-21. <https://e-journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/j>
- Abubakar U. A, Ahmed W. D. & Babayo S. (2016). Effect of Political Thuggery on Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria, *Sahel Analyst: Journal of Management Sciences*, 14(3) pp.76-89, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria. www.sajmsfmsunimaid.com
- Abubakar U. A., Rabiou B. H., Abdulkadir A. & Ramatu B. (2018). Political Thuggery and Violence in Gombe of Nigeria: An Examination of Kalare Phenomenon, *Kashere Journal of Humanities, Management and Social Sciences*, 2(1), p147-160, <https://journals.fukashere.edu.ng>
- ACLED (2022). Political Violence during Brazil’s 2022 General Elections, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, <https://acleddata.com/2022/10/17/>
- ACLED (2022a). Kenya’s Political Violence Landscape in the Lead-Up to the 2022 Elections, <https://acleddata.com/2022/08/09/kenyas>
- ACLED (2022a). Kenya’s Political Violence Landscape in the Lead-Up to the 2022 Elections, <https://acleddata.com/2022/08/09/kenyas>
- Adam P. (2018). *Why bother with elections?* John Wiley & Sons. www.researchgate.net

- Adeleke G. F. (2016). Political Thuggery and Voters' Turnout in Fourth Republic's General Elections in Southwestern, Nigeria, *African Journal for the Psychological Study of Social Issues*, 19 (3), p47-60, www.researchgate.com.
- Afolabi, T. (2021). Youth, political violence, and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. *African Journal of Democracy and Development*, 11(2), 55–72.
- Africanews (2019). A quick look at what's at stake in Nigeria's 2019 General Elections. <https://www.africanews.com/2019/01/28/>
- Agba M. S, Coker M. A & Ogaboh (2010). Political Thuggery and Democratic Dividends in Nigeria, *International Journal of Public Administration*, 33(4), 192-199, <https://doi:10.1080/0190069090338036>
- Agbaga, A. (2006). Democracy and Governance Assessment of Nigeria. <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>
- Agri G. E & Agri E. M (2020). Insecurity, conflict and socio-economic development in Nigeria, *SOCIALSCI Journal*, 8 (2020), <https://purkh.com/index.php/tosocial>
- Ahmad, U. (2019). An evaluation of rehabilitation of Kalare gangsters in Gombe Metropolis, Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Management Review*, 14(1), 231 243. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ijdmr/article>
- Alemika, E. E. O. (2011). *Electoral security and democratic consolidation in Nigeria*. CLEEN Foundation.
- Ali A. S. (2014). Drug Abuse and Political Thuggery among the Youth in Kano Metropolis: A Modern Civilization or Resource Mismanagement? *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(4), p.76-84, www.iiste.org.
- Aliyu, A. U. (2018). The causes and effect of political thuggery in Nigeria. *GPH International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 1(12), 22 34.
- Alphonsus O. N. (2015). Political Thuggery: A Threat to Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria, *Asian Journal of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities*, 3(2), ISSN 2311-3782, p25-34, <http://www.multidisciplinaryjournals.com>
- Alusala, M. (2016). *Lessons from small arms and weapons control initiatives in Africa*. BICC Working Paper, <https://www.ssoar.info>
- Amnesty International. (2018). *Bangladesh: Violent crackdown on opposition ahead of elections*. Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/>
- Arise A. (2013). Politics Is Nigeria's Most Lucrative Business, interview in the Channel Television, <https://www.channelstv.com/2013/09/25/politics>
- Aristotle I. J, Maduawuchi E., & Oyeinfie E. J (2012). Hard drug use among youths and cult violence in Yenagoa metropolis, Bayelsa State, *International Journal of Integrated Education*, 4(5), DOI: 10.31149/ijie.v4i5.1700

- Arne T. (2019). "The Tipp-Ex election": Widespread unrest after the 2019 elections in Malawi, <https://www.cmi.no/publications/7252>
- Ashcroft, C. (2021). *Violence and Power in the Thought of Hannah Arendt*. University of Pennsylvania Press, [doi/10.9783/978081229794](https://doi.org/10.9783/978081229794)
- Atienza, M. E. (2020). Election-related violence and reforms in the Philippines. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 5(2), 134–150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2057891119881569>
- Austin O. O. (2015). Arresting Political Thuggery and Other Vices among Social Miscreants in Lagos State, Nigeria for Sustainable Development, *Net Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(3), 70-76, www.goggle.com
- Ayegba, U. S. (2015). Unemployment and poverty as sources and consequence of insecurity in Nigeria: The Boko Haram insurgency revisited. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 9(3), 90-99. <https://academicjournals.org/journal/>
- Ayoade, J. A. (2019). Civic education and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. *Journal of Political Studies*, 6(2), 101–118.
- Bashir, M. U., Ali, K. B., & Siedelson, L. S. (2017). Youth and Transformation to Political violence in North Eastern Nigeria. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/234675920>
- Battigalli, P., Dufwenberg, M., & Smith, A. (2019). Frustration, aggression, and anger in leader-follower games. *Games and Economic Behaviour*, 117, 15-39, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/games-and-economic-behaviour>
- Bello Y. (2020). There Will Be Safety When Nigerian Politicians Stop Using Thugs and Criminals, an Interview with Chanel Television, December 23rd 2020, <https://www.channelstv.com/2020/12/23/>
- Berkowitz, L. (1989). Frustration–aggression hypothesis: Examination and reformulation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 106(1), 59–73.
- Bratton, M., & Masunungure, E. (2011). The anatomy of political predation: Leaders, elites and coalitions in Zimbabwe, 1980–2010. *Developmental Leadership Program Research Paper*, 9. <https://www.dlprog.org/>
- Bratton, W., & Kelling, G. (2006). There are no cracks in the broken windows. *National Review Online*. <http://www.nationalreview.com/>
- Braun, C. & Clarke, P. (2013) *Qualitative Research Method for Social Science*. New Delhi: Pearson Education Inc.
- Breuer, J., & Elson, M. (2017). Frustration-Aggression Theory, In Sturmeijer P. (ed. 2017), *The Wiley Handbook of Violence and Aggression* (pp. 1-12). Chichester: Wiley Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119057574.whbva040>

- Brink H.I.L. (1993). Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research, Conference Paper, delivered at SA Society of Nurse Researchers' Workshop-RAU 19 March 1993
- Business Day (2023). Police arrest security personnel for robbery, car snatching, <https://businessday.ng/news/article/police-arrest-security-personnel->
- Carlos S. & Amílcar P. (2019). The Effect of Electoral Violence on Electoral Participation in Africa, *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos*, <https://doi.org/10.4000/>
- CDD (2019). How security operatives, INEC officials, compromised 2019 election results, report by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/349513->
- Channels (2019). Katsina election tribunal dismisses petition against governor Masari, <https://www.channelstv.com/2019/09/21/katsina-election-tribunal>
- Chatham House. (2024). *Nigeria's democracy at a crossroads: Electoral reforms and political accountability*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs. <https://www.chathamhouse.org>
- Cheeseman, N., Lynch, G., & Willis, J. (2018). Digital dilemmas: The unintended consequences of election technology. *Democratization*, 25(8), 1397–1418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2018.1470165>
- Clayton B (2021). Election violence spiked worldwide in 2020 – will this year be better? <https://theconversation.com/election-violence-spiked-worldwide>
- CLEEN Foundation (2019). Report on the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria <https://cleen.org/2019/10/23/public-presentation-of-the-report-of-2019>
- CLEEN Foundation. (2023). *Security threat assessment for Nigeria's 2023 general elections*. Lagos: CLEEN Foundation. <https://cleen.org>
- CMEV (2020). The 2019 Sri Lankan Presidential Election: Election Observation Report by the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV), <http://www.cmev.org/>, <https://anfrel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/>
- Collins English Dictionary (2023). Election credibility, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/election/credibility>
- Creswell, J.W. (2014) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches*. California: Sage Publication.
- Daily Post (2019). Buhari VS Atiku: Balarabe Musa discloses billions APC, PDP will spend to win presidency, *Daily Post* <https://dailypost.ng/2019/01/27/buhari-vs-atiku-balarabe-musa-discloses-billions-apc-pdp-ll-spend-win-presidency>
- Daily Post (2021). Policeman arrested for armed robbery in Port Harcourt, *Daily Post* <https://dailypost.ng/2021/01/18/policeman-arrested-for-armed-robbery>

