



Unveiling the Underlying Factors and Ripple Effects of Electoral Violence in the Tamale Metropolis

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ABSTRACT

This study reveals the underlying factors promoting electoral-related violence and its effects in the Tamale metropolis. The case study design guided the research, with a mixed-methods approach used for the data collection. Two hundred and fifty closed and open-ended questionnaires were administered to respondents, while five key informant in-depth interviews were conducted. Quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and a thematic approach was used to analyse the qualitative data obtained from the study. It was revealed that electoral violence is engendered by multifaceted root causes, encompassing political, social, and economic dimensions. However, poverty was noted as the leading cause of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis, representing 34.8%. The research found that election-related violence has significant effects on the socio-economic development of Tamale metropolis. These include the maiming of people, deaths, and destruction of public and private properties. These findings confirm the conceptual framework on which this study is anchored. Drawn from identity and interest-group theories, the conceptual framework posited that election-related violence leads to loss of lives, loss of property, harassment of citizens, displacement of citizens, disruption of public order, and maiming of citizens. It was further established that addressing the problem of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that involves various stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organisations, political parties, and the local community. Therefore, it is recommended that the government work in collaboration with non-governmental and civil society organisations and community stakeholders to address unemployment in the country, particularly among youth by creating employment opportunities.

Keywords: elections, electoral violence, Tamale Metropolis, electorate, democratic governance.

INTRODUCTION

Many countries around the world have embraced multi-party democracy as a form of government since the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. Multiparty democracy is seen as an effective means to select a legitimate government and increase citizen participation in governance processes. Elections have become an important feature of multi-party democracy across the globe and seen as common means to capture state power. Elections are now frequently used to compete for state power in sub-Saharan Africa since the region adopted multi-party system of government in the early 1990s. Many countries in Sub-saharan Africa have held more than three consecutive elections since the 1990s (Adolfo et al., 2012). A positive perception of multi-party politics has emerged following improvements in the number of elections and the standard of democracy across the continent. However, this development closely follows another, far more disturbing trend in the form of election-related violence. Electoral related violence not only threatens the peace and security of the continent, but can also undermine the long-term sustainability of country's democratization processes (Adolfo et al., 2012).

Electoral violence is any form of organized action or threat aimed at threatening or harming political stakeholders before, during, or after election. Political parties often use electoral violence to deliberately influence the conduct and outcome of elections, with coercion on people, property, and infrastructure (Bekoe, 2012; Harish & Toha, 2019; Høglund, 2009). Election related violence occurs at any point in election cycle, including election announcements, party primaries, voter registration and during victory celebrations (Seeberg et al., 2018; Soderberg, 2018).

Election related violence occurs across the world with much of the recorded cases in the developing countries including Ghana.

Ghana has held eight consecutive general elections from 1992 to 2020 (CDD, 2021). Ghana's elections have since been recognized as free and fair by many across the world. This however does not mean absence of election-related violence. In each of these elections, there were multiple reports of election violence which have resulted in massive destruction of valuable resources and loss of lives (Gyamera, 2018, CDD and CODEO, Electoral Commission Report, 2021). As reported by the Electoral Commission in the 2020 election, due to violence that occurred in certain constituencies, the declaration of election results in those constituencies were delayed igniting tension and anxiety in the country (Electoral Commission, 2021).

The Tamale metropolis, located in the northern region of Ghana, has over the years witnessed a troubling increase in electoral violence during electoral process. Several elections observer reports have cited Tamale metropolis as a trouble hotspot for electoral violence (see Zounmenou 2011; Bekoe, 2012). The causes of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis are complex and multifaceted, rooted in historical, socio-economic, and political factors (see also Amankwah, 2013; CDD, 2019; Dorina and Stephanie, 2021).

One of the primary causes of electoral violence often reported is the intense competition for power and resources among political parties and their supporter. The region's politics often revolves around ethnicity and identity, leading to heightened tensions and rivalries during election campaigns (Dorina and Stephanie, 2021). Also, a large proportion of the population in the Tamale metropolis composed of youth who often face high unemployment rates and limited economic opportunities. As a result, they become susceptible to manipulation by politicians who exploit their frustrations and offer incentives for engaging in violent activities during elections (Owusu Kyei & Berckmoes, 2020; Seidu, 2020). The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region exacerbates the situation. The easy access to firearms facilitates violent confrontations between rival political factions during electoral process. The effects of electoral violence in the metropolis are far-reaching and detrimental to both individuals and society. There is loss of lives and injuries during clashes, leaving families devastated and communities traumatised. Electoral violence causes significant damage to public and private property, hindering economic development. It also undermines the credibility of democratic process, eroding trust in institutions and discouraging citizen participation in elections. This perpetuates a vicious cycle where disillusionment with the democratic system contributes to escalation of violence during subsequent electoral events (see also CDD, 2021; 2017; CODEO, 2021, Zounmenou, 2011; Birch et al., 2020).

It is imperative to add that electoral violence has led to destruction of properties in many forms, including burning and pillaging, ballot boxes have also been taken by "macho men" and youth groups, and there have been open fights among supporters of different parties. To address this canker of electoral violence requires a better understanding of the factors promoting the violence and how it affects the citizens, society and consequently retards the development effort of the country at large. It is against this problem that this paper examines the causes and implications of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. The paper is guided by the following research questions

1. What are the causes of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis?
2. What are the economic and political implications of electoral violence in Tamale metropolis?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contextualizing Electoral Violence

Historically, it is established that, electioneering activities first appeared in Ancient Greece and Rome. It was further noted that, the pope and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire were chosen in Rome through elections. In a different historical trend within elections domains, after the passing of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the same procedure was applied in the elections for the caliphate in Ancient Arab nations. The history of contemporary elections, however, began in the 17th century, a time of representative democracy in Europe and North America (Nacil, 2009).

Election violence is essentially any form of organized action or any form of organized activities aimed at threatening (physical, psychological and structural), extorting or delaying electoral process (Albert, 2007).

The worst-case scenarios of electoral violence are Physical violence which include assassination, arson, looting, shooting, kidnapping, hostage taking, violent turmoil in campaign

events, armed raids on voting and sorting centers, including ballot stealing, and ballot boxes. This situation also has psychological effects which refer to formal and informal behaviors that create fear in people that can be the product of physical violence. These include threats to opposition by security guards or by phone or text message (Albert, 2007).

