

## CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF POLITICAL THUGGERY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF OFU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE, NIGERIA.

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### Abstract

Thuggery is a destructive force that erodes the fabric of society and breeds fear and distrust. It fosters a disregard for the rule of law and the principles of justice even as it erodes the values of empathy, compassion and respect for others, leading to a breakdown of social order. Societies afflicted by thuggery suffer from increased crime rates, reduced quality of life and a general sense of unrest and anarchy. Thuggery, especially its political variant, is a form of social violence which poses immense challenge to the security of lives and property of Nigerians and undermines the socio-economic and political development of the nation. This study interrogated the causes and effects of political thuggery on the socio-economic and political development of Ofu Local Government Area, Kogi State, Nigeria. Data for the study were collected from 384 respondents who were selected using the purposive and systematic random sampling techniques. Questionnaire, In-depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were used to elicit data from respondents while the resultant quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.0. The Frustration Aggression Theory was adopted to provide theoretical pathway for the study. Findings from the study attributed political thuggery in Ofu Local Government Area Kogi State Nigeria, to a plethora of factors, among which are: unemployment, frustration, and bad governance. The study recommends the initiation of aggressive skill acquisition and job creation programmes by the Kogi State Government to effectively engage the army of unemployed youth in the study area to divert them from political thuggery while law enforcement should be strengthened to prosecute state and non-state actors found to be the sponsors of thugs whom they deploy to snatch ballot papers and engage in mayhem before, during and after elections in the study area, to serve as deterrent to others.

**Keywords:** Bad governance; Frustration; Political thuggery, Socio-economic development; Unemployment.

## Introduction

The menace of political thuggery in Africa is one of the most pressing challenges affecting how peaceful elections can be conducted (Cheeseman, 2014). This is important because elections in Africa have frequently triggered conflict. At least 80% of elections on the continent are associated with a serious violent incident that have resulted in loss of property and lives. Fierce competition between rival leaders or political parties during elections has been implicated in the outbreak of civil unrest in places such as Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, Zanzibar, South Sudan etc. (Kristine, Keith, Jose & Simrin, 2014). As the number of nations involved increases, so the number of lives and property lost increases.

In the African context, political thuggery manifests in different forms, sometimes making it more difficult for conflict experts to adequately capture. Though the issue of political violence is defined based on the direct relationship between the violent act and the immediate political incidence, political violence has surfaced from certain unclear channels. In most African nations, certain violence which had claimed lives and property have emanated from long time grievances over the political situation in the country in question. In some places like Mali, Senegal, Somalia, Libya, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Nigeria and Egypt; political violence has surfaced under the smoke screen of ethnic rivalry, religious domination, quest for change of overdue government and assumed corrupt government (Kristine, Keith, Jose Simrin, 2014).

These entire incidences had political undertones. Of paramount importance here is that whether the violence occurred before, during or after election, the quick and available machinery for the execution of this agenda are the youth. While elections have generally been more peaceful mechanisms for contesting power, politically motivated violence has occurred in about 60% of African elections between 1990 and 1999 (Scott 2012). Electoral violence is orchestrated by political elites to intimidate voters. Youth wings or party task forces are prominent exponents. In Zimbabwe, victory for the opposition in the 2008 parliamentary election triggered immediate and brutal response from the ruling party (ZANU-PF). A campaign of beatings and targeted assassinations of MDC officials and supporters forced the party leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, to withdraw from the presidential run-off vote (Africa Research Institute, 2012).

Political thuggery is a devastating phenomenon in Nigerian politics. It has brought about loss of lives and valuable property with attendant socio-economic and political consequences. The phenomenon is characterized by crises, conflict, dispute, rebellion, violence and even war, all of which combine to stunt the country's democratic development. The menace of political thuggery is such that thugs move mostly in organized groups victimizing, terrorizing, intimidating, and injuring, not only politicians but also innocent and law-abiding citizens. The menace is responsible for poor political culture as it results to death or poses deadly threats by deterring individuals from actively partaking into the political process and routine socio-economic activities in their homes, shops and on the streets within the country. Hassan (2011) noted that the political elite recruit unemployed youth as thugs whom they enlist to disrupt political campaigns, rallies as well as snatch ballot boxes for their personal aggrandizement as manifested during the 2011 general elections and subsequent elections in Nigeria. The trend of ballot box snatching is beginning to give way to vote selling and vote buying occasioned by the introduction of the card reader and other technology enabled voting devices into the country's election management process.

