

Ballots or Bullets? Investigating Youth Disposition and Drivers of Election-Related Violence in Southwestern Nigeria

Timilehin Olayinka Omoniyi 

Ph.D. AD Scientific Index ID: 5809128. Department of Arts & Social Sciences Education Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan.
Correo electrónico: timmylayinka@gmail.com

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/desafios/a.15863>

ABSTRACT

Election-related violence poses a major threat to democratic stability in emerging democracies such as Nigeria. Several factors have been widely examined, less attention has been devoted to the youth dispositions to election-related violence. This study, therefore, investigated youth disposition to election-related violence as well as factors predisposing them to such behavior in southwestern Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was considered proper for assessing existing conditions without manipulating variables. Youths aged 18–35 years living in Oyo, Osun, and Ondo States were purposively selected due to history of being politically active youth populations and prior records of election-related violence. A total of 1,174 youths were sampled using a multi-stage sampling procedure. In each state, two local government areas were randomly selected, followed by purposive selection of communities with high youth concentration and political activity. Data were collected using the Youth Disposition and Predisposition to Election-Related Violence Scale ($r=0.72$). Section A of the instrument captured demographic information, Section B measured youth disposition toward election-related violence, and Section C assessed predisposing factors. Findings revealed that youths exhibited a generally low disposition toward election-related violence ($\bar{x}=2.21$; Threshold: 2.5), indicating weak endorsement of violence as a legitimate tool of political participation. However, pockets of tolerance for electoral manipulation and monetary inducement were observed. Analysis further showed that predisposing factors ($\bar{x}= 3.20$; Threshold: 3.0) strongly influenced youth vulnerability to violent mobilization. These included past substance abuse, previous involvement in violent activities, and low levels of electoral participation and trust in political institutions. Several recommendations were made.

Keywords: Youth; Disposition; Drivers; Election-related Violence; Southwestern; Nigeria

Para citar este artículo: Omoniyi, T. O. (2026). Ballots or Bullets? Investigating Youth Disposition and Drivers of Election-Related Violence in Southwestern Nigeria. *Desafíos*, 38(Especial), 1-19.
<https://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/desafios/a.15863>

¿Papeletas o balas? Investigando la disposición juvenil y los factores impulsores de la violencia relacionada con elecciones en el suroeste de Nigeria

RESUMEN

La violencia relacionada con las elecciones representa una gran amenaza para la estabilidad democrática en democracias emergentes como Nigeria. Aunque varios factores han sido ampliamente estudiados, se ha prestado menor atención a las disposiciones juveniles hacia la violencia electoral. Por ello, este estudio investigó la disposición de los jóvenes a participar en violencia relacionada con las elecciones, así como los factores que los predisponen a este comportamiento en el suroeste de Nigeria. Se utilizó un diseño de investigación de encuesta descriptiva para evaluar condiciones existentes sin manipular variables. Se seleccionaron intencionalmente jóvenes de 18 a 35 años residentes en los estados de Oyo, Osun y Ondo, debido a su historial de alta actividad política juvenil y antecedentes de violencia electoral. Un total de 1174 jóvenes participaron mediante un procedimiento de muestreo multietápico. Los datos se recopilaron utilizando la Escala de Disposición y Predisposición Juvenil hacia la Violencia Electoral ($r=0.72$). Los resultados mostraron que los jóvenes presentaban una baja disposición general hacia la violencia electoral ($\bar{x}=2.21$; umbral: 2.5), lo que indica un débil respaldo a la violencia como herramienta legítima de participación política. Sin embargo, se observaron ciertos niveles de tolerancia hacia la manipulación electoral y la inducción monetaria. Además, los factores predisponentes ($\bar{x}=3.20$; umbral: 3.0) influyeron significativamente en la vulnerabilidad juvenil a la movilización violenta. Entre ellos se encontraron el consumo previo de sustancias, la participación anterior en actos violentos y bajos niveles de confianza y participación electoral. Finalmente, se formularon varias recomendaciones.

Palabras clave: Juventud; disposición; factores impulsores; violencia electoral; suroeste; Nigeria

Cédulas ou balas? Investigando a disposição dos jovens e os fatores que impulsionam a violência eleitoral no sudoeste da Nigéria

