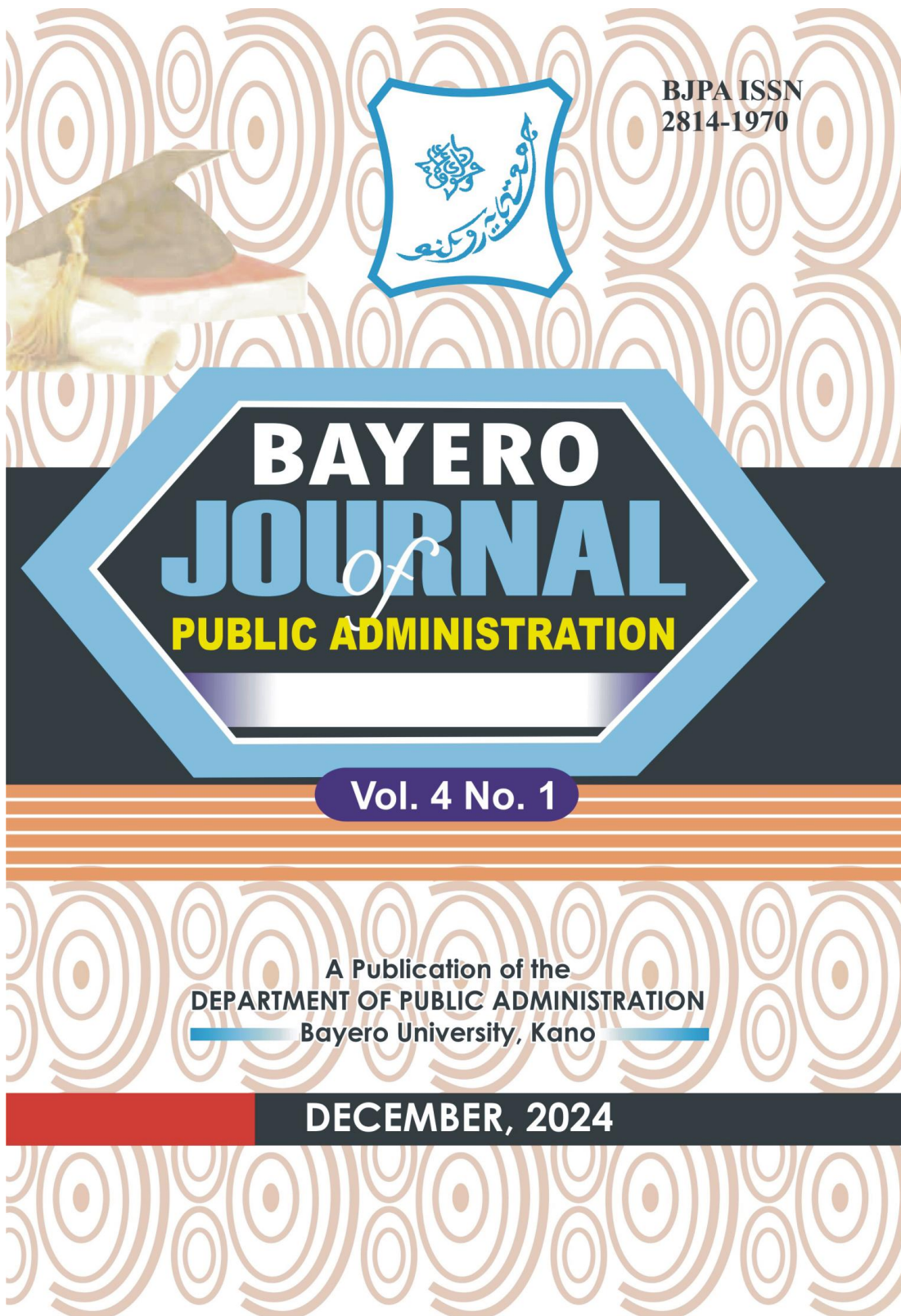


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MITIGATING POLITICAL THUGGERY AND VIOLENCE IN ADAMAWA STATE THROUGH EFFECTIVE POLITICAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper examines political thuggery and violence as significant challenges to political development in Adamawa State. Elections in the state are often marred by violence due to the activities of political thugs, frequently recruited by politicians. Unemployed youths, driven by economic hardship and lack of opportunities, are particularly vulnerable to political manipulation. This study employs a survey research design, data was collected from 400 respondents across the three senatorial districts through stratified random sampling. Primary data was gathered via questionnaires on Kobo Collect, interviews, and group discussions with elites, while secondary data was analyzed from relevant literature. Elite Theory, drawing from Mosca, Pareto, and Michels, guided the analysis. Findings reveal that political thuggery is fueled by poor governance, poverty, unemployment, and inadequate political education, with ethnic and religious sentiments sometimes exploited to justify violence. Beyond loss of lives and property, political thuggery contributes to increased crime and reduced youth engagement in productive activities, perpetuating a cycle of violence and economic stagnation. To address these issues, the study recommends structured political education at the grassroots level, employment initiatives for vulnerable youth, and stricter enforcement of laws against political violence. These interventions can help mitigate political thuggery and foster a more stable political environment in Adamawa State. Keywords: Political thuggery, violence, youths, political education, governance, Adamawa State.

Keywords: Political thuggery, violence, youths, political education.

1. Introduction

It remains an undeniable fact that the rate at which youths are involved in crimes, especially political thuggery and violence before, during, and after elections, is alarming. Due to unemployment and poverty, youths are highly susceptible to being exploited by the political class for various nefarious activities. They are used for distributing money at polling centers, manipulating voter registers and election results, diverting electoral materials, snatching ballot boxes, and inciting riots to disrupt the electoral process. This persistent cycle of political manipulation not only undermines the integrity of the electoral system but also entrenches a culture of violence and lawlessness among the youth. For young people to be effectively and positively engaged in political matters both now and in the future, they must be exposed to political education that instills democratic values, civic responsibility, and respect for the rule of law.