Elections can exacerbate tensions. A recurrence of factional clashes in northern Nigeria followed the Goodluck Jonathan's victory in the 2011 presidential election. A large number of

people were reportedly killed in election-related violence in that part of the country. The political class who often crave for political power, use various undemocratic means including the deployment of political thuggery to remain in power without considering the damage it does to the socio-economic and democratic sustainability of their nations. It is against this background that this study examines the menace of political thuggery on the socio-economic and political development of Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Political thuggery is a social problem that has been a menace to Nigeria's political system and Kogi State in particular. Successive governments have taken several steps to nip the scourge in the bud albeit without any tangible degree of success. In spite of the stringent provisions in the 2010 Electoral Act prohibiting hoodlums from engaging in political thuggery, incidences of political thuggery have continued to characterise every election circle in Nigeria with Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State having its own share of the disturbing menace. Ofu Local Government area has been known to be a hotbed of political thuggery and other electoral violence dating back to several years. For instance, Isiaka (2010), reported that hundreds of residents of Ejule in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State fled the town when heavy fighting broke out amongst some youth which left six (6) people dead and several others seriously injured. The then Council Chairman Mr. Enejo Peter had expressed sadness over the incidents, lamenting that the series of politically-motivated killings, maiming and destruction of property by miscreants have impeded economic and political activities in the area. He lamented that four (4) persons were killed while many others sustained serious injuries following a violent clash between rival political thugs in Ejule, Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State. The Chairman blamed the fracas on people he described as "desperate politicians" intent on disrupting the peace of the area by arming political thugs to foment trouble at the slightest provocation.

Not too long ago, one Mrs. Salome Abu, then Women Leader of the Peoples' Democratic Party, PDP, was reportedly burnt alive on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019, when thugs believed to be sympathetic to one of the opposition political parties stormed her residence at Ochadamu Ward in the study area. Ocholi Edicha, one of the suspected culprits was arrested, tried, convicted and jailed 12 years for his role in the murder of the female politician (Agbana, 2019). Similarly, one Kabir Bala, (aka Okwo), was killed on June 23, 2023 at Ejule in Ofu Local Government Area under unclear circumstances by hoodlums. Segun (2023), reported that Kabiru Bala, a notorious criminal was linked to the death of Salome Abu, a PDP Women Leader in Ochadamu Ward.

In nearby, Anyigba, in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, a 19-year first time voter and an undergraduate student of the Kogi State University, Anyigba, Usman Daniel was murdered in cold blood by stray bullets when thugs stormed one of the polling units located by the Kogi State Water Works at Ajetachi area, shot sporadically and snatched ballot boxes during the February 2019 election.

It is against the backdrop of the foregoing problems, that this study examines the causes and effects of political thuggery on the socio-economic and political development of Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

- (a) What are the causes of political thuggery in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State?
- (b) What are the effects of political thuggery on the socio-economic and political development of Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State?
- (c) What strategies can be adopted to mitigate the menace of political thuggery in the study area?

### **Study Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses guided this study:

- H<sub>0</sub>. There is no positive correlation between the causes of political thuggery and their effects on the study area.
- H<sub>0</sub>. There is no significant correlation between the effects of political thuggery and the socio-economic and political development of Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State.

### **Literature Review**

#### **The concept of Political Thuggery**

Political thuggery can be defined as any negative behaviour associated with violence, hooliganism, kidnapping, murder, assassination, gang action and trouble ‘shooting’, that is strongly instrumental in distorting electoral results, snatching of ballot boxes, alteration of election results, elimination of political opponents under the influence of drugs and supernatural powers. Nigeria’s political system is majorly characterized by acts of thuggery, violence, harassment etc. Overall, political thuggery is characterized by robbery, intimidation, gangsterism, murder, physical assault and often involves physical combat between two opposing gangs or groups, which ultimately generates inter-personal or group hostilities. Since the pre-independence General Elections of 1959, politics in Nigeria has been characterized by thuggery and violence (Abubakar, 2015).