RESUMO

A violência relacionada às eleições representa uma grande ameaça à estabilidade democrática em democracias emergentes como a Nigéria. Vários fatores foram amplamente examinados, e menos atenção tem sido dada às disposições dos jovens para a violência eleitoral. Portanto, este estudo investigou a disposição dos jovens à violência eleitoral, bem como fatores que os predispõem a esse tipo de comportamento no sudoeste da Nigéria. O desenho descritivo da pesquisa foi considerado adequado para avaliar as condições existentes sem manipular variáveis. Jovens de 18 a 35 anos que viviam nos estados de Oyo, Osun e Ondo foram escolhidos intencionalmente devido ao histórico de serem populações jovens, politicamente ativas e com antecedentes de violência eleitoral. Foram incluídos na amostra um total de 1.174 jovens com base em um procedimento de amostragem em múltiplas etapas. Em cada estado, duas áreas do governo local foram selecionadas aleatoriamente, seguidas pela seleção intencional de comunidades com alta concentração juvenil e atividade política. Os dados foram coletados usando a Escala de Disposição e Predisposição Juvenil à Violência Eleitoral ($r=0,72$). A Seção A do instrumento capturou informações demográficas, a Seção B mediu a disposição dos jovens em relação à violência eleitoral e a Seção C avaliou fatores de predisposição. Os resultados revelaram que os jovens apresentavam uma disposição geralmente baixa à violência eleitoral ($\bar{x}=2,21$; Limiar: 2,5), indicando um apoio fraco

à violência como ferramenta legítima de participação política. No entanto, foram observados focos de tolerância para manipulação eleitoral e incentivos financeiros. A análise mostrou ainda que os fatores de predisposição ($\bar{x}=3,20$; Limiar: 3,0) influenciaram fortemente a vulnerabilidade dos jovens à mobilização violenta. Esses fatores incluíam histórico de abuso de substâncias, envolvimento anterior em atividades violentas e baixos níveis de participação eleitoral e confiança em instituições políticas. Diversas recomendações foram feitas.

Palavras-chave: juventude; disposição; fatores; violência eleitoral; sudoeste; Nigéria

Introduction

Election-related violence is still a persistent threat to democratic consolidation in many developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where political transitions are often turbulent and fiercely contested. Nigeria, despite over two decades of uninterrupted democratic practice, continues to witness cyclical outbreaks of violence before, during, and after elections (Von-Borzyskowski, & Kuhn, 2020). At the center of this disturbing trend are the youth who are both key actors and casualties. Their roles in election-related violence manifests in political thuggery to ballot snatching, intimidation of voters, and post-election unrest among others. This has raised critical concerns about their political disposition and the structural dynamics that shape their engagement with the democratic process (Omoniyi, 2025). Elections are fundamental to democratic governance, serving as the primary means by which citizens choose their leaders and influence public policies.

However, the credibility and integrity of electoral processes across the world have often been undermined by violence. Globally, election-related violence (ERV) has emerged as a recurrent feature in fragile democracies and conflict-prone societies. According to Yiaga Africa (2020), over 60 countries experienced election-related violence between 2010 and 2020, ranging from intimidation and harassment to targeted killings and widespread civil unrest. Such violence not only erodes public trust in democratic institutions but also stifles civic participation and suppresses dissenting voices (Omoniyi, 2023; Ibrahim & Ibeanu 2009). In extreme cases, it derails democratic consolidation and plunges societies into long-term instability. The causes of ERV vary widely across contexts, but common triggers include ethnic tensions, weak institutions, corruption, political exclusion, and a winner-takes-all political culture. In sub-Saharan Africa, elections are often perceived as zero-sum contests, where the cost of losing is politically and economically unbearable.

Studies by Awofeso & Odeyemi (2014) and Bekoe (2011) have shown how this perception drives political elites and their supporters to manipulate electoral processes or use violence to secure victory. Furthermore, youth unemployment and poor civic education contribute significantly to the recruitment of young people as instruments of violence. Political actors exploit their vulnerability and frustration, offering them monetary or material incentives to foment chaos and intimidate opponents during elections. In recent years, technological advancements and social media platforms have further complicated the dynamics of election-related violence (Akinboye, 2005; Omoniyi, 2025). While these tools can promote transparency and citizen engagement, they also serve as channels for misinformation, incitement, and mobilization for violent acts. For example, the 2007 post-election crisis in Kenya, which resulted in the deaths of over 1,100 people and displacement of hundreds of thousands, was partly fueled by ethnically charged narratives circulated through SMS and radio broadcasts (Eme & Ibietan, 2012).

Similarly, in Myanmar's 2020 general elections, digital platforms were used to marginalize ethnic minorities and justify military crackdowns. These examples underscore the changing nature of ERV and the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to mitigate its risks. While successive elections have shown improvements in electoral administration and technology adoption, they have also been marred by violence and impunity. The 2003 general elections were notoriously violent, resulting in hundreds of deaths across several states. Similar patterns were seen in the 2007, 2011, and 2019 elections, especially in hotspots like Rivers, Kaduna, Borno, and Kano States. According to data from the IDEA (2021) and Von-Borzyskowski & Kuhn (2020), over 1,200 incidents of election-related violence occurred between 2015 and 2019, with youths being the primary actors and victims in most cases. This trend reflects the deep-seated structural and institutional weaknesses in Nigeria's political architecture. Studies like Nwangwu & Onah (2019) and Weghorst, & Lindberg, (2011) have explained youth involvement to a range of socio-economic factors chief among them, unemployment, poverty, and elite manipulation.