Thuggery is an act of violence or behavior by ruffians hired or instigated by politicians to intimidate their opponents. Agagu (2010) viewed political thuggery as the illegitimate and unauthorized use of force to impose decisions against the will of others, while Oni (2014) defined it as an unlawful means of seeking political power, including acts of intimidation, violence, hooliganism, brutality, or gangsterism—whether leading to death or not—intended to threaten or silence political opponents before, during, or after elections. Similarly, Anzaki in *The Lawyers Chronicle* (n.d.) described violence as the intentional use of physical force or power—whether threatened or actual against oneself, another person, or a group, which often results in injury, death, psychological harm, or deprivation. The activities of political thugs frequently lead to large-scale violence, causing destruction of lives and property, disrupting governance, and weakening democratic institutions.

Research Question

How do unemployment, poverty, and inadequate political education contribute to political thuggery and violence in Adamawa State, and what measures can mitigate these issues?

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between unemployment and youth involvement in political thuggery in Adamawa State.
2. To analyze how political education influences youth participation in elections and reduces political violence.
3. To assess the impact of political thuggery on electoral integrity and governance in Adamawa State.

Hypotheses

H₀: There is no significant relationship between youth engagement in political thuggery and violence, in Adamawa State.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between youth engagement in political thuggery and violence, in Adamawa State.
in Adamawa State.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Elite Theory and Its Application to Political Thuggery

Elite Theory provides a lens through which political realities, including power dynamics and governance structures, can be analyzed. Developed from the works of Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941), Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923), and Robert Michels (1876–1936), the theory posits that societies are divided into two groups: a small, organized elite that controls decision-making and an uncoordinated majority with limited political influence (Mosca, 1939; Pareto, 1963; Michels, 1915). The ruling elite maintains its dominance through control over key institutions, resources, and mechanisms of coercion.

In Nigeria, political elites exploit the vulnerability of unemployed youths, recruiting them into thuggery to serve their interests during elections (Ake, 1996). These elites, particularly within the political class, employ a range of tactics including financial incentives, ideological manipulation, and coercion to maintain their grip on power (Joseph, 1987). The prevalence of political thuggery in Adamawa State illustrates how elites perpetuate electoral violence as a

tool to secure political advantages, often at the expense of democratic stability and national security (Omotola, 2010).

