Political Violence and the Prospect of Democracy in Nigeria: A Survey of the South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria

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Abstract

Democratic development among the African nations is a spring board which has come to lift the continent from the agony of underdevelopment however; electoral violence has stood as a counter weight to this development. Electorates are discouraged from political participation while political violence has made democracy to be synonymous with death trap. The present study focused on evaluating the impart of political violence on public perception of democracy in Nigeria among the electorates in the South-Eastern Nigeria where there has been continual increase on political apathy and low turnout of voters during general elections. 750 participants from 10 geopolitical districts (18+) were selected for the study while the study adopted survey design in data collection. Descriptive and Inferential statistics were adopted to demonstrate the relationship between political violence and the indices of democracy in the region. The findings revealed the impact of political violence on public attitude towards democracy especially since the fourth republic in the country.

Introduction

Democracy in Nigeria since the first republic has faced with lots of hurdles which included electoral violence in form of thuggery; making it more or less difficult for the true principles of democracy to emerge. Due to political violence and political thuggery, an average Nigerian cannot differentiate between democratic governance and leadership by imposition; this of course has made a significant number of the citizens to see democracy as synonymous with death and destruction. The common citizens of the nation are placed far from the realities of democracy both in participation and the dividends of democracy. The terrible nature of the election and electioneering campaigns in Nigeria has defeated the true concept of democracy and has alienated the electorates from their political environment. This situation is one of the greatest threats to democracy such that the survival of phenomenon has been put to jeopardy. The separation of the electorates from the process of selecting their leaders in a democratic dispensation is a way of imposing wrong and autocratic leaders on the masses and engendering of antidemocratic principles in the political system. Through the process of selecting the party candidate to the general election in Nigeria, democratic principle is undermined leaving the process at the mercy of party king makers and the men in possession of weapons and might [1-3]. The electorates are terrified and intimidated out of the selection and election platform while the men with good intention knowledge and character are terrified out of electoral process making Nigeria young democracy more or less the meeting of the vultures which end at producing wrong and disgruntled leaders [4,5]. Political thuggery and violence have been rooted in Nigerian democracy such that they have killed the spirit of genuine political participation both at the leadership level and among the electorates. Where these abound, the future of democracy is in doubt save for the reinforcement of autocracy, military in civilian regalia and militancy politics in disguise [6,7]. Among the African nations, political thuggery in the form of using the unemployed youth and the security agency by the political demagogues has created a serious setbacks and underdevelopment as the electorates are discouraged from participating in political activities. Democracy as one of the important agenda before the United Nations, to protect human rights and encourage development, has been endangered by political thuggery making it necessary to scientifically evaluation. The South-Eastern Nigeria is one of the regions of the country where there has been a high level of political apathy resulting to low turnout during general elections. Although some scholars have alleged it is on the account of political thuggery and lack of faith in Nigerian democracy, the present study is focused on the indices of true democracy such as political participation at the grass root among the electorates and the public perception of the image of democracy in Nigeria in the face of constant electoral violence. Among other things, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

i. Do people of South-Eastern Nigeria perceive Nigeria as truly democratic nation?

ii. What is the attitude to Nigerian democracy among the people of the region?

iii. What is the relationship between public perception of democracy in the region and their attitude to Nigerian democracy?

iv. What is the public perception of the extent of political violence in the region?

v. What is the relationship between public perception of electoral violence and political participation?

vi. What is the relationship between public perception of electoral violence and attitude to democracy in Nigeria?

vii. How do the electorates perceive the selection of party candidate by various political parties?

viii. Do the electorates believe their vote contribute to democracy in the face of political violence?

ix. Has political violence affected participation in voting since the fourth republic in the region?

x. How do the electorates perceive the Nigerian electoral system?

xi. What are the factors that can explain the public perception of democracy in Nigeria as a nation?