- Daily Trust (2019). Kano Governorship Poll Inconclusive, Says INEC, *Daily Trust*, <https://dailytrust.com/kano-governorship-poll-inconclusive-says-inec/>.
- Daily Trust (2022). APC, PDP, Others yet to submit 2019 election expense reports, INEC, *Daily Trust* <https://dailytrust.com/apc-pdp-others-yet-to-submit-2019/>
- Daily Trust (2022a). Clamp down on drug abuse will help address insecurity in Nigeria, *Daily Trust*, <https://dailytrust.com/clamp-down-on-drug-abuse-will-help-address-insecurity-in-nigeria>
- Dansadau S. (2021). Dansadau: Zamfara elders accuse security agencies of releasing arrested bandits, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/502803>
- Deutsche Welle (2019). Violence and Fraud in Nigeria's Gubernatorial Elections, March 27th 2019, www.dw.com
- Durkin, A. (2019). *Global arms trade highest since end of cold war*. Hinrich Foundation. <https://tradevistas.org/global-arms-trade-highest-since-end-war/>.
- Eloma, U. T., Ugwumba, N. F. C., & Abang, E. O. (2014). "Effect of proliferation of small arms and light weapons on the development of Niger-delta region of Nigeria". *Developing Country Studies*, 4(10), 60-72.
- Emma, O. A., & Aloysius, S. I. (2017). Political and electoral violence in Nigeria: a case of 2015 general election in Kogi and Bayelsa state of Nigeria. *Indian Journal of Economics and Development*, 5(12), 1-10. <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>
- Esponda, I., & Poulsen, O. (2019). Electoral violence and the political economy of elections: Evidence from Mexico. *Journal of Development Economics*, 137, 52–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2018.11.005>
- European Union (2019). Report of the Election Observation Mission in Nigeria: the 2019 General Elections, www.eumission.org
- European Union (2019a). Tripartite Elections: Final Report of the European Union Election Observation Mission, MALAWI 2019, <https://www.eods.eu/library/EU%20EOM%20MWI%202019%20FR.pdf>
- European Union (2022). Final report of the 2022 general elections in Kenya by the European Union Election Observation Mission, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/EU_EOM_Kenya
- Ezeibe, C. (2021). Hate Speech and Election Violence in Nigeria. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 56 (4), 919-935. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909620951208>
- Ezemenaka, K. E. (2021). Youth Violence and Human Security in Nigeria. *Social Sciences* 10: 267. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10070267>
- Financial Times (2020). Malawi court overturns 2019 presidential election result, <https://www.ft.com/content/fbd09b8e-46c2-11ea-aeb3-955839e06441>

- Frazer, E., & Hutchings, K. (2020). *Violence and political theory*. John Wiley & Sons.
<https://scholar.google.com>
- Freedom House. (2019). *Freedom in the World 2019 – Mexico*. Freedom House.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/mexico/freedom-world/2019>
- Gault, M. & Silver, E. (2008). Spuriousness or mediation? Broken windows according to Sampson and Raudenbush (1999). *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 36, 240-243,
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/journal-of-criminal-justice>
- Gbenemene K (2019). Illicit Drug Abuse and Criminal Behaviour among Adolescent: The Rivers State Experience, *Journal of Research and Opinion*, 6 (10),
DOI:10.15520/jro.v6i10.29
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(4), 597-606.
<http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol8/iss4/6>
- Green Politics (2005). Political Thuggery and Violence in Nigeria: The Bane of Women Participation in Politics, *Green Politics Special Report*, 1270601,
www.fotosearch.com
- Halliru, T. (2012). Ethno-religious conflicts and political instability in Nigeria: When peace took flight. *Asian journal of management sciences and education*, 1(1), 39-51. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1074.6268>
- Höglund, K. (2009). Electoral violence in conflict-ridden societies: concepts, causes, and consequences, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21(3): 412-427.
<https://google.com>
- Horgan, J. G., & Horgan, J. (2004). *The psychology of terrorism*. Routledge.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203496961/>
- HRW (2020). Malawi: Ensure Free, Fair, Safe Elections, Human Right Watch report,
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/03/>
- Human Right Watch (2019). Nigeria: Widespread Violence Ushers in President's New Term <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/10/>
- Ibeanu, O. (2007). Elections and the paradox of democratic governance in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 1(2), 1–13.
- Ibietan, J., & Ajayi, O. O. (2015). The Governing Elite and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: An Appraisal of the Fourth Republic. *Journal of Human and Social Science Research*, 6(1), 14-21. <http://eprints.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/3756/>
- Ibrahim I. A. (2022). *Skills Rather than Just Degrees*, University Press, Ibadan.
- ICG (2019). International Crisis Group: Nigeria's 2019 Elections-Six States to Watch,
<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/268-nigerias-2019>
- ICIR (2019). International Centre for Investigative Reporters: Meet CP Wakili Mohammed Kano Police Boss who Arrested Deputy Governor to Prevent Rigging, <https://www.icirigeria.org/meet-cp-wakili-mohammed-kano/>

- Idris S, Che Mohd A. Y. & Shazwanis B. S. (2023). Bandits' Struggle for Survival and its Humanitarian Impacts in Zamfara State, Nigeria, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9:1, 2241714, DOI: 10.1080/23311886.2023.2241714, <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/oass20>
- IFES (2019). Elections in Nigeria: 2019 General Elections, Africa. International Foundation for Electoral Systems, www.IFES.org
- Iheanacho, E.N. (2015). Electoral Violence in Nigeria: A Hindrance to Democratic Stability. *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences*. 8(2), pp.258-265. <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>
- Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). (2022). *Guidelines for electronic transmission and collation of results*. Abuja: INEC. <https://www.inecnigeria.org>
- Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). (2023). *Report on the 2023 general elections*. Abuja: INEC. <https://www.inecnigeria.org>
- INEC (2019). Report of the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria, www.inecnigeria.org
- International Crisis Group. (2022). *Mitigating election violence risks in Nigeria*. Brussels: ICG. <https://www.crisisgroup.org>
- International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) (2019). IRI/NDI Nigeria International Election Observation Mission Final Report. info@iri.org, <http://www.ndi.org/contact>
- Inyang, B. (2018). Militancy and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. *African Research Review*, 12(4), 65-76. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/afrrrev/article/view/179873/169222>
- Iyekekpolo, W. O. (2018). Political elites and the rise of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 32(4), 749-767. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1400431>, www.tandfonline.com
- Ja'e, Y. H., & Lukman, B. (2021). Effects of Poverty on 'Yan Kalare' Thuggery in Gombe Local Government Area, Gombe State (2007-2015). *KIU Journal of Humanities*, 6(1), 31-37. <https://www.ijhumas.com/ojs/index.php/kiuhums/article/download/1168/103>
- Joseph I. (2022). Weak laws frustrating war against illicit drugs in Northeastern Nigeria, <https://humanglemedia.com/weak-laws-frustrating-war-against>
- Joshua, S. (2013). Politics, Poverty and Violent Conflicts: Exploring Their Complex Nexus in Nigeria. *Politics*, 3(7). <https://www.academia.edu/download/517630>
- Kabiru, B. I, Adlina A. H. & Ku Hasnita K. S. (2015). The Implications of Thuggery as a Form of Political Violence in Bauchi, Nigeria, *Elixir International Journal: Social Studies* 81(2015), p31447 31452, www.elixirpublishers.com
- KDI (2019). Administration of Electoral Justice in Nigeria: Analysis of election petition tribunal for the 2019 general elections, Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI) <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>
- Keane, J. (2004). *Violence and democracy*. Cambridge University Press. <https://books.google.com/books>

