

# **POLITICAL THUGGERY AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: EXPERIENCE FROM KWARA STATE POLITICS.**

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## **Abstract**

Political thuggery has become a recurrent feature in the body politic of Nigeria. This is not without consequences on good governance. The paper examines the causes and the effects of political thuggery on good governance in Nigeria with focus on Kwara state of Nigeria. The study adopts survey method for its research design. 300 copies of questionnaires were administered in four local government areas that were randomly selected in Kwara state. Frequency and simple percentage were used to analyse the data. Using the conflict theory for discussion, the study revealed that politicians sponsored, funded and supported political thuggery. Political thuggery drew willing recruits from unemployment youths, and is sustained by poverty, lack of political ideology and principle as well as money politics. The study made some recommendations, including that, youths should be economically empowered and money politics should be discouraged by the government.

**Keywords:** Governance, Kwara State, Politics, Thuggery, Violence.

## **LUTTE POLITIQUE ET GOUVERNANCE AU NIGERIA: L'EXPERIENCE DE LA POLITIQUE DE L'ÉTAT DE KWARA.**

## **Abstrait**

Les violences politiques sont devenues une caractéristique récurrente du corps politique du Nigéria. Cela n'est pas sans conséquences pour la bonne gouvernance. Le document examine les causes et les effets de la violence politique sur la bonne gouvernance au Nigéria, en mettant l'accent sur l'État de Kwara au Nigéria. L'étude adopte une méthode d'enquête pour son plan de recherche. 300 copies de questionnaires ont été administrées dans quatre zones d'administration locale sélectionnées au hasard dans l'État de Kwara. La fréquence et le pourcentage simple ont été utilisés pour analyser les données. En utilisant la théorie du conflit pour la discussion, l'étude a révélé que les politiciens parrainaient, finançaient et soutenaient la violence politique. La violence politique a attiré des recrues volontaires parmi les jeunes au chômage et est entretenue par la pauvreté, le manque d'idéologie et de principes politiques

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ainsi que par la politique monétaire. L'étude a formulé certaines recommandations, notamment que les jeunes devraient être économiquement autonomes et que les politiques financières devraient être découragées par le gouvernement.

**Mots-clés:** Gouvernance, Etat de Kwara, Politique, Thuggery, Violence.

## **Introduction**

Thuggery has been actively used in both local and national politics in Nigeria since the independence in 1960. Many powerful but selfish politicians have successfully used thuggery as an effective means of winning political race. Many of the leaders in nascent Nigeria democracy got to the top by violence especially with the use of political thugs. These thugs are purposely employed to perpetrate violence in order to silence or intimidate the opponents in political contest with a view to winning election. Using the employ of thuggery many political opponents are assassinated, while others are maimed and or threatened to withdraw from political race.

Election being an attribute of democracy is a useful means of getting access to position of power. Since power is not given free to individual, politicians have to compete for power. One of the means of competing for power is the usage of political thugs in Nigeria. The youth provides the willing machinery for thuggery not because they like it but because of large scale unemployment and its attendant poverty among them. Nigeria's 4<sup>th</sup> Republic has witnessed many innocent citizens killed by political thugs and all manner of political and traditional criminals. Many of the political thugs are made up of disorganized drug addicts, aggressive, rough and dangerous youths who are school dropouts, boys and girls from broken homes or societal outcast who are willing and able to cause trouble and spill blood (Wape & Mc Donald, 2008). Countless assassinations and destructions sponsored and supported by the politicians have been recorded (Emetulu, 2018)

Political thuggery has consequences on democratic governance. Electoral processes have become a big challenge with arms proliferation Elections do not only trigger conflicts associated with violent incident but also loss of live and properties. Thugs are used most especially during electioneering campaign and electoral processes to intimidate, physical assault, blackmail, destruction of property, theft of electoral materials and assassination of the opponents. Fierce competitions between rival leaders or political parties during elections have been implicated in outbreak of civil unrest in many places in Nigeria (Samuel, 2017).