In Africa and many developing countries, poverty is primarily a structural problem. Due to poverty, political party sympathizers who have been rewarded or promised goodies by political leaders in exchange for power will do anything and everything to ensure that their patrons win the election including resorting to violence before, during and after election (Gyamara, 2018).

Election violence is not limited to election day, it occurs before, during, and after elections. Pre-election violence includes actions or intimidation against electoral authorities during voter registration or campaigns. Election Day violence includes ballot box theft, attacks on the opposition and political parties, and harassment and intimidation of security forces. Post-election violence can take the form of violent protests against real or imaginary fraudulent elections, and the use of state violent equipment in response to protests further exacerbates the intensity of violence.

Causes of Electoral Violence

Scholars have attempted unraveling some of the factors influencing election related violence. First, the politics of exclusion is one of the main factors mostly cited in the literature. Adolfo et al. (2012) indicated that in Africa's political history, one party politics and domination as well as the winner takes all is the most dominant. As a result, some people particularly the opposition, are often marginalized in terms of having access to their economic and social facilities. They are deliberately excluded from national politics. For example, election violence in Côte d'Ivoire was the result of a political separation between the North and South that divided the country (Haris & Toha, 2019). Individuals and groups felt excluded and as a result adopted a radical approach to capture political power which resulted in a longstanding clash between factions in the country.

Second, socio-economic instability in the loss of political power, especially in countries where almost all power is centralized is another cause of political violence. When leaders are afraid to lose all the benefits they enjoy in power, they always refuse to admit defeat when they lose an election. If the winner takes everything and everyone else has to prepare for the next election, the chances of violence are high (Gillies, 2011). Due to economic uncertainty, many politicians' resorts to all sorts of illegal means including violence and intimidation to gain political power (Gillies, 2011). These politicians can use the militia and national security agencies to intimidate voters in order to win elections at the expense of others.

Fraudulent voting is another notable factor within the literature for electoral violence. Political Parties affected by this fraudulent vote may resort to violence to prevent fraudulent activities. This often happens when the citizens in the country have lost confident in the electoral management system. Many African political parties for instance, who often lose elections, blame their defeat on electoral fraud. In Kenya for instance, the opposing government after losing the 2017, cited multiple fraud as the cause of the defeat (Gyamara, 2018). In Ghana, both the 2012, 2016 and 2020 election was characterised by several reports of fraudulent activities in some pooling stations (CDD report, 2013; 2017; 2021).

Ethnicity is another cause of electoral violence. Many electoral violence reported cases in most African countries are as a result of ethnic differences in those countries. Erdmann (2007) and Widner (1997) argued that ethnicity itself is not evil, as ethnicity is nothing more than a relationship that exists between people. However, it has been used as a tool for electoral violence in recent times (Lentz and Nugent, 2000).

Election mismanagement is equally a factor cited in the literature that can lead to electoral violence. Election mismanagement can play a role in inciting violence, especially in conflict-prone areas. In post-conflict societies, election management can create situations that contribute to the outbreak of violence (Sisk, 2008). According to Sisk (2008), the structure of voting rights, the level of people's abilities and the degree of fairness determine their ability to organize credible elections. Lyons (2004) also states that efficiency, expertise, transparency, impartiality, and independence are important prerequisites for achieving legitimate election results. However, if these conditions are not met, there is an increased risk of political instability and election violence (Pastor 1999). This means that in preventing election related violence, institutions responsible for election management must strive to be fair in the performance of their duties.

Effects of Electoral Violence

Election-related violence comes along with several and severe effects that manifest itself in the socio-economic and political development of a country. Electoral violence has had a negative impact on many countries that have suffered from it.

First, there are security implications for affected countries. When electoral violence occurs, the security of the countries involved becomes very unstable and this spreads to other neighboring countries. In the view of Omotola (2008), some of the key security issues in electoral violence include the complete disruption of public order, the increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), the number of refugees, and the militarization of society. Omotola (2008) backs up her argument with the fact that after the 2007 election riots in Nigeria, there was a complete breakdown of law and order in the already unstable states.

Election violence leads to an increase in the number of displaced people. Studies have shown that in Africa and other parts of the world, election-related violence has resulted in many people looking for shelter outside of their homes. According to the Kenya Red Cross Association (2008), the number of internal migrants in Kenya is more than 300,000 as a result of the post-election violence in 2007. Many of these IDPs also come with their problems. In addition to the security issues associated with managing such large numbers in the camps, displaced persons are also exposed to a number of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS (Omotola, 2008).

Electoral violence is also characterized by the violation of human rights. Studies have shown that in many countries including the African countries, human rights violations often accompanied electoral violence. For instance, Omotola (2008) reported that in 2007 election in Nigeria the security agents subjected the citizens to harassment, abuse and even murder. Kenya's election in 2007 was also characterized by electoral violence which saw series of human rights violations ranging from brutalities, rape, destruction of properties and the killing of civilians (Omotola, 2008).