Achimugu (2024) conceptualizes thuggery as the actions and behaviours of individuals who have succumbed to lack of moral compass and empathy for others by engaging in violence, intimidation, lawlessness, and criminal acts without regards for societal norms and values. He noted that thugs perpetrate crimes such as physical assault, robbery and extortion, often using brute force to achieve their goals. According him, those who engage in thuggery prioritize their own desires and power over the well-being of others thereby causing harm and suffering without remorse. Also, Lawal cited in Idris (2011: 1) views thuggery as criminalization of politics. He noted that when politics is criminalized, it is left in the hands of ruffians, thugs, hoodlums and hooligans, while the good citizens are scared away. For the purpose of this study, thuggery is any act of politically-motivated violence deployed by desperate politicians to cause mayhem with the ultimate desire of using same to gain ascension to power and retain political relevance.

In order to have a firm grasp of the causes of political thuggery and how it works and affects the socio-economic and political development of societies, Nigeria inclusive, a number of studies have focused on the menace. This has led to the conduct of several empirical studies.

Alphonsus’ (2015), study centred on ‘Political thuggery; A threat to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The aim of the study was to examine the reason for the prevalence incidence of political thuggery in Nigeria during elections. The study attributed thuggery to youth unemployment and its attendant poverty and frustration; the negative impact of money politics and the phenomenon of godfather-ism in Nigeria’s political process. The study recommended that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should make adequate security arrangement to resist or mitigate the challenge. Part of the mitigation efforts was the provision in the Electoral Act 2010 criminalizing political thuggery. While we agree with Alphonsus’ recommendation, the snag however, has been the lack of political will to prosecute electoral offenders, especially political thugs and their sponsors.

Umar (2017), in his work titled “Almajiri (Traditional Islamic scholarship) and political thuggery in Nigeria”, sought to identify the causes of political thuggery vis-a-vis the Almajirai

system. The study which adopted the cross-sectional survey design, found among others, that without any significant variation in the perception of stake holders, there was a very weak level of involvement of the Almajiri in political thuggery in Bauchi State (2007-2015). The study therefore advocated a reform of Nigeria's educational system, including conventional and the informal sectors; poverty alleviation, and strong enforcement of law and order as possible antidotes to political thuggery. The study, in our opinion, failed to identify the major cause of thuggery, which is lack of employment opportunity for the ever-increasing army of Nigerian graduates.

Emma and Aloysius (2017), in their study focused on establishing the causes of electoral violence in Nigeria's democracy with Bayelsa and Kogi State 2015 general election as study foci. The researchers adopted the Frustration-Aggression theory to provide intellectual direction. The study which was cross-sectional in nature, identified among other factors, frustration-aggression, poverty and self-centeredness as the predictors of electoral violence and recommended among others, that the elected representatives should keep their campaign promises while the INEC should devise appropriate mechanisms for ensuring free and fair elections. Even though the study provided insight into the menace of electoral violence it, however, failed to underscore the fact that human beings, especially politicians could do and say anything while in need, but the moment they get what they wanted, they might renege on such promises thereby leading to dissatisfaction which is one of the major causes of political thuggery.

Galadima, Sivapalan, and Abd's (2019), work on the study of youth unemployment and terrorism in Nigeria, examined a correlation between youth unemployment and Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria, using the frustration-aggression theory as theoretical frame work. The study found that the increasing number of unemployed youths in the north east of Nigeria has provided adequate pool of recruits for the Boko Haram elite which they deploy to perpetrate their murderous acts. The study recommended that government should declare a state of emergency on employment to nip the scourge in the bud. From the perspective of the study under review, it is noteworthy that such recommendation can hardly solve the problem given that no government-enabled employment opportunity will be commensurate to the huge sums of money being paid the radicalized youths by the Boko Haram leadership.

Abubakar, Bola, Abdulkadir and Ramatu (2020), in their study on political thuggery and violence in Gombe State of Nigeria, isolated the selfish interest of thugs, poverty and unemployment, illiteracy, poor governance, group sentiment and injustice as causes of political thuggery and violence in the study area. The study recommended among others, provision of employment, orientation towards peaceful coexistence, good governance, equity and justice as well as proper education as panacea. The study however, failed to address the politics of ethnicity, the majority versus minority divide, which is prevalent in Gombe State as another cause of political thuggery.

### **Effects of Political Thuggery on Political and Socio-Economic Activities in Nigeria**

Saliu and Enojo (2016), in a study titled "Political conflict, Godfatherism and Democratic Sustainability on Nigeria's Fourth Republic, examined the nexus between contestants and godfatherism in seeking for any elective office. The study which was cross-sectional, found out amongst others, that godfathers have negatively impacted the democratic process in Nigeria as their activities have denied the citizenry the opportunity of electing their preferred candidates into political offices. The study recommended the need for the redefinition of the country's value system even as it failed to appreciate the fact that the personal greed of political thugs, manifested in the destruction of lives and property during elections, negatively affect the development of the society.