- Kevin H. & Tony B. (2018). The role of ideology in politics and society, in the Understanding political ideas and movements, <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526137951.00011>
- Kifordu, H. A. (2011). Ethnic politics, political elite, and regime change in Nigeria. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 11(3), 427-450. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10>
- Kinge, R. F. (2015). State, youths and electoral violence in North Eastern Nigeria: implications for national security. <http://ilimijournal.com>
- Krejcie & Morgan (1970). Determining Sample Size for Research Activities, *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, #30, pp. 607-610).
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. <https://us.sagepub.com/>
- Leadership (2022). 2 Policemen Arrested Over Phone Calls with Escaped Terrorists, *Leadership* <https://leadership.ng/2-policemen-arrested-over-phone-calls/>
- Legit (2019). List elected candidates 2019 house representatives election, *Legit* <https://www.legit.ng/1227183-list-elected-candidates-2019-house>
- Liam A. (2022). Violence reached an unprecedented level in Brazil's 2022 election: survey, <https://globalvoices.org/2022/12/15/violence-reached-an>
- Lijphart A (1994). *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945-1990*. New York, Oxford University Press
- Magar, E. (2019). Electoral integrity and specialized electoral crimes prosecution in Mexico. *Mexican Law Review*, 11(2), 29–55. <https://doi.org/10.22201/ijj.24485306e.2019.2.13691>
- Malam, B. (2014). "Small arms and light weapons proliferations and its implications for West African regional security". *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(8), 260-269. www.iosrjournals.org
- Maru B. (2021). Nigerian soldier arrested supplying ammunition, uniforms to bandits Zamfara Govt <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/nwest/446971-just-in-nigerian-soldier-arrested-supplying-ammunition-uniforms-to-bandits>
- Marwa: Drug abuse linked to 90% of crime in Nigeria, in an interview with the Cable Newspaper, <https://www.thecable.ng/marwa-drug-abuse-to-blame-for-90->
- May O. E. (2016). Political thuggery and the crisis of confidence among youths in Nigeria, *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 21(1) www.iosrjournals.org
- Mercy Corps (2022). Drug abuse as a conflict accelerant in Northcentral Nigeria, <https://nigeria.mercycorps.org/blog/drug-abuse-conflict->
- Michael S. A. (2011). Political Thuggery and Democratic Dividends in Nigeria: An Empirical Study. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 1 (1), 58-65. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.hess.1927024020110101.057M>
- Mohammed H. S. (2015). *Political thuggery and elections in Nigeria: A Case Study of the 2011 General Elections in Bauchi State*, A Dissertation Submitted

for the requirement of Award of Master Degree of Humana Science in Political Science, Kulliyah of Revealed Islamic Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia.

- Mohammed H. S. (2015). Political Thuggery: A Threat to Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria, *Asian Journal of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities*, 3(2), ISSN 2311 3782, p25-34.
- Moliki, A. O. (2021). Political Party Elite and Election-Related Violence in Nigeria: The Nexus and Implications for Democracy and Governance, *Simulacra*, 4(1), p101–114, <https://doi.org/10.21107/sml.v4i1.10520>
- Monday, O. S. (2010). Elite recruitment and political stability in the Nigerian Fourth Republic. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 24(2), 129-133. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080>
- Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. <https://methods.sagepub.com>
- Moses, J. (2017). “Small arms and light weapons proliferation in the 21st century: The Nigerian case”. In *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 6(11), 1638-1652.
- Mukhtar, S., Che Rose, R. A., Choy, L. K., & Bibi-Farouk, A. U. I. (2018). “Boko Haram and the geopolitics of force migration in Nigeria”. *Journal of International Studies*, 14(1), 51-63. <https://e-journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/j>
- National Assembly of Nigeria. (2025). *Bill for an Act to establish the Electoral Offences Tribunal*. Abuja: National Assembly Press. <https://nass.gov.ng>
- Naziru H. (2020). Youth Violence and Public Safety in Nigeria: A Study of Sara-Suka Gang in Bauchi Local Government Area, Bauchi State, 2009-2015, <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>
- Newsday (2020). Buhari Nominates Partisan Aide as INEC Commissioner, *Newsday*, <https://www.com.ng/buhari-nominates-partisan-aide-as-inec-commissioner>
- Nicholas C. and Brian K. (2018), *How to Rig an Election*, Yale University Press, Padstow, Cornwall UK.
- NLC (2021). On the front lines of today’s cities: trauma, challenges and solutions, a report of National League of Cities, United States, <https://www.nlc.org/resource/on-the-frontlines-of-todays-cities-trauma>
- Nowak, M., & Gsell, A. (2018). *Handmade and deadly craft production of small arms in Nigeria*. Briefing Paper, Small Arms Survey. German Cooperation.
- NST (2023). Nigeria Security Tracker, Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.or/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>
- Nwankwo, C. (2020). Electoral violence and democratic legitimacy in Nigeria: A case study of the 2019 elections. *Journal of African Political Studies*, 8(1), 77–95.
- Nwozor, A., Ajakaiye, O. O., Okidu, O., Olanrewaju, A., & Afolabi, O. (2022). Social Media in Politics: Interrogating Electorate-Driven Hate Speech in Nigeria's 2019 Presidential Campaigns. *JeDEM-eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government*, 14(1), 104-129. <https://jedem.org/index.php/jedem/article/view>