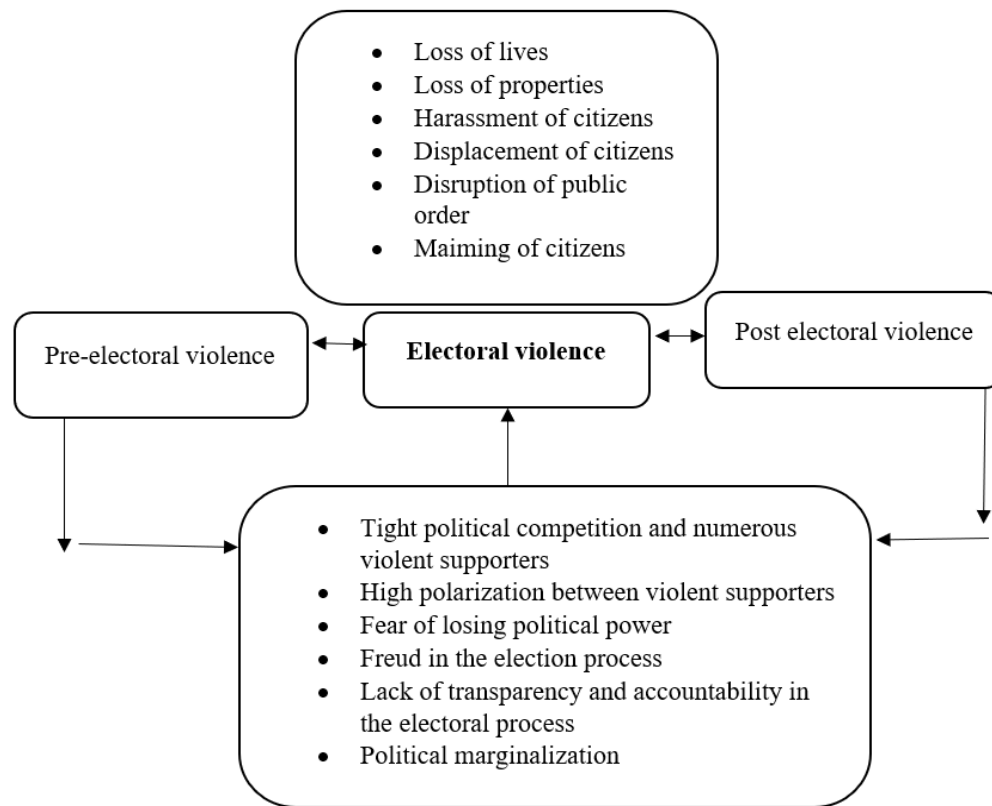


Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing the Causes and Effects of Electoral Violence

Source: Authors construct, 2024

The conceptual framework on which the study was anchored shows that there are two classifications of electoral violence which is pre-electoral and post-electoral violence. The pre-electoral violence includes the violence that occurs before the day of the election. This could range from processes leading to voter registration, political party primaries for both Parliamentary and Presidential candidates' elections to political party campaigns. The post-election occurs after election which including collation and counting, declaration of results and victory celebrations. Election related violence leads to loss of lives, loss of properties, harassment of citizens, displacement of citizens, disruption of public order and maiming of citizens.

The identity and interest-group theories constitute the conceptual framework for this study. The identity theory was formulated by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979 which posits that the meanings that people give themselves develop from the roles that they fulfill. This theory argues that people divide their world into an in-group and an out-group, and might discriminate against the out-group, thus enhancing their self-image and likely to led to violence against the other (Mcleod, 2008). This is often the case with political parties' youth groups. The interest-group theory was developed by Thorsten Sellin (1938), The theory suggests that during periods of rapid social change, violence occurs because groups with different norms and values come closer together. In interest-group theory, violence consists of acts between groups with differing norms to assert power over another group. The cause of violence in this theory would be an attempt to maintain the norms of each group, even when they conflict with other groups. Identity theories and interest-group theories have a lot in common.

The use of this conceptual framework which was drawn from the identity and interest-group theories provides a multidimensional approach to understand the nature of electoral violence in the Tamale Metropolis. This further offers a holistic perspective of the causes and consequences of electoral violence in general for policy implication and action.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The design chosen for this research is case study. This is because the researchers conducted an in-depth investigation into the causes and effects of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. The causes and effects of electoral violence is complex and multifaceted in nature. Case study provides the proper structure in unearthing these issues within the real-life context of residents in the Tamale metropolis who have been affected by the issue under study (Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2014).

Research Approach

The paper adopted the mixed research approach in gathering the necessary data for the study. Specifically, the convergent parallel mixed approach was used in gathering the data (Creswell, 2014). With this approach, the researchers collected both qualitative and quantitative data and analyzed them separately. After the analysis the two results were then compared for triangulation. Triangulation is necessary for this research because the quantitative and qualitative data complement and cross-validate each other (Sharan, 2002).

Research Instruments

In line with the selected approach for this research, two instruments were used to gather the needed data. These instruments included the questionnaire and an interview guide. Both closed and open-ended questionnaire were used for the study. The questionnaire helped the researchers in gathering the quantitative data for onward statistical analysis. The interview guide was also used to conduct key informant interviews. This was to enable the researchers gather appropriate qualitative data for further analysis. All the instruments were developed in line with objectives set out for the research.

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The population from within which the research sampled respondents include individuals who are residents in the tamale metropolis for at least 3 years at the time of the study. Thus, the respondent must have witnessed at least one general election in the Tamale Metropolis. The population also included officials of the Electoral Commission, the Police, NCCE and the Northern Regional Peace Council. Purposive sampling technique was used to sample a total of two hundred and fifty-five (255) respondents for the study. Out of the total of two hundred and fifty-five (255), five (5) were sampled using expert purposive sampling technique. They included one respondent each from Electoral Commission, the Ghana Police, the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and regional Peace Council and Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) who served as key informants. The quantitative data was obtained from the remaining 250 individuals who were residents in the Tamale Metropolis.

Data Collection Procedure

The research was conducted from January 2024 to March, 2024. Before data were collected, the instruments for the data collection were first piloted to ascertain the effectiveness of the

instruments in gathering the needed information. Before the piloting the instruments were subjected to peer review. After review by external supervisor and subsequent correction, the instruments were sent to the field and administered to the respondents to ascertain their effectiveness. After piloting, the instruments were taken to the field for data collection which took one month to complete. Before every participant was included, the objective, assurance of privacy and relevance of the study were communicated to the respondents. Respondents were encouraged to give candid opinions as they have experienced it. It took less than 30 minutes to answer the questionnaire and 1-hour interviews were also conducted with Key informants. Respondents were given the opportunity to opt out whenever they felt uncomfortable during the interview process or when answering questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the quantitative data was done using the SPSS version 22. The analyzed data was presented in graphs and tables using frequencies and percentages whilst thematic approach was used to analyze the qualitative data. The data obtained through interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The qualitative data obtained were subjected to thorough reading and codes were assign to them. The related codes were sorted, organized and grouped into different themes. Further analysis was made by breaking down the major themes into subthemes in order to gain deeper insight into the issues.