However, these explanations, though plausible, tend to be reductionist and insufficiently interrogated. This is because not all unemployed or poor youths engage in election-related violence, and not all acts of violence are externally sponsored. In the same vein, some youths voluntarily participate in violence out of political conviction, group loyalty, or perceived injustice. This raises a

critical gap in knowledge and why do some youths gravitate toward violence during elections while others reject it, despite facing similar socio-economic and political conditions? The answer to this remains elusive. This is because the current studies fail to offer a context-specific analysis of youth dispositions and factors driving them into violence. It is discovered that while the nation's policy frameworks and electoral reforms have focused heavily on curbing physical manifestations of election-related violence through security deployment, voting technology, and legal penalties among others, little attention has been paid to addressing the underlying drivers of youth involvement.

It is also explained that subject-based civic education, social studies and associated moral instruction interventions are often top-down, generic, and fail to account for the informal socialization processes that shape youth political behavior at community levels. Moreover, the voices, experiences, and perspectives of the youth themselves are frequently absent in the design of election-related violence prevention programs. Globally, scholarly debates are also divided. While some studies emphasize structural factors like marginalization and institutional failure, others stress the agency of young people and the social meanings they attach to political violence. Yet, there is limited consensus on which factors carry the most weight, or how they interact in specific situation like Nigeria where ethnic, religious, digital, and economic dynamics coalesce in difficult ways during electoral cycles. Therefore, this study becomes imperative. It seeks to explore the disposition of Nigerian youths toward election-related violence and interrogate the factors that predispose them to such actions.

It is discovered that there are several interlocking factors contributing to the persistence of ERV in Nigeria. First, the electoral process is often characterized by a lack of transparency, vote-buying, logistical failures, and legal ambiguities. These issues diminish public confidence and provide justifications for violent contestation. Second, political godfatherism and elite manipulation have entrenched a culture of impunity where violent actors are rarely prosecuted. Third, socio-economic disparities and mass unemployment, particularly among the youth, create a fertile ground for recruitment into political thuggery. Research by Nwangwu & Onah (2019) revealed that 68% of youth involved in Election-related Violence in Southwest Nigeria were unemployed and lacked formal civic education. The convergence of these factors makes violence a rational choice for some actors seeking political advantage. For instance, Nwangwu and Onuoha (2022) conducted a mixed-method study on Election-related Violence in

Imo and Rivers States, revealing that lack of police neutrality and judicial delay in electoral litigation significantly contribute to citizens' resort to self-help and violent protests.

In another study, Orji & Uzodi (2012) observed that political parties deliberately fund and train armed groups during pre-election campaigns, only to disband or abandon them after elections, thereby fueling cycles of violence and criminality. These findings explain the need for electoral reforms that go beyond voting procedures to address systemic incentives for violence. In terms of response, both state and non-state actors have made concerted efforts to curb Election-related Violence in Nigeria. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has introduced innovations like the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), electronic transmission of results, and voter education programs aimed at promoting transparency and reducing conflict triggers. Civil society organizations such as the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and Yiaga Africa have also played pivotal roles through election monitoring, peacebuilding initiatives, and civic sensitization.

However, these efforts often lack sustainability due to limited funding, political interference, and weak inter-agency coordination. Moreover, the Nigerian police and security forces have been criticized for partisanship, delayed response, and sometimes excessive use of force. It is equally important to consider the psychological and social consequences of election-related violence on communities. Victims often suffer trauma, displacement, and long-term distrust of political institutions. In conflict-affected zones like parts of Zamfara and Plateau States, residents have become disillusioned with democratic processes, leading to voter apathy and reduced civic engagement. Young people, particularly those who have been used as political thugs, are often abandoned post-election, with no rehabilitation or reintegration programs. This perpetuates cycles of violence, criminality, and social marginalization. Addressing ERV, therefore, requires not just legal or electoral interventions but also psychosocial support and community rebuilding efforts.

In nutshell, election-related violence remains a significant threat to democratic development globally, and particularly in Nigeria where structural fragility, elite impunity, and youth vulnerability intersect to fuel violent outcomes. While the manifestations of ERV differ across regions, its impacts, ranging from loss of life to democratic regression, are universally harmful.

The Nigerian case illustrates how electoral processes can be hijacked by violent logics when political competition is not underpinned by institutional trust, civic culture, and economic inclusion. Original empirical findings and policy reviews point to the need for systemic reform, civic reorientation, and deliberate investment in democratic infrastructure if the tide of election-related violence is to be reversed. Globally, young people represent one of the most dynamic, visible, and contested demographics in political transitions (Falana, 2018). In both emerging and established democracies, youths have consistently played significant roles during electoral cycles. This is because voters, observers, campaigners, and regrettably, as perpetrators and victims of violence.