- Obi, C. I. (2004). Nigeria: Democracy on trial. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet. <https://www.divaportal.org/smash/get/diva2:240343/FULLTEXT02>
- Obi, C. I. (2011). Taking back our democracy? The trials and travails of Nigerian elections since 1999. *Democratization*, 18(2), 366-387. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs>
- Obiam S. C. (2021). The Nigerian State and Electoral Violence: An Analysis of the 2019 Presidential General Election in Nigeria, *Journal of Humanities And Social Science*, 26(3), p53-61, www.iosrjournals.org
- Odigwe, D. A. (2015). Nigerian political parties and internal democracy. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 4(2), 65-78. <https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC-52d808d96>
- Ogundiwin, A. O., Akpuh, C. C., & Adeleye, M. A. (2021). A Normative Theoretical Discourse of Elite Self-Recruitment in Nigeria, 1960-2019. *KIU Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(3), 115-123. <https://www.ijhumas.com/ojs/index.php/kiuj>
- Ohene-Asare, L. S., Aklavon, F., Mossou, T., & Ikelegbe, U. (2014). *Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in West Africa: Routes between Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria*. Abuja: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Ojobo O. A. (2019). Nigeria's 2019 Elections: So Many Choices, So Difficult to Choose. http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/contenido?
- Ojukwu, C. C., & Shopeju, J. O. (2010). Elite corruption and the culture of primitive accumulation in 21st century Nigeria. *International journal of peace and development studies*, 1(2), 15-24. <https://academicjournals.org/journal/IJPDS>
- Ojukwu, U. G., Mazi Mbah, C. C. & Maduekwe, V.C (2019). Elections and Democratic Consolidation: A Study of 2019 General Elections in Nigeria, *Direct Research Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies*, 6(4), p53 64, doi:<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3227245>
- Okoli, A. C., & Okpaleke, F. N. (2014). Curbing electoral violence in Nigeria: The imperative of political education. *African Research Review*, 8(2), 1–13.
- Olamide, S. A., & Emmanuel, A. T. (2018). “Proliferation of small arms and light weapons: The bane of human security in Nigeria”. *International Journal of Research Publication*, 3(1), 1-12.
- Olaoluwa B. A. O. (2018). Reducing Nigerian Youths Involvement in Electoral Violence: An Action Research Approach, Durban University of Technology, <https://scholar.google.com/scholar>
- Olarinmoye, O. O. (2008). Godfathers, political parties and electoral corruption in Nigeria. *African Journal of political science and international relations*, 2(4), 066-073. <https://academicjournals.org/journal/AJPSIR/article-abstract/>
- Olayiwola, S. S. (2017). “Proliferation of small arms and security challenges in Nigeria”. *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies*, 3(3), 33-38.
- Olu A. (2020). Observers Report and the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria: A Focus on Electoral Violence and Lessons for Future Elections, *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration*, 8(4), p21 32, ISSN: 2054-6335(Print)

- Olu-Adeyemi, L. (2017). Deprivation, frustration and aggression: an interrogation of Fulani herdsman terror in Nigeria. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 4(15). <https://doi:10.14738/assrj.415.3501>
- Oluwabunmi V. J & Goodnews O. (2021). Media Framing and Electoral Violence in NigeriaFourth Republic. *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS)*, 4(2), 307 – 321. <https://www.researchgate.net>
- Omede, A. J., & Bakare, A. R. (2014). The impact of political education on Nigeria's democratic stability. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(10), 493–500.
- Omenma, J. T. (2019). Courts' Involvement in the Electoral Process and Their Impact on Improving Election Quality in Nigeria. *Politeia* (02568845), 38(1). <https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.25159/2663-6689/4377>
- Omilusi, M. (2016). Electoral violence, political instability and the role of the police: Nigeria in perspective. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 10(3), 23–32.
- Omodia, S. M., & Egwemi, V. (2011). Political participation and democratic consolidation in Nigeria: A retrospective analysis. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research*, 3(1), 8–14.
- Omomia, A. O. (2015). Arresting political thuggery and other vices among social miscreants in Lagos State, Nigeria for sustainable development. *Net Journal of Social Sciences*, 3 (3), 70-76. <http://www.netjournals.org/pdf/NJSS/2015/3/15>
- Onah, E.I. (2015). Boko Haram insurgency and the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria. *Journal of International Studies*. 11, 15-28.
- Onapajo H & Bablola D. (2020). Nigeria's 2019 General Elections-a shattered hope, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 109(4), 363-367, <https://doi:10.1080/00358533.2020.1788765>
- Onimisi, T. (2019). Appraisal of the 2019 post-electoral violence in Nigeria. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(3), 107–113. <https://www.researchgate.net>
- Onyishi, A. E. (2018). Political elites in Nigeria and the politics of democratization in lieu of democratization of politics: implication for social integration and sustainable development. *Journal of Security Studies and Global Politics*, 3(2), 147-155.
- Osaghae, E. E. (2021). Ethnicity and democracy in Africa: Intervening variables and possibilities for positive change. *African Studies Review*, 64(3), 645–668. <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.67>
- Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT). (2018). *Electoral violence and security in Pakistan's 2018 elections*. PILDAT. <https://pildat.org>
- Pal, S. (2019). Electronic voting machines in India: Trust, transparency, and the VVPAT debate. *Election Law Journal*, 18(2), 173–189. <https://doi.org/10.1089/elj.2019.0523>

- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. <https://us.sagepub.com/>
- Paul Y. M. (2013). The Implications of Political Thuggery on Socio Economic and Political Development of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria, *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 3(10), 2090-2103. www.researchgate.com
- People Gazette (2021). 2019 election: documents show Atiku paid \$16.5 million to secure US visa, destroy Buhari campaign, <https://gazettenggr.com/2019-election-documents-show-atiku-paid-16-5-million-to-secure-us-visa-destroy-buhari-campaign/>
- Pippa N, Richard W. F, and Ferran-Martínez I C (2015). *Contentious Elections: from Ballots to Barricades*, Routledge, the Taylor & Francis Group, New York. <https://scholar.google.com>
- Pippa N. (2017). *Why American elections are flawed: and how to fix them*, Cornell University Press, New York
- Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC). (2022). *Analysis of the Electoral Act 2022*. Abuja: PLAC. <https://placng.org>
- Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC). (2022). *Analysis of the Electoral Act 2022*. Abuja: PLAC. <https://placng.org>
- Premium Times (2019a). Supplementary Elections: Police Deploy Five DIGs, other Senior Officers, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/321573-supplementary-elections-police-deploy-five-digs-other-senior-officials>
- Premium Times (2019c). Nigeria's 2019 elections flawed, poorly managed: Civil society organisations, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/343871-Nigerias-2019-elections-flawed-poorly-managed-Civil-society-organisations>
- Premium Times (2019d). INEC Records over 1689 litigations from the 2019 general elections, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/334893-inec-records-over-1689-litigations-from-the-2019-general-elections/>
- Premium Times (2019e). Atiku rejects presidential election result, unveils next step, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/316547-atiku-rejects-presidential-election-result-unveils-next-step.html>
- Premium Times (2021). PDP governors moving to APC because of partys' democratic ideals Tinibu, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/Pdp-governors-moving-to-apc-because-of-partys-democratic-ideals-tinibu>
- Premium Times, (2019). Kano Election: Thugs set PDP Governorship Candidate's House Ablaze, February 11th, 2019, www.premiumtimesng.com
- Premium Times, (2019b). EU Mission Reports Widespread Violence, Vote Buying in Kano Supplementary Elections, March 26th, 2019, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com>
- Premium Times, (2019f). Analysis: Delayed Voting, Malpractices and Other Lapses Observed in February 23 Elections, March 2nd, 2019, 27/07/2021 www.premiumtimesng.com