Critical Evaluation of Elite Theory

While Elite Theory effectively explains how a small group maintains political control, it has notable strengths and limitations in analyzing political thuggery in Nigeria:

Strengths:

- The theory highlights how political elites manipulate institutions to maintain power, explaining the persistent nature of electoral violence (Ikelegbe, 2013).
- It aligns with real-world observations of Nigerian politics, where elites strategically mobilize thugs to disrupt democratic processes (Higley & Burton, 2006).
- The theory underscores the structural inequalities that enable elites to dominate political decision-making (Omodia, 2012).

Limitations:

- It offers a deterministic view of power, assuming that elites will always control political processes without significant resistance from the masses (Dahl, 1961).
- The theory downplays grassroots political movements and the potential for societal change through civic engagement and political education (Piven & Cloward, 1977).
- It does not fully account for the role of technology, media, and globalization in transforming elite structures and creating new avenues for political participation (Castells, 2010).

Elite Theory complements Conflict Theory, which explains how socio-economic disparities fuel political violence (Marx, 1848/1978), and contrasts with Pluralism, which argues that power is more dispersed among competing groups rather than concentrated within a single elite class (Truman, 1951). While Elite Theory provides insights into political manipulation, integrating perspectives from democratic and participatory theories can offer a more comprehensive understanding of how to curb political thuggery through institutional reforms and civic engagement (Held, 2006).

By applying Elite Theory to the issue of political thuggery, this study reveals how entrenched power structures perpetuate electoral violence. However, addressing this challenge requires more than just recognizing elite control—it necessitates policy interventions, political education, and stronger democratic institutions to dismantle the conditions that allow political elites to exploit vulnerable youths for their own gain (Ojo, 2014).

Political thuggery and violence pose a significant threat to national security by fostering instability, undermining democratic processes, and eroding public trust in governance (Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006). The use of violence as a political tool creates an environment where elections are won through coercion rather than the legitimate will of the people (Human Rights Watch, 2007). This, in turn, promotes bad governance by allowing incompetent or corrupt leaders to ascend to power, perpetuating cycles of poor leadership, lack of accountability, and policy failure (Oluwadare, 2013). Additionally, political violence discourages civic participation, as citizens become fearful of engaging in the political process (Obi, 2004). In view of these pressing issues, this study seeks to critically examine the root

causes of political thuggery and violence, their impact on Nigerian society, and the role of political education as a sustainable solution to mitigating these threats.

Political Thuggery

Political thuggery has been defined in various ways by different scholars. Howell and George-Genyi (2013) describe thuggery as activities involving stealing, killing, kidnapping, victimization, intimidation, and harassment, all of which disrupt peace and harmony within communities. When politics is criminalized through thuggery, individuals who uphold good values may be discouraged from participating in political processes. This suggests that thuggery is a violent phenomenon affecting political culture and democratic governance in Nigeria.

Similarly, Banwo (2003) defines political thuggery as the use of extrajudicial means in contesting or exercising political power, including intimidation, harassment, assassination, blackmail, and arson. He argues that such violent tactics undermine sustainable peace and security in a democratic system. The prevalence of political thuggery in Nigeria is largely attributed to electoral manipulation by political elites, who employ violence to maintain control and suppress opposition.

Typology of Political Thuggery in Nigeria

The manifestation of political thuggery varies across different regions of Nigeria, shaped by local traditions, political culture, and socio-economic conditions. The various nomenclatures for political thugs in different states include: Gombe State – *Kalare*, Adamawa State – *Yan Daukan Amarya*, Kano State – *Yan Tauri/Yan Daba*, Bauchi State – *Sara Suka*, Borno State – *Ecomog*, Lagos State – *Area Boys*, Bayelsa State – *Egbesu* and Abia State – *Bakassi Boys*

Despite regional variations, these groups share common traits, including intimidation, violence, and criminal activities often orchestrated by political elites. These acts not only destabilize political processes but also endanger innocent civilians.