Validity and Reliability

In this specific research, data was gathered through the utilization of a questionnaire and interview guide. These instruments enabled cross-checking of information from various perspectives, enabling the researchers to validate the precision of the responses. By observing the consistency in responses provided by the participants, the researchers established a robust foundation for asserting the trustworthiness and uniformity of the data collection techniques utilized in the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Quantitative and qualitative data was obtained and analysed from 250 respondents in line with research questions for this study. The quantitative data is presented using percentages and frequency in the form of table and figures. Excerpts of the qualitative data obtained from the key informants have also been presented to support the quantitative data obtained from the research.

Table 1: Age Distribution

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
18-27 years	151	60.4
28-37 years	68	27.2
38-47 years	25	10
48-57 years	3	1.2
58 years and above	3	1.2
Total	250	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the table 1 above, out of 250 respondents who participated in the study, 60.4 percent were within the age range of 18-27 years. 27.2 percent were within the age range of 28-37 years

old. Respondents within the age range of 38-47 years constituted 10 percent of the total respondents. Respondents within the age ranges of 48-57 years and 58 years and above constituted only 1.2 percent of the respondents respectively. The data suggest that participants in the research are spread across various age ranges with the largest proportion of the respondents (60.4 percent) falling within the age range of 18-27 years. This suggest that the study has a significant representation of young adults. Youth participation in elections and political process can influence the dynamics of electoral violence, as younger individuals might be more prone to engage in confrontations due to their passion and emotions (CDD, 2020). Many of the members of the notable vigilante groups in Ghana are known to be young adults (CDD, 2020).

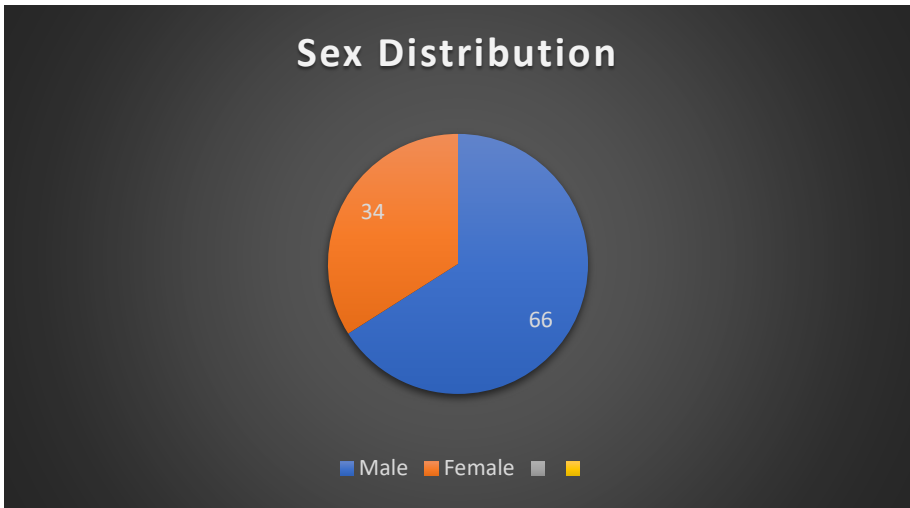


Figure1. Sex Distribution
Source: Field Survey, 2024

The figure 1 above shows that out of the total participants of 250, male constituted 66 percent of the participants whilst the female participants were only 34 percent of the total respondents. This data shows that majority of the participants in this research were males.

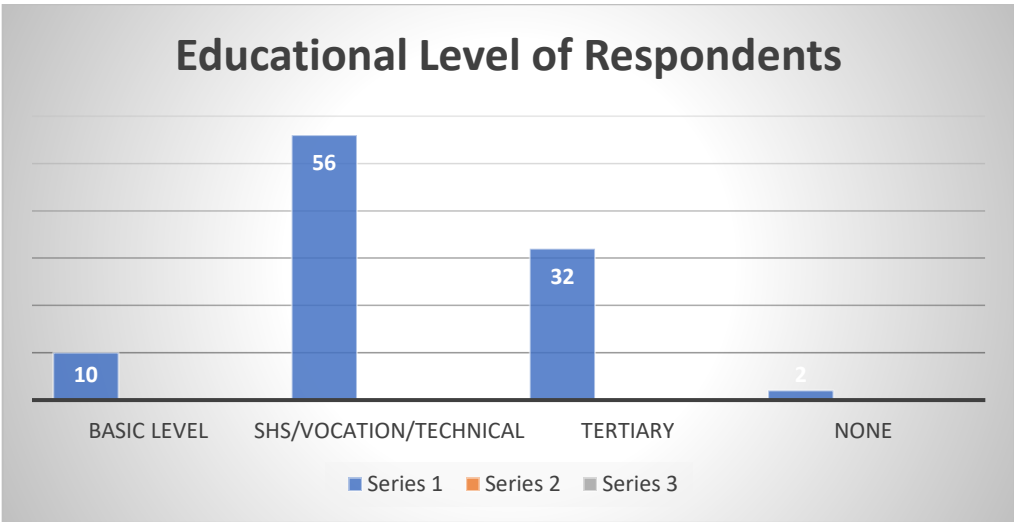


Figure 2. Educational Level of Respondents
Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 2 shows that out of the 250 respondents who took part in the study, 10 percent had basic level education as their highest educational level. 56 percent of the respondents had their highest education level to be at SHS/Vocational/Technical. Those who had their highest education at the tertiary level constituted 32 percent of the respondents. Meanwhile, 2 percent of the respondents had no formal education. The data shows that SHS/Vocational/Technical education graduates constituted majority of the study and are followed by those who graduated at the tertiary. This shows that literacy level among the respondents in this study is very high.