Political Thuggery in Nigeria, A Historical Overview

Thuggery has been a common feature in Nigerian history since independence but it is quite difficult to ascertain the exact time it become an indispensable part of the Nigerian polity. Tracing the earlier stages of political thuggery in Nigeria, Abekhale and Toy-Anyiin, were of the view that the political tussle between Akintola and Awolowo during the first republic, which witnessed an unprecedented violence is one of the earliest crises recorded in postcolonial era. According to Isichei cited in Abekhale and Toy-Anyiin, the unpopular minority government of Akintola as at then used violence and coercion to survive the venoms of the opposition political parties and the electorates in the western region of Nigeria [8].

In the Middle Belt of Nigeria comprising Benue state, Kogi state, etc., thuggery was witnessed in its brutality and perhaps, the first time, during the Tiv riot of 1964, remotely connected to late Senator J. S. Tarka, leader of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). In connection with this political violence, it was estimated that 337 people died.

The issue of thuggery during the first republic is not limited to the western and Middle Belt region; it became a common phenomenon in different parts of Nigeria. In the Northern region, the genesis of thuggery in the first republic is aptly connected to the conflict between northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and Northern People's Congress (NPC), whose problematic scenario began at Kano [9]. In the spirit of traditionalism and fear of reformist party like NEPU, British colonial government mobilized the machinery of the Kano native authority made up of the traditional institutions, police, judiciary and prison, and transformed them into instrument of repression and violence against the adherents of NEPU. A gangster group called Jam Iyyar Mahaukaba (Crazy men's party) was fashioned out to counteract the members of NEPU by moving from house to house and street to street to fish out, attack and molest them squarely. This action in the account of Mbaya and Abba, set a stage for spiral violence on the opposition parties in the region such as National Congress of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC) and other none indigenous parties in the Northern region. It was that politics which extended to the second republic which witnessed Great Nigerian People's Party (GNPP) and National Party of Nigeria (NPN) as dominant parties in the Northern region.

Political violence from the Nigerian second republic was so bitter that party faithful engaged in burning of houses, for example, in Mafomi and other villages surrounding the metropolis, including poisoning of wells in the remote areas. Meanwhile the wave of political thuggery especially in the North which extended till presently started

during the social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) era of the aborted third republic [9]. Meanwhile in spite of the terminated third Republic which gave birth to the modern day political thuggery, thuggery continued into the fourth republic in different parts of the country operating in some places as organized groups, and in others as adhoc groups and by implication, work for both political party as a group and individual politicians in different political parties. For instance, these thugs are known in different parts of Nigeria by different names such as, Odua people congress popularly known as areas boys in Lagos, in the Niger Delta we have Egbesu boys, in Calabar we have Bakassi boys, Bauchi has Sara-Suka (cut and stab), Gombe has Yarkalare, Yam Daba (Jungle boys) in Kano and ECOMOG in Borno. The current development in Borno state has revealed that most of these thugs have metamorphosed to Boko Haram [9]. In the present Republic, electoral violence powered by political thuggery has become the other of the day even sometimes, going beyond the electoral issue to other politically related matters. Since elections and post-election periods of 1999 to 2008, there is hardly any state in Nigeria that has not witnessed political violence, killings and thuggery. The preponderance of political thuggery/violence gives the impression that Nigeria can never run a successful democracy [10]. Statistical data on political assassinations, violence and thuggery from 1999 (the beginning of fourth republic), till presently, are frightening and calls for speedy remedial actions [11].

The electorate and democracy itself is being undermined due to human right abuse and threats to free and fair elections. Human Right Watch estimates that a minimum of 300 Nigerians were killed in violence linked to the 2007 election although there may be other credible estimates considerably higher than this.

As evidence of the obvious nature of political violence and thuggery in Nigerian Democracy, it has become a public discourse and daily phenomenon in the language of the politicians [12]. The optimism of President Jonathan about the possibility of conducting peaceful, orderly and violent free elections in 2015 devoid of heavy presence of security personnel appears to be unrealizable as certain events are pointing at the fact that all politicians and political parties have arranged their thugs, preparing for the worst.