The disposition of youth toward election-related violence is seen as attitudinal, behavioral, and psychological inclination to support or engage in electoral conflict (Usman, 2009). This is gaining increased academic attention, particularly in politically unstable or transitional states. While youth engagement is often hailed as a democratic asset, growing empirical evidence suggests that large segments of the youth population in fragile political systems are becoming increasingly inclined toward election-related confrontation and aggression. In Nigeria, the narrative is both familiar and troubling. Electoral periods frequently witness the mobilization of young people for disruptive acts which range from ballot box snatching and voter intimidation to attacks on political opponents and security personnel. This disposition does not emerge in a vacuum. It is often shaped by a mix of social disillusionment, identity politics, institutional distrust, and perceived political exclusion.

Findings from post-election assessments in Nigeria's 2011, 2015, and 2019 general elections reveal a worrying pattern of youth involvement in both orchestrated and spontaneous election-related violence, especially in urban slums, semi-urban centers, and conflict-prone rural zones. Many of these youths, according to Albert (2007), view violence as a justifiable means to "protect the mandate" or "punish betrayal" by the state. This disposition is also deeply tied to historical and generational patterns of political alienation. This is because several Nigerian youths have grown up in an environment where elections are seen as contests of power and manipulation rather than instruments of legitimate representation. It is to be noted that decades of political impunity, elite marginalization, and economic stagnation have produced widespread cynicism among young people who increasingly view elections as

exclusive affairs reserved for the wealthy and well-connected. In such a situation, the attraction to violence is not merely material, it is symbolic as well as an act of protest or assertion of agency in a system that offers limited formal participation.

To buttress, group dynamics and peer influence further complicate this disposition. In many local situations, political identity is constructed within peer groups, informal neighborhood associations, or cult-like gangs. Within these structures, engaging in election-related violence becomes not just a political act, but a cultural norm, a performance of loyalty and masculinity. Research by Okafor and Olurode (2021) found that in certain communities, youth groups derived respect and political access by demonstrating capacity to ‘secure’ their territories during elections. Thus, violence becomes a socially endorsed behavior, rather than a deviation from it. Yet, it is critical to avoid overgeneralizing or pathologizing youth as inherently violent. This is because not all Nigerian youths support or participate in election-related violence. Many are vocal proponents of peacebuilding, civic awareness, and electoral integrity. A typical example that can buttress a point is that of groups like Yiaga Africa, Connected Development (CODE), and the #NotTooYoungToRun movement demonstrate that youths can and do play constructive roles in electoral reform and democratic deepening.

This contradiction between violent and peaceful dispositions explains the heterogeneity within Nigeria’s youth population. It also outlines the importance of interrogating the enabling conditions that push some youths toward violence while others resist it. Moreover, in the digital age, online spaces have become powerful arenas for shaping youth political behavior. In addition, social media platforms, while enabling civic mobilization, also serve as accelerants for political misinformation, ethnic hatred, and mobilization for electoral conflict. For instance, during the 2023 general elections, several digitally driven disinformation campaigns directly targeted young voters, inciting suspicion, outrage, and in some cases, retaliatory violence. The convergence of youth identity, digital media, and fragile electoral systems thus requires renewed scholarly focus and policy innovation. While the violent disposition of certain youth groups during elections is well documented, the precise factors that predispose youths to election-related violence remain a subject of considerable debate in both global and Nigerian scholarship.

Although researchers such as Olarinmoye (2008) and Paden (2008) have often invoked concepts like poverty, unemployment, political manipulation, or identity conflict to explain youth involvement in violence, the causal pathways remain unclear. In the same vein, no singular theory or model has gained consensus on the centrality of what causes youth to engage in election-related violence. The lack of clarity has significant implications for policy design and violence prevention strategies, hence, this study.

Study Objectives

Generally, the aim of the study was to assess the youth disposition and drivers of election-related violence. Specifically, two objectives guided the study.

1. Assess the disposition of voting-age youths to election-related violence.
2. Ascertain the factors that predispose voting-age youths to election-related violence.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for gathering, describing, and interpreting information on existing conditions, attitudes, and behaviors without manipulating variables. The target population for this study included voting-age youths (18–35 years) living in three selected states of southwestern Nigeria: Oyo, Osun, and Ondo States. These states were purposively selected due to their history of politically active youth populations and prior records of election-related violence as reported by civil society observers and electoral monitoring bodies. The selection also ensures geographical diversity within the southwest geopolitical zone. A sample of 1,174 youths was drawn using multi-stage sampling techniques. In the first stage, two local government areas (LGAs) were randomly selected from each of the three states. In the second stage, purposive sampling was employed to select communities within the LGAs known for high youth concentrations and political activity. Finally, systematic sampling was used to recruit individual youth respondents within these communities. Gender, educational background, and urban-rural representation were also considered to ensure demographic diversity and broader generalizability. Data were collected using a self-designed questionnaire titled Youth Disposition and Predisposition to Election-Related Violence Scale (YDPERVS, $r = 0.72$). The instrument was divided into three sections. Section A

captured demographic information such as age, gender, education level, and political affiliation. Section B measured youth disposition to election-related violence, with items assessing attitudes, willingness, and perceived justification for engaging in electoral conflict. Section C addressed factors that may predispose youths to violence, including economic status, civic education exposure, political trust, peer influence, and media use. The researcher employed trained field assistants to administer the instruments physically, ensuring literacy limitations did not hinder participation. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to encourage honest responses. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) to summarize youth disposition patterns and prevalent predisposing factors.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the disposition of voting-age youths to election-related violence?

