

# ELECTORAL VIOLENCE AND VOTER APATHY: PEACE JOURNALISM AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN PERSPECTIVE

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## Abstract

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Throughout election seasons, threats, verbal bullying, hate speech, misinformation, physical attack, and imposed “protection” are all utilised to limit, postpone, or otherwise impact the electoral process, according to Fischer (2002). By examining the role of the media in the portrayal of electoral violence, this research highlighted the struggle for power and state resources in electoral contests. The paper looks at peace journalism as a key component of election coverage for defusing tensions and fostering good governance. Two hypotheses were tested, and no link was found between media reporting on electoral violence, media portrayals of electoral violence, and voters’ perception of good governance. The result demonstrates that the Nigerian media is fair in its coverage of electoral issues, including violence before, during, and after elections, in a balanced and responsible manner. It is all geared towards promoting good governance. The study indicates that journalists are primarily responsible for what readers learn about elections and electoral violence, and audience perception will be shaped by how journalists represent political players and their activities.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Electoral Violence, Nigeria, Peace Journalism, Governance, Violence

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of Africa’s most popular and rising democracies, every political competition in Nigeria has seen substantial violence and challenges. From independence (the first republic in 1960) until

democracy was restored, examining the country’s political history uncovers evidence of political and electoral violence (1999 till date). Since the restoration of democracy in 1999, there have been many elections. In these elections, one thing has been consistent: the Nigerian political climate

has worsened from good to poor, changing from violence to more violence. Electoral violence has increased with the political elites frequently turning the impoverished and unemployed youths into tools for unleashing violence against opponents and their supporters. The democratic systems and institutions collapse, thereby endangering good governance with the political elites' continued sponsoring of violence during elections. It is necessary to comprehend the phenomena known as electoral violence thoroughly to completely realise the gravity of this argument.

Election violence is defined as any act of violence committed in support of election activities, including before, during, and after the election, such as the use of force to disrupt political meetings and vote at polling stations or the use of lethal weapons to threaten voters and other electoral actors or to cause bodily harm or injury to any human being. Election scholars outside the Western world have long been fascinated by how clientelism, vote-buying, and intimidation can sabotage democratic processes (Birch, 2007).

Throughout election seasons, threats, verbal bullying, hate speech, misinformation, physical attack, and imposed "protection" are all utilised to limit, postpone, or otherwise impact the electoral process, according to Fischer (2002). He notes further that for election systems, any isolated or organised attempt to control, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process by threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, misinformation, physical assault, forced "security", "blackmail", "property destruction", or "assassination".

These definitions focus on the key points of contention and concerns regarding electoral violence in general. These perspectives address the impact of electoral violence on the election process and the voters. It clarifies the definitions and circumstances of electoral violence and the wide range of behaviours that might be classified as electoral violence. Democratic violence may linger beyond election day, distorting the entire electoral process.

Specific indicators must be present for any type of electoral violence to occur. These indicators include the identified victim(s) and the perpetrator(s). Occurring at a certain time and location disrupt the electoral process, whether before, during, or after it. It might also refer to the criminals' aim to negatively influence the political process or the victims' electorates. To be more specific, several stages of political violence arise before and after elections. These three levels must be understood to comprehend electoral violence.

This work was guided by the following research questions:

*RQ1: How prevalent is violence and voter apathy in Nigeria's electoral system?*

*RQ2: To what extent can peace journalism help in reducing violence and apathy amongst voters in Nigeria?*

*RQ3: What is the nature of stories that can reduce voters' apathy and violence in Nigeria's electoral system?*

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature using various concepts. Section 3 discusses the research design and a survey used to conduct empirical research on the influence of media

campaigns on good governance. Section 4 discusses the result, while Section 5 concludes the paper based on the results obtained.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. The struggle for power and state resources in electoral contests

Election-related violence has unfortunately been a part of Nigerian elections since they began. Like those across the world, Nigerian elections are high-stakes, winner-take-all events. Elections are regularly if not always, tainted by unnecessary violence since so much is at stake. Politicians frequently exploit simmering ethnic, religious, and regional conflicts to gain an unfair political advantage. They promote racial hatred in society and even injure their opponents and supporters physically and psychologically.