The main objective of political violence by political thugs is to influence the electoral process and its outcome by gaining an unfair political advantage by one individual or group of individuals over another. Election influence might occur at different stages of the electoral process either before, during or after the election in the form of thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral processes or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral processes. Political thugs are used to snatch ballot boxes, stuff ballot boxes, and eliminate political opponents and declaration of fake results.

Nigerian democratic governance is attained by do-or-die affair where the only rule of the game is survival of the fittest, regardless of crudeness or brutality. Thuggery therefore has consequences on the survival of democracy and good governance. Promotion of good governance requires atmosphere where voters are free to choose their leaders and the political atmosphere allows for competition without violence among the rivalry parties. Good

governance provides the human society with the opportunities for advancement and every other thing that ensures human rights and freedom in the society. The freedom to select the types of people to govern the society is highly emphasized in democratic governance. This can only be done by electoral process that ensures free and fair election of people to position of authority and power. This can only be achieved when the menace of political thuggery is checked, this in the long run will bring a sustainable democracy that would indeed be a government of the people, for the people and by the people.

### **Statement of Problem**

Political thuggery has constituted a recurring social problem which makes it difficult to organize free fair and credible election in Nigeria. The inability to conduct free and fair election has consequences on good governance. In Nigeria like other African countries, the biggest challenge to democratic processes is how to hold peaceful election. The electioneering campaigns and conduct of election frequently triggered conflict. The instrument use in perpetration of conflict is political thugs. Fierce competitions between rival leaders or political parties before and during elections have been implicated in outbreak of civil unrest. The results of activities of political thugs which are hired by the political party members have resulted in a serious violent incident that has resulted in loss of lives and properties.

The increasing occurrence of political thuggery and violence in Nigeria is a threat to good governance and challenge to security. The menace of political thuggery affects the democratic activities during campaign, rallies and casting of votes which invariably causes loss of lives and valuable properties. As Yakubu and Ali (2017) observed, thuggery has significant negative effect on innocent Nigerians on daily basis both at homes and away from home. It is against this background, that investigating into the causes of political thuggery and its implication on political governance in Kwara state becomes necessary.

**The specific objectives** of this study are to:

- i). Examine the factors encouraging (influencing) political thuggery in Kwara state.
- ii). Ascertain the relationship between political thuggery and governance in Kwara state

### **Research Hypothesis**

Ho1: There is no significant difference among factors that influence political thuggery in Kwara state, Nigeria.

Ho.2: There is no significant effect of political thuggery on good governance in Kwara state, Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Political thuggery**

Political thuggery is defined as an act of violence or behavior by ruffians hired or instigated by politicians to intimidate their opponents. It is therefore safe to say that thuggery in Nigerian politics is a means to an end. Thuggery refers to act of violence usually criminal behavior and is carried out in a federation, state, or local government by some group of people known as thugs (Kogi State Digest, 2011). Political thuggery is characterized by robbery, intimidation, gangsterism, toutage, murder, killing, physical assault, hooliganism and harassment, that often involves physical combat between two opposing gangs. Political thuggery has become useful tools in the hands of ruling elite or the potential ruling elite to the

extent that it has become institutionalized to the point of subverting the constitution for their self and economic gains (Mbaya, 2013).

According to Mbaya (2013), thugs are entitled to ammunitions without hindrance. They are entitled to police escorts and are immune to the crime of abduction assassination, violence harassment and rigging of election maiming. Some of them are placed on regular salaries, with allowance accompanying their remuneration. Some are equally employed as special advisers, special assistants and personal assistants. Thuggery is therefore, a behavior that contradicts peace, harmony and co-existing among groups (Mbaya, 2013). It has become a common feature in Nigerian since independence, but it is quite difficult to ascertain the exact time it became an indispensable part of the Nigeria polity.