Table 1: Mean Response of Voting-Age Youths' Disposition Toward Election-Related Violence

S/N	Item	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M	SD
1	I serve as bodyguard to politicians during elections	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	531 (45.2)	643 (54.8)	1.45	0.50
2	Carrying guns and other dangerous weapons during elections is part of the electoral process	1 (0.1)	21 (1.8)	604 (51.4)	548 (46.7)	1.55	0.54
3	Hijacking ballot boxes during elections is part of the electoral process	13 (1.1)	121 (10.3)	668 (56.9)	372 (31.7)	1.81	0.65
4	Joining others in manipulating figures during elections is not a big deal	219 (18.9)	423 (36.0)	387 (33.0)	145 (12.4)	2.61	0.93
5	I like the way political opponents and their supporters are treated before, during, and after elections	24 (2.0)	85 (7.2)	611 (52.0)	454 (38.7)	1.73	0.68

S/N	Item	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M	SD
6	Threatening people from voting for candidates of their choice is part of the electoral process	33 (2.8)	200 (17.0)	595 (50.7)	346 (29.5)	1.93	0.76
7	I have been paid to stop people from voting for candidates of their choice	102 (8.7)	328 (27.9)	574 (48.9)	170 (14.5)	2.31	0.82
8	Maiming and killing candidates of opposing parties is not a difficult task for me	20 (1.7)	209 (17.8)	588 (50.1)	357 (30.4)	1.91	0.74
9	I have destroyed property and campaign materials of opposing candidates	70 (6.0)	291 (24.8)	498 (42.2)	319 (27.1)	2.10	0.87
10	People can secretly volunteer to disrupt election rallies of opposing parties	563 (48.0)	248 (21.1)	323 (27.5)	40 (3.4)	2.13	0.78
11	I sometimes act as a middleman to cause crises before, during, and after elections	9 (0.8)	188 (16.0)	575 (49.0)	402 (34.2)	1.83	0.71
12	I believe election activism makes people rich quickly	203 (17.3)	456 (38.8)	404 (34.4)	111 (9.5)	2.64	0.88
13	I have been active in groups effecting radical political changes during elections	181 (15.4)	332 (28.3)	419 (35.7)	242 (20.6)	2.39	0.98
14	There can never be a peaceful election in my area	183 (15.6)	429 (36.5)	412 (35.1)	150 (12.8)	2.55	0.90
15	During elections, there is nothing I cannot do to make money	290 (24.7)	467 (39.8)	344 (29.3)	73 (6.2)	2.83	0.87
16	Politicians deserve severe punishment for selfish interests during elections	298 (25.4)	452 (38.5)	318 (27.1)	106 (9.0)	2.80	0.92
17	I can sacrifice my life for my political party during elections	156 (13.3)	402 (34.2)	484 (41.2)	132 (11.2)	2.50	0.86
18	Politics is never a means to make money	209 (17.8)	425 (36.2)	373 (31.8)	167 (14.2)	2.58	0.94

S/N	Item	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M	SD
19	Exhibiting politically responsible behavior during elections is not necessary	51 (4.3)	326 (27.8)	580 (49.4)	217 (18.5)	2.18	0.78
20	Recycling politicians motivates my involvement in electoral violence	152 (12.9)	315 (26.8)	440 (37.5)	267 (22.7)	2.30	0.96
21	It is important that my voice is heard before, during, and after elections	239 (20.4)	429 (36.5)	370 (31.5)	136 (11.6)	2.66	0.93
22	I have secretly volunteered to remove obstacles to my party's electoral victory	6 (0.5)	199 (17.0)	586 (49.9)	383 (32.6)	1.85	0.70

Note. SA= Strongly Agree; A= Agree; D= Disagree; SD= Strongly Disagree

Table 1 shows voting-ages youths' disposition to election-related violence in Southwestern Nigeria. The table shows that grand weighted mean: 2.21 out of the maximum obtainable score of 4.00, which is lower than the threshold of 2.50. This implies that voting-age youths have low disposition to election-related violence. The rating revealed items that contributed to voting-ages youths' disposition to election-related violence including: Joining others in manipulating figures during elections is not a big deal; I believe in election activism because it makes people rich within a space of time; There can never be a peaceful election in my area; During elections, there is nothing I cannot do to make money; Politicians are meant to pay severely for their selfish interest in office during elections; Politics is never a mean to make money; It is a must I make my voice heard before, during and after elections

