



The duality of election fraud and criminality in Nigeria: The alchemy and agony of winning the votes and losing the counts

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Abstract

Electoral fraud is a global problem that is demanding attention from all nooks and crannies. The developed like the developing world are all trapped in this enclosure of violating electoral laws thus, engendering criminality of all kinds. The acts of political thuggery, intimidation, harassment, vote buying, disenfranchisement, impersonation, tempering with election votes amongst others are phenomenal and have led to assault, affray, assassination, street violence, kidnapping, abduction and armed robbery. This situation is worsen by acrimony and vendetta brought about by character assassination and rivalry. These calls for a study to x-ray the duality of election fraud and criminality in Nigeria: the alchemy and agony of winning the votes and losing the counts. The study adopted jurisdictional election fraud theory and the conspiracy election fraud theory to explain the issue under discuss. The study was a survey that used quality data. The Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discuss (FGD) were used. Twenty-four (24) KII and two (2) sets of eight (8) participants each for male and females were used for the FGD. The samples were drawn using simple random and purposive sampling technique. Manual content analysis and ethnographic summaries were used to analyze the data. It was concluded that electoral fraud is bad and capable of spinning the wheel of criminality in a geometrical progression and should be discouraged. It was recommended that government, NGOs and community leaders; parents, the youths and the entire society should wake up to their reality and combat this evil that has been cohabiting with us in Nigeria for a long time.

Keywords: Duality, Election fraud, Criminality, Alchemy, Agony, Winning, losing and Votes

Introduction

In all continents and countries of the world, electoral fraud is gaining much attention. The Europe and American continents adopted the electronic voting system to conduct election but the process is this being manipulated. These acts of conducting opinion poll, character assassination (libel) of aspirants or candidates, disenfranchisement, intimidation, artificial migration etc are forms of electoral fraud deliberately designed to alter the process in favour of a preferred candidate or aspirant. In the Arctic and Antarctica continents the electoral process uses electronic voting system as well as manual system however, the process favours vote buying, rigging through character assassination, intimidation, artificial migration/ party membership, disenfranchisement among others. While in Asia and African continent, the electoral process is full of electoral fraud and manipulations such as intimidation, assault, libel, vote buying, disinformation, division of opposition votes, disenfranchisement, artificial migration, party membership suspension, thuggery, assassination, threat and injuries. These activities are barbaric and capable of ruining both the gains of democracy as well as the whole essence of election (Akan, 2021) [7, 9].

The phenomenon has nomenclature that seems to be used interchangeably with words and phrases like election manipulation, voters` fraud and election rigging. All these words and phrases merely suggest irregularities in election. It actually connotes illegal interference with the process of an election, either by increasing the vote share of a favored candidate, depressing the vote

share of rival candidates, or both. It is different in meaning from one country to another but most times goes hand-in-hand with voter suppression (Wikipedia, 2016).

Even though, electoral law precedes electoral frauds, most activities or practices rather violate general laws than election laws which prohibit assault, harassment and libel. Although technically the term "electoral fraud" covers only those acts which are illegal, the term is sometimes used to describe acts which are legal, but considered morally unacceptable, outside the spirit of an election or in violation of the principles of democracy (Wikipedia, 2016).

Often times it is observed that, electoral fraud in general elections with national outlook can spur protest, coup and corruption while in regional, states or Local Government elections, it will alter change process, reduce voter confidence and enhance distrust on the electoral process. It is a fundamental violation of the principle of democracy if there is a deliberate manipulation of the electoral process. Such behaviours or actions have adverse effect on democracy on one hand, the voters on the other and the leadership to articulately deliver on the dividends of transition and election process to its citizens. To forestall all these circumstances from coming to bear, this study seeks to examine the duality of election fraud and criminality in Nigeria, to understand the alchemy and agony of winning the votes and losing the counts.