The use of thugs by politicians to gain political advantage has become widespread. Political thuggery appears to be the only means of gaining political power without any consideration for meritocracy and popular opinion of the masses (Abekhale & Tor-Anyiin, 2013). Memberships of thugs are predominantly youths (males and females). Ortese (2004) described political thuggery as an “organized act of violence, intimidate and blackmail directed against a political opponent to achieve a selfish political objective. He remarked that thuggery is an instrument of terrorism organized against political opponents; to threaten or harm political opponents or rig elections (Agba, 2011). As UNESCO (2005) observed, it could results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury death, psychological harm, deprivation or mal-development.

Godfatherism though not absolutely in all parts of Africa, endangers political violence and encourages political thuggery (Samuel, 2017). Godfathers make possible the maintenance of army of thugs who intimidate political opponents, snatch ballot boxes during elections and play other key roles in manipulation of election result in accordance with the wishes of the godfather (Samuel, 2017). Godfatherism as a factor in perpetuation of political violence manifest through funding that lures unemployed youths to be recruited for thuggery. Nnamau (2003) observed that godfathers are simply self-seeking individuals who use government for their own purposes. The ability of godson to meet the demand of the godfather, sometimes, results into political violence and use of political thugs. If conflict arises between the godfather and godson over the appropriation of resources, the incumbent godson faces the risk of instability in his administration (Njoku, 2015).

### **Governance and good governance**

The concepts of democracy and governance are interrelated but are not the same. Good governance entails efficient and effective reciprocity between rulers and the ruled. It is incumbent upon governance to be responsive. Governance is perceived as a critical factor in accelerating and sustaining economic growth and development. Its usefulness is evidenced in the need for progress and development in the country, the protection of individuals, that makes it possible for society to flourish and government execute their responsibilities efficiently and transparently, through adequate institutional mechanisms that would ascertain accountability (Olaniyan, 2016).

According to the World Bank, governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. The World Bank's definition further emphasizes its concern with efficiency and the capacity of state institutions to be transparent in the conduct of public and private businesses, as well as accountability for economic and financial performance. Ikpi( 1997) cited in Eregha (2007) defined governance as the total ability to organize, synthesize and direct the various actions of

the working parts of a government to perform meaningfully and creditably. Thus, governance involves both the governing class and the governed people. From this perspective, good governance must of necessity be democratic, entail popular participation by the people, accountable and ensure basic freedom.

### **Theoretical framework**

Karl Marx's perspective provide radical alternative to functionalist view of the nature of conflict. He believed that societies are divided into two major social groups: a ruling class and a subject class. The conflict theory, suggested by Karl Marx, claim society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. Social conflict theory sees social life as a competition and focuses on the distribution of resources, power and inequality. Conflict theory states that tensions and conflicts arise when resources, states and power are unevenly distributed between groups in society and that these conflicts becomes the engine for social change. Conflict arises as a result of control of material resources and accumulated wealth, control of politics and the institutions that make up society. In Marx's explanation, the ruling classes were the upper class people who had plenty of resources and imposed many rules and their superiority over the subject class. The subject class consists of those with no power whoa rea mainly peasants and low-class people.

Social conflict is defined as the struggle for agency or power in society, conflict is seen as a normal way of life rather than abnormal situations. The implication of this is that where there are two or more people of diverse interests, there will be conflict. It is on the basis of this that conflict theory emphasizes interests, more than norms and values in conflict. It is usually the competition over resources that cause or bring about conflict. Political conflict emerges from the clash of opposing interests. It opposes those who are more or less satisfied with the existing social order that want to conserve it, and those for whom the existing order does not suit and so desires or want to change it. Political conflict therefore may arise out of competition for greater power or efforts to maintain one's share as a member of a favorable group.