Research Question 2: What factors predispose voting-age youths to election-related violence in Southwestern, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Response of Factors Predisposing Voting-Age Youths to Election-Related Violence in Southwestern, Nigeria

S/N	Item	VH (%)	H (%)	M (%)	L (%)	VL (%)	M	SD
1	Personal history of violence	245 (20.9)	301 (25.6)	390 (33.2)	218 (18.6)	20 (1.7)	3.45	1.07
2	Psychological factors (stress, aggressive behavior, emotional distress)	209 (17.8)	265 (22.8)	388 (33.0)	255 (21.7)	57 (4.9)	3.27	1.13
3	Exposure to violence and conflict in the family	187 (15.9)	221 (18.8)	363 (30.9)	344 (29.3)	59 (5.0)	3.11	1.14
4	Involvement with drugs, alcohol, or tobacco	217 (18.5)	225 (19.5)	351 (29.9)	299 (25.5)	82 (7.0)	3.17	1.20
5	Lack of required information (electoral illiteracy)	202 (17.2)	279 (23.8)	240 (20.4)	331 (28.2)	122 (10.4)	3.09	1.27
6	Antisocial beliefs and attitudes	80 (6.8)	242 (20.6)	247 (21.0)	569 (48.5)	36 (3.1)	2.80	1.02
7	Authoritarian child-rearing attitudes	164 (14.0)	221 (18.8)	189 (16.1)	549 (46.8)	51 (4.3)	2.91	1.18
8	Low parental involvement	242 (20.6)	114 (9.7)	248 (21.1)	277 (23.6)	293 (25.0)	2.77	1.45
9	Low parental education and income	278 (23.7)	184 (15.7)	504 (42.9)	139 (11.8)	69 (5.9)	3.39	1.14
10	Past substance abuse or criminality	431 (36.7)	169 (14.4)	333 (28.4)	110 (9.4)	131 (11.2)	3.56	1.36
11	Poor family functioning	357 (30.4)	138 (11.8)	180 (15.3)	159 (13.5)	340 (29.0)	3.01	1.62
12	Poor monitoring and supervision of children	220 (18.7)	165 (14.1)	346 (29.5)	361 (30.7)	82 (7.0)	3.07	1.21
13	Association with political gangs	142 (12.1)	185 (15.8)	665 (56.6)	115 (9.8)	67 (5.7)	3.19	0.97

S/N	Item	VH (%)	H (%)	M (%)	L (%)	VL (%)	M	SD
14	Lack of involvement in electoral activities	181 (15.4)	402 (34.2)	399 (34.0)	115 (9.8)	77 (6.6)	3.42	1.07
15	Poor academic performance	233 (19.8)	321 (27.3)	280 (23.9)	138 (11.8)	202 (17.2)	3.21	1.35
16	Low commitment to education	169 (14.4)	264 (22.5)	166 (14.1)	247 (21.0)	328 (27.9)	2.74	1.44
17	Low economic opportunities in employment, skills, and wealth creation	167 (14.2)	177 (15.1)	271 (18.8)	268 (22.8)	341 (29.0)	2.63	1.40
18	High concentrations of poor residents	214 (18.2)	264 (22.5)	345 (29.5)	247 (21.0)	104 (8.9)	3.20	1.22
19	High level of family disruption	215 (18.3)	273 (23.3)	232 (19.8)	382 (32.5)	72 (6.1)	3.15	1.23
20	Low levels of community participation in politics	166 (14.1)	316 (26.9)	333 (28.4)	176 (15.0)	183 (15.6)	3.09	1.27

Note. VH= Very High; H= High; M= Moderate; L= Low; VL= Very Low

Table 2 shows factors which predisposes voting-age youths to election-related violence in Southwestern, Nigeria. The table shows that weighted mean of 3.20, which is higher than the threshold of 3.00. This implies that 'Past substance abuse or criminality,' 'Personal history of violent,' and 'Lack of involvement in electoral activities are potent factors that predispose voting-ages youths to election-related violence in Southwestern, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Voting-Ages Youths' Disposition to Election-Related Violence