Statement of the problem

The electoral system the world over has been manipulated in one form or another. In the United States and other parts of Latin America 2021 and 2012, America's Barometer noted that 15% of the voters surveyed in Latin America had been given some token or gifts in exchange for votes self-reported surveys have shown that vote buying is popular. The Argentine vote buying is an all-time practices that is common among Peronist party (Simeon Nichter, 2017). The Mexico experienced revealed that vote buying is most likely visible among the poor and rural dwellers and these instances have been regular in the history of Mexico. Literature search on vote buying in Mexico showed that in the last twenty years were obtainable. In 2006 Mexican election 8.8% of the population benefitted from vote buying and a corruption inquiry commission arrested and prosecuted Andrés Granier Melo for embezzlement of funds in the state of Tabasco during his governorship: among other things, some of these funds were used for vote-buying (although Melo has denied all accusations).

The Venezuela experience shows that during the 2018 Venezuelan presidential election, reports of vote buying were pronounced. Venezuelans that were suffering from hunger were pressured to vote for Maduro, where pro government supporters offered food as bribe and Maduro promised compensation and rewards for citizens show evidence of voting in his favour. Although, this promised were never given till date.

In the African continent generally, the fifth Afrobarometer survey showed that 48% of voters in 33 African countries feared violence during elections, and 16% of voters were offered money or other goods in exchange for voting a particular way in the most recent election. In Kenya, Right from the 1990s till now, Kenya has regular had multiparty elections wherein vote buying been key in winning the pools. While in Nigeria a self-reported survey conducted observed that, 1 in 5 Nigerian has experienced an

offer for their vote. The rewards offered by Nigerian politicians include money, commodities such as food and clothing, or a job. Although the practice of vote buying is widespread, 58% of Nigerians surveyed at the time of the 2007 election viewed vote buying as immoral. Despite this, when asked if they thought it was wrong to accept rewards or monetary compensation for your vote, 78% said no. it is reasonable to note that, since vote buying is illegal in most countries, a researcher's ability to collect accurate data is hindered. This is because many citizens may not feel comfortable revealing their experience or involvement with corrupt activities, or fear that they will suffer repercussions from their governments for coming forward with such information.

In Indonesian, vote buying and other electoral frauds is common as money politics. A survey which sampled four hundred and forty (440) respondents by Institut Riset Indonesia in January-March 2020 in areas that will have local elections in 2020, 60 percent of respondents believed that they will allow their vote to be bought. Reasons for accepting vote buying include considering it as a gift that cannot be rejected while 35-46 percent said it is compensation for not going to work on the election day has 25-30 percent, and supporting daily needs has 9-16 percent. The common technique or form of vote buying is giving money a day or two before the Election Day.

In the Philippines, even though the Commission on Elections' (COMELEC) restricted vote buying in the Philippines, it was very popular across the Philippines, during or near election period. The Philippine National Police, noted that vote buying in the Philippines often starts in the dark, where potential voter assemble to collect sample ballot with the money or gift item, not at less than ₱500. Even when the authorities warned and have since apprehended those who were involved, it is likely not going to stop. Thus, this particular study is premised on exploring the duality of election fraud and criminality in Nigeria, to find solution to the alchemy and agony of winning the votes and losing the counts in the pooling and INEC office and the courts.

Research questions

The work asked the following questions to give the study a direction:

1. What is the effect of political thuggery and voters' harassment on violence in Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of voters' assault on vandalism and malicious damage in Nigeria?
3. What is the role of vote buying on misinformation and libel in Nigeria?
4. What is the effect of vote suppression on assassination during election in Nigeria?
5. What is the impact of character assassination on acrimony and vendetta during election in Nigeria?

Objective of the study

This work sues as it main objective to examine the duality of election fraud and criminality in Nigeria while the sub-objectives are to:

1. Examine the effect of political thuggery and voters' harassment on violence in Nigeria
2. ascertain the influence of voters' assault on vandalism and malicious damage in Nigeria
3. Investigate the role of vote buying on misinformation and libel in Nigeria?