Political education is the process of instilling relevant political skills, norms, and values necessary for meaningful political participation. According to Ozmon and Craver (1976), political education aims to establish a better polity by fostering civic awareness and engagement.

Nwankwo (2012) defines political education as a broad and encompassing concept that involves preparing individuals for political participation, both formally and informally. He emphasizes the role of political education in orienting citizens towards better governance through active engagement in democratic processes.

Obasi (2005) further highlights the significance of political education in fostering an understanding of democracy, governance, and electoral processes. He argues that low political education results in political apathy and an inability to address socio-political challenges effectively. Through political education, citizens gain knowledge about governmental functions, democratic principles, and their rights, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to governance.

Bender (1967) and Okafor and Okeke (2002) suggest that political education is a fundamental aspect of political socialization, shaping individuals' attitudes and values toward politics. Johari (2005) raises concerns about the uncritical internalization of political norms, emphasizing the need for citizens to actively question and engage with political processes rather than passively accept existing systems.

How Lack of Effective Political Education Contributes to Political Thuggery in Adamawa State

The absence of effective political education has exacerbated political thuggery in Adamawa State in several ways:

Ignorance and Misinformation: Individuals with limited political education are more susceptible to misinformation and propaganda, making them easy targets for manipulation by political elites (Nwankwo, 2012). Misinformed youths may embrace radical ideologies and resort to violence as a means of expressing political grievances.

Lack of Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills: Political education fosters critical thinking, allowing individuals to evaluate political issues rationally (Obasi, 2005), without these skills, individuals may be easily influenced by charismatic but manipulative leaders and engage in violent acts without considering alternative solutions.

Inability to Engage in Peaceful Political Processes: Politically uneducated individuals may feel excluded from the system and turn to violence as a means of asserting themselves (Bender, 1967). Proper political education could equip them with knowledge of non-violent forms of participation, such as voting, advocacy, and civic engagement.

Polarization and Extremism: Political education promotes tolerance and understanding of diverse viewpoints, reducing polarization and extremism (Johari, 2005). a lack of exposure to differing political perspectives can lead to radicalization and violent confrontations.

Weak Democratic Institutions: without political education, citizens may not understand the significance of democratic institutions, leading to disenchantment and violent tendencies (Obasi, 2005).

Several factors contribute to political thuggery in Adamawa State: Ignorance and Low Political Education; many youths engage in political violence due to a lack of awareness about democratic principles and electoral processes (Nwankwo, 2012). Bad Governance; Poor leadership and lack of accountability fuel electoral violence (Abimbola & Akinsote, 2012), Election rigging and political manipulation further contribute to political instability. Unemployment and Poverty; Economic hardships make youths susceptible to recruitment by political elites who use them as thugs (Agba, 2011). High Remuneration of Political Offices; the financial incentives associated with political offices encourage electoral violence and the use of thugs (Agba, 2011). Bribery and Corruption; Corrupt practices within the judiciary and electoral system enable political thuggery to thrive (Obasi, 2005).

The link between political thuggery and inadequate political education lies in the following factors: Vulnerability to Manipulation; Politically uneducated individuals are easily manipulated by political elites and extremist groups (Obasi, 2005). Limited Knowledge of

Peaceful Political Alternatives; Without awareness of democratic engagement, individuals may resort to violence to express political frustrations (Bender, 1967). Misguided Understanding of Political Ideologies; a lack of political education may lead to the adoption of extremist ideologies that justify violence (Johari, 2005). Polarization and Lack of Empathy; Political education fosters dialogue and reduces political intolerance (Okafor & Okeke, 2002). Lack of Civic Engagement and Accountability; when citizens are uninformed about their rights and responsibilities, they become disengaged, allowing political violence to thrive (Obasi, 2005).

3. Methodology

This study adopts a survey research design to systematically collect quantitative data from a sample of respondents in Adamawa State. The survey research design is appropriate for this study as it allows for the examination of political thuggery and violence among youths while identifying the determinant factors influencing such behaviors. This design facilitates the gathering of structured data, enabling the analysis of trends, relationships, and possible solutions through effective political education.

3.1 Population

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022) report, the estimated population of Adamawa State is 4,902,100.

