

***Electoral Regulations and Violence among Youths in Anambra State, Nigeria,  
2015 - 2019***

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**Abstract**

*The study interrogated electoral violence among youths and stakeholders in Anambra State, Nigeria (2015-2019). Ex-post facto research design was adopted. The population was 4,822 respondents consisting of INEC officials, executive of all registered political parties, town councils, and youth councils in the state. Simple random, proportionate and accidental sampling techniques were used in selecting 966 respondents for the study. Data collection instruments were Elections Regulations and Guidelines (ERG) contained in the 2010 Electoral Act, and Adherence to Election Ethics Questionnaire (AEEQ) with 20 items meant to elicit responses on the problems of the study. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was .71. Descriptive statistics, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Simple linear regression were adopted for data analysis. Results showed that the level of adherence to election ethics in the study area is not significantly high and there is a statistically significant influence of perceived adherence to election ethics among stakeholders and involvement in election violence. Public perception of INEC conducting free and fair election significantly predicts adherence to election ethics among youths in Anambra State. It was recommended that candidates, electorates and electoral officials should make concerted efforts to adhere in totality to election ethics.*

**Keywords:** Ethics, Youths, Electoral, violence, Politics

**Introduction**

There is usually a debate on whether or not politics fuels violence in the society, especially among the youths. However, this may be true on one hand and may be false on the other hand. Election violence is a form of political violence exhibited before, during and after election which often take the nature of politically motivated

kidnapping, killing, ballot box snatching, armed attacks on perceived opponent and the officers of electoral umpire as well as electoral stakeholders, burning of collation centres and offices for the purpose of gaining political advantage (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019). Election violence happens in form of assassination, looting, and attacks on those involved in the electoral process such as the media, voters, candidates standing for elections, destroying electoral materials and disrupting campaign rallies (Omotola, 2010; Onapajo, 2014). Politics is not meant to destroy but to build and correct for the good of all. Cases of widespread violence are often high after the announcement of election results (Straus & Taylor, 2012). This has been the feature of Nigeria's democratic process. For instance, the 2019 general elections in Nigeria witnessed a violent post-electoral process as over 70 persons lost their lives during and after the exercise (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019).

Beside the loss of lives recorded during and after the general election, ballot box snatching, burning of properties including the Independent National Electoral Commission offices housing sensitive and non-sensitive materials meant for the election, burning of houses of political aspirants and people affected with varying degrees of injuries characterized the elections of the President and National Assembly on February 23rd as well as the Governorship and State House of Assembly of March 9th and the subsequent supplementary elections (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019). Persistent post-electoral violence unfortunately has come to be associated with Nigerian politics which made it practically difficult to disassociate this fact from obvious economic and social inequalities, heightened religious and ethnic divisions, increasing cases of corruption, weak state institutions, structural weaknesses, abuse and use of power of the state to favour incumbents, ease in manipulation and use of the young people towards violence (Verjee, Kwaja & Onubogu, 2018; Onimisi, 2015).

The continuous electoral violence being witnessed in Nigeria, if not properly addressed, would place the country's democratic practice at risk of becoming unpopular among the citizens of the country. This is an element of drawback in the future elections for electoral violence is eating deep into the economy. Thus, one prominent enemy of current democratic dispensation remains electoral violence especially among youths because of uncertainty, fears over loss of lives and property, conflict and doubt continue to characterize the electoral system in Nigeria which threatens the corporate existence of the nation (Agbalajobi & Agunbiade, 2016).

The prevalent electoral violence threatens democracy in Nigeria, democratization, democratic growth, democratic consolidation thus increasing unrest, insecurity, increase in cultism and problem in democratic handover of power especially when the outcome of the election is perceived to be fraudulent as a result of violent acts. In polarized societies, the outcome of elections make little or no difference as it is usually

not accepted by both the ruling and opposition parties, which usually leads to frequent court cases and court rulings (Verjee et al., 2018). This unacceptability of electoral outcome is more compounded where there are evidence of electoral fraud or irregularity and electoral violence especially in the case of Nigeria in general and Anambra State in particular. There are several recorded incidences of election violence across the country. In Anambra State, Southeast, the Premium Times reported that Nigeria police confirmed the death of two persons in Obosi area during the State House of Assembly elections when armed political thugs attempted to snatch electoral results, while 47 people were equally arrested for disruption of elections, thuggery, and assault during the March 9th election (Premium Times, 2019).