Politics as we have seen is the quest for power. It involves the struggle for power, which is aimed at controlling the resources of the state. The powerful groups use their power to exploit other groups with less power. The exploitation is carried out through brute force and economics. The privilege groups realizing that it is political power that will protect and sustain their wealth usually attempt to seize political power through both legal and illegal means. This situation, where force is applied by all means to control political power usually lead to political violence through employment of political thugs (Ekanem & Simon, 2012).

### **Methodology**

The study adopted survey research method for its research design. This is because the Adegoke (2012) the plan, structure and strategy of investigation focused on obtaining answers some research questions, while controlling variance (Adegoke, 2012). Three hundred questionnaires, that measured responses on 5-Likert scales (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) were administered in four local government areas of Kwara state on ward heads, youth leaders, women leaders, politicians, security officials and identified political thugs. In addition, focus group discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KII) were held with youths who have served as political thugs during elections and electioneering campaigns, community leaders and politicians. It was aimed at complementing the responses from the questionnaire.

The secondary sources of data collection, apart from the primary sources (questionnaires and interviews) were journal, books, newspapers, magazines, and seminar papers. The method of data analysis includes frequency distribution table and simple percentages.

## Findings

### Interpretation and analysis of Data

Table 1: Respondents' Rating of Factors that Influence Political Thuggery in Kwara State, N = 300

| Factors                   | Rating (%) |      |      |      |      | Mean        | STD         |
|---------------------------|------------|------|------|------|------|-------------|-------------|
|                           | SA*        | A*   | UD*  | D*   | SD*  |             |             |
| Lack of good governance   | 32.3       | 38.0 | 5.3  | 10.7 | 13.7 | <b>3.65</b> | <b>1.38</b> |
| Lack Democratic Culture   | 43.0       | 34.3 | 2.7  | 14.3 | 5.7  | <b>3.95</b> | <b>1.24</b> |
| Unemployment              | 34.3       | 31.7 | -    | 19.7 | 14.3 | <b>3.52</b> | <b>1.54</b> |
| Poverty & high illiteracy | 36.7       | 33.3 | -    | 10.7 | 19.3 | <b>3.57</b> | <b>1.29</b> |
| Problem of Godfathers     | 42.0       | 36.7 | -    | 13.3 | 8.0  | <b>3.91</b> | <b>1.46</b> |
| Moral decadence           | 28.0       | 33.0 | 5.7  | 16.7 | 16.7 | <b>3.39</b> | <b>1.47</b> |
| Weak Security agencies    | 32.0       | 27.0 | 10.7 | 13.7 | 16.3 | <b>3.45</b> | <b>1.32</b> |

\*SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree, UD = Undecided; SD = Strongly Disagree

Three hundred respondents participated in the study, and were asked to rate seven factors that have been widely suggested in contemporary literature as causes of political thuggery in Nigeria. Hypothesis one in this study argued that seven factors exerted similar influence on political thuggery in Kwara state. However the result of the survey as summarized in table 1 show differences in both percentage rating and mean ranking of the influence. The mean score ranged from 3.45 to 3.95 with percentage of responses suggesting an overwhelming agreement with existing literature on the causes of political thuggery in Nigeria (Njoku, 2015). Although all the mean scores were above average, lack of democratic culture was rated above all other causes (3.95) followed with godfatherism (3.91) and lack of good governance (3.65). Poverty and unemployment were reported as causes of political thuggery. The reasons may not be far- fetched. Recruitment of unemployed youths as political mercenaries has a long history in Nigeria, dating back to the second republic when unemployed youths were hired by political parties and trained for ballot-box snatching and guard-jobs (Ikoh, 2016). As suggested in other studies, poverty and unemployment pushed some youths to do odd jobs for politicians during electioneering campaigns and elections. Such odd jobs include thuggery and even assassination and kidnapping of political opponents (Yskunu & Ali, 2017).