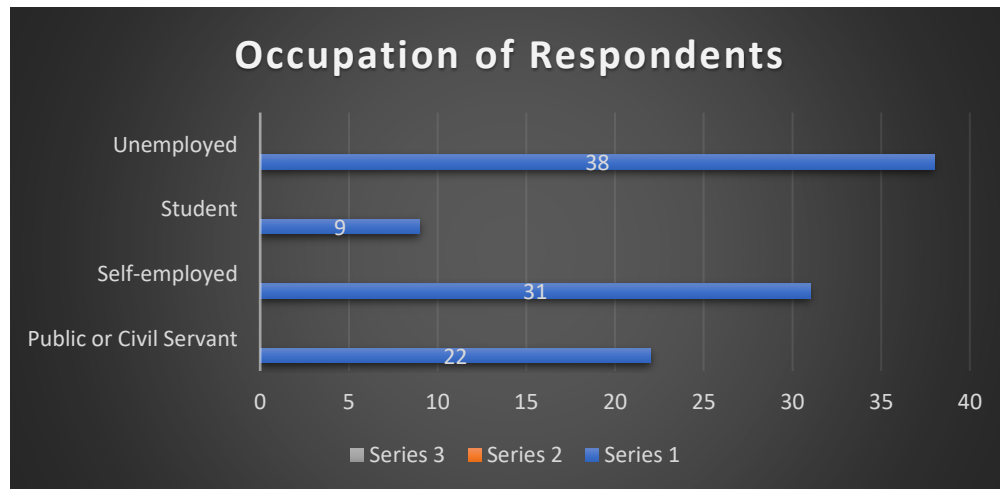


Figure 3. Occupation of Respondents

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 3 shows that out of the 250 respondents, 27% were public or Civil servants. 31% indicated they were self-employed. 9% were students whilst 38% indicated they were unemployed. This data shows that most of the respondents who took part in the study were unemployed. This goes to confirm the recent statistics published by the GSS (2021) which suggested that the unemployment rate in the country is growing rapidly across the country. Unemployment leads to frustration, disillusionment, and feeling of hopelessness among the youth and other unemployed individuals. This sense of dissatisfaction with the system can create a fertile ground for participation in acts of violence including during elections. A recent fact-finding committee constituted to investigate the Ayawaso Wugon by election and the 2022 election violence found that unemployment is one the risk factors of the electoral violence in the Ghana (CDD, 2022; CODEO, 2022).

Causes of Electoral Violence

Available literature on electoral violence showcased that electoral violence are caused by multifaceted factors. This research attempted to find out some of the causes of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. The variables used for the research included Ethnic and Political Rivalry, Youth Unemployment, Political polarization, Ineffective law enforcement, Political intimidation, Misinformation and propaganda, Mistrust in electoral process, Inadequate civic education and Political party Vigilantism.

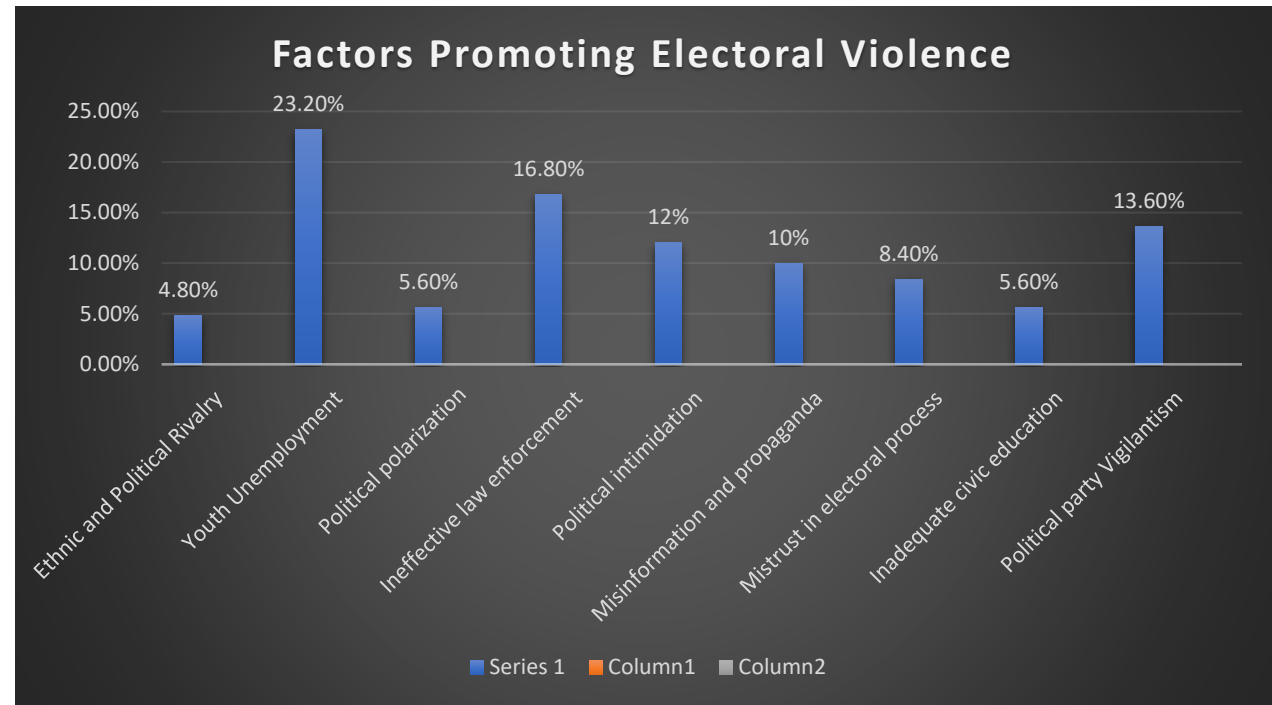


Figure 4. Causes of Electoral Violence
Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the figure 4 above, the data shows that out of the total respondents of 250, 4.8 percent were of the view that ethnicity and political rivalry in the metropolis promotes electoral violence. 23.2 percent of the respondents believed that youth unemployment is a major factor that promotes electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. political polarization was viewed by 5.6 percent of the respondents as the major cause of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. 16.8 percent of the respondents held the view that ineffective law enforcement facilitates electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. Political intimidation was viewed by 12 percent of the respondents to be the major cause of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. 10 percent of the respondents also cited misinformation and propaganda by the political actors as the major factor promoting electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. Mistrust of the electoral process by the political actors was seen as the major factor promoting electoral violence by 8.4 percent. 5.6 percent of the respondents believed that inadequate civic education is a major cause of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. 13.6 percent of the respondents held the view that political party vigilantism promotes electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. The quantitative data shows that unemployment is a leading factor promoting electoral violence in the Tamale and is closely followed by political vigilantism and ineffective law enforcement. With 14% of the youth being unemployed in the country as at 2024 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2024), the youth are more susceptible to engaging in violence as a means of expressing frustration or as a result of manipulation by political actors.