Political tussle and desire to clinch unto power by all means and at all cost have been the primary reason for election violence in Nigeria (Orji & Uzodi, 2012). The Nigerian political class employs communal, sectional, ethnic and religious sentiment when they are faced with stiff political competition for power (Orji & Uzodi, 2012). The use of ethnicity in Nigerian electioneering is such that the political aspirant with a great amount of ethnic influence having lost an election tend to encourage his or her supporters directly or indirectly to cause disturbance which invariable in most cases leads to violence in the community (Agbalajobi & Agunbiade, 2016). The growing level of ignorance as a result of increasing poverty, unemployment, and lack of basic education and importantly near absence of orientation contributed in no small measure to the 2019 electoral violence in Nigeria (Timothy & Omolegbe, 2019).

Also, studies suggest that most electoral violence in Nigeria are carried out by gangs or political thugs recruited, armed, financed by political party officials, politicians and government officials through selected representatives due to increasing level of illiteracy, poverty and high rate of unemployment in the country (Orji & Uzodi, 2012; Aniekwe & Kushie, 2011; Adepegba, 2019). Similarly, Enu and Odey (2017a) stressed the need to contain organised crime to forestall crime, corruption and violence in a global system of governance. The electoral violence commonly witnessed in the country are often perpetuated by sets of illiterates, and sometimes educated persons who are unemployed, financially weak and poor youths who depend on the political elites for their survival. The youths easily turn to political thugs for their political masters (Meadow, 2009). Doubt over the integrity of the electoral umpire and negative perception of the electoral process among the stakeholder could lead to violent elections (Orji & Uzodi, 2012).

In doing this, youths are the vehicle via which the act is perpetrated. This has done more harm than good to the whole system as it well encourages social vices and cultism among youths. It as well instigates violence among youths, and political, religious and ethnic groups. The researchers perceive that this problem has been

lingering due to the laxity on the part of the Nigerian government and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as well as law enforcement agencies to sanction culprits and defaulters of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) (FRN, 2010) that prescribes fines payable by culprits. It must also be established here that the onus of conducting a credible election with the aid of the Electoral Act is on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Therefore, a peaceful and free election devoid of violence can be possible depending on how INEC handles the process.

In spite of the provision of the Electoral Act, 2010 to guide and regulate the electoral process, acts of electoral violence persist in Nigerian democratic practice. This Act is supposed to be the mirror through which stakeholders in the electoral system are dressed. It is instructive to note that the Act stipulates punishment or deterrents for defaulters. By this token, there should be a seamless process devoid of violence of any kind. However, the 2015 and 2019 general elections, which are assumed to be among the best in the annals of Nigerian democracy, were not devoid of electoral skirmishes here and there. As Enu and Odey (2017b) noted, youths have been the implements in the hands of the political class for cultivating violence, whom the authors maintained chose not to provide the youths with Civic Education. The foregoing stirred the curiosity that informed the decision to interrogate electoral violence among youths in Anambra State of Nigeria, 2015-2019.

### **Purpose of the study**

In specific terms, this study sought to examine:

1. The extent of adherence to electoral regulations among youths and election stakeholders in Anambra State.
2. Perceived adherence to electoral regulations among youth and other stakeholders and involvement in electoral violence in Anambra State.
3. Public perception of INEC conducting credible elections and electoral violence among youths in Anambra State.

### **Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** Extent of adherence to electoral regulation is not significantly high among youths and election stakeholders in Anambra State.

**Ho2:** There is no significant mean difference in the perception of youths and election stakeholders on the level of adherence to electoral regulation and the extent of electoral violence in Anambra State.