Additionally, many respondents reported 'moral decadence' as a factor in political thuggery ( $X = 3.39$ , Std = 1.47). This finding suggests the emergence of social disorganization and a subculture of violence that is sustained by commodification of vote. As political thuggery becomes more beneficiary in terms of pecuniary interest, it is attracting more and more idle youths to participate in political thuggery. The standard deviation of the mean scores was below 2, thus suggesting moderate deviation from the mean opinion of the respondents on factors that caused political thuggery in Kwara state.

Table 2: Effect of Political thuggery in Kwara State, N = 300

| S/N | Effects  | Rating (%) |      |     |      |      | Mean        | STD         |
|-----|--|------------|------|-----|------|------|-------------|-------------|
|     |  | SA*        | A*   | UD* | D*   | SD*  |             |             |
| 1   | Loss of lives/ properties                        | 34.3       | 38.0 | 3.3 | 17.3 | 7.0  | <b>3.75</b> | <b>1.28</b> |
| 2   | Creates fear in the society                      | 43.3       | 40.0 | -   | 10.0 | 6.7  | <b>4.03</b> | <b>1.20</b> |
| 3   | Social vices/ criminality                        | 46.7       | 33.3 | -   | 10.0 | 10.0 | <b>3.97</b> | <b>1.33</b> |
| 4   | Rigging of elections                             | 33.3       | 44.3 | 3.7 | 7.3  | 11.3 | <b>3.81</b> | <b>1.29</b> |
| 5   | Threat and assault of voters/political opponents | 40.0       | 33.3 | 7.6 | 10.0 | 10.0 | <b>3.83</b> | <b>1.32</b> |
| 6   | Creates violence                                 | 33.3       | 33.3 | 6.7 | 13.3 | 13.3 | <b>3.43</b> | <b>1.41</b> |
| 7   | Threat to security                               | 36.0       | 46.3 | -   | 10.7 | 7.0  | <b>3.94</b> | <b>1.19</b> |
| 8   | Destruction of commercial activities             | 34.3       | 38.0 | 7.0 | 3.3  | 17.3 | <b>3.69</b> | <b>1.42</b> |
| 9   | Hinders emergence of credible candidates         | 43.0       | 43.0 | -   | 7.0  | 7.0  | <b>4.08</b> | <b>1.16</b> |

\*SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree, UD = Undecided; SD = Strongly Disagree

As shown in table 2, the effect of political thuggery in Kwara state was outstandingly acknowledged in the constrained it caused for the emergence of a credible candidate during election (Mean = 4.08). Since violence is used in the selection of candidates even within party platform, credible candidates who cannot pay thugs decide either not to participate in seeking nomination within the party or to withdraw their candidature. Many others who scaled through at the party level still face the odds of confronting thugs from other parties. The availability of thugs from the different parties make election in Nigeria to resemble a mini-war, if not outright war, as thugs appear in police uniforms with guns, while others who cannot acquire police uniforms would come with assorted arms to chase away voters (Davies, 2006). Given such development, it is little surprise that political thuggery created so much fear (Mean= 4.03) in the State. This is because apart from assault (Mean=3.83) and the use of thugs to rig election (Mean=3.81), thuggery is associated with crime and criminality (Mean = 3.91). Respondents acknowledged the existence of these problems in the rating of insecurity (Mean =3.94) and the destruction of commercial activities in the state (Mean=3.69) during election.

Table 3: Respondents' rating of effect of Political thuggery on Democratic Governance, N = 300

| Effect                              | Rating |      |     |      |      | Mean        | STD         |
|-------------------------------------|--------|------|-----|------|------|-------------|-------------|
|                                     | SA*    | A*   | UD* | D*   | SD*  |             |             |
| Accountability                      | 41.7   | 33.3 | 5.7 | 13.7 | 5.7  | <b>3.91</b> | <b>1.24</b> |
| Corruption                          | 38.0   | 35.0 | 2.7 | 10.7 | 13.7 | <b>3.73</b> | <b>1.41</b> |
| Hinders Democratic Dividends        | 34.7   | 40.3 | 5.3 | 12.7 | 7.0  | <b>3.83</b> | <b>1.23</b> |
| Hinders infrastructural development | 35.7   | 41.3 | 4.0 | 8.0  | 11.0 | <b>3.83</b> | <b>1.30</b> |