Political Thuggery and Democratic Development in Nigeria

In a developmental perspective, democracy is a people based government aimed at serving the interest of the masses. It is within this understanding that Schumepter cited in Agba [11,13], defined the term as an institutional arrangement in which decision making is transferred to individuals by means of competitive struggle for people's votes. Democracy according to Saward, is a political system in which the citizens themselves have an equal effective input in the making of binding collective decisions. Indeed, the concept of democracy has attracted a plethora of definitions so much so that even regimes that are known to be despotic, authoritarian and dictatorial take pride in describing themselves as democratic. As further exemplified by Schmitter and Karl cited in Amuwo, democracy is an estimated system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in public realm by citizens acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives. From the above, democracy have certain empirical reference or characteristics which could be summarized viz: level of civil and political liberties manifested by freedom of speech and associations, the supremacy of the will of the electorates, regular and periodic elections through

meaningful competition for elective position among individuals as representatives of political parties, accountability and the exclusion of the use of force and high level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies.

Meanwhile thuggery as an instrument in the hands of politicians is a grave threat to democracy as well as political development in general. Political thuggery leads to the militarization of the political environment. This scares away credible patriotic individuals from active participation in the democratic process. It contributes immensely in the proliferation of arms and ammunition in the country which, in many cases, are employed for rigging elections and harassment and intimidation of political opponents of the sponsors of thugs. Political thuggery is a tool for the perpetration of political violence and subversion of democratic order. Some political leaders employ the services of thugs to intimidate majority of party members in order to impose candidates during party primaries, and to ensure that such candidates win the general election [14,15]. Omotosho observed that it is as a result of the desperation of some politicians and their high handedness that there is virtually a total lack of democratic process in our political parties. Thuggery also discourages the electorates from exercising their Franchise and thereby creating the unacceptable situation of low turnout during general elections.

Methodology

The study was carried out among the states in the South-Eastern Nigeria among the 15 geopolitical districts in the region. The study adopted cross sectional survey and random sampling design.

The study randomly selected 10 geopolitical districts among the 15 geopolitical districts in the region. Among the 10 geopolitical districts are: 001 and 003 (from Abia state), 010 and 012 (from Anambra state), 031 and 033 (from Ebonyi state) and 046 and 048 (from Imo state). The sample size of this study was based on the projected population of the region by 2017 based on the 2006 census which was the last census before this study (National Population Commission). The sample size for this study was statistically determined using Taro Yamane (1967:886) statistical formula while the sample size of the study was 750 respondents.

The study adopted both random and modified random sampling techniques in selecting the respondents. All the geopolitical districts selected were equally represented in the sample as well as males and females by adopting equal probability sampling technique. The instrument for the study was survey questionnaire developed on nominal scale. The questionnaires were self-administered with some guidance from the researchers where the respondents requested for assistance.

The data collected were coded and analyzed using Social Science Statically Package (SPSS) while the hypotheses guiding the study were tested with inferential statistics such as Spearman Rank correlation analysis, Logistic Regression, Linear Regression and factor analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The below Table 1 is the distribution of the study participants by age. According to the table, majority of the participants (33.7%) are in the age category of 24-29, 29.1% are in the age category of 30-35, 25.1% are in the age category of 18-23, 12.1% are in the age category of 36 and above while the mean age of the participants is 38.9.

Age categories	Frequency	Percent
18-23	188	25.1
24-29	253	33.7
30-35	218	29.1
36 and above	91	12.1
Total	750	100.0
Field Survey, 2017		

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by age.

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Autocratic	242	32.3
Partially democratic without value for human right	183	24.4
Moderately democratic	165	22
Truly democratic	160	21.3
Total	750	100
Field Survey, 2017		

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents on how they see Nigerian political system.

Public perception of political violence	Frequency	Percent
None existent	70	9.3
Slightly in existence	159	21.2
Moderately high	345	46
Very high	176	23.5
Total	750	100
Field Survey, 2017		

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents on their perception of political violence in the area.

The above Table 2 is the distribution of the participants on how they see Nigerian political system. According to the distribution, 32.3% of the participants perceived the current political system as autocratic, 24.4% perceived the system as partially democratic without value for human right, 22.0% perceived the system as moderately democratic with hope for improvement while 21.3% believed the system is truly democratic.[1]

The above Table 3 shows the distribution of the study participants on their observation of political violence in the region. According to the distribution, 46% of the participants observed that political violence is moderately high in the region, 23.5% observed that political violence is very high in the region, 21.2% observed that political violence is slightly in existence while only 9.3% of the participants observed no existence of political violence in their areas.[2]

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	363	48.4
Disagree	156	20.8
Agree	121	16.1
Strongly agree	110	14.7
Total	750	100
Field Survey, 2017		

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents on whether the candidates selected by the political parties during general election represent the interest of the masses.