The finding of the study revealed that voting-age youths have low/negative disposition to election-related violence in Southwestern Nigeria. This implies that majority of voting-age youths selected for this study are not disposed to engaging in election-related violence. Unlike the common belief that many youths are maneuvered, paid, or promised positional or material gains to disrupt elections, this may be due to the level of education to which many of them

are exposed in the Southwestern Nigeria, which may not be comparable to other regions in Nigeria. Also, the findings of this study might not be unconnected with the fact that many voting-age youths examined in this study are educated and familiar with the Nigeria political system. With this, many of them are likely to comport themselves before, during, and after elections. It could also be averred from this finding that, if there is an enabling environment, social amenities, and qualitative education, many voting-age youths may not even consider violence to drive home their points, as they did during the #EndSars protests, which ravaged the entire length and breadth of the country. Awofeso & Odeyemi (2014) Verjee, Kwaja & Onubogu (2018) and Von-Borzyskowski (2019) reported that if there is enabling environment, many voting-age youths may not be lured into constituting nuisance before, during, and after elections. This finding is in line with John Dalton's Cognitive Mobilization Theory of Political Literacy and Political Participation (CMTPLPP, 1985), which states that citizens receive cognitive cues that guide decisions on constitutionally backed activities such as voting, campaigning, standing for election, and other forms of participation, which are likely to affect their decision to engage in election-related violence or not.

Factors that Predispose Voting-Age youths to Election-Related Violence

The findings of the study revealed that individual, family, peer/social, and other contextual factors significantly predispose voting-age youths to election-related violence in Southwestern Nigeria. Specifically, factors such as past substance abuse or criminality, personal history of violence, and lack of involvement in electoral activities were identified as major predictors. This suggests that election-related violence among youths is not the product of a single cause but rather the result of multiple interacting social and behavioral factors. The finding aligns with earlier studies such as Ajayi (2015), Zounmenou and Ojo (2014), as well as Samuel (2017), which found that intense political competition during elections often fuels youth involvement in electoral violence. Similarly, Ajayi (2015) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2021) noted that individuals tend to adopt the dominant political behaviors and ideologies prevalent in their environments. Thus, communities characterized by tension and political rivalry are more likely to experience election-related violence.

This perspective is reinforced by Agbaje and Adejumobi (2006), Nkwede (2016), Omotola (2010) who observed that controversies surrounding heavily rigged elections have historically triggered political violence and instability

in Nigeria, thereby discouraging positive democratic participation. The findings are further supported by Toros and Birch (2019), who emphasized that peer and social influences play a critical role in shaping youths' involvement in electoral violence. This study also corroborates the analytical framework developed by Kristine Höglund (2009), which posits that electoral violence results from a combination of structural, institutional, and behavioral factors. In addition, Federal Government of Nigeria (2014) and Okoro and Nwafor (2021) affirmed that youths are the engine of electoral participation, but when poorly managed they may become instruments of electoral unrest. However, these findings contradict the views of Ibeanu (2007); Kew (2010) and Onimisi (2015), who argued that Nigerian elections have historically been dominated by voter intimidation, political thuggery, assassination, ballot snatching, and killings largely perpetrated by youths.

The variation may be attributed to the focus of this study on youths aged 18–35, who may be engaged in education, employment, or entrepreneurial activities and thus less inclined to participate in violence than socially and economically marginalized youths.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while youth disposition toward election-related violence is a visible and measurable concern in Nigeria and many developing democracies, the factors that predispose them to such behavior remain deeply ambiguous and contested. Explanations grounded in unemployment, political manipulation, civic ignorance, or identity politics offer partial insight but lack the nuance and empirical consistency needed for effective policy design. There is a pressing need for deeper, youth-centered, context-specific, and interdisciplinary research to interrogate these predispositions. Until then, efforts to prevent election-related violence may continue to treat symptoms rather than causes, failing to unravel the complex motivations that drive some youths toward the path of election-related violence while others resist it altogether.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made.

1. Federal Ministry of Education and related agencies should embed civic education robustly across curricula at both basic and tertiary levels.

2. State governments, in collaboration with NGOs and private sector stakeholders, should set up community-based Youth Development Centers offering vocational training, entrepreneurship incubation, digital skills acquisition, and leadership development programs.
3. Enforce strict legal sanctions against political actors who recruit youths for violence.
4. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in collaboration with security agencies and anti-corruption bodies, should ensure the prosecution of political figures who incite, fund, or mobilize youths for violent purposes.
5. Training youths as election observers, peace ambassadors, and conflict mediators during electoral cycles will foster ownership, peer influence, and a culture of nonviolence.

References

- Agbaje, A. A. B., & Adejumbi, S. (2006). Do votes count? The travails of electoral politics in Nigeria. *Africa Development*, 31(3), 25–44.
- Ajayi, K. (2015). Security agencies and the management of elections in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences and Public Policy*, 7(2), 29–40.
- Akinboye, S. O. (2005). Election-related violence and national security in Nigeria: Issues and perspectives. *International Journal of Social Inquiry*, 2(2), 1–19.
- Albert, I. O. (2007). Re-conceptualising election-related violence in Nigeria. *African Sociological Review*, 11(2), 41–54.
- Awofeso, O., & Odeyemi, T. I. (2014). Youth and election-related violence in Africa: A comparative study of Kenya and Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 4(5), 279–295.
- Bekoe, D. A. (2011). Nigeria's 2011 elections: Best run, but most violent (Peace Brief). United States Institute of Peace.
- Eme, O. I., & Ibietan, J. (2012). The cost of elections in Nigeria. *Journal of Research in National Development*, 10(1), 292–305.
- Falana, F. (2018, May 2). Voting rights of the Nigerian diaspora. *This Day Newspapers*.
- Federal Government of Nigeria. (2014). *The mid-term report of the transformation agenda, 2011–2013: Taking stock and moving forward*. The Presidency.
- Höglund, K. (2009). Electoral violence: Causes, concepts, and consequences. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 21(3), 412–427. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550902950290>