4. Explore the effect of vote suppression on assassination in Nigeria?
5. Assess the impact of character assassination on acrimony and vendetta in Nigeria

Theoretical framework

This works made use of the jurisdictional theory of election fraud and conspiracy theory of election fraud.

Jurisdictional theory of election fraud

The jurisdictional election fraud theory assumes that electoral fraud has been premised on electoral authoritarianism given that most forms of autocracies in the world are clothes behind democratic façade. However substantial is the fact that, the goal is to achieve electoral legitimacy without risking democracy and whatever is unknown about it. Whatever would have motivated this falsehood is anchored around the fear of political unrest and violence. It is defensive to lay claims that election authoritarians do not really ban opposition but create multi-party system wherein votes are shared but government resources including the military and police are used to sponsor and support the elections of the ruling party or ruling class. These power mongers use the media and other avenues available to them, to create propaganda, misinform and mislead the public. This may explain why almost all elections favour the ruling party and the ruling class. Furthermore, it is because the prosecution, courts, electoral commissions are controlled by the ruling party. This often leaves the opposition with the choice of revolt or acquiesces. Federalism shields electoral fraud because democracy is over rated as government of the people, by the people and for the people. Meanwhile, it is the manipulative tool for electoral irregularities. Given this problems therefore the jurisdiction model which suggest that election takes place with a particular jurisdiction like Local Government Area, State, region, and country with similarities and have adequate knowledge of issues on ground. Each jurisdiction handles and manipulates the election result to its advantage depending on who has the power, property, prestige, influence and possibly authority to fine-tune results to their favour. This theory can effectively be applied in Nigeria where party faithful who act as agents, thugs and monitoring team etc go all out to carry out any form of act like character assassination, vote buying, voter suppression, thuggery, intimidation, assault, libel and misinformation just to coerce, lure or deceive voters and secure more votes. This is a typical situation in Nigeria where party member go out of the way including elimination of opponents, electoral officers and voters to win election. Election fraud, rigging and manipulation are very common sights in Nigeria elections and have been here for a while. This theory was used because it has been able to explain why and how election fraud is successfully committed in Nigeria jurisdiction like elsewhere in the world. The conspiracy will also be used to augment this theory for a more illuminating explanation on the issue under discuss.

Conspiracy theory of election fraud

The conspiracy theory is a view point advanced to reject the standard explanation for an event and credit a covert group or organization with carrying out a secret plot. The conspiracy theory claimed or believed that people do things behind others (secretly) to gain certain results that they do not merit. It holds its claim on the fact that whatever is presented to the

public has a manipulative undertone. The theory tries to offer an explanation for harmful and tragic event(s) as a result of the action or inaction of a small group of powerful individuals or groups who upturn events and situation to their advantage and offer a false impression to the public. Such explanations reject the accepted narrative surrounding those events; in fact, the official version of the explanation may be seen as further conspiracy. The conspiracy theory flourishes as the after of an unpleasant event with brought about depression and or anxiety. The electoral conspiracy theory assumed that a group of people congregate and carryout a kangaroo arrangement as well as masterminded plan to rig elections and after the successful rigging, the same set of people come out to offer a totally different explanation for why things happened the way they do to the public to cover up their track. Most times in Nigeria, after the election has been conducted, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Police, Court, electoral tribunal, mass media and party stalwarts are on the same page of electoral fraud. This is because the aforementioned set of persons, agencies or group help the power that be, to outsmart the public by forcing a candidate on them. They present unfathomable result and defend the falsehood surrounding the result to a point of making it look like truth that has been tested and trusted. Tools like libel, misinformation, character assassination, vote buying, intimidation, harassment, vote suppression, assassination, disenfranchisement, party membership suspension, division of opposition votes, artificial migration or party membership defection etc are employed to carryout electoral fraud in Nigeria and this practices have almost become a norm among the political class. This is often perfected with exchange of Ghana must go bags. The conspiracy theory have been used here because it offers explanation on how the ruling and political class outsmart and manipulate the public in election and continue to perpetuate obnoxious acts against the civil public in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design with the general public as the unit of analysis. It sampled the Local Government and States in the geopolitical zones using cluster sampling and the participants using purposive sampling techniques. Four (4) participants each where sampled from four (4) states in each of six in each of the six (6) geopolitical zones making twenty-four (24) participants for the Key Informant Interview (KII). While the FGD made use of two sets of eight (8) males and females categories. The study used qualitative method of data collection. That is, it combined Key Informant Interview (KII) with Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The data was analyzed using manual content analysis and ethnographic summaries.