\*SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree, UD = Undecided; SD = Strongly Disagree

In this study democratic governance was measured by 'accountability of the elected to the electorate', democratic dividends, which include 'creation of employment opportunities,

welfare services, etc’. It also included infrastructural developments like road, health services, etc’. It is widely asserted in the literature that since politicians used money to buy votes either by bribing the electorates or the electoral umpires, they believed thereafter that they owe the electorate nothing by way of accountability (Joseph, 2000), infrastructural development (Kwaghga & Tarfa, 2015) and/ or social services (Saliu & Lipade, 2008). In our finding, political thuggery affected democratic governance through hindering accountability (Mean = 3.91). This score was highly above average, given a score of 5. The standard deviation of 1.24 suggests that the deviation from the mean was not really wide. Similarly, respondents opinion on lack of ‘democratic dividends’ and ‘infrastructural development’ was high (Mean =3.38 respectively, even though with different standard deviation). As suggested elsewhere ((Davies, 2006), corruption, as a function of political thuggery, received a mean score of 3.73 (Std= 1.41) in this study.

Table 4: Regression analysis of the impact of Political thuggery on good governance in Kwara State

| <b>R</b>                        | <b>R-Square</b>                    | <b>R<sup>2</sup> Adjusted</b> | <b>Std Error of Estimate</b>     |          |             |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| .991                            | .981                               | .981                          | .18434                           |          |             |
| <b>Sources of variance</b>      | <b>Mean Square</b>                 | <b>df</b>                     | <b>Mean Square</b>               | <b>F</b> | <b>Sig</b>  |
| Regression                      | 513.543                            | 9                             | 59.060                           | 1679.260 | .000        |
| Residual                        | 9.854                              | 290                           | .034                             |          |             |
| <b>Total</b>                    | 523.397                            | 299                           |                                  |          |             |
| <b>Model</b>                    | <b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b> |                               | <b>Standardized Coefficients</b> | <b>T</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
|                                 | <b>B</b>                           | <b>Std. Error</b>             | <b>Beta</b>                      |          |             |
| (Constant)                      | -.053                              | .046                          |                                  | 1.143    | .254        |
| Loss of Life and property       | .322                               | .043                          | .313                             | 7.415    | .000        |
| Create Fear                     | -.018                              | .049                          | .016                             | .362     | .718        |
| Crime and antisocial behaviour  | -.038                              | .041                          | .038                             | .930     | .353        |
| Rigging of election             | .236                               | .046                          | .229                             | 5.145    | .000        |
| Assault of voters               | .697                               | .053                          | .696                             | 13.249   | .000        |
| Create violence                 | -.037                              | .036                          | .040                             | 1.034    | .302        |
| Insecurity                      | -.029                              | .046                          | .026                             | .622     | .534        |
| Destruction of infrastructure   | -.086                              | .055                          | .092                             | 1.549    | .122        |
| Emergence of credible candidate | -.034                              | .041                          | .030                             | .829     | .408        |

Hypothesis two of this study argues that political thuggery has no significant effect on good governance in Kwara state, Nigeria. In order to test the hypothesis, the mean of the means scores of democratic governance (table 3) was regressed on the scores of table 2 (respondents’ rating of the effect of political thuggery on democratic governance). The analysis shows a R-square of 0.981, which suggests that the nine independent variables in the regression accounted for 98.10 percent of the total variation in democratic governance expressed by the respondents (table 4). The test of significance for the F-statistics which measures the probability that none of the independent variables correlated with the dependent variable beyond what could be explained by pure chance or due to random error was



significant [ $F(9; 290) = 1679.26, p < .001$ ]. Given this result, it was possible to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that political thuggery exerted significant influence on democratic governance in Kwara state.