**Ho3:** Public perception of INEC conducting credible elections does not significantly predict electoral violence among youths in Anambra State.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted an ex-post facto research design since the activities under investigation had taken place and far beyond the manipulation of the researchers. The study area was Anambra State, South-East Nigeria. It lies between the coordinates: 6°20'N 7°00'E with a population of 4,177,828 covering an area of 4,844km<sup>2</sup> (1,870 sq mi). It is bounded to the West by Delta State, to the South by Imo and Rivers States, to the East by Enugu State and to the North by Kogi State. Majority (98%) of the people speak Igbo language while the remaining 2% speak Igala.

The population was four thousand, eight hundred and twenty-two (4,822) respondents consisting of INEC officials in the state, executive committees of all registered political parties in the state, executive committees of all town councils in the state, and executive committees of all youth councils in the state. The sample was 966 respondents (20% of targeted population) selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure involving stratified, purposive and accidental sampling techniques. The population was stratified into the various groups from which samples were drawn. The samples were drawn based on the purpose of the study. Meanwhile, the respondents were chosen using accidental sampling approach in as much as they belonged to the specified stratum from which a certain number was to be chosen (20% was assigned to electoral officials, 30% to registered political parties officials while the remaining 50% of the respondents were youths).

Two instruments were used for data collection; Elections Regulations and Guidelines (ERG) contained in the Electoral Act, 2010 as amended (it was used to determine extent of adherence) and a questionnaire tagged Adherence to Election Ethics Questionnaire (AEEQ) developed by the researchers with 20 items with a Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate of .71 determined after trial testing the instrument on 100 respondents on the target population who were not part of the study sample. The ERG was used as a guide in constructing the AEEQ, which was based on a four-point Likert scale with the options of strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), disagreed (D) and strongly disagree (SD). The questionnaire was used to elicit information on the relationship between public perception of INEC conducting free and fair election and adherence to electoral regulations. Descriptive statistics of mean and inferential statistics of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and simple linear regression, were adopted for data analysis, and all hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level.

## Presentation of results

Results are presented according to the study hypotheses.

**Ho1:** Extent of adherence to electoral regulation is not significantly high among youths and election stakeholders in Anambra State.

To test this hypothesis, data was coded appropriately and one sample t-test statistics was adopted in analysing the data. Summary of the results is presented in table 1.

**Table 1:** One sample t-test of extent of adherence to electoral regulation

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	Sig.
Population mean		14.38	4.75			
	966			.285	964	.08
Sample mean		20.00	6.53			

Results of the data as presented on table 1 revealed that the extent of adherence to electoral regulation in the study area is not significantly high, given that the sample mean (14.38) is less than the population mean (20.00), with a t-value of .285, df=964 and  $p > .05$ .

**Ho2:** There is no significant mean difference in the perception of youths and election stakeholders on the level of adherence to electoral regulation and extent of electoral violence in Anambra State.

To test this hypothesis, data was coded appropriately and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was adopted in analysing the data. Mean score, standard deviation and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test this hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level and presented in table 2, LSD Post Hoc test for multiple classifications in table 3.

**Table 2:** Summary ANOVA of mean difference in perceived adherence to election regulations among youths and other stakeholders and involvement in election violence

Category	N	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Electoral officials	193	24.03	2.58		
Political parties officials	290	21.93	3.96		
Youth groups	483	22.87	4.68		
Total	966	23.03	3.71		
Source of variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	686.707	2	137.341	10.471	.000
Within Groups	12592.233	963	13.117		
Total	13278.940	965			

\*Significant at .05 level; df = 2,963; critical F = 3.00

**Table 3:** LSD Multiple Comparisons

(I) Stakeholders	(J) Stakeholders	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Electoral officials	Pol. parties officials	1.04643	.54693	.056	-.0269	2.1197
	Youths	1.16089	.69919	.097	-.2112	2.5330
Political parties officials	Electoral officials	-2.09360*	.30478	.000	-	-
	Youths	-.93270	.69172	.178	2.6917	1.4955
Youths	Electoral officials	-1.16089	.69919	.097	-	.2112
	Candidates	.93270	.69172	.178	2.2902	2.2902

\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 2 presents the result of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of perceived level of adherence to electoral regulation among youths and election stakeholders and extent of electoral violence in Anambra State. The result revealed that there is statistically significant difference in the perception of youth and election stakeholders on the level of adherence to electoral regulation and extent of electoral violence  $F(2, 965) = 10.47; p < .05$ . By this result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant mean difference in the perception of youths and election stakeholders on the level of adherence to electoral regulation and extent of electoral violence in Anambra State was rejected, while the alternate hypothesis was retained. Because there was a statistically significant mean difference in the perceived level of adherence of youths and election stakeholders to electoral regulations, Post Hoc Test was performed to establish which of the categories (electoral officials, political parties officials and youths) have more adherence. The result is presented in table 3.