There are two major reasons Nigerian elections will continue to be fiercely contested. Nigeria's government controls productive resources, and economic supremacy is two examples. As a result, government officials are the most important avenue to acquiring primitive riches. The second is politicising the country's security and law enforcement organisations, whose impartiality has been questioned. The government has a great deal of power and resources, which may be troublesome, particularly in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country like Nigeria, where mutual hostility is growing. According to the country's Constitution, Land Use Act, and Petroleum Act, the government owns and controls critical natural resources such as oil and gas. It is the country's primary economic basis and the shortest path to becoming a "big man". Oil revenue is received, divided, and distributed solely by the federal government to the 36 states. The 774 local governments have had their share of the resource seized or taken away by their state governors because so many want to play the power game and take a fair share of the economy.

Winning contracts in the private sector, whether at the federal or state level, is becoming increasingly difficult, and the majority of the time, it depends on one's political connections. Politics has become the sole means for many political candidates to improve their condition, the situation of their community members, and the situation of their contacts. However, for some, winning elections is merely a question of selfish self-aggrandisement driven by the personal prestige of being in command of people and money, with financial gain being the ultimate aim. There is no doubt that candidates and their supporters spend a lot of money on elections in the hopes of making a lot of money when they win, and this is the motivation behind politicians' winner-take-all mentality that is enough to incite violence to intimidate opponents before, during, and after elections. Long-running religious and ethnic-regional conflicts among Nigeria's many ethnic and religious groups, which turn elections into battlegrounds for political dominance and resource control, significantly complicate the issue. Candidates have frequently utilised inflammatory language between opposing groups like Christians and Muslims as part of their campaign methods to incite conflict. Nigerian general elections are divided into North and South, Christian South, and Muslim North.

Another major source of contention in Nigerian elections is security. Security agencies have been accused of complacency or open collaboration with the current administration to retain or install allies in office. Many politicians from various parties publicly express their fear of security forces during election seasons. They accuse the military of being politicised or prejudiced in dealing with tense circumstances before, during, and after elections. They accuse security and law enforcement agents of being devoted to the ruling party and used to intimidate and harass political opponents. This situation is unique to Nigeria. Nigerians had viewed the deployment of security troops with great suspicion since 1999 when the country returned to democracy after several years of military administration. Many individuals believe the government's anti-corruption drive aims to persuade political opponents to join and support the governing party or destroy their economic basis to undermine their political position ahead of another election.

Due to a lack of trust in security officials, political actors on all sides have repeatedly relied on thugs and criminals to commit violence or intimidate opponents. Because the legislation regulating security and law enforcement organisations enable political influence, security services may find themselves in a crossfire of dual command. The President appoints all military service heads and other leaders of the State Security Services, including the Inspector General of Police, who can be fired without cause. It has occurred even though the IGP had been certified by the Senate. The payer dictates the music in this situation.

It is no longer unexpected to see various Nigerian security professionals sacked or moved only days or hours before elections. Political opponents have long suspected that this is simply another attempt by the administration to limit their political fortunes and acquire an unfair advantage by rigging elections. According to a film that circulated, security agents were seen escorting political thugs loyal to a certain party to many polling stations in Lagos State to damage election materials and frighten voters. Security agents watched while political thugs harassed voters and took away electoral materials during elections. All of this makes security agents more loyal to the government of the day than to their philosophy of service because failing to help the government keep power may result in their losing their job and livelihood.

## 2.2. Good governance

Good governance is the collection of strategies through which individuals and organisations in the public and private sectors deal with their mutual challenges. It's a never-ending process of balancing conflicting interests and establishing cooperative actions. It consists of formal institutions and processes with the capacity to ensure informal compliance and agreements that individuals and organisations have agreed to or accepted to achieve their objectives. Good governance, in essence, is a collection of principles and standards for social administration that attempts to maximise public benefits while simultaneously fostering and assuring peaceful and long-term prosperity (Giao, 2021).