Data presentation and discussion of result

The data sourced from the field work for this study is presented thematically in line with the research questions below:

What is the effect of political thuggery and voters` harassment on violence in Nigeria?

Participants were asked the effect of political thuggery and voters` harassment on violence during election in Nigeria. It was reported by one of the participants that election in Nigeria is a do or die affair. It is a winner takes all situation, thus, aspirants and party stalwarts engage all avenues to

become successful. The use of political thugs to harass voters and aspirants is one of the many antics and evils that permeate electioneering process in Nigeria. This situation often leaves the country choosing and selecting wrong leaders who were not voted by the people and do not have interest of the masses at heart. This explained the frustration and violence amongst the youths in Nigeria. The current trend of kidnapping, abduction, armed robbery; assassination and murder are by-products of this kind of scenario.

Another participant argued that political thuggery and harassment of voters and aspirants during elections do not end at winning election. After election in most cases protest, riots, vandalism, street blockade, armed robbery, murder, street fighting, kidnapping, abduction, intimidation and threats continue to rear their ugly heads.

A participant observed that, when politician hire the services of thugs to harass voters and their opponents, they have given arms and ammunitions to these able bodied youths. Most of these youths are used during election for their nefarious activities and abandoned afterwards leaving the arms and ammunition in the custody of these youths. The consequences of these act is evident to all of us, we have witnessed a continuous rise in crime rates of different kind and it is not unconnected with electoral fraud and the desperation to win election. The spate of armed robbery, kidnapping, abduction, killings, ethnic, clashes and wars are a function of the Nigerian electioneering process.

A participant noted that the Nigerian electioneering process engender a lot of criminalities. She wondered the need for political thuggery and harassment of voters and aspirants when there is provision for campaign and convincing of candidates to vote for candidates of their choice. The use of political thugs to harass voter and aspirant is barbaric, inhuman and unnecessary. She lamented that after elections, civil unrest, street violence, protest, stealing, armed robbery, kidnapping and abduction becomes the order of the day. Elections in Nigeria have succeeded in snatching peace and order from the society and exposed everyone to a high state of insecurity.

It was noted by another participant that the use of thugs and harassment as a tool to win election is not funny and appreciative at all. She believed that this phenomenon is harmful in all ramifications. She argued that people are injured, hurt, killed and elections disrupted. In most cases she continued, the wrong winner emerged and would not be able to consolidate the gains of democracy without a corresponding change in the will and aspiration of the masses. This could be a catalyst for frustration on the part of youths for violence and criminalities of all kind. Little wonder why armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, abduction and assassinations are increasing per second in Nigeria.

The FGD participants revealed that there is nothing good about using political thugs to harass voters and aspirants. This only create tension, enmity, injuries, deaths and escalates other crime like armed robbery, abduction, kidnapping, assassination, stealing and street fighting.

What is the influence of voters` assault on vandalism and malicious damage in Nigeria?