In an interview with some key participants, they cited many factors causing electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. Excerpts of interviews are presented below;

“Electoral violence in the Tamal metropolis is influenced by many factors. First, the strong competition between NDC and NPP particularly, often creates tension

in the metropolis, which subsequently escalates into violence. Also, the presence of vigilante groups, who are affiliates of NDC and NPP contributes to the electoral violence we often see in the Tamale metropolis. These groups are often mobilized to intimidate opponents which end up disrupting the electoral process...” (Police Officer).

“Mistrust in the electoral processes is one of the major causes of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. Some stakeholders like the political parties have developed mistrust to the electoral commission and its process as they see the process as not transparent or fair. This mistrust usually fuels anger and suspicion among people which escalates into violence. In addition, the spread of “Fake” news during election plays a key role in promoting violence. In addition, logistical challenge in the form of delays in supplying electoral materials at the polling station, the late arrival of election officers often results in suspicion and frustration which leads to electoral violence. (EC, Official)

“The high levels of youth unemployment contribute to electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. The high level of unemployment makes the youth susceptible to manipulated into engaging into electoral violence. The situation makes it easy for youth to easily be recruited into violent activities by the political parties. Also, strong allegiance to political parties based on ethnic lines, sometimes leading to tension during electoral violence. Lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms within the community. This situation also surfaces during election which often escalates into electoral violence.” (Peace Council, Official)

“Many factors contribute to electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. Weak enforcement of laws against electoral practices usually emboldens individuals and groups to engage in violence during election. For example, the Ayawaso Wogon by election violence, the Techiman electoral violence, and notable cases in the Tamale metropolis. Many people went Scot free; this is emboldening others to engage in electoral violence in the Tamale, knowing that there will be no consequences. In addition, the proliferation of small arms in the metropolis is fueling electoral violence in the metropolis. Monetization of election or politics cannot be left out. With high amount of money politicians spend during election creates a situation of losing not seen an option by the political partes, creating tension and ultimately leading to electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. To add, the careless use of inflammatory rhetoric by political leaders and the media often incites supports which some escalates in to violence.” (CDD, Official)

“Our observation reveals that electoral violence is fueled by the lack of confidence in the electoral system due to the perception of bias or incompetence among the officials of the electoral violence. This sometimes exacerbate, leading to electoral violence. Again, the involvement of vigilante groups, mostly sponsored by the political parties, in our election significantly contributes to election-related violence in the Tamale metropolis. moreover, limited voter education often results in misunderstanding of electoral process, which sometimes leads to electoral violence. (CODEO, Official)

The quantitative and qualitative data above shows that electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis is caused by several factors including Ethnic and Political Rivalry, Youth Unemployment, Political polarization, Ineffective law enforcement, Political intimidation, Misinformation and propaganda, Mistrust in electoral process, Inadequate civic education and Political party Vigilantism. This finding supports the existing body of literature such as Urda (2006) that aligns youth unemployment with increased political unrest and violence, particularly in developing countries. It also supports the work of Collier and Hoeffler (2004) which demonstrated that youth unemployment is strongly correlated with political violence. The data also suggest that political party vigilantism is a primary factor promoting electoral related violence in the Tamale metropolis. The Tamale metropolis has the two most known vigilante groups in Ghana; the “Azoka Boys” and the “Kandaha Boys” (Owusu Kyei & Berckmoes, 2020; Seidu, 2020). This points to the organized nature of violence, often backed or condoned by political parties. This points to the need to not just address the economic causes but also the organizational structures that perpetuate these conflicts. This result supports the findings CDD (2020), Meissner (2010) and Kyei and Berckmoes (2021) which reported that electoral violence in Ghana is caused by the lack of transparency of the electoral process.

Perpetrators of Electoral Violence in the Tamale Metropolis

Data was requested regarding those responsible for causing electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. The factors taken into account comprised of the candidates from the political parties, the electoral staff, the ‘Macho Men’, supporters of political parties, journalist, and vigilante groups. The findings revealed that among these electoral stakeholders, political party supporters are the primary instigators of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. The graphical representation of this information can be found in figure 5.

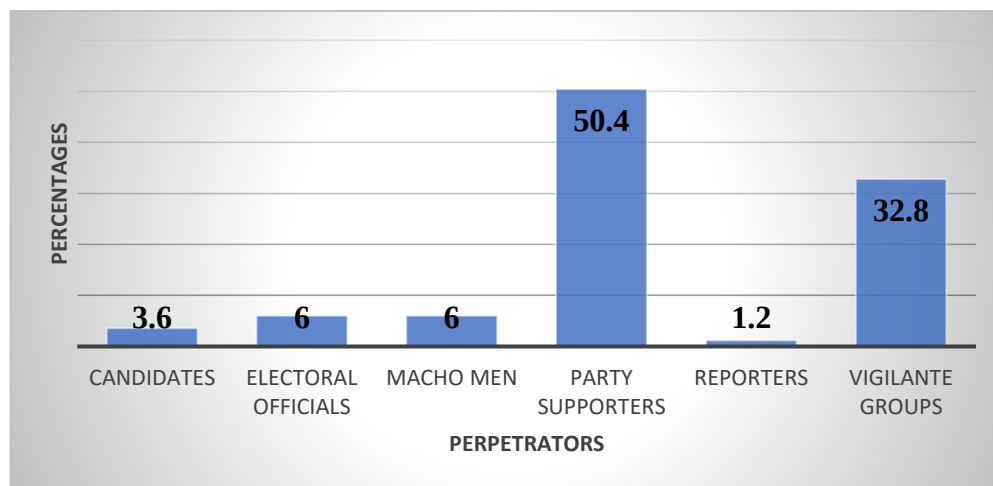


Figure 5: Perpetrators of election violence

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From figure 5 above, the data shows that 1.2 percent of the participants mentioned that media reporters are responsible for electoral-related violence. Additionally, 3.6 percent pointed out that political party candidates are involved in electoral-related violence. The study found that 6 percent attributed electoral violence to both electoral officials and ‘macho’ men hired by candidates in Tamale metropolis. Interestingly, approximately half 50.4 percent of the

respondents held the view that party supporters are the ones responsible for electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis.