In other words, it is the ideal state and goal of many countries' government reform projects, the state and government's guiding principles, or the whole system's designs and operations. Good governance is the partnership that considers the geopolitical challenges of integration and legal boundaries. The possibilities necessary for extending local self-governance are just a few of the issues that must be addressed (Ruohonen, Salminen, & Vahtera, 2021). Demographic challenges that could jeopardise the country's socio-economic development and stability are easily noted and tackled (Bakkar & Ögçem, 2020).

Orji (2021) claims that faulty elections lead to lousy government, hindering growth. It's important to remember that disagreements divert precious resources away from effective governance initiatives.

## 2.3. The role of the mass media in election campaign and reporting

The mass media (radio, television, newspaper, and magazine) play an important role in the election campaign and reporting. The media offer the audience "windows on the globe". They may influence and shape public and private perceptions of the world and awareness of its political events. These modern media do more than provide unbiased information about the world; they actively urge people to view and comprehend it in certain ways and terms. As a result, McQuail (2010) concludes that the real influence on media dependence cannot die since the media remain important during times of crisis and uncertainty. Election campaigns encompass everything political parties say about their candidates' and party geniuses' attractiveness in the media.

According to Agba (2006, p.193), the mass media is central to social interactions. They want to use the media's power to address national cohesion and integration issues, crucial for successful election campaigns. The media, particularly those in the communication industry, require a political philosophy that preserves freedom of expression and access to information. From pre-colonial times to the present, the press has served as a forum for Nigeria's political divisions, tasked with promoting cross-fertilisation of ideas aimed at criticising or examining campaign difficulties, mostly for individuals who are not well-versed in political discourse. As a result, election campaign coverage should include crucial information for people who cannot observe or grasp events that impact them. Other political players can obey campaign norms if the media forms a strong alliance with voters. It is important to the public since all they want is an election representing their views. They (the citizens) want to show that they are important by deciding on the destiny of candidates before and after the elections. As a result, the media must ensure that politicians respect voters' right to direct election campaigns and that campaign scripts are devoid of false promises. Political players must follow the rules governing elections and the contestation of electoral seats.

During campaigns, the media must explain issues, bring politicians closer to voters, and educate people on the differences between parties and candidates so that they may make educated

judgments (Agba, 2006, p. 199). As a result, it is often assumed that the media will focus on big problems that have considerable ramifications for people's political choices. The electorate should know what to do with campaign messages after being broadcast in the media. For example, what the media did in 2002 to increase voter registration turnout may be mirrored in campaign reporting. It even went so far as to throw its full support behind the event, a huge success. The media should pay close attention to the campaign themes of the major parties. Instead of allowing politicians to create the political agenda, the media should work on developing a proper political agenda for the general population. Because the reporter is informed about important events, institutions, and political processes, a campaign reporter who utilises the media to report on events, institutions, and political processes is also necessary.

In addition, factors impacting campaign tactics (e.g., the party caucus), conventions, primaries, campaigns, elections, and the electorate on which the entire process is based should be considered. As a result, the reporter must be aware of the positioning strategy and cover certain essential issues appropriately. A public opinion poll on the breadth of coverage, reporting style, objectivity of reports, and areas that the audience would like to alter should also be conducted. Everything in campaign reporting should assist people in understanding how to vote. Informing the electorate does not indicate that the party has intentions for them, but it does imply good governance. As a result, the campaign's media strategy should give thorough voter information. Because people make incendiary remarks during elections, the media should watch any organisation taking an unofficial interest in politics. As a result, the media should evaluate their behaviour from time to time, keeping in mind that partisanship can inhibit competent campaign reporting.

#### **2.4. Peace journalism: An alternative model of journalism**

According to Harish and Toha (2019), electoral violence is defined as coercive acts against people, property, and infrastructure conducted by political actors to influence the process and outcome of elections. It can happen at any stage during the political cycle, including election announcements, party primaries, and state and non-state entities facilitating voter registration (Seeberg, Wahman, & Skaaning, 2018). On the other hand, election-related violence can result in significant deaths and spark civil upheaval (Laakso, 2019).

An examination of relevant data sets found that at least some violence happens in a considerable proportion of the world's population (Birch, Daxecker, & Höglund, 2020). According to Birch and Muchlinski (2017), almost three-quarters (78%) of elections in countries designated at risk of violence contain at least ten violent occurrences, using statistics from the Countries at Risk of Election Violence (CREV). On the other hand, electoral Contention and Violence (ECAV) records reveal that more than three violent occurrences occurred in more than half of the elections (Daxecker, Amicarelli, & Jung, 2019).