- Premium Times. (2023, March 2). INEC blames technical glitch for result upload delays. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com>
- Pulse (2019). 2019 Elections: Police, military say 1,119 suspects arrested, <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/2019-elections-police-military-say-1119-suspects-arrested/>
- Pulse (2023). Atiku spent \$120m on 2019 election day alone, whistle-blower, [https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/atiku-spent-\\$120m-on-2019-election-day-alone-whistle-blower/](https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/atiku-spent-$120m-on-2019-election-day-alone-whistle-blower/)
- Punch (2019). Buhari APC using state resources for election campaign says: Atiku's spokesman, <https://punchng.com/buhari-apc-using-state-resources-for-election-campaign-says-atikus-spokesman/>
- Punch (2019a). Delta election tribunal delivers ruling after petitioner seeks case transfer, <https://punchng.com/delta-election-tribunal-delivers-ruling-after-petitioner-seeks-case-transfer/>
- Punch (2022). APC, PDP Exceeded Campaign Spending Limit-INEC, <https://www.punchng.com/apc-pdp-exceeded-campaign-spending-limit-inec>
- Punch (2022a). How corruption is fuelling insecurity, <https://www.punchng.com/how-corruption-is-fuelling-insecurity/>
- Punch. (2023, March 3). INEC explains failure of IReV uploads. <https://punchng.com>
- Rachel K. (2022). The rise in political violence in the United States and damage to our democracy, a testimony: select committee to investigate the January 6th attack on the United States Capitol, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/03/31/rise-in-political-violence-in-united-states-and-damage-to-our-democracy-pub->
- Raji S. & Angelina I. O. (2019). Nigeria: Curtailing Electoral Violence through Information and Communication Technologies, *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, Issue 27, April 2019, 70-92. <https://doi:10.24193/csqr.27.5>
- Rasak, B. (2017). Political thuggery, violence and women participation in politics in Nigeria. *Political thuggery, violence and women participation in politics in Nigeria*, 8(1), 63-76. <http://eprints.lmu.edu.ng>
- Reliefweb (2019). Joint Statement on the Postponement of the 2019 Elections in Nigeria. <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/joint-statement-postponement-2019-elections>
- Research Advisor (2006). Sampling Size, (<http://research-advisors.com>)
- Rosenje, M. O., Adeniyi, Oluwatobi P. & Peju-Rosenje, T. O. (2020). Arms proliferation, security challenge and electoral violence in the 2019 Rivers State Governorship Election, *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies (AJPAS)*, 13(2), <https://www.ajpasebsu.org.ng/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Arms-Proliferation.pdf>
- Sahara Reporters (2018). Police Arrest 'PDP Members' with INEC Election Observer Tags, <https://saharareporters.com/2018/09/27/police-arrest-16-pdp-members-inec-election-observer-tags>

- Sahara Reporters (2019). Revealed: Armed robbers, murderers, employed by Governor Yahaya Bello to help Buhari/Osibanjo, APC win elections in Kogi State, <https://saharareporters.com/2019/06/24/revealed-armed-robbers-murderers-employed-governor-yahaya-bello-help-buhariosinbajo-apc>
- Sahara Reporters (2022). Nigerian Army arrests soldier selling multi-million naira ammunitions to bandits in Zamfara, <https://saharareporters.com/2022/05/12/breaking-nigerian-army-arrests-soldier-selling-multi-million-naira-ammunition-bandits>
- Sahara Reporters (2023). Nigerian Police arrest six vigilante members employed by crisis ridden Enugu State Community to fight rampaging terrorists, <https://saharareporters.com/2023/06/24/nigerian-police-arrest-six-vigilante-members-employed-crisis-ridden-enugu-state&ved=2ahUKEwjDnfulg6->
- Salihu M. & Yakubu Y. (2021). Election Violence and Voter Turnout in 2019 General Elections: What Role for Political Parties? *European Scientific Journal*, ESJ, 17(2), 137. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2021.v17n2p137>
- Schlichte K. (2009). In the Shadow of Violence: The Politics of Armed Groups, Vol.1, the Deutsche Nationabibliothek, USA, www.book.google.com
- Schraeder, P. J. (1994). Elites as Facilitators or Impediments to Political Development? Some Lessons from the "Third Wave" of Democratization in Africa. *The Journal of Developing Areas*, 29(1), 69-90. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4192413>
- Sentell B. (2018). Defections, Decamping and Cross-Carpeting: The Challenges Facing Nigerian Political Parties Ahead of the 2019 General Election, in the International Republican Institute, <https://www.iri.org/>
- SERAP (2019). SERAP seek ICC probe of APC, PDP officials over violence in Bayelsa/ Kogi elections, Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project <https://www.serapnigeria.org/2019/11/17/serap-seek-ICC-probe-of-APC-PDP-officials-over-violence-in-Bayelsa-Kogi-elections>
- Shankyula T. S. (2019). Political Thuggery and Elections in Nigeria and the law, Research Fellow, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS).
- SIPRI Year Book (2019). *Armaments, disarmament and international security*. Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI, <https://www.sipri.org>
- Siro A.A. (2014). Drug Abuse and Political Thuggery among the Youth in Kano Metropolis: A Modern Civilization or Resource Mismanagement? *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, www.iiste.org
- Situation Room (2019). Report of the Nigeria's 2019 General Elections, Nigerian Civil Society Organization: Situation Room, Website: <http://situationroom.placng.org>
- Sule B, Adamu U & Usman U (2020). The 2019 General Election in Nigeria: Examining the Issues, Challenges, Successes and Lessons for Future General Elections, *International Journal of Social Sciences Perspectives*, 6(2), pp. 100 113, <https://doi:10.33094/7.2017.2020.62.100.113>

- Sule B, Sambo U & Saragih Y, (2021). The 2019 General Election and the Transparency Question in Nigeria: Political Party Financing As the Bane of Youth Participation, *Britain International of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 37-49, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33258/biohs.v3i1.358>
- Sule B. & Sambo U. (2020). The 2019 General Election and the Politics of Inconclusive Election in Nigeria: A Review of the Affected States, *Khazanah Sosial*, 2(3), p105-124, <https://doi:10.15575/ks.v2i3.9702>, <http://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/ksT>
- Sule B. (2018). *Political Party Financing and Election Reforms in Nigeria's 2015 General Election: Issues and Impacts*, being a PhD Thesis submitted to Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)
- Sule B. (2019). The 2019 general election in Gombe State: An analysis of the voting pattern, issues, impacts and its implications, *International Journal of Social Sciences Perspectives*, 4(2), <https://doi:10.33094/7.2017.2019.42.62.75>
- Sule, B., Mikail, I. K., & Yahaya, M. A. (2020a). An overview of the genesis, sources, manifestations and impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in northern Nigeria. *Journal of International Studies*, 16, 195-218. <https://journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/jis>
- Sule, B., Mohd A. M. S. & Bakri M. (2017). Independent National Electoral Commission and Campaign Financing Monitoring in Nigeria: The 2015 General Elections, *Journal of International Studies*, 13, 15-31, <https://journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/jis>
- Taylor, C. (2018). Shared security, shared elections: Best practices for the prevention of electoral violence. *Afsc.org* electoral violence report. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world>
- Taylor, C. F., Pevehouse, J. C., & Straus, S. (2017). Perils of pluralism: Electoral violence and incumbency in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Peace Research*, 54(3), 397–411.
- The 1999 Constitution (2022). Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, <https://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionoftheFederalRepublicofNigeria>
- The Cable (2019). Two Arrested with 14 Sacks of Ballot Papers in Kano, [https://www.thecable.ng/just-in-two-arrested-wth-14-sacks-of-ballot-papers-in kano/amp](https://www.thecable.ng/just-in-two-arrested-wth-14-sacks-of-ballot-papers-in-kano/amp)
- The Cable (2022). Soldier nabbed for 'stealing and supplying ammunition to bandits' in Borno [https://www.thecable.ng/soldier-nabbed-in-borno-for-stealing-and-supplying ammunition-to-bandits](https://www.thecable.ng/soldier-nabbed-in-borno-for-stealing-and-supplying-ammunition-to-bandits)
- The Carter Center. (2019). *Final report on the DRC's 2018 presidential elections*. The Carter Center. <https://www.cartercenter.org>
- The Eagle Online (2021). Inspector Caught Voting at APC Congress, Police React, *The Eagle Online*, [https://theeagleonline.com.ng/inspector-Caught-voting-at-apc-congress police-react/](https://theeagleonline.com.ng/inspector-Caught-voting-at-apc-congress-police-react/)
- The Electoral Act (2019). The electoral act 2019 as amended. Policy and legacy

advocacy centre, <https://placng.org>

The Guardian (2007). Call for rerun of ‘sham’ elections dismissed by Nigerian government as coup attempt, *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/apr/23/chrismcgreal.international>