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	255	34
Disagree	234	31.2
Agree	135	18
Strongly agree	126	16.8
Total	750	100
Field Survey, 2017		

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents on whether they believe their votes are relevant in the face of political violence and snatching of ballot boxes during general elections.

The above Table 4 shows the distribution of the study participants on their perception of the selection of the candidates by the political parties before general elections. According to the distribution, 48.4% of the participants indicated that the candidates usually presented to the masses during general elections are not in the interest of the masses, 20.8% also indicated that such candidates are not in the interest of the masses, 16.1% believed that candidates selected by the political parties during the general elections are in the interest of the masses while 14.7% of the participants strongly agree that such candidates are in the interest of the masses.

The above Table 5 is the distribution of the study participants on whether they believe their votes are relevant in the face of political violence during general elections. According to the table, 34% of the respondents strongly disagree that their votes are relevant in the face of political violence and snatching of ballot boxes during elections, 31.2% while disagree, 18% and 16.8% agree and strongly agree respectively that their votes can still be relevant in the presence of political violence and snatching of ballot boxes during general elections.[3]

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	269	35.9
Disagree	151	20.1
Agree	146	19.5
Strongly	184	24.5
Total	750	100
Field Survey, 2017		

Table 6: Distribution of the respondents on whether they are willing to support democracy in Nigeria in the face of political violence during elections.

The above Table 6 is the distribution of the respondents on whether they are willing to support democracy in Nigeria in the face of political violence. Accord to the table, 35.9% of the respondents strongly disagree, 20.1% disagree while 19.5% and 24.5% agree and strongly agree that they will support democracy in Nigeria in the face of political violence during elections.[4]

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[1] The rating of perception here is based on the common observations among the people in the region where government of the day is seen as having different stages of manifestations such as leadership by military method which is simply represented here as autocratic government. Others are partial democracy which is viewed generally as democracy by camouflage among the African leaders such as in Nigeria. Here, the government does certain activities in pretense to mimic the democratic nations theoretically while in practical situations, what the government announce in the public is not what they do in the inner chamber. Moderate democracy commonly among the people is the system which at least some regular activities such as elections, acknowledgement of the rule of law, separation of powers etc. are acknowledged by the people in power. Finally, true democracy is the true reflection of the ethics of democracy as is obtained in developed nations.

[2] Political violence here is what people observe as snatching of the ballot papers during the general elections in front of the electorates, which in most cases result to open confrontations with the security personnel at the polling booth. In some other situations, the hired assassins invade the house of their victims during election period either in the night or on a broad day light causing a pandemonium. In most of these incidents, the general public usually learns directly and indirectly if such killings are politically connected and this informs their knowledge and interpretation of political violence. In most places, this situation is rampant while in other places they are few or does not attract public attention whenever they happen.

[3] During the general elections, the electorates' votes according to their choice of political parties and candidates however, in most cases, at the middle of the election political thugs appear on the stage to disperse the voters in order to carry ballot boxes into their own designated places to stuff the boxes with already thumb-printed papers. This makes it complicated when you want to interpreted who win the election and how. In any case, this situation is differently interpreted by the general public making the voters to have some thought about their participating in voting.

[4] Willingness to support democracy here is connected to the ability of the electorates to participate in political activities in order to promote democracy and involve them in resolving the observed abnormalities. In most cases, the willingness appears in form of joining political activists to resolve the undemocratic activities by the leaders in power and to use every available opportunity and position to enlighten the public about their rights and duties in the sustenance of true democracy.

The above Table 7 shows the distribution of the respondents on how they rate Nigerian electoral system. Based on the table, 36.1% of the respondents see the Nigerian electoral system as incompetent, 34% see it as fairly competent while, 29.9% see it as competent.