In an interview with some of the key stakeholders, perspectives were shared on the perpetrators of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. Here are some excerpts of the interviews presented below;

"...some key perpetrators of electoral violence in the Tamale Metropolis during electoral processes are mostly party supporters and illiterates..."(EC official, 2024).

"...the youth are usually the perpetrators of electoral violence due to the fact that most of them are unemployed and thus are readily available to be exploited by politicians through the medium of promising them jobs and also to some extent some private security services deployed by political parties to fast-track the electoral process due to the fact that the various opponents do not trust the state security so ensure order in that the state security works in favor of the incumbent end up causing chaos and starting violence..."(CDD-Ghana official, 2024).

"...young people are often recruited into the political party groups with the aim of providing protection and ensuring the interest of the political parties are met. It is now a common practice as both the NPP and NDC have groups aligning to them. With the promise of giving jobs or enlisting them into the security forces, these young people become willing to die for the political party. And so, of course, the political party supporters are the major perpetrators of electoral related conflict." (Police Officer, 2024)

"Election in Ghana has become a do or die affairs and so every political party has a group that protects their interest in ensuring that they win the election. Recently you can see the atmosphere leading into the 2024 election, every one is calling on its supporters to ensure that they win the election. This kind of calls often brings tension at the polling stations and coalition centres leading to electoral violence. So, the supporters of the political parties are the key master minders of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis." (Peace Council official, 2024).

"...the number one perpetrators of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis and across the country are the supporters of the political parties. The 'Azoka' and 'Kanadaha' boys and their likes are known supporters of both the NDC and NPP respectively. Aside these groups, ordinary party supporter in an attempt to protect the interest of their parties usually engage in violence..." (CODEO, 2024).

The outcomes derived from both quantitative and qualitative data illustrate that those who engage in electoral violence are predominantly individuals and groups who support political parties. These party supporters are driven by a strong desire to ensure victory for their respective parties in the elections. As a result, they are willing to exert additional efforts including violence to accomplish their objective (see also Bob-Miller, 2014; Kumah-Abiwu,

2017; Nkansah and Gawu, 2020). This finding aligns with the observation made in the 2022 Desk study report conducted by CDD-Ghana, which identified party supporters as the primary instigators of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis (CDD, 2022).

Table 2: Economic effects of electoral violence

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Loss of property	95	38
Increased Poverty	21	8.4
Retards Economic Activities	119	47.6
Unemployment	15	6
Total	250	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data in Table 2 indicates that out of the 250 respondents surveyed, various economic effects of electoral violence were identified. Around 6.8 percent of the respondents mentioned unemployment as an economic consequence of electoral violence. A significant proportion, approximately 47.6 percent highlighted those retarding economic activities as a prevalent economic effect resulting from electoral violence. Additionally, 8.4 percent of the respondents believed that electoral violence contributes to poverty. The data suggests that retarding economic activities is a substantial economic challenge associated with electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis as it was identified by nearly half of the total respondents.

Table 3: Political implications of election violence

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Breakdown of Political Parties and Institutions	18	7.2
Diminished Trust in Democratic Processes and Institutions	78	31.2
Reduces credibility of Democracy and Governance	96	38.4
Undermines Civil and Political Rights	58	23.2
Total	250	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data shows that a relatively small proportion of respondents, 7.2 percent, believe that electoral-related violence contributes to the breakdown of the political parties and institutions that are crucial for the functioning democratic system. 31.2 percent expressed the belief that electoral-related violence erodes the trust people have in democratic process and institutions that uphold the foundational principles of democracy. The largest proportion of the respondents, 38.4 percent indicated that electoral-related violence leads to a reduction in the credibility of democracy as an effective governance system. This sentiment suggest that a considerable number of people view electoral violence as a substantial threat to the legitimacy and functionality of democratic systems. A quarter of the respondents, 23.2 percent of the respondents believe that electoral violence in the specific context of Tamale results in the undermining of civil and political rights.

The viewpoints of experts further reinforce the implications of electoral violence and the data in this regard are presented below;

In an interview with an official of the electoral commission of the Tamale Metropolis, the officer emphasized that electoral violence disrupts normal life, affects business, and diverts resources away from development to security measures. He narrated that;

"...The purpose of election is to select or choose leaders. When people turn to attack each other, it affects businesses since no one is able to come out to buy or sell. The regional director had to stay indoors for 3 days with heavy security to protect him. The money used to employ those security officers could have been used for other developmental purposes to help improve the economic development, but due to the violence it was used to employ security officers to protect the regional director. The money was also used to repair facilities instead of carrying out new developmental projects...(EC Official, 2024).

He also added that electoral violence also affects the social and political systems of the state. He said,

"...The main reason why elections are conducted is to select who the leader will be and why that leader. If people are not able to vote because of fear the few that will go out to vote will make a wrong decision by voting for a leader who cannot perform the duties well. When people are not able to come out and vote it affects the political development of the area..." (Peace Council, 2024).

The CDD-Ghana official highlighted how violence deters investors and hampers economic growth due to the unfavorable environment for economic activities. The officer narrated that

"...Destruction of resources and property deters investors from channeling their resources into these areas because they believe their efforts might go to waste during elections when violence arises and this deters economic growth..." (Officer, CDD-Ghana, 2024).

The data underscores the potential far-reaching consequences of electoral violence on political parties, democratic process, credibility of governance systems, and individual rights. The relatively high percentage in the "Reduced credibility of democracy" and "Reduced Trust in Democratic process/institutions" categories suggests that many respondents view electoral violence as a serious challenge to the functioning and legitimacy of democratic systems.