The Guardian (2019b). PDP wins in Benue, Bauchi Sokoto, APC takes Kano and Plateau, *The Guardian*. <https://theguardian.ng/news/pdp-wins-in-benue-bauchi-sokoto-apc-takes-kano-and-plateau/>

The Guardian (2020). Much Ado about Asset Declarations of Public Officers, *The Guardian*. <https://theguardian.ng/opinion/much-ado-about-asset-declarations-of-public-officers>

The Guardian (2020a). INEC spent N2.249 per voter, N189B in 2019 general election, say report, *The Guardian*. <https://theguardian.ng/politics/inec-pent-n2-249-per-voter-n189b-in-2019-general-election-say-report/>

The Nation (2019). Reasons for Inconclusive Elections in Nigeria, *The Nation*, <https://www.thenationonlineng.net/reasons-for-inconclusive-elections-in-nigeria-inec/>

The New York Times (2019). Nigeria’s election brings dual crises back to the polls: Corruption and Boko Haram, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/11/world/africa/nigeria-election-corruption.html>

The Sun (2023). DSS nabs retired army colonel, 6 others for armed robbery, recovered weapons, *The Sun*, <https://sunnewsonline.com/dss-nabs-retired-army-colonel-6-others-for-armed-robbery-recover-weapons>

This Day (2019). INEC Declares Governorship Election of Benue State Inconclusive, *This Day*, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/03/11/inec-declares-governorship-election-of-benue-state-inconclusive/>

This Day (2022). ‘Nigerian political parties lack ideology’, *This Day* <https://thenationonlineng.net/nigerian-political-parties-lack-ideology>

This Day live (2023). Are Security Agencies Aiding Terrorists? *This Day live*, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/04/19/are-security-agencies-aiding-terrorists>

TIDS (2020). The missing Elements: Dressing Corruption through security sector reform in West Africa, Transparency International Defence & Security, https://tidefence.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/02/SSR_in_WA_ENG_policy_paper_v1.2pdf&ved

Timothy O. & Omolegbe L. T. (2019). Appraisal of the 2019 Post-Electoral Violence in Nigeria, *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 4(3), 107-113, www.msosocialsciences.com

Tran, D. S. (2019). Voting Technology. In *Unrigging American Elections*, 127-149. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-03547-1_1

Tribune Online (2019). INEC declares PDP’s Fintiri Winner of Adamawa Governorship Election, *Tribune Online*, <https://tribuneonlineng.com/inec>

[declares-pdps fintiri-winner-of-adamawa-governorship-election/](#)

Tribune Online (2019a). The staging election burden, *Tribune Online*, <https://tribuneonlineng.com/the-staging-election-burden/>

Tribune Online (2023). Police sergeant, 31 others arrested for robbery in Lagos, *Tribune Online*, <https://tribuneonlineng.com/police-sergeant-31-others-arrested-for-robbery-in-lagos/>

Uche U. O. (2022). Islam and human dignity: the plights of Almajiri street children during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria, *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 9:1, 2139796, DOI:10.1080/23311983.2022.2139796

Ukwayi J. K, Okpa J. T, & Akwaji F. (2019). Trends in Illicit Drug Trafficking in Nigeria: Highlighting the Imperative of Raising the Red Flag. *American Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(1): 25-37. www.onlinesciencepublishing.com

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2017). *Elections and conflict prevention: A guide to analysis, planning and programming*. New York: UNDP. <https://www.undp.org>

UNODC (2018). Drugs Use in Nigeria, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna, www.google.com

USAID (2010). Electoral Security Framework: Technical guidance handbook for democracy and governance officers, report of the United States Agency for International Development, www.gogle.com

Usman, A. R. I., & Dangiwa, A. L. (2018). Political Violence and Insecurity in Nigeria: a Case Study of Kalare Political Thugs in Gombe State, Nigeria. *Ilorin Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 20(1), 57. <https://www.researchgate.net>

Vanguard (2019). Woman Leader Burnt to Death by Thugs in Kogi, November 19th, 2019, *Vanguard*, www.vanguardngr.com

Vanguard (2019a). Army Detains Rivers Commissioner, 13 others over Illegal Possession of Ballot Papers, *Vanguard*, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/02/army-detains-rivers-commissioner-13-others-over-illegal-possession-of-ballot-papers>

Vanguard (2019b). Police Arrest 2 Men in Kano with 14 Sacks of 'Fake' Ballot Papers, *Vanguard*, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/02/breaking-police-arrest-2-men-in-kano-with-14-sacks-fake-ballot-papers>

Vanguard (2019c). End conflicting judgements now, INEC task judiciary, *Vanguard*, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/01/end-conflicting-judgements-now-inec-task-judiciary/>

Victor A. (2022). Cost of politics: where is INEC audited financial reports? Daily Post, <https://dailypost.ng/2022/08/08/victor-agi-cost-of-politics-where-is-inec-audited-financial-report/>

- Waziri R. A., Mat B. B., & Taya, S. L. (2018). "Human security under threat: The proliferation of small arms in Nigeria". *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 23(5), 17-21. DOI:10.9790/0837-2305031721, www.iosrjournals.org
- Wike N. (2019). An interview: The '2019 Elections- Army Interference, the Worst in Nigeria's History', by the Channel Television. <https://www.channelstv.com/2019/03/22/2019>
- Within N. (2019). Two private guards arrested by Police for armed robbery, <https://www.withinnigeria.com/2019/07/29/two-private-guards-arrested-by-police-for-armed-robbery/>
- Workneh, T. W. (2020). Ethiopia's Hate Speech Predicament: Seeking Antidotes beyond a Legislative Response. *African Journalism Studies*, 1-17. DOI:10.1080/23743670.2020.1729832
- World Bank (2023). Unemployment rate in Nigeria, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>
- Xu, Y., Fiedler, M. L., & Flaming, K. H. (2005). Discovering the impact of community policing: the broken windows thesis, collective efficacy and citizens' judgment. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 42, 147-186.
- Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An Introductory Analysis*, 2nd ed., New York: Harper and Row. www.google.com
- Yiaga Africa. (2019). *Watching the vote: Report on the 2019 general elections in Nigeria*. Abuja: Yiaga Africa. <https://yiaga.org>