In the 1970s, Johan Galtung, a Norwegian Peace Studies scholar, advocated peace journalism. The curious nature of media researchers has seen some enlarge and promote the notion, while others have questioned its applicability. According to Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), peace journalism does not entail "reporting peace". The authors define peace journalism as "bringing ideas from Peace and Conflict Studies — the total of what is known and observed about conflict, its dynamics, and the prospects for transformation — to the day-to-day chores of editing and reporting the news" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 248).

In a nutshell, peace journalism is journalistic coverage and reporting of conflict that influences the public's comprehension of the conflict and their perceptions of the solution. This role influences the techniques and methods utilised to resolve these issues. Peace journalism's main goal is to choose and disseminate conflict-related stories in the media to promote awareness about the possibility of nonviolent conflict settlement. According to Shinar (2007), peace journalism instils a feeling of duty and conscientiousness in the media's coverage of the conflict. According to him, it aims to "contribute to peacemaking, peacekeeping and influencing the attitudes of media owners, marketers, experts, and viewers toward conflict and peace".

According to Bassil (2014), the tendency of traditional news reporting to distort conflict reality highlights the need for peace journalism. Peace journalism, in this opinion, is a comprehensive approach to conflict coverage in the media that includes both interpretive and balanced reporting rather than a single-dimensional report dedicated to conflict reporting. According to peace journalism, Fair coverage requires "identifying stakeholders outside of the parties directly involved in violent confrontation" (Fahmy & Eakin, 2014, p. 89). As a result, a specific aspect of war reporting, a limited dichotomisation of conflict narratives, has no place in peace reporting.

As previously stated, there is a distinction between peace journalism and embedded journalism. Peace journalism emphasises a broad context for conflict (rather than violence), investigating and publicising the truth (rather than propaganda), and broadening news sources to include ordinary war victims and witnesses (not just the elites or so-called "official sources"). It is the desire to reach a win-win situation due to a disagreement (not a victory for one party).

Shinar (2007) outlines the fundamental principles of peace journalism, which include:

- Exploring the histories and circumstances of conflict creation and offering reasons and options on all sides to depict the conflict truthfully and clearly to the audience.
- Allowing different points of view to be heard.
- Peace talks and post-war developments receive more attention than normal fighting reports revealing all kinds of falsehoods, cover-up efforts, and offenders on both sides, as well as exposing excesses committed by, and suffering inflicted on, individuals from all parties and backgrounds.
- Provision of creative solutions for conflict resolution, peacemaking, and peacekeeping.

While peace journalism is all-encompassing, it has created a plethora of variations. Some scholars

have offered specialised notions such as constructive conflict coverage, conflict solution journalism, conflict-sensitive journalism, and de-escalation-oriented conflict coverage (Howard, 2002). Given the tendency for conflict players to impose their agendas through the media as facts, Howard (2003) says that relaying the bare facts of a conflict situation is insufficient. Furthermore, he considers conflict analysis foundational to conflict-sensitive media since it allows journalists to inform the public better and encourage conflict resolution. Conflict-sensitive journalism essentially instructs journalists to avoid reporting conflict with only two sides; identify the root causes and structural implications of conflicts; emphasise areas of commonality between conflicting parties; avoid reporting opinions as facts. Others are to avoid stereotyping, use emotional and inflammatory words in describing incidents, persons, or groups within a conflict situation, and avoid reporting opinions as facts (Howard, 2003, p. 16).

## 2.5. Electoral crisis and peace journalism

Electoral violence can take different forms and have a variety of outcomes, but it all involves coercion. According to von Borzyskowski and Wahman (2019), lethal violence is usually covered and less subject to underreporting in the media-based sources that underpin many cross-country sources recording election violence. One of the strategies elites may use to influence political outcomes is electoral violence (Daxecker, Di Salvatore, & Ruggeri, 2019).