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Incompetent	271	36.1
Fairly competent	255	34
Very competent	224	29.9
Total	750	100
Field Survey, 2017		

Table 7: Distribution of the respondents on how they rate Nigerian electoral system.

According to Table 8 above, 44.5% of the respondents strongly disagree that Nigeria is a multiparty political system, 21.2% disagree

while 20.1% and 14.2% agree and strongly agree respectively that Nigeria is a multiparty nation.[5]

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	334	44.5
Disagree	159	21.2
Agree	151	20.1
Strongly agree	106	14.2
Total	750	100
Field Survey, 2017		

Table 8: Distribution of the respondents on whether Nigeria is a multiparty nation.

Distribution of the respondents on whether they are willing to support democracy in Nigeria in the face of political violence during elections		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly	Total
Distribution of the respondents on how they see Nigerian political system	Autocratic	184	5	15	38	242
		-24.50%	-0.70%	-2.00%	-5.10%	-32.30%
	Partially democratic	82	41	20	40	183
		-10.90%	-5.50%	-2.70%	-5.30%	-24.40%
	Moderately democratic	2	103	57	3	165
		-0.30%	-13.70%	-7.60%	-0.40%	-22.00%
	Truly democratic	1	2	54	103	160
		-0.10%	-0.30%	-7.20%	-13.70%	-21.30%
	Total	269	151	146	184	750
		-35.90%	-20.10%	-19.50%	-24.50%	-100.00%
Field Survey, 2017 (N=750) rho=.592 2tail P<0.01.						

Table 9: Distribution of the respondents on how they see Nigerian political system.

According to the above Table 9, 32.3% of the respondents see Nigerian political system as autocratic, 24.4% see it as partially democratic, 22% see it as moderately democratic while 21.3% see it as truly democratic. Consequently, 35.9% and 20.1% strongly disagree and disagree that they will support democracy in the face of political violence during the elections while 19.5% and 24.5% agree and strongly agree respectively that they will support democracy in Nigeria in the face of political violence. However, the correlation analysis shows positive correlation between the public perception of the political system and their willingness to support democracy in Nigeria in the face of political violence.

The above Table 10 shows that 30.1% of the respondents indicated that they can involve in political activities such as voting, 31.9% indicated that they are willing to participate in political activities up to the extent of blogging political issues and signing petition online, 17.2% are willing to participate up to the extent of protesting and writing a letter to public officials while, 20% are willing to participate in political activities up to the extent of joining political activism. Meanwhile, 9.3% of the respondents indicated that they observe no political violence in the area, 21.2% indicate that it is slightly in existence, 46% believe it is moderately in existence while 23.5% observed that is high. Nonetheless, the correlation test revealed that there is negative relationship between public perception of political

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[5]   Among the popular discuss here, multiparty system is observed to allow for the fair participation of all the registered political parties and to grant them level playing ground in the results and outcome of every election. By implication, this informs the way people perceive.

violence and willingness to participate in political activities in the region.

Distribution of the respondents on their perception of political violence in the area		None existent	Slightly in existence	Moderately high	Very high	Total
Distribution of the respondents on their willingness to participate in political activities	Voting	9	22	44	151	226
		-1.20%	-2.90%	-5.90%	-20.10%	-30.10%
	Blogging political issues/signing petition online	1	12	212	14	239
		-0.10%	-1.60%	-28.30%	-1.90%	-31.90%
	Protesting and writing a letter to public officials	2	41	81	5	129
		-0.30%	-5.50%	-10.80%	-0.70%	-17.20%
	Joining activists, interest groups and occupying buildings over political issues	58	84	8	6	156
		-7.70%	-11.20%	-1.10%	-0.80%	-20.80%
	Total	70	159	345	176	750
		-9.30%	-21.20%	-46.00%	-23.50%	-100.00%
Field Survey, 2017 (N=750) rho=-682 2tail P<0.01						

Table 10: Distribution of the respondents on their willingness to participate in political activities.