- Ibeanu, O. (2007). *Elections and the paradox of violence in Nigeria* (Working Paper No. 1). Nigerian Consortium for Elections and Conflict.
- Ibrahim, J., & Ibeanu, O. (2009). *The 2007 elections and the struggle for electoral democracy in Nigeria*. Centre for Democracy and Development.
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2021). *Global state of democracy report: Building resilience in a pandemic era*. <https://www.idea.int/publications>
- Kew, D. (2010). Nigeria. In D. Villalón & L. VonDoepp (Eds.), *The fate of Africa's democratic experiments* (pp. 227–248). Indiana University Press.
- Nwangwu, C., & Onah, E. I. (2019). Youth bulge and election-related violence in Nigeria: A discourse. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 54(5), 733–747. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909619844412>
- Nkwede, O. J. (2016). *Electoral violence and 2015 general elections in Nigeria: A focus on the ramifications of political developments in Ebonyi State*.
- Okoro, N., & Nwafor, K. A. (2021). Youth political participation and election-related violence in Nigeria: Media framing of 2019 general elections. *Journal of African Elections*, 20(1), 84–105. <https://doi.org/10.20940/JAE/2021/v20i1a5>
- Olarinmoye, O. O. (2008). Godfathers, political parties and electoral corruption in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 2(4), 66–73.
- Omotola, J. S. (2010). Elections and democratic transition in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic. *African Affairs*, 109(437), 535–553. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adq031>
- Omoniyi, T. O. (2023). *Independent National Electoral Commission voters education programme and election-related violence among youths of voting-age in Southwestern Nigeria* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Omoniyi T. O. (2025). What drives youths to vote? An analysis of politico-behavioural constructs in Southwestern Nigeria. *Journal of Social, Humanity, and Education*, 5(4), 2025, 389–401. <https://doi.org/10.35912/jshe.v5i4.3090>
- Omoniyi T. O. (2025) Voter Education Package and KAP Framework in Electoral Violence Prevention Among Youth of Voting-Ages in Ondo City, Ondo State Nigeria *Journal of Governance and Accountability Studies* 6(1), 29–42. <https://doi.org/10.35912/jgas.v6i1.3018>
- Omoniyi T. O. (2025) Electoral Violence in Africa's Shrinking Civic Space: Nature, Magnitude and Remedies. *Journal of Governance and Accountability Studies* 6(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.35912/jgas.v6i1.2753>
- Onimisi, T. (2015). The prognoses of the 2011 electoral violence in Nigeria and the lessons for the future. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(1), 242. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n1s1p242>
- Orji, N., & Uzodi, N. (2012). *The 2011 post-election-related violence in Nigeria*. Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC).

- Paden, J. N. (2008). *Faith and politics in Nigeria: Nigeria as a pivotal state in the Muslim world*. United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Toros, E., & Birch, S. (2019). Who are the targets of electoral coercion? Evidence from Turkey. *Democratization*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1639151>
- Usman, S. M. (2009). *Election-related violence and rigging in Nigeria: A comparative analysis of 2003 and 2007 general elections* [Workshop presentation]. One-day workshop on YouthAgainst Electoral Violence, organized by Arewa Patriotic Vanguard in collaboration with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).
- Verjee, A., Kwaja, C., & Onubogu, O. (2018). *Nigeria's 2019 elections: Change, continuity, and the risks to peace*. United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org>
- Von-Borzyskowski, I., & Kuhn, P. (2020). Dangerously informed: Voter information and pre-election-related violence in Africa. *Journal of Peace Research*, 57(1), 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343319884986>
- Von-Borzyskowski, I. (2019). The credibility challenge: How democracy aid influences election-related violence. Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501736551>
- Weghorst, K., & Lindberg, S. (2011). Effective opposition strategies: Collective goods or clientelism? In E. Uddhammar, E. Green, & J. Soderstrom (Eds.), *Democratization: Special issue political opposition and democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 18(5), 1093–1214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2011.603483>
- Yiaga Africa. (2020). Not too young to run: Deepening youth inclusion in Nigeria's democratic process. <https://yiaga.org/reports>
- Zounmenou, D., & Ojo, E. O. (2014). Nigeria's 2015 elections and the bumpy path to democracy (ISS Policy Brief, 69). Institute for Security Studies.