APPENDICES

Appendix A

Informants and Dates of Interview

Informants and Dates of Interview

Category	Informant	Address	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
A1	Electorate	Railway, Jos North Local Government Area, Plateau State	Faculty of Education, University of Jos	8 th January, 2023
A2	Electorate	Odriba, Odriba Local Government Area, Imo State	Premises of Federal Secretariat, Abuja	10 th January, 2023
B1	Political thug	Nigerian Correctional Service, Gombe Medium Security Custodial Centre, Gombe State	Nigerian Correctional Service, Gombe Medium Security Custodial Centre, Gombe State	12 th May, 2023
B2	Political thug	Nigerian Correctional Service, Gombe Medium Security Custodial Centre, Gombe State	Nigerian Correctional Service, Gombe Medium Security Custodial Centre, Gombe State	12 th May, 2023
C	Candidate (State House of Assembly Aspirant, Gombe State)	Tudun Wada, Gombe, Gombe State	Behind Gombe Local Government Secretariat, Gombe State	26 th April, 2023
D	Political party official	Wuse Zone 5, Abuja	Central District Area, Abuja	10 th January, 2023
E	Academic (Political Scientist)	Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State	State Low-cost Quarts, Gombe, Gombe State	29 th April, 2023
F	Security agent	Behind Emirs Palace, Dutse, Jigawa State	Federal University Dutse, Jigawa State	20 th June, 2023
G	Government official (Special Adviser, Political Matters, Gombe State Governor)	Government House, Gombe State	Special Advisers' Complex, Government House, Gombe State	17 th January, 2023
H	Civil society organization (National Secretary, JONAPWD)	B32, Penthouse Estate, Onisha Street, Lugbe, Abuja	B32, Penthouse Estate, Onisha Street, Lugbe, Abuja	7 th February, 2023
I	Socio-political analyst	Lafiya, Nasarawa State	Central Mosque, Central District Area, Abuja	13 th January, 2023
FGD	Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	Federal Capital Territory, Abuja	Wuse Zone 5, Abuja	13 th January, 2023

Source: Reseaercher's Design (2024)

Appendix B

Interview Questions

CATEGORY_A 1 & 2 (ELECTORATES)

Good Day Sir. My name is Abubakar Umar Alhaji, a student of Political Science from University Utara, Malaysia. I am conducting a research thesis of PhD titled the impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. I come to you to seek for your opinion and experience of political thuggery. Your response will help us to integrate and analyze our research objectives according to our research proposal. All information provided will be treated in confidentiality of the research. So we have few questions.

1. Do you have any experience of political thuggery?
2. Based on your experience, who do you think are political thugs?
3. In what ways did politicians use political thugs during 2019 general elections?
4. What are the factors responsible for contributing or domesticating political thuggery into the 2019 general elections?
5. Based on this, do you think political thuggery has affected the outcome of the 2019 general elections?
6. In what ways do you think political thugs helped politicians to manipulate election?
7. Do you think the activities of political thugs impacted on the credibility of the 2019 general elections?
8. Do you think during the elections the environment was volatile or was peaceful?
9. Do you think political thuggery contribute to general insecurity of the state?
10. Is the activity of political thugs limited to election?
11. In what ways do you think the activities of political thugs affect the general insecurity of the Nigerian state after 2019 general elections?
12. On a final note, what do you think can be done to address political thuggery permanently?
13. On this direction, do you think we can foresee a free and fair election without political thuggery in the future?

CATEGORY_B 1 & 2 (POLITICAL THUGS)

1. What is your experience of political thuggery?
2. Based on this, who are then political thugs?
3. Is political thuggery linked to election?
4. What do you think are the factors responsible or contributing to the political thuggery in the 2019 general election?
5. Based on your opinion, who do you think are the prime supporters of political thugs?
6. On what ways do politicians used thugs during elections?
7. How did the political thugs help in manipulating the 2019 general election?
8. How do you think political thuggery help politicians during elections?
9. Has political thuggery impacted on the credibility of the 2019 general elections?
10. Is the activities of political thugs change the outcome of the election?
11. What is the role of security officials?
12. Has political thuggery helped in the general insecurity after the 2019 general elections?
13. Do you foreseen the possibility of having a credible election without thuggery in Nigeria?
14. On a final note, do you think that we can address political thuggery permanently?

CATEGORY_C (CANDIDATE)

1. Do you have any experience of political thuggery?
2. Who are the prime supporters of political thuggery?
3. What are the contributory factors to political thuggery in the 2019 general elections?
4. Were thugs used as an instrument of rigging during the 2019 general elections?
5. Do you think that politicians help political thugs, support and recruit them?
6. In what ways politicians helped thugs to rig elections?
7. Who are the thugs attacking?
8. Based on your assessment, do you think that 2019 general elections were credible?

9. In what ways political thuggery damages the image of 2019 general elections?
10. Was the political environment during the 2019 election stable?
11. How would you assess the role of security personnel?
12. Having said that the security were insufficient, do you think that they were been manipulated by the candidates?
13. Has political thuggery continued even after the 2019 general election?
14. Do you think that we can foresee free and fair elections in the future without violent or without thuggery?
15. On a final assessment, do you think that the political thuggery has affected the credibility of 2019 general election?
16. Do you think that political thuggery can be eliminated?

CATEGORY_D (POLITICAL PARTY OFFICIAL)

1. Do you have any experience of political thuggery?
2. So, do you have any experience of participatory during the 2019 election?
3. Based on this, do you think that the activities of political thugs affect the election?
4. Who are the prime supporters of political thugs?
5. In what ways do political godfathers use political talks to rig elections?
6. Do you think that these activities of political thugs to rig and manipulate elections has changed the outcome of the election?
7. In general sense do you think that political thuggery impacted on the credibility of the 2019 general elections?
8. Amidst political thuggery, do you think that political thugs exist even after the 2019 elections?
9. In what ways do you think that the existence of political thuggery after the 2019 elections will affect the community or the society?
10. Considering the activities of thugs amidst during the 2019 general election, what is the role of the security agencies?
11. On the final assessment, do you think that the 2019 general election was credible?
12. So on a final note, what do you think can be done to address political thuggery in future?

CATEGORY_E (ACADEMIC)

1. As political analyst and academic, do you have any experience in the 2019 general election on political thuggery?
2. Who are these political thugs?
3. Who are the prime supporters of political thugs?
4. In what ways political thugs helped politicians in 2019 elections?
5. What do you think are the factors responsible for political thuggery in 2019 general election?
6. Based on your assessment, how do you think politicians manipulate political thugs during the 2019 general election?
7. Do you think that political thuggery has impacted on the credibility on the 2019 general elections?
8. In that case, in what ways has political thuggery destroyed the image of the of the election credibility?
9. Was the environment so volatile during the 2019 general elections?
10. Do you believe that political thugs changed the outcome of the 2019 general elections?
11. Has political thuggery contributed to general insecurity after the 2019 general elections?
12. Are there ways in which political thuggery affected the security situation of Nigerian society even after the 2019 general elections?
13. What is the response of the security officers?
14. With these acts of political thuggery during elections, do you foresee the possibility of free and fair election?
15. Can we say that political thuggery has affected the credibility of the 2019 general elections?
16. On the final note, do you think we can address political thuggery permanently?
17. In a nutshell, how do you proffer solutions to political thuggery so as to improve the credibility of the future elections?

CATEGORY_F & G (SECURITY AGENT & GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL)

1. Do you have any experience on political thuggery?
2. Based on this, who do you think are political thugs?
3. Coming to that, who do you think are the prime supporters of political thugs?
4. On this view, how do you think or in what ways do politicians or the prime supporters of political thugs use political thugs in their election?
5. Based on your opinion, what do you think are the factors responsible contributing to political thuggery in the 2019 general elections?
6. In that ways political thugs helped to manipulate the 2019 general elections?
7. Based on your experience, can we say that political thuggery impacted on the credibility of the 2019 general elections?
8. Can we say that political thuggery affects the outcome of the 2019 general elections?
9. Now can we say that the security agents or officials have really contributed to the activity of political thugs?
10. Can we say that government is incapable to address the issue of political thuggery?
11. So now since that is the case, do you think that political thuggery contribute to the general insecurity?
12. So now even after the 2019 general elections, has political thuggery existed?
13. Do you think that during the 2019 general elections, the political environment was volatile?
14. Do you foresee the possibility of having a credible election in Nigeria?
15. On a general assessment, can we say that the 2019 general elections was credible?
16. Do you think political thuggery can be addressed permanently after the 2019 general elections?