When people's interests overlap, it creates an electoral conflict. Depending on the nature of the disagreement, it may become violent, with both parties using violence to achieve their goals. "Journalists always have two options; take sides by inciting one party in the conflict against the other, or play the role of a moderating third party by improving communication and contributing to constructive conflict transformation" (Kempf, 2003, p. 83). Peleg (2006) notes that "allowing rivaling sides to get to know one another, upholding understanding and empathy, focusing on certainty, and emphasising truth-oriented, people-oriented, and solution-oriented journalism to expedite peace" (p. 1) through peace journalism efforts, the media play a critical role as a third party during electoral conflicts. As a result, before, during, and after elections, the media should establish channels for resolving electoral crises and disputes and post-election reconciliation. According to Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), the peace journalism technique allows society to assess and reward peaceful conflict resolution. It employs conflict analysis and transformation tactics to deliver fair and honest reporting during a crisis. Journalists that follow this paradigm cover armed conflict and violence more thoroughly, holistic, and in-depth since election-covering media must push for or support friendly contests, regardless of how intense or tense the electoral process appears. By covering or emphasising things that have the potential to help a peaceful election transition or contest, the media, for example, tries to downplay fears, words, and deeds capable of heating the polity and leading to voter apathy. Johan Galtung's (as cited in Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005) peace journalism methodology draws clear distinctions between peace journalism

and traditional or war-focused reporting. The proponents advise war reporters to improve their conflict analysis skills through training; which will allow them to untangle conflicts accurately and their stages, identify players and their various viewpoints, positions, interests, needs, and concerns, and provide reports that will help readers better understand the conflict's foundations and causes.

As Peleg (2006) puts it, "nobody's cause except peace" is served by peace journalism, and peace reporters "will not use themselves for anyone's specific aim" (p. 13). Only an accurate explanation of each side's arguments and interests in a logical framework would be possible.

Journalists in conflict situations should stimulate cross-community debate, build bridges across aggressive lines, discover areas of agreement rather than discord, and spotlight positive, sometimes non-official happenings on the ground, according to the goals of peace journalism. This type of reporting boosts public confidence in the election process and decreases partisanship. Under this approach, the media becomes facilitators of good change rather than being objective professional observers/reporters (Howard, 2003).

Reporting electoral violence from a peace journalism viewpoint can assist build the consensus needed to promote a culture of peaceful elections and convince voters that the process is trustworthy and that the outcome will be what they desire. As a result, if there is peaceful communication, reporters and editors must understand and practice peace journalism throughout election coverage.

## 2.6. Theoretical framework

For this topic, the research is based on Karl Marx's dialectical materialism, which provides plausible causes for Nigeria's electoral violence. Karl Marx's dialectical materialism is an excellent fit for Nigeria's predicament. According to Abbas (2010), dialectical materialism focuses on man's intrinsic reasons for economic pursuits and demands. Marx's dialectical materialism may begin with the necessity of human wants. These criteria, on the other hand, are sociological rather than biological. Humans, for example, need food to survive, yet cultivating or hunting food to satisfy this bodily need is a social activity. It is why dialectics is incompatible with pure individualism and autonomy ideologies. According to dialectics, humans are not self-contained entities acting of their own free will. On the other hand, Marx ("Karl Marx: The eighteenth brumaire", n.d.) claims that man build their history, but not as they want; they do not produce it under conditions selected by themselves, but under the circumstances immediately experienced, given, and transmitted from the past.

Given this, it is reasonable to conclude that man's unquenchable need to achieve, dominate, and hold political power at any cost validates this concept's development. As a result, the kind and direction of political fights for political power affect economic factors that are symbiotically tied to interpersonal relationships in the production process.

The following hypotheses guided the study:

*H1<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between media reports on electoral violence and voter apathy during elections in Nigeria.*

*H2<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between media portrayals of electoral violence and the perception of good governance by voters in Nigeria.*

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was population-based and employed a quantitative-descriptive methodology, focusing on distinct groups (Estigoy & Sulasula, 2020). Because the goal of this study is to examine or quantify the components, the analysis is quantitative. The study is also descriptive since it tried to discover the present status of a phenomenon (Singh, 2006) relevant to the study, which contributed to determining the respondents' perspectives toward election violence. Data collection, tabulation, analysis, and description were also included in the study, indicating descriptive research.