Participants were asked the influence of voters` assault on vandalism and malicious damage during in Nigeria. A participant observed that whether verbal or physical assault on the electoral officers, voters and aspirants is morally and

legally wrong. It is a criminal offence that the law abhors. This behaviour has a legal backing and punishment allotted to it. The suspect or culprit is expected to be charged and arraigned with various offences depending on who is assaulted. Most times the scene creates tension, atmosphere of hostility and chaos. Physical assault leads to fights where bodily injuries are inflicted and deaths may occur. It is as a prelude for vandalization and malicious damage of properties. Elections takes place in public facilities like schools, community town halls, church/mosques when fight erupts in such places, it is public properties that are damaged. Of ten times, this is a big blow to democracy and development in which electioneering process dares to elect leaders to achieve.

It is the view of another participant that, assault is offensive and leaves one with physical and psychological torture. She reported that she can bear to see anyone assault her whether verbally or physically. When this assault happened people like me who cannot stand will be force to revolt and fight usual will erupt leaving a score of people injured or killed with properties maliciously damaged. This is a fundamental contradiction from the goals and principles of election and democracy.

A participant argued that assault during electioneering process in Nigeria is almost normal. He is of the opinion that party thugs and supporters will always engage words during elections this often resulted to fight and destruction of properties. He added that when I am in the public, I guard my utterance and avoid engaging in public uproar or display of emotion. A lot of people lack self-control self-respect and self-esteem, if you do not guide yours jealously, they will drag you low to their level. The consequence is that it might not just end in quarreling, fighting and destruction of properties, it could result to death, protracted court cases and permanent enmity. That is how bad, the situation is.

A participant believed that it is not uncommon to find party thugs, faithful and supporters clash during campaign, election and afterwards. Their clashes are usually bloody and destruction. People get injured, die and properties as destroyed in quantum. Whenever I am going to vote in election I am well behaved and guided because I do not want to be embarrassed or assaulted by anyone. It is a common practice in Nigerian polling booths. She lamented thus "I do not know why the atmosphere is that tensed and violent prone" I have never seen an electioneering process (campaign and election) in Nigeria goes by smoothly without violence. She is of the opinion that electioneering process in Nigeria promotes violence through it do or die desperation approach. I detest elections because of this.

Another participant noted that assault and vandalization of public properties during elections in Nigeria is not new to me. We are used to it. People fight, get injured and some die in the process. People`s private and public properties are vandalized maliciously. In the last election I saw a fine bike and car being burnt to ashes. After the election too, series of destruction took place and created a lot of tension, fear and civil unrest. One wonders when this will all stop, instead it is increasing and creating a spillover effect of the individuals involved in it and the society in general.

The FGD participants revealed that, assault and malicious damage is the specimen of electioneering process in Nigeria. In any election that there are not seen, it seems abnormal. Others argued that, assault promote violence, vandalization, malicious damage, deaths and enmity among supporters and

aspirants. Some say it undermines development and sabotage effort to give the masses a quality life.

What is the role of vote buying and misinformation on libel in Nigeria?

Participants were asked the role of vote buying on libel in Nigeria. One of the participants said vote buying is seen everywhere in Nigerian elections. Sometimes, it is given as gift item, money or even juicy promises. It results to misinformation and diversion of public resources. When votes are bought and such an aspirant wins election, he/she will make effort to recoup the monies spent in vote buying through stealing, embezzlement and misappropriation of funds. This will only leave the masses in penury and the society undeveloped.

Another participant believed that there is not clear cut link between vote buying and libel. She said vote buying is damaging and people in this part of the world see as election winning techniques and voters sees it as the dividends of voting and not going to work on election day. She argued that sometimes vote buying is done a day or two before the proper election. In most polling booth, you see party stalwarts paying cash and gift items to people who show evidence of voting in their favour. The media and opposition parties write and make post or publication to expose this act but those who are pro vote buying see it as libel. What I know is that aspirants buy votes in Nigeria and the opposition takes it up against perpetrators of such act in courts or electoral tribunal.