3.2 Sample Size Determination

The sample size for this research was determined using Slovin's (1960) formula, as adopted by Yamane (1967):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where

n= Sample size

N = Total population

1 = Statistical Constant

e = Assumed margin of error (level of significance), set at 0.05 for a 95% confidence level

By applying this formula, the sample size is estimated to be 399.64, which is rounded up to the nearest whole number, resulting in a final sample size of 400.

3.3 Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure a fair and unbiased representation of the population. Adamawa State was divided into three senatorial districts, with each district serving as a stratum. A sample was drawn from each of the following zones: Central Zone – represented by Yola North, Northern Zone – represented by Mubi North and Southern Zone – represented by Numan. This approach enhances the accuracy and representativeness of the study by ensuring adequate coverage of the diverse demographic and geographic characteristics of Adamawa State.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire uploaded onto the Kobo Collect platform. closed-ended questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data from respondents. The survey was administered digitally, ensuring real-time data capture and minimizing errors.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire was cleaned, coded, and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (frequency, and percentage) were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistical tests (Regression analysis) was applied to identify relationships and trends.

4. Results

Section A: Demographics of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Demographic Category	Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	302	75.50
	Female	98	24.50
Educational Background	Non-formal Education	30	7.50
	Primary Education	65	16.25
	Secondary Education	92	23.00
	Diploma	66	16.50
	Degree	46	11.50
	Postgraduate Diploma (PGD)	50	12.50
	Master's Degree	42	10.50
	PhD Degree	9	2.25
Marital Status	Single	204	51.00
	Married	160	40.00
	Divorced	21	5.25
	Widowed	9	2.25
	Married but Single	6	1.50
Employment Status	Student	110	27.50
	Part-time Employed	70	17.50
	Full-time Business Person	54	13.50
	Retired	55	13.75
	Part-time Employed (additional)	50	12.50
	Full-time Employed	41	10.25
	Unemployed	20	5.00
Involvement in Political Thuggery	Yes	216	54.00
	No	184	46.00
Perception of Unemployment and Political Thuggery	Yes	400	100.00

Source: Computed using Stata from field survey data (2024).

The survey revealed that the majority of respondents (75.5%) were male, while 24.5% were female. This gender disparity suggests that political violence and thuggery in Adamawa State may be more prevalent among men, necessitating targeted interventions to promote civic engagement and political awareness among both genders. The educational background of respondents varied, with 23% having completed secondary education, 16.5% holding a diploma, and 11.5% attaining a degree. These differences highlight the need for tailored civic education strategies to ensure political awareness across different educational levels.

Marital status distribution indicates that over half of the respondents (51%) were single, while 40% were married. The perspectives of these groups on political violence may differ, as family responsibilities could influence decision-making and engagement in political activities. Similarly, employment status data showed that students (27.5%) constituted the largest group, followed by part-time employees (17.5%) and full-time business persons (13.5%). Unemployment, though at 5%, remains a critical factor that influences political violence, as unemployed youth are more vulnerable to being recruited for political thuggery.

A striking finding from the survey is that 54% of respondents admitted to participating in political thuggery, underscoring the urgent need for preventive strategies such as community awareness programs, political sensitization, and stricter legal enforcement against political violence. Additionally, all respondents (100%) agreed that unemployment contributes to political thuggery, reinforcing the argument for employment-driven solutions to address this issue.