An anonymous internet community served as the study's participants. A total of 330 Nigerian voters are being polled. The genders who replied were females (64 percent) and males (36 percent). The researcher produced a questionnaire checklist to ensure that the questionnaire utilised current literature for this study's research instrument, a questionnaire meant to collect data. The statements were revised to reflect the study's goals. The validity and reliability of the instrument were assessed using research literature and the study's issues. The instrument was only administered once. The scores were used to compute the reliability coefficient using Cronbach's coefficient alpha technique, which came out to 0.81, judged sufficient for the study.

An online survey with 20 statements was used to gauge Nigerian voters' opinions on media coverage of election violence. The questionnaire was created using QQdocs, an internet survey tool that is available online. A link was created and shared via WhatsApp, a popular social networking service. The researchers copied the URL of the questionnaire and forwarded it to their contact list, and the voters' involvement in the study was entirely voluntary. SPSS Statistics was used to code and analyse the data from the study equipment.

The three hundred and thirty (330) replies were also evaluated using descriptive statistics, namely the mean percentage. The researchers followed

ethical guidelines when conducting the study, ensuring no conflicts of interest or a motivation to influence the findings.

Furthermore, the privacy and confidentiality of the participants' data and replies were protected and safeguarded. The respondents are adults, mostly professionals from diverse areas; hence the researchers did not choose a vulnerable study population. The respondents in question are of legal age to consent. Participation in the study is completely optional, and no payment is required.

Focus group discussion (FGD) and interview are two alternative methods that may be utilised to conduct this type of study. The researcher should gather a large group of individuals for the FGD to debate concerns that arise from the research challenge. In the event of an interview, the researcher should create a list of questions to ask people chosen from the research population. The researcher must make certain that the question is open-ended.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. The first null hypothesis testing

As shown in Table 1 below, the calculated r-value of 0.001 is less than the critical r-value of 0.195 at a 0.05 alpha level with 306 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the first null hypothesis (*H1<sub>0</sub>*) that there is no significant relationship between media reports on electoral violence and voter apathy during elections in Nigeria is accepted. This finding agrees with the study by Shenga and Pereira (2019), which found that Africans who perceived electoral violence were more likely to attend an election campaign rally and vote. Instead of using the incumbent to prevent the opposition supporters from voting, electoral violence appears to motivate those who perceive it to participate.

The result indicates that the media in Nigeria are fair in their reportage of electoral matters, especially on violence before, during, and after elections, in a balanced and responsible manner. It can be deduced from the result that the media, through their accountable and balanced reportage, made some contributions to the peaceful elections in Nigeria.

**Table 1.** Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient analysis (*H1<sub>0</sub>* testing)

Variables	$\Sigma x$ $\Sigma y$	$\Sigma x^2$ $\Sigma y^2$	$\Sigma xy$	df	r-cal.	r-crit.	Decision <i>p</i> < 0.05
Media reports on electoral violence	4,716	74,254	64,327	306	0.001	0.195	NS
Voter apathy during elections	4,201	63,183					

Source: Field survey 2022.

Note: NS = not significant at *p* < 0.05 alpha level; *N* = 308.

#### 4.2. The second null hypothesis testing

Data presented in Table 2 below indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.316 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.195 at a 0.05 alpha level with 306 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the second null hypothesis (*H2<sub>0</sub>*), which states that there is no significant relationship between media portrayals of electoral violence and voters' perception of good governance, is discarded and the alternative hypothesis upheld. Since voters' perception of electoral violence relates significantly to its

portrayal in the media, it may indicate that voters' perceptions may be influenced accordingly depending on how the media portrays a conflict.

Even though the study finds that media portrayal of election violence does not affect the perception of good governance, it is essential to note that violence harms participation in elections. When a winner emerges at all costs through violent means, the tendency of governance to be affected is rife. Most times, the quest for power is the reason for the violence and not necessarily to improve the lots of the people. Again, if a neighbourhood is

unsafe, voters might leave their residential location, thus losing their prospect of voting in the neighbourhood where they were registered. This situation has been a recurring scenario as far as elections in Nigeria are concerned for some time now.