It was noticed by another participant that, vote buying end up with libel charges in courts. It is either the opposition charges the culprits or the culprit uses character assassination as defense to escape the long arm of the law. Nigeria is a big joke and the electioneering process in a melodrama. We will continue to languish in wishful thinking in shamble until we truly aspire to get it right. Aspirants who buy votes once they win elections, they loot the state treasurer to nothing to cover for their loss. This situation always results in unemployment or employment without salary, pension, promotion and gratuity. The issue of social infrastructure and development becomes a dream. Crime rate dramatically increases and deviation becomes a norm. This is exactly where Nigeria finds itself wallowing in agony.

It was the observation of another participant that, vote buying leads to libel. She however reported that it leads to embezzlement, misappropriation and undevelopment. To her, people who sale their vote and conscience for money are selling their future and the country's development because the aspirants will want to recover their money back. This will only take the country backward. This could eventually promote other crimes like prostitution, fraud, robbery, kidnapping, abduction and assassination due to youth unemployment and lack of the basic needs for survival.

A participant noted that vote buying is capable of attracting libel, law suits and crime like embezzlement, misappropriation, fraud, prostitution; assassination, armed robbery, kidnapping, abduction and stealing.

The findings from the FGD participants revealed that, politicians engaged in vote buying. The vote buying tools for winning election is illegal and unlawful. This act attracts libel charges or law suits from the losers or opposition parties. Beyond this, there is likelihood for crimes like embezzlement, fraud, misappropriation and money laundering from the politicians. While stealing, breaking and entry; armed robbery, kidnapping, assassination and

abduction will occur from the unemployed and idle youths roaming the streets.

What is the effect of vote suppression on assassination in Nigeria?

When participants were asked the effect of vote suppression on assassination in Nigeria, it was noticed by one of the participants that vote suppression is provoking. Most time politician eliminates their opposition or opponents if it is clear that they suppress or stole their vote. In the last election, one INEC staff and his family were roasted in a flame of fire in his house because he suppressed an aspirant's votes in election. These situations are everywhere in Nigerian elections.

Another participant said he will not even take it that I aspired for a political office and my votes are being suppressed to favour my opposition. He said it raw "I will skin a lot of people alive beginning with my opponent, his family and then the INEC officials.

It was the view of another participant that votes` suppression is bad and capable of arouse uncontrollable anger on the opposition. It could lead to protest, riots, assault, affray, malicious damage/vandalism and death. She asserted that, election fraud that involved vote suppression is not just annoying but immoral, unlawful and witch-hunting. To her, no one will take it. It is very possible that most people will be killed as a result of that act. These things are very possible and I heard such things happened in the last elections in most cities here in Nigeria. She added that people need to be mindful how they deliberately provoke others. It is not everyone that have the heart to use court action or overlook, most people will out of provocation and anger take the laws into their hands.

A participant said of all the electoral fraud, why suppressing votes that are casted in favour of a particular candidate? He wondered why people are so heartless and noted that desperation can cause a lot of havoc that turn around to consume and destroy them. To him, suppression of votes has taken the lives of many INEC officials and politicians. The regular kidnapping, abduction, maiming, assassination and brutality of politician by political opponents is associated with this kind of act. In Nigeria everything is possible. People have been killed in similar circumstances severally.

The FGD participants argued that votes` suppression can lead to assassination. While some said they have heard of such acts, other claimed they have witnessed it in practice. Some said if anyone can suppress the votes of his rivals to win, it means his opponent can also assassinate or kill him as pay back. The FGD participants epitomized that, Nigeria politicians and desperados who will do anything including assassination and elimination to have their way.

What is the impact of character assassination on acrimony and vendetta in Nigeria?

When asked the impact of character assassination on acrimony and vendetta in Nigeria, a participant said forgiveness is not easy. If someone destroys your personality through character assassination, he is not a friend but a foe. With foes, enmity is eternal, they would not stop at anything until, and they succeed in bringing you down and have their way. It will definitely be a series of prolonged retaliatory and vengeful hatred. This kind of act can extend into generations yet unborn.