Uche and Obi (2016), whose study examined the effects of political thuggery in Kogi State with reference to Anyigba town in Dekina Local Government Area from March 2015 – December 2015, adopted the survey research design. The study found out that political thuggery has fouled the political process in Kogi State with severe consequences for the polity and recommended that politicians should stop the usage of political thugs to win elections. The study however, failed to advise both governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to provide employment for the youth to redirect their energy from engagement in thuggery and electoral violence.

Rasak and Garba (2017), in a study titled “Political Thuggery, Violence and Woman Participation in Politics in Nigeria” found out that for balanced participation devoid of gender inequality, Nigerian women need to be more enlightened to fully participate in the electoral process by seeking election into political offices, the inherent challenges of intimidation and harassment by political thugs notwithstanding. The study noted that contesting for elective positions is not the prerogative of the male gender but a constitutional right of both the male and female genders.

Adamu and Abubakar (2017), in a research titled “The effects of Sara-Suka political thuggery on democratic and social activities in Bauchi State: A Study of the 2015 General Elections” found out among other factors, that instilling fear in candidates, hindering the electorate from participating in political activities, killing of innocent people, human rights violation, destruction of valuable properties, insecurity during and after election and intimidation of people within the state, serve as fetters to the electoral process in the study area. The study recommended that the Bauchi State should institute appropriate measures to nip the identified challenges in the bud. The study was however, silent on the contributions of non-governmental organisation and private individuals towards solving the problem affecting the society. Even though there is similarity of title between the former and the current study, the former was conducted in Bauchi while the latter study is in Ofu local government of Kogi State.

Alhaji (2018), in a study titled “Causes and effects of political thuggery in Nigeria” examined the reasons for the persistence of political thuggery in Nigeria during elections. The study revealed that political thuggery hinders public accountability of elected officers and is thus, is a bane of good governance in Nigeria. Relying on secondary data, the study noted that party differences and political violence have common and destructive effect on the unity of Nigeria in the social, political, cultural and economic spheres.

Okafor and Okafor (2018), in their study titled “Political violence and the prospects of democracy in Nigeria: A study of the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria” examined the impact of political violence on public perception of democracy in Nigeria among the electorate in the South-Eastern Nigeria. The study adopted survey method of data collection, as well as descriptive and inferential statistics as tools for checking the correlation between political violence and indices of democracy in the region. It found out that political violence negatively affected public attitude towards democracy as political thuggery dissuades people from active participation in the electoral process.

The major underlying lesson to be learnt from these studies is that political thuggery is not only a cog in the wheel of progress of any political system but it is also antithetical to the growth, development and sustenance of democracy as a system of representative government in Nigeria, as it is in other emerging democracies of the world.

### **Theoretical Framework**

For this study, the Frustration Aggression theory is used to explain political thuggery among the youth in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The original formulation

of the frustration–aggression hypothesis by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939) stated that the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression. What is especially noteworthy in this definition is that, unlike the use of the word in everyday language, frustration here is not understood as an emotional experience but as an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response.

The original theory claimed that: (a) Aggression is always preceded by frustration and (b), Frustration always leads to aggression. The theory has undergone two important revisions: one by Neal Miller in 1941, and another by Leonard Berkowitz in 1989 (Psychol, 1989). Although the 1939 and 1941 versions of the theory were controversial and heavily criticized, the 1989 version has been better received and is commonly used as a theoretical basis for modern aggression research.

This study finds relevance in the Frustration-Aggression theory because it could be used to link the ever-increasing rate of youth unemployment with political thuggery in Nigeria. The inability of the Nigerian government to provide employment opportunities for its teeming youth has provided a fertile ground for the displacement of frustration by this class of people. There is a strong feeling of joy and expectation when a student is about graduating from a higher institution of learning. However, such expectation gradually fades away and is replaced with frustration after some years of hopelessness as necessitated by unfruitful efforts made to secure gainful employment. When the frustration prolongs as the employment delays or is denied, there is a high probability that such youth may take to unapproved means to actualize their goals. One of such outlawed means which some of the frustrated youth resort to in Nigeria, is to make themselves ready tools to be used for political thuggery by the political class.