Section B: Engagement in Political Thuggery

Table 2.1: Engagement in Political Thuggery

S/N	Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
1	To what extent do you agree that increasing civic education and political awareness could help reduce political thuggery in Adamawa State?	157(39.25%)	164(41.00%)	8(8.25%)	8(8.75%)	11(2.75%)	1.9475	1.0355
2	Addressing poverty and unemployment can have a significant impact on reducing political thuggery	162(40.50%)	123(30.75%)	68(17.00%)	28(7.00%)	19(4.75%)	2.0475	1.1328
3	Socioeconomic factors make young people more vulnerable to becoming political thugs	94(23.50%)	218(54.50%)	64(16.00%)	12(3.00%)	12(3.00%)	2.075	0.8839
4	Mentorship programs with positive role models would influence young individuals to avoid engaging in political thuggery	165(41.25%)	131(32.75%)	79(19.75%)	12(3.00%)	13(3.25%)	1.9425	1.0108
5	Strengthening law enforcement efforts would deter young people from participating in political violence and thuggery	161(40.25%)	144(36.00%)	47(11.75%)	35(8.75%)	13(3.25%)	1.9875	1.0794
6	To what extent do you agree that implementing stricter regulations on campaign financing could help decrease the involvement of political thugs in elections in Adamawa State	157(39.25%)	143(35.75%)	36(9.00%)	50(12.50%)	14(3.50%)	2.0525	1.139

7	Educational campaigns in schools and communities would effectively discourage young people from engaging in political thuggery	102(25.50%)	220(55.00%)	47(11.75%)	14(3.50%)	17(4.25%)	2.06	0.9453
8	How strongly do you believe that promoting intergroup dialogue and conflict resolution skills can mitigate the appeal of political thuggery among young individuals	153(38.25%)	153(38.25%)	66(16.50%)	13(3.25%)	15(3.75%)	1.96	1.0079
9	Political thuggery in Adamawa State could be as a result of poverty and bad governance	146(36.50%)	150(37.50%)	40(10.00%)	38(9.50%)	26(6.50%)	2.12	1.191
10	To what degree do you believe promoting youth empowerment programs and job creation initiatives could mitigate the influence of political thuggery in Adamawa State	81(20.25%)	212(53.00%)	42(10.50%)	5(12.50%)	15(3.75%)	2.265	1.0380
11	To what extent do you agree that establishing independent electoral commissions to oversee elections could contribute to reducing the influence of political thugs in Adamawa State	152(38.00%)	167(41.75%)	55(13.75%)	16(4.00%)	10(2.50%)	1.912	0.9471
12	strengthening law enforcement and prosecution of political thugs would be in curbing political violence in Adamawa State	147(36.75%)	140(35.00%)	55(13.75%)	42(10.50%)	16(4.00%)	2.1	1.13

Table 2.1 presents responses from 400 survey participants on various factors influencing political thuggery in Adamawa State. The findings indicate that increasing civic education and political awareness is widely seen as an effective strategy for reducing political thuggery, with 47.75% strongly agreeing and 32.50% agreeing. Addressing poverty and unemployment is also perceived as crucial, as 37.75% strongly agree and 37.50% agree that these factors contribute significantly to political thuggery.

Additionally, socioeconomic vulnerabilities were found to increase youth susceptibility to thuggery, with 23.75% strongly agreeing and 51.75% agreeing. Mentorship programs with positive role models were endorsed by 44.25% of respondents who strongly agreed and 35.25% who agreed that such initiatives would help deter young individuals from engaging in political violence. Strengthening law enforcement to deter participation in political thuggery was also strongly supported, with 40.50% strongly agreeing and 34.50% agreeing.

Stricter regulations on campaign financing were viewed as a potential solution, with 42.00% strongly agreeing and 37.25% agreeing. Educational campaigns in schools and communities were deemed effective deterrents, supported by 39.25% of respondents who strongly agreed and 41.00% who agreed. Moreover, 40.50% strongly agreed and 30.75% agreed that promoting intergroup dialogue and conflict resolution skills could mitigate the appeal of political thuggery among youth.

Findings also show that poverty and bad governance contribute significantly to political thuggery in Adamawa State, with 23.50% strongly agreeing and 54.50% agreeing. Promoting youth empowerment programs and job creation initiatives was seen as an effective measure to curb thuggery, with 41.25% strongly agreeing and 32.75% agreeing. Establishing independent electoral commissions to oversee elections was supported by 40.25% who strongly agreed and 36.00% who agreed, while strengthening law enforcement and prosecution of political thugs was endorsed by 39.25% who strongly agreed and 35.75% who agreed.

These findings align with previous studies (Adebayo, 2013; Ogundiya, 2019) that emphasize the role of poverty, unemployment, and weak governance structures in fostering political thuggery. The results highlight the need for structural reforms to promote political education, enforce campaign financing laws, and improve economic opportunities to address this issue effectively.