Electoral violence exerts its impact on the economic, political, and social structures of a nation, a reality that cannot be escaped. On the political front, the trustworthiness of democracy and governance has been eroded by electoral violence, creating hinderance to the advancement of democracy in the Tamale metropolis. This leads to consequences such as loss of assets, election of inappropriate leaders, loss of lives, and many more. The quantitative and qualitative data also paint a picture of electoral violence as a significant threat to the democratic system in the Tamale metropolis. The concerns raised by the respondents such as erosion of trust, the reduction in the credibility of electoral process and undermining of civil and political rights are indicators of the potential long-term impact that electoral violence can pose to democracy and development in the metropolis. The narrations by key informants further reinforces the view

that electoral violence not only disrupts the electoral process, but also has long term economic and political implications that can negatively affect the overall development of the metropolis. These findings align with the discoveries of Omotola (2008), Yakter and Tessler (2023) and Asunka et al. (2019), affirming that electoral violence impedes political and economic development.

Effective Ways of Reducing the Occurrence of Electoral Violence

This study also aimed to uncover the perspectives of participants regarding the most effective methods to tackle the occurrence of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. The viewpoints are detailed below:

Table 4: Effective ways of reducing the occurrence of electoral violence

Measures	Freq.	Percentage
Transparency by Electoral Management Bodies	10	4
Perpetrators facing the Laws	30	12
Disbanding Vigilante Groups	50	20
Education on the effects of electoral violence	40	16
Intensifying security presence before, during and after election	20	8
Poverty reduction	100	40
Total	250	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the table, 4 percent of the total respondents believe that transparent electoral management bodies play a crucial role in maintaining the credibility and fairness of elections, hence can reduce the occurrence of electoral violence. 12 percent of the respondents held the view that when perpetrators are held accountable through legal mechanism it can reduce electoral violence because it serves as deterrent to others. 20 percent believe disbanding vigilante groups can ensure free, fair and peaceful election which reduces electoral violence. 16 percent were of the view point that raising the awareness of people on the negative consequences of electoral violence can help discourage individuals from participating in or supporting violence during elections. 8 percent suggested that increasing security presence during the entire electoral cycle can deter acts of violence. The most common view point held by many of the respondents, 40 percent, was that reducing poverty can reduce the occurrence of the electoral-related violence in the Tamale metropolis.

Some key informants also provided some useful suggestions to effectively reduce electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis.

The Official of CDD-Ghana when he said:

“...One of the measures to curb electoral violence is by using religious leaders to engage people and advise them on the need for peace and how to put a stop to electoral violence...” (Officer CDD-Ghana, 2024).

Also, the Electoral Commission Director of the Tamale Metropolis in the interview with him said in relation to the measures to reduce the occurrence of electoral violence;

“...We need to keep educating the people especially the youth in the consequences

on electoral violence since it is a continuous process...” (EC Official, 2024).

The data suggest that while poverty is not directly related to electoral process, addressing it can indirectly contribute to lowering the risk of electoral violence. High level of poverty and inequality can create an environment where individuals are more susceptible to manipulation by political actors who might exploit grievances for their own gain as indicated by Smith (2022). The view points of the respondents provided that these measures collectively address various aspects of electoral violence, from institutional transparency and accountability to socio-economic factors. Implementing a combination of these measures can contribute to creating an environment where elections are conducted peacefully and with the trust of the population (Johnson, 2021; Lee, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS

This paper unveiled the causes and effects of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. The findings of the research highlighted the nature of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis and provided deeper insights into its implication to the development of the Tamale metropolis. The research showcased the complex factors promoting electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis, with youth unemployment being the number one driver of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis. With the larger proportion of the respondents in the study being within the age range of 18-27 years age range, the study showcased how vulnerable the youth are for manipulation and violence. This suggest that any effective strategy to address the issue of electoral violence must focuses on addressing socio-economic concerns in the society.

The findings of the study emphasised the importance of addressing the underlying causes of electoral violence for the betterment of socio-economic and political development in the Tamale metropolis. Unemployment emerges as a key factor that must be tackled, given its significant influence on promoting violence during electoral periods. To effectively combat this issue, a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders is suggested.

The government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups are identified as pivotal players in implementing interventions to mitigate electoral violence. By investing in educational initiatives, skills training, and economic opportunities, particularly targeted at the youth population, these stakeholders can address the issue of unemployment and reduce poverty levels, particularly among the youth. Empowering young individuals through education and equipping them with the necessary skills can enhance their resilience against being influenced to partake in or support violent acts during elections.

Policy Recommendations

Addressing the problem of electoral violence in the Tamale metropolis requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach as indicated earlier that involves various stakeholders, including the government agencies, civil society organizations, political parties, and the local community. The following recommendation can help guide policy aimed at addressing electoral violence in Tamale metropolis:

- **Voter education and civil engagement:** It is important that the extensive voter education campaigns are launched by NCCE, Electoral commission, NGOs and civil

society groups to inform citizens about the importance of peaceful elections and negative consequence of electoral violence.

- **Political dialogue and mediation:** The regional peace council and other important stakeholders such as the NCCE and EC in Tamale should establish mechanisms for political parties to engage in constructive dialogue and negotiate their differences peacefully. In this regard, local mediation committee involving respected community leaders and institutions can be set up to mediate disputes and conflicts arising from political process.
- **Strong law Enforcement:** The law enforcement agencies must be properly trained, adequately resourced and fully committed to maintain law and order during the electoral period. Thus, they should hold accountable those responsible for inciting or participating in violence, regardless of their political affiliations.
- **Strengthening the Electoral Commission:** It is important to strengthen the independence and credibility of the electoral commission to ensure transparent and fair election process. This will help reduce the suspicions on the ability of the EC to change electoral outcome.
- **Youth Engagement and Empowerment:** The state must invest in programs that provides young people with education, skills training, and economic opportunities, reducing their vulnerability to manipulation by political parties. This will help create a platform for youth participation in governance and decision-making process.
- **Media Responsibility:** The media must ensure that they provide a balance coverage of all political parties and candidates to ensure accuracy and fairness. The media must exhibit responsible journalism that avoids sensationalism and the spread of false information that contribute to tensions.
- **Community-Based initiatives:** It is important that local community leaders, religious leaders and traditional authorities are engaged to promote peace and discourage violence within the communities in the metropolis. This will foster a sense of unity and shared responsibility among citizens.
- **Early Warning Systems:** it is important mechanisms to monitor and detect early signs of potential violence is established to enable timely intervention and prevention. In this regard, such mechanism should collaborate with local organizations to gather and analyse data on potential conflict triggers.

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