**Ho3:** Public perception of INEC conducting credible elections does not significantly predict electoral violence among youths in Anambra State.

To test this hypothesis, data was coded appropriately and simple linear regression statistics was adopted in analysing the data. Summary of the results is presented in table 4:

**Table 4:** Summary of simple linear regression analysis of public perception of INEC conducting free and fair election and electoral violence among youths

Variables	Mean	SD					
Perception	10.61	4.96					
Adherence	23.12	6.83					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	F	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Sig
Regression	5686.668	1					
Residual	174234.021	964	50.002	.318 <sup>a</sup>	.092	.091	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Total	179920.689	965					

The result of data analysis as presented in table 4 shows that the R-value of 0.318<sup>a</sup> is significant at 0.05 alpha level ( $p = .000^a < 0.05$ ), therefore the stated null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant contribution of public perception of INEC conducting credible election on electoral violence in Anambra State. Also, the R<sup>2</sup>-value of .092 implies that 9.2% of total variance is accounted for by predictor variable (public perception of INEC). Furthermore, the regression ANOVA revealed that, there was a high joint linear association (contribution) of the predictor-variable

(public perception of INEC) on electoral violence among youths in Anambra State given by the  $F(1, 965) = 50.002$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . The adjusted  $R^2$  (.091) shows some shrinkage of the unadjusted value (.092) indicating that the model could be generalized on the population. Based on the result, it was concluded that public perception of INEC conducting credible elections significantly predicts electoral violence among youths in Anambra State.

### **Discussion of the findings**

Results of data analysis for hypothesis 1 as presented in table 1 revealed that the level of adherence to electoral regulation in the study area is not significantly high as the comparison of the sample mean (14.38) with the population mean (20.00) indicates  $t=0.285$ ,  $p>.05$  and  $df=964$ . Table 2 presents the result of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of perceived adherence to electoral regulation among youths and other stakeholders and electoral violence. The result revealed that there is statistically significant difference in the perception of youths and stakeholders on the level of adherence to electoral regulation and extent of election violence  $F(2, 965) = 10.47$ ;  $p < .05$ . By this result, the null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternate hypothesis was retained. The result of data analysis as presented in table 4 shows that the R-value of  $0.318^a$  is significant at 0.05 alpha level ( $p = .000^a < 0.05$ ), therefore the stated null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant contribution of public perception of INEC conducting credible elections and electoral violence among youths in Anambra State.

These findings are not different from the report by Timothy and Omolegbe (2019) and Enu and Odey (2017b), who pointed out that politicians sponsor youths during election and aggravates electoral violence in Nigeria. This is corroborated by Adeniyi (2019) who also pointed out that hoodlums who burnt down electoral materials were suspected to be sponsored by political elites in Nigeria. To further support this finding, Adepegba (2019) reported that thugs that were arrested by the police in Imo State are alleged to have been sponsored by some set of politicians who are desperately in need for power at all cost.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the finding of the study, it is concluded that adherence to electoral regulation is not high. Again, there is a significant difference in the perception of election stakeholders on adherence to electoral regulation and electoral violence. Finally, how INEC handles election influences electoral violence.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. A reform in the electoral regulatory framework should be made by electoral stakeholders spearheaded by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) so that a more stringent punitive action could be taken against defaulters of electoral regulations.
2. Greater voter education should be made by political parties, INEC and educational institutions to make the masses well informed about the electoral regulation and on peace-building approaches to forestall nonchalant attitude towards sanctity in elections.
3. Integrity, transparency and justice should be the watch words in the appointment of INEC officials so that institutional framework behind INEC could be strong enough to provide Nigerians with credible elections.

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