Distribution of the respondents on their perception of political violence in the area		None existent	Slightly in existence	Moderately high	Very high	Total
Distribution of the respondents on whether they are willing to support democracy in Nigeria in the face of political violence during elections	Strongly disagree	5	5	145	114	269
		-0.70%	-0.70%	-19.30%	-15.20%	-35.90%
	Disagree	3	10	135	3	151
		-0.40%	-1.30%	-18.00%	-0.40%	-20.10%
	Agree	7	85	41	13	146
		-0.90%	-11.30%	-5.50%	-1.70%	-19.50%
	Strongly	55	59	24	46	184
		-7.30%	-7.90%	-3.20%	-6.10%	-24.50%
	Total	70	159	345	176	750
		-9.30%	-21.20%	-46.00%	-23.50%	-100.00%
Field Survey, 2017 (N=750) rho=-482 2tail P<0.01						

Table 11: Distribution of the respondents on whether they are willing to support democracy in Nigeria in the face of political violence during elections.

According the above Table 11, 35.9% and 20.1% strongly disagree and disagree that they will support democracy in the face of political violence during the elections while 19.5% and 24.5% agree and strongly agree respectively that they will support democracy in Nigeria in the face of political violence. Meanwhile, 9.3% of the respondents indicated that they observe no political violence in the area, 21.2% indicate that it is slightly in existence, 46% believe it is moderately in existence while 23.5% observed that is high. Nonetheless, the correlation test revealed that there is negative relationship between public perception of political violence and willingness to support democracy in the face of political violence during elections.

According to the above Table 12, 9.3% of the respondents indicated that they observe no political violence in the area, 21.2% indicate that it is slightly in existence, 46% believe it is moderately high while 23.5%

observed that is high. According to the table, 34% of the respondents strongly disagree that their votes are relevant in the face of political violence and snatching of ballot boxes during elections, 31.2% while disagree, 18% and 16.8% agree and strongly agree respectively that their votes can still be relevant in the presence of political violence and snatching of ballot boxes during general elections. Nevertheless, the correlation test revealed that there is negative relationship between public perception of political violence and their perception of the relevance of their votes in the face of political violence during elections.

Distribution of the respondents on whether they believe their votes are relevant in the face of political violence and snatching of ballot boxes during general elections						
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Distribution of the respondents on their perception of political violence in the area	None existent	6	5	6	53	70
		-0.80%	-0.70%	-0.80%	-7.10%	-9.30%
	Slightly in existence	9	17	68	65	159
		-1.20%	-2.30%	-9.10%	-8.70%	-21.20%
	Moderately high	80	204	55	6	345
		-10.70%	-27.20%	-7.30%	-0.80%	-46.00%
	Very high	160	8	6	2	176
		-21.30%	-1.10%	-0.80%	-0.30%	-23.50%
	Total	255	234	135	126	750
		-34.00%	-31.20%	-18.00%	-16.80%	-100.00%
Field Survey, 2017 (N=750) rho=-746 2tail P<0.01						

Table 12: Distribution of the respondents on their perception of political violence in the area.

Distribution of the respondents on how many times they have voted since the Nigerian fourth republic						
		At least Once	Slightly Few	Somehow in most of the elections	Often in every election	Total
Distribution of the respondents on their perception of political violence in the area	None existent	9	5	2	54	70
		-1.20%	-0.70%	-0.30%	-7.20%	-9.30%
	Slightly in existence	15	18	41	85	159
		-2.00%	-2.40%	-5.50%	11.30%	21.20%
	Moderately high	64	127	142	12	345
		-8.50%	-16.90%	-18.90%	-1.60%	-46.00%
	Very high	131	11	1	33	176
		-17.50%	-1.50%	-0.10%	-4.40%	-23.50%
	Total	219	161	186	184	750
		-29.20%	-21.50%	-24.80%	-24.50%	100.0%
Field Survey, 2017 (N=750) rho=-540 2tail P<0.01.						

Table 13: Distribution of the respondents on their perception of political violence in the area.