This finding is supported by Harish and Toha (2019). They note that electoral violence is distinct and perpetrated by political actors to influence

the process and outcome of elections. It includes coercive acts against people, property, and infrastructure. The finding is also supported by Seeberg et al. (2018) who noted that violence could occur at any point during the electoral cycle, including election announcements, party primaries, and voter registration facilitated by both state and non-state actors.

**Table 2.** Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient analysis ( $H_{20}$  testing)

Variables	$\Sigma x$ $\Sigma y$	$\Sigma x^2$ $\Sigma y^2$	$\Sigma xy$	$df$	$r\text{-cal.}$	$r\text{-crit.}$	Decision $p < 0.05$
Media reports on electoral violence	5,459	99,415	92,577	306	0.316	0.195	S
Perception of good governance	5,178	89,468					

Source: Field survey 2022.

Note: S = significant at  $p < 0.05$  alpha level;  $N = 308$ .

## 5. CONCLUSION

In Nigeria, electoral violence is not uncommon. Electoral violence takes on a new level every election season, which is expected. According to a historical review of Nigeria's political system, violence has always been a part of our electoral culture. Nigerians still remember the heinous event known as "Operation We-ti-e" which translates to "Operation spray it!" in the Western Region, in which several important politicians from the first republic and their supporters died as a result of election violence. It was one of the major factors in the first republic's demise in 1966.

By turning a basic civic practice into a power fight between themselves and other contesting political opponents, certain Nigerian politicians have exhibited their bestial character and craving for power and influence to control state resources. While the electoral laws provide for a punishment of N1 million and three years in prison, no case of electoral violence or noncompliance has ever been punished in a court of law. Unfortunately, the country's weak election regulations have made it simple for anyone to conduct electoral crimes and get away with it. Even law enforcement is wrestling with concerns of allegiance, deciding whether to support the state or powerful citizens in government. Thousands of security officers were dispatched to safeguard the environment during the polls. Still, they were not equipped to follow international best practices, and they used the same weapons to inflict harm on the electorates they were intended to protect. Some security personnel works for political gladiators in the states, allowing hoodlums to destroy election materials and poll workers and voters.

Electoral violence is a sign of institutional failure, a situation in which the rule of law has not been properly established and political competition rules and norms have been eroded. In this scenario, the ballot loses importance as a determining factor in political conflict, and guns become the primary means of gaining power. In flawed elections, voting frequently results in violence, which influences the government. It is because competing factions usually struggle to accept election outcomes. As a result, most manipulated elections culminate in conflict and violent battles between the competing political parties that ultimately win power.

Journalists are primarily responsible for the information that readers get regarding elections and electoral violence. The audience's opinion of political players and their activities will be shaped by how they represent them. It is critical to remember that the media must grasp their role in bringing calm following a tense election. They must understand that if they take sides during the elections, it will be difficult to reverse their positions and become peacemakers since their neutrality will have been damaged.

The following recommendations are made because of the general and specific effects of election violence on the people and the nation's image.

Political power has to lose its attractiveness. It is vital to debunk the myth that politics is the most dependable source of wealth.

Nigeria needs fundamental constitutional and legal reforms to eliminate political monopolisation of resources and give federating states and local governments greater money from resources within their domains.

Peace journalism ideals should be adopted and used by journalists covering elections. It will help resolve election-related problems before they turn into full-blown humanitarian disasters. Reporters and editors are in charge of carrying out the strategy.

Law enforcement agencies' political influence must be reduced as soon as feasible to foster impartiality, patriotism, and professionalism among security personnel and public trust and confidence in their actions during elections.

Using hostile rhetoric to portray any political party in distress should be avoided. Such words tend to intensify rather than alleviate the situation when violence breaks out.

Electoral procedures must find a way to penalise harsh speech and intimidation of opponents before, during, and after elections.

Conflict reporting that integrates a range of sources is in high demand. It will help establish a thorough understanding of the issues at hand, facilitate early conflict settlement, and give a platform for opposing groups to communicate with one another to better the crisis resolution.

It is expected that the findings of this study will spur electoral conflicts managers/researchers into finding alternative ways of resolving electoral conflicts and giving the democratic process more credibility and bring forth good governance.

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