Another participant said character assassination leads to a

feeling of anger and bitterness towards opposition or opponents who engages in destroying his political rivals through presenting them in a bad light. Character assassination progresses in acrimonious manner continuously as this opponents strive for retaliation and dominance. Nigeria is actually one of the countries in this political mess. A participant laments that politics with bitterness is what obtains in Nigeria. She said, she heard that in politics there is no permanent friend or enemy but in Nigeria, that adage seems not to hold sway. This is because character assassination is rampant and this breeds acrimony and vendetta, and encourage other crimes like assassination, murder, kidnapping, abduction, armed robbery and vandalism to excel. To her, we are stuck in this country and it is an annoying entrapment because we cannot do anything about thing.

It was reported by another participant that character assassination tarnishes someone's image and may lead to scandal that will destroy his career or life. This is the intent of Nigeria politicians towards each other to score easy votes and win election. Nigeria media, party faith/supporters and the public is used to create propaganda, blackmail, libel with the intention to impinge character assassination against a particular candidate. This situation can degenerate into problem of hatred and life time fighting. The level of furiousness between political foes can hold grounds for generations. Moreso, that grade grandchildren are meant to inherit political enemies of grade grandfathers that they do not know. This is not a healthy situation is capable of eroding the foundation of man's social existence and peace. Worst is the fact that nothing ever works well in this kind of atmosphere, meaning that almost all aspects of life for these rivals and society may have to be stagnated and stampeded for God knows how long.

A participant reported that hating a political opponent is a major weakness. It is supposed to be rivalry and competitiveness over a political office that ends immediately after election but most people who aspire for political offices engage in character assassination and create a template for acrimony and vendetta to dwell permanently. He added that "I do not know what is wrong with all this desperation about among Nigerian politicians". Their desperation will lead them to doom if it is not tamed and controlled.

The FGD session participants reported that character assassination is a bad act and is common among politicians even in the developed climes. They contended that it is very common in Nigeria to find a political opponent and his supporters' tongue lashing and lambasting their rival(s) to brighten their chances of winning election. When this happens, the opponent may take it up to revenge and retaliate. This may not just be in words but beyond and it could last forever in the mind of this person seeking revenge until his aim is achieve. This scenario may have offered explanation for incessant violence and criminality that is ravaging Nigeria and eroding the peace and unity of the people. We are more divided that united in Nigeria because of politics, religion, ethnicity and cliques based on sentiments created or founded on a baseless ideology. This is "the true picture of the agony of Nigerian politicians have pushed the country in. May we not drown in the acts and sins of our political class and elite", he submitted.

Conclusion

It was concluded from the finding of this study that harassment can discourage participation in voting and thus, hindering the emergence of popular candidate as winner. Voters' assault violates human right of the voters. The use of libel in the electoral process offends human integrity and fundamental human rights of the aspirants and voters. Vote suppression offend the voters and wrong winners are announced. The autonomy of voters is undermined and creates a dependency of voters on the income or goods that they are receiving for their votes, and can further perpetuate a type of poverty trap. Vote buying in democratic states like Nigeria, poses a threat to democracy, misinformation hinders democracy principles.

Recommendations

The following recommendation should be strictly adhered to if this phenomenon is to be curbed successfully:

- Political thuggery should be discouraged through effective law making and enforcement by the government and its agents.
- Assault and affray of both voters and aspirants in and out of the polling booth should be frowned at and suspects or culprits be severely dealt with.
- Youths should deliberately refused to be used as thugs to disrupt the electoral process as this will only lead to the emergence of a non-popular candidate that would not be able to delivers on the gains of democracy to the citizens.
- Parents must dare to appropriately socialize and conscientize their children and wards to be conscious of the very essence of election and stay away from acts capable of obstructing the smooth running and process of electing good leaders to drive the process of democracy.
- Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), god spirited individuals, community leaders and everyone should be up and doing to ensure that the democratic process is not alter or falter in anywhere. Should this happen, there is bound to be ineffective leadership and governance.

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