According to the above Table 13, 9.3% of the respondents indicated that they observe no political violence in the area, 21.2% indicate that it is slightly in existence, 46% believe it is moderately high while 23.5% observed that is high. Also, the table shows that 29.2% of the respondents have voted at least once since the fourth republic in Nigeria, 21.5% have voted in slightly few elections, 24.8% have voted somehow in most of the elections while 24.5% have voted often in every election since the beginning of the forth republic. Meanwhile, the correlation test revealed that there is negative relationship between

public perception of political violence and their participation in voting since the fourth republic in Nigeria.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Distribution of the respondents by age	0.113	0.031	0.096	3.618	0
Distribution of the respondents on their perception of political violence in the area	-0.088	0.032	-0.069	-2.722	0.007
Distribution of the respondents on whether the candidates selected by the political parties during general election represent the interest of the masses	0.247	0.039	0.242	6.281	0
Distribution of the respondents on how they rate Nigerian security during elections	0.063	0.043	0.05	1.467	0.143
Distribution of the respondents on whether they believe their votes are relevant in the face of political violence and snatching of ballot boxes during general elections	0.186	0.039	0.177	4.735	0
Distribution of the respondents on whether they believe that there can be true democracy in the face of political violence in Nigeria	0.2	0.036	0.191	5.606	0
Distribution of the respondents on whether they are willing to support democracy in Nigeria in the face of political violence during elections	-0.033	0.024	-0.035	-1.389	0.165
Distribution of the respondents on how they rate Nigerian electoral system	0.334	0.042	0.239	7.917	0
Distribution of the respondents on whether Nigeria is a multiparty nation	-0.032	0.038	-0.031	-0.84	0.401
a. Dependent Variable: Distribution of the respondents on the see Nigerian political system					
R=0.906 R2=0.821 Note: Result is significant at .05					

Table 14: Linear regression on public perception of democracy in Nigeria and other variables.

The above Table 14 displayed the linear regression explaining the relationship between public perception of democracy in among the people of the region (The dependent variable) and other variables such as age, respondents perception of political violence in the area, Distribution of the respondents on whether the candidates selected by the political parties during general election represent the interest of the masses, Distribution of the respondents on how they rate Nigerian security during elections, Distribution of the respondents on whether they believe their votes are relevant in the face of political violence and snatching of ballot boxes during general elections, etc. The overall power of the model in explaining public perception of democracy in Nigeria is 90.6% (R value), F (376.669) p<0.005; while the individual variables (independent) contained in the model contributed at various levels in the overall explanation. According to the standardized coefficient values (Beta), respondents' perception of the method of candidate selection by the political parties during general election contributed the highest value to the model explanatory power (.242), followed by how the respondents rate Nigerian electoral system (.239), whether they believe that there can be true democracy in the face of political violence in Nigeria (.191) whether they believe their votes are relevant in the face of political violence and snatching of ballot boxes during general elections (.177) and others.

Conclusion

Democratic development in Nigeria and elsewhere is the function of the general participation of the electorates. Where this is obstructed, the socio-economic and political developments which are the fruits of democracy are denied to the poor masses. In the case of South-Eastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria, democracy has been welcome with doubt among the electorates due to the phenomenon of political violence in the region. This has been investigated in this study. Among the electorates in the region, only insignificant percentage (21.3%) of the electorates in this study believed there is true democracy in Nigeria while majority of the respondents (69.5%) see electoral violence as moderately and very high in the region. According to the findings of the current study, 56% of the electorates in the study disagree that they can support democracy in the region in the presence of the incessant political violence during the election while, there is negative relationship between public perception of political violence and willingness to participate in political activities in the region (rho=-682 2tail P<0.01). the study also finds that majority of the electorates who participated in the study (65.2%) disagree that their votes are relevant in the presence of political violence in the area. Other findings of the study included, that majority of the respondents (69.2%) did not see the process of selecting candidates by the political parties as

representing the interest of the masses; only 29.9% of the electorates in the study, perceived the Nigerian electoral system to be very competent; there is negative relationship between public perception of political violence and willingness to support democracy in the face of political violence during elections (rho=-482 $P<0.01$); there is negative relationship between public perception of political violence and their perception of the relevance of their votes in the face of political violence during elections (rho=-746 $P<0.001$); there is negative relationship between public perception of political violence and their participation in voting since the fourth republic in Nigeria (rho=-540 $P<0.01$).

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