### **Methodology**

This study used the cross-sectional survey research design in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting data from only a segment of people or items considered to be representative of the entire group or population so that generalization can be made based on the data collected.

This study was conducted in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State. Ofu Local Government is situated in the Eastern Senatorial zone of Kogi State and was created on the 11th of May, 1989. It was carved out of the old Idah Local Government Area (Ofu L.G.A Information Unit, 2022). The population for this study consisted of 192,169 people which is the entirety of the population of Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, according to the 2006 census figures. The projected population of Ofu Local Government Area was 276, 545 (Ladan, 2020). To get the sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table was used. Deducing from the table, the sample size drawn from Ofu Local Government Area for the study was 384 respondents.

Purposive and systematic sampling techniques were adopted for the study while three instruments: questionnaire, In-depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were used for data collection. The questionnaire was used in this study because it helped the researchers to reach out to a wide and diverse population of respondents. It was administered by the researchers and two research assistants with social science background and good knowledge of the culture and tradition of the study area.

The second instrument, the IDI was used to complement the questionnaire and it enabled the researchers to probe deeper into the subject of the study. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used to elicit information from members of target groups selected from five of the eleven wards,

namely, Ejule / Alla Ward, Alloma / Okura Ward, Ugwolawo Ward I, Itobe / Okokenyi Ward, and Ochadamu Ward. A total of 25 participants among them, the Onu (King of the town) Pastors, Imam, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), community leaders and heads of the vigilante groups in the selected political wards, formed the FGD participants.

The data generated were analyzed using inferential statistics, frequency and percentage tables with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.0. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical tool was used to establish probable relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

### **Results /Discussion**

This section of the paper examines the causes as well as the effects of political thuggery on the socio-economic and political development of Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State. The discussion is abinitio, premised on the objectives of the study, while drawing inferences from extant literature on the topic of the paper.

#### **Causes of thuggery in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State**

**Table 3: Shows the causes of political thuggery in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Unemployment and the attendant poverty lead to political thuggery in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State.	88	22.92
2	Political godfathers do everything possible to install their godsons into office during elections.	113	29.43
3	Frustration/aggression constitute the brain behind of electoral violence in the study area.	69	17.97
4	Illiteracy, poor governance, group sentiment and injustice jointly cause political thuggery and violence.	78	20.31
5	Ineffectiveness of security personnel creates room for political thuggery.	36	9.37
6	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field survey, 2021**

Table 3 indicates that 88 respondents or 22.92 % of the total population of respondents identified unemployment and the resultant poverty as the cause of political thuggery in the study area, while 113 others or 29.42% implicated the phenomenon of political godfatherism for the menace. A total of 69 (17.97%); 78 (20.31%) and 36 (9.3%) respondents, respectively, singled out frustration/aggression, illiteracy, poor governance, group sentiment and injustice and

ineffectiveness of security personnel in that order, as the drivers of political thuggery in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State.

The respondents' viewpoints are in agreement with the views canvassed in the literature by Alphonsus (2015). Alphonsus in a study of political thuggery as a threat to democratic consolidation in Nigeria, specifically isolated unemployment among Nigerian youth as the major pull factor for engagement in the nefarious act. He noted that poverty and frustration which are the by-products of unemployment, make the unemployed vulnerable to the antics of greedy and selfish politicians who recruit them for their personal aggrandizement.

These findings also cohere with the views of Focus Group Discussants and In-depth interviewees (IDI) as shown below:

Political thuggery is caused by factors such as unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, godfatherism and selfishness on the part of both the politicians and the thugs alike (Ejule, Male, 55 years, FGD, 2021).

A female respondent in Ugwolawo Ward also noted:

Political thuggery is caused by the Godfatherism and God son factor. The God father try (sic) every possible means to install their godson (sic) with the aid of hoodlums by criminalizing politics (Ugwolawo, Female, 45. IDI, 2021).