The coefficients of the regression analysis provide explanation beyond mere significant. It provides the extent to which each of the independent variable influence democratic governance in Kwara state. This is reported by both the unstandardized coefficient (B) and standardized coefficient (Beta). Out of the nine independent variables tested in the model, only 'loss of lives and property, rigging of election, and of voters during election was significant'. The standardized weights ( $\beta$ ) of 'create fear, crime and anti-social behaviour, create violence, insecurity, destruction of infrastructure, and emergence of credible candidates' were all negative. These suggest that that every activity of political thuggery exerted impact that worsen the already existed levels of fear and insecurity in the state. However, the impact was mostly felt in the 'assault of voters' ( $\beta = .696, t = 13.249, p < .05$ ), loss of live and property ( $\beta = .313, t = 7.415, p < .05$ ), and rigging of election ( $\beta = .229, t = 5.145, p < .05$ ).

### **Discuss of findings**

Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The findings attest to several factors that serve to sustain political thuggery in Kwara state. Though some of these factors like godfatherism and lack of democratic culture, are politically driven, others like unemployment, poverty and weak security system are inflicted by poor political vision and policy, which ofcourse tend to reinforce other problems. For instance, while unemployment may have given rise to jobless foot soldiers, the associated poverty makes it possible for them to become willing tools in the hands of politicians. They thus become vulnerable for recruitment or mobilization for political thuggery. It is experience in political thuggery and the persistent unemployment even after helping political master to win election that create room for crime and anti-social behaviours.

Political thuggery creates cultural values that appreciate not only violence but also moral decadence. During the process of hiring the political thugs arms and ammunition are given to them for perpetration of violence. After the politicians must have won their elections, the thugs are not care for again and the weapons they bought for them cannot be recovered from them again. Most of these thugs are using the weapons to commit crime such armed robbery, kidnapping, killing, etc, today.

The use of thugs by politicians in the electoral process has sustained the culture of political violence and creates democratic disorder. Some political leaders employ the services of thugs to intimidate political opponents and ensure victory at the poll (Njoku, 2015). Thugs do not only threaten political opponents but also voters. It discourages the electorate or voters from exercising their franchise and thereby creates the unacceptable situation of low turnout during general elections. For instance, during 2015 general election, there was low turnout of voters, especially during governorship elections. It was recorded that in some states, only 50 percent of registered voters voted because of the fear of the menace of thugs (Kwaghga & Tarfa, 2015).

Political thuggery hinders public accountability of elective officers thus a bane to good governance in Nigeria; increases crime rate thus a threat to the achievement of democratic dividend and exercise of citizenship rights in Nigeria. Ensuring public accountability in Nigeria is not only cumbersome but problematic (Agba, 2010). The act of using thugs to attain political position has created corrupt politicians with sole aim of enriching their pockets. The

monies spent during the process are quickly recovered by stealing, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds.

In the politics of godfatherism, it is the political ideology of 'winners take all' that reigns. Given this context, it is difficult to hold political elected officers accountable. Democratic dividends are therefore scarce to come by. Political opponents are often under threat of violence, even as the masses continue to experience joblessness and insecurity.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- a) There should be law against political thuggery in Kwara state in particular and Nigerian in general.
- b) The government should create employment opportunities and empowerment opportunities for the teeming youth.
- c) The government should create awareness and sensitization campaigns to transform and dissuade thugs' psychology.
- d) Government must consistently educate citizens and youths on the evil of political thuggery and violence.
- e) The political leaders should detach politics from ethnic and religious affiliation.
- f) Government should make elective offices less attractive financially and concentrate on policies and creating programmes aimed at alleviating poverty and strengthening the capacity of the security agencies.
- g) It is important for government to deploy a large number of security personnel to safeguard the lives of voters and as well guarantee the peaceful conduct of the elections.

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