CATEGORY_H & I (CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION & SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYST)

1. As an activist, do you have any experience of political thuggery?
2. Who are these political thugs?
3. Based on this, who do you think are the major or prime supporters of this thugs?
4. Are the activities linked to election?
5. How the activities of these political thugs helped politicians to manipulate 2019 general election?
6. Based on your own idea and experience, what do you think are the factors responsible for domesticating of political thuggery into the 2019 elections?
7. In what ways do you think politicians use political thugs during the 2019 general elections?
8. Do you think that political thuggery impacted on the credibility of the 2019 elections?
9. Amid activities of these political thugs, can we say that their actions and inactions affect the outcome of the 2019 elections?
10. Do you think political thuggery affect general insecurity in Nigeria?
11. Has political thuggery existed even after the 2019 general elections?
12. Can you highlight few things or few areas where political thuggery contribute to general insecurity after the 2019 general elections?
13. Considering the activities of political thugs, can we say that the 2019 general elections was credible?
14. Finally, what do you think can be done to address political to thuggery permanently?

CATEGORY_FGD (FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION)

1. Do you have any experience of political thuggery?
2. What is your experience about the political thuggery in election anywhere during the conduct of the 2019 general election in Nigeria?
3. Who do you think are political thugs?
4. Who do you think are the prime supporters of political thugs during the 2019 general elections?

5. So, why do you think that politicians used political thugs in election?
6. In what ways do you think these politicians used political thugs to rig election in the 2019 general elections?
7. How do you think or in what ways do political thugs helped to manipulate or rig election for politicians?
8. Do you think that political thuggery in general affect the outcome of the 2019 general elections?
9. Based on these ideas, what are the contributory factors that contributed to political thuggery during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria?
10. Since you believe that political thuggery determined the outcome of election, can we say that political thuggery alone affected the credibility of the 2019 election?
11. Has political thuggery changed the outcome of the 2019 election?
12. So on the security issue, how political thuggery affect general insecurity?
13. Based on this understandings, can we anticipate a free and fair election without thuggery in Nigeria?
14. Has political thuggery existed even after the 2019 general elections?
15. Since we believe that political thuggery exists even after 2019 general elections, in what ways do political thuggery contribute to insecurity?
16. On a general assessment, can we say that the 2019 election was credible?
17. Finally, in what ways can we address political thuggery in our society?

Appendix C:
Letters Obtained



NIGERIAN CORRECTIONAL SERVICE
GOMBE MED. SEC. CUSTODIAL CENTRE
EMIR'S DRIVE GOMBE, GOMBE STATE.

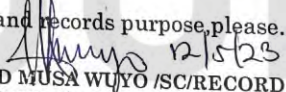
GC72/VOL.VIII/96
12TH May, 2023

The Dean,
Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of
Government,
Universiti Utara Malaysia.

ABUBAKARUMAR ALHAJI MATRIC NUMBER 904150

I am directed to write and confirm to you that the above named student has carry-out his research in this organization today 12th May, 2023.

Above is for your information and records purpose, please.


MOH'D MUSA WUYO /SC/RECORDS

For; ASST.CONTROLLER OF CORRECTIONS
I/C GOMBE MED.SESC.CUSTODIAL CENTRE



Hon. Muhammad A. Bello PhD, FBDFM
Special Adviser on Political Matters to the Governor of Gombe State

10th January, 2023

Abubakar Umar Alhaji
Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Federal University of Kashere,
Gombe State,

APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH INTERACTION

Sequel to your letter requesting for an interview with me as a government official, I therefore write to inform you that your request has been approved for the topic "Impact of Political Thuggery on the Credibility of the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria".

2. You are to come for the interaction during working days from 2pm to 4pm on Tuesday, 17th January, 2023.
3. Your questions should be restricted to the research topic indicated and information collected shall be strictly considered for your PhD thesis as you stated.
4. Accept the assurances of my highest regards.

Dr. Muhammad A. Bello

OFFICE ADDRESS: Special Advisers' Complex Government House, Gombe State. **Tel:** 08036577931
Email: muhammadbello050@gmail.com



DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF KASHERE
www.fukashere.edu.ng
P.M.B 0182, GOMBE STATE

Vice Chancellor
Professor Umaru A. Paté
B.A. (Hons), MPhil (Ghana), PhD (Maid)

Dean
Prof. Mohammed Inuwa Danda
B.Sc., M.Sc. (BUK) PhD (Ilorin)

Head of Department
Dr. Babayo Sule
B.Sc (Maid), M.Sc. (BUK) PhD (UUM)

The Dean
Ghazali Shafi Graduate School of Government
Universiti Utara Malaysia

Sir,

Approval of Interview

This is to inform you that your student Abubakar Umar Alhaji (904158) has come for an oral interview of his PhD research on the topic "Impact of Political Thuggery on the Credibility of the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria" dated 29th April, 2023.

Please accept my best wishes, and don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it in the future.

Dr Babayo Sule

Head of Department





Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities

R.C. NO. 83700

Email: info@jonapwd.org; info@jonapwdng.org; Tel: 09060026565

Social Media Address: Twitter: [@jonapwdNG](https://twitter.com/jonapwdNG); Facebook: [Jonapwd National](https://www.facebook.com/jonapwdNational); Instagram: [Jonapwd Nigeria](https://www.instagram.com/jonapwdNigeria); LinkedIn: [Jonapwd Nigeria](https://www.linkedin.com/company/jonapwd-nigeria)

17th January, 2023

Abubakar Umar Alhaji (904158)

School of International Studies
Universiti Utara Malaysia

APPROVAL FOR INTERVIEW

This is to inform you that your application for an interview with the civil society organisation approved to you on the topic "impact of political thuggery on the credibility of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria".

Therefore, you are to come for the interaction on the date 7th February, 2023.

You are welcome.

Yours Sincerely,

ISHYAKU ADAMU

SECRETARY

Ishiyaku Adamu

National Secretary JONAPWD



UUM
Universiti Utara Malaysia



GHAZALI SHAFIE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT
UUM Kolej Undang-Undang, Kerajaan dan Pengajian Antarabangsa
Universiti Utara Malaysia
06010 UUM SINTOK
KEDAH DARUL AMAN
MALAYSIA



Tel: 604 - 928 7751/7752
Faks (Fax): 604 - 928 7799
Laman Web (Web): www.gsgg.uum.edu.my

Ref. No. : UUM/COLGIS/GSGSG/ 904158
Date : December 8, 2022

TO WHOM IT'S MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

DATA COLLECTION FOR PHD THESIS

This is to certify that **ABUBAKAR UMAR ALHAJI (Matric Number : 904158)** is a full time PhD student at Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah.

He needs to collect data for his research in order to fulfill the requirements of his PhD programme.

It is sincerely appreciated that your organization will be able to assist him in getting the necessary information and grant him permission to collect the data for his PhD research thesis.

Thank you.

"KNOWLEDGE, VIRTUE, SERVICE"

Yours faithfully

PROF. DR. RUSDI BIN OMAR

Dean
Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government
Universiti Utara Malaysia
Tel : 04-9287750 Fax: 04-9287799
E-mail : rusdiomar@uum.edu.my

Universiti Pengurusan Terkemuka
The Eminent Management University