**Effects of Political thuggery on socio-economic and political activities of the study area.**

**Table 4: Shows the effects of political thuggery on economic and political activities in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State**

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Political thuggery leads to destruction of lives property.	20	5.21
2	Political thuggery results in the disruption of elections.	25	6.51
3	Political thuggery scares voters during elections.	30	7.81
4	Political thuggery leads to the imposition of unpopular candidates.	22	5.73
5	Political thuggery hinders economic activities.	34	8.85
6	Political thuggery contributes to the absence of banking and commercial activities in the study area.	10	2.60
7	Relocation of educational institutions from the study area	04	1.04
8	All of the above	239	62.24
9	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2021**

From table 4, it is evident that an over-whelming population of 239 respondents or 62.24% of the study population identified a combination of destruction of lives and property, disruption of election, scaring of voters during elections, imposition of unpopular candidates, disruption of economic activities, contribution to absence of banking and commercial activities and relocation

of educational institutions to safer havens as the cumulative effects of political thuggery on the socio-economic and political development of Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State. However, a combination of 145 respondents or 37.76%, identified each of the factors in the table in different but negligible percentages as the effects of political thuggery in the study area.

The majority view point tallies with the work of Adamu and Abubakar (2017), on “The Effect of Sara-Suka Political Thuggery on Democratic and Social Activities in Bauchi State: A Study of 2015 General Election” whose outcome identified tendencies such as creation of fear among candidates, hindering the electorate from engaging in political activities, killing of innocent people, violation of human rights, destruction of valuable property, insecurity during and after election and intimidation of people within the state during elections as the cumulative effects of political thuggery.

The study findings also resonated with views from the different FGD sessions. Two of the discussants captured their feelings as follows:

Political thuggery results in fighting, killing and stealing as well as the destruction of the market which is our primary source of income. Outsiders stop coming to the market to buy and sell because of the activities of thugs during elections (Itobe, FGD, 2021).

Thuggery activities have negatively affected our primary source of income and livelihood including the peaceful atmosphere enjoyed within our community (Alloma, FGD, 2021).

It is noteworthy that in addition to the questionnaire and FGD as well as the IDI responses, the authors also tested the hypotheses formulated for the study. In determining the relationship and difference between independent and dependent variables, two (2) null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The first hypothesis sought to establish the correlation between the causes of political thuggery and the effect.

Data from the study findings supported the hypothesis that the causes of political thuggery such as unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, frustration and aggression, etc. have net effects on the prevalence of political thuggery in a given environment, in this case, Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State. This is also consistent with the study of Alphonsus (2015) which identified unemployment and its attendant poverty, frustration and aggression as risk factors. This finding further supported the assumption of the frustration -Aggression theory that the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and contrariwise.

The second hypothesis posited that there was a significant relationship between political thuggery and the socio-economic and political development of Ofu Local Government Area. Findings from the study as shown in table 4, attested to such relationship. The work of Adamu and Abubakar (2017) and Alhaji (2018), both of which established the destructive effects of political thuggery on socio-economic and political life of citizens further buttressed the validity of the second hypothesis.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the causes and effects of political thuggery on the socio-economic and political development of Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The study identified thuggery as a destructive force that erodes the fabric of society and breeds fear and distrust while noting that societies bedeviled by thuggery suffer from increased crime rates, reduced quality of life and a general sense of unrest and anarchy.

The study isolated unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, breakdown in core moral values, lack of readiness on the part of the government to deal with perpetrators of political thuggery as the major drivers of political thuggery in the study area. It asserted that the menace of political thuggery has held back the development of the area through the imposition of unpopular candidates who are surrogates of political godfathers to whom they owe allegiance rather than the electorate. The menace has also retarded the economic growth of the study area as both local and national investors are scared of investing in the area while people live in perpetual fear of possible loss of lives and destruction of property by political miscreants, especially before, during and after elections.

### Recommendations

Against the backdrop of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested for policy formulation and possible implementation:

- (a) It is obvious from previous studies and this study that a combination of factors such as unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, breakdown in core moral values, lack of readiness on the part of the government have led to political thuggery. It is hereby recommended that governments at all levels should initiate measures through intervention outlets like the NDE, YES, etc., to create skill acquisition programmes to engage the army of unemployed youths and rechannel their energies from engagement in acts of thuggery and political violence.
- (b) It is also evident in extant literature that political thuggery has devastating effects including but not limited to killing of innocent persons and destruction of social amenities, which thus, scare away both foreign and local investors. Law enforcement should be strengthened to prosecute both state and no-state actors who sponsor thugs, irrespective of their status, to deter others from the nefarious act.
- (c) An important aspect in dealing with thuggery is for the political governance structures at both the Kogi State and Ofu Local Government Area, to ensure the promotion and cultivation of a culture of empathy, respect and ethical behaviour, especially among the youth, to enthrone a more harmonious, safe, peaceful and just environment for all.

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