Table 2.2: Repercussions for Speaking Against Political Thuggery

How important is it for policymakers to allocate resources towards addressing the underlying social, economic, and political grievances that fuel the recruitment of young people into political thuggery?	Frequency.	Percent
Neutral Important	18	4.50
Not Important	18	4.50
Somewhat Important	110	27.50
Very Important	254	63.50
Total	400	100.00

Table 2.2 reveals that while 81.5% of respondents reported facing no repercussions for speaking out against political thuggery, 18.5% experienced retaliation. This suggests that, although freedom of expression exists to some extent, a significant minority still faces threats for opposing political violence. Previous studies (Ikelegbe, 2018) confirm that activists and political reformists often face intimidation, underscoring the need for stronger legal protections and advocacy programs to ensure citizens can voice their concerns without fear.

Table 2.3: Resource Allocation by Policymakers

How important is it for policymakers to allocate resources towards addressing the underlying social, economic, and political grievances that fuel the recruitment of young people into political thuggery?	Frequency.	Percent
Neutral Important	18	4.50
Not Important	18	4.50
Somewhat Important	110	27.50
Very Important	254	63.50
Total	400	100.00

The findings from Table 2.3 demonstrate strong public support for allocating resources to address the root causes of political thuggery. A total of 63.50% of respondents believe such interventions are "very important," while 27.50% consider them "somewhat important." Only 9% viewed resource allocation as neutral or unimportant. This aligns with existing literature (Nwankwo & Okeke, 2020) emphasizing that strategic investment in youth development, employment, and social inclusion can significantly reduce political violence.

Table 4.4 Regression Analysis Findings

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Err.	t-value	p-value	95% conf. interval	Sig.
Violence	0.058	0.026	2.20	0.029	0.006-0.109	**($p < 0.05$)
Constant	3.295	0.097	33.08	0.000	3.104-3.486	***($p < 0.01$)

Model summary

Mean dependent variable: 3.481

Standard deviation: 0.955

R-squared: 0.012

F-test: 4.832 ($p = 0.029$)

The regression analysis reveals a significant positive correlation between youth engagement in political thuggery and violence (Coef. = 0.058, p -value = 0.029). This suggests that an increase in youth involvement in thuggery leads to an increase in violence. However, the low R-squared value (0.012) indicates that political thuggery alone accounts for only 1.2% of the variance in violence, suggesting that other factors contribute to political instability. This is consistent with past research (Onuoha, 2017), which found that political thuggery, while a key factor, is often influenced by broader socio-political dynamics, such as weak law enforcement and governance failures.

5.0 Conclusion

The study reveals a significant link between political thuggery and violence in Adamawa State, highlighting the need for multi-faceted interventions. However, it also suggests that structural and institutional factors contribute to political violence beyond youth involvement. To tackle this issue, a comprehensive approach is needed, including targeted political education programs, economic empowerment initiatives, and strengthened law enforcement. Investing in youth employment, mentorship programs, and civic engagement can also help reduce thuggery's appeal. Implementing these measures can lead to a more peaceful, democratic, and politically stable environment in Adamawa State.

5.1 Recommendations

1. Enhance Political Education and Civic Awareness: Implement comprehensive political education programs in schools and communities to promote democratic values and peaceful political participation.
2. Address Socioeconomic Drivers of Political Thuggery: Prioritize job creation, vocational training, and social protection programs (e.g., scholarships and microfinance) to provide youth with economic alternatives to political violence.
3. Strengthen Law Enforcement and Electoral Regulations: Train and equip law enforcement to enforce anti-thuggery laws, prosecute sponsors of political violence, and regulate campaign financing to prevent the recruitment of political thugs.
4. Promote Community Engagement and Conflict Resolution: Support inter-group dialogue, mediation programs, and mentorship initiatives to address grievances, reduce tensions, and provide youth with positive role models.
5. Encourage Data-Driven Policy and Governance Reforms: Conduct further research on the root causes of political thuggery and implement evidence-based policies to improve governance, electoral transparency, and youth empowerment.

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