Potential of Islamic Principles in Addressing the Menace of Political Thuggery in Igala Land

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Abstract

There is no gaingsaying that Nigeria is one of the most blessed countries in the world. Apart from the nation's large population and rich culture, the country is blessed with natural resources such as rich farm land, petroleum, coal, limestone, gold, zink amongst many others. It is equally arguable that Nigeria is one of the developing nations of the world that have been struggling with developmental and economic challenges such as poor infrastructures, poverty and unemployment leading to existence of social and violent conflicts in the country. The reason for these challenges is not hard to explain. Nigeria has been bedevilled with bad leadership over the decades. The country lacks leaders that have the potentials and willness to manage the nation's huge resources for the betterment of the country. In other words, the political classes in Nigeria have used different means such as thuggery among others to mismanage the nation's political system and huge resources. These challenges have over the years have had serious negative impacts on the development of the country. However, many means have been used to discuss the aforementioned challenges. Yet, the problem seems to be on the increase. Thus, this work intends to investigate the roles and potentials of Islamic preaching in addressing the menace of thuggery in the country using Kogi State as a paradigm. To this end, the work employs survey design of the quantitative research methodology to gather and analyse data on the aforementioned issues. The result revealed among other things that issues of thuggery has impacted negatively on the development of Nigeria and Kogi State in particular. Thus, recommendations were made based on the findings.

Key words: Prevention; Manace; Politics; Thuggery; Islam

1. INTRODUCTION

Political thuggery as an aspect of social violence has been disturbing in Nigerian democracy. Particularly, the menace of political thuggery has become detrimental to democratic sustainability in Nigerian politics as thugs move mostly in groups victimising, terrorising, intimidating, and injuring innocent individuals and politicians (Daniel & Audu, 2022, p.14). Accordingly, the phenomenon poses deadly threats as it deters political processes and routine socio-economic activities within the human society (Ken, 2021, p.17). The social, political and economic powers of the sponsors of this menace have made it both national and international concern.

Political thuggery has become the order of the day in Kogi State specifically in Igalaland since the advent of the fourth republic in 1999 (Odoma, 2019, p.11). It is regrettable that after election, most of the thugs are often abandoned by the politicians after being used to get to the corridor of political power through rigging of elections with the use of fire arms amongst others (Ejiga & John, 2022, p.23). The inabilities of political fathers that perpetuate this act often fail to recover the arms distributed among the political thugs. Hence, political thugs take advantage in utilizing the fire arms in robbery, kidnapping, assassinations, murder, among other crimes

due to their exposure to unnecessary spending attitudes of black money that accrues to them from the political (Lawal & Muhammed, 2022, p.12)

In order to address the menace of political thuggery, Islamic religious leaders engage in curtailing political thuggery and promoting peace through the utilization of diverse strategies. Some of these strategies include; peace messaging and support for free and fair elections. This is evident as some Islamic religious leaders advocate for peaceful elections through non-violent and inclusive discourse (Darnolf & Cyllah, 2021, p.21). These messages can be articulated through leaflets, the media, or more commonly, religious sermons. Also, civic education, debates and election monitoring has been another strategy utilized by Islamic religious leaders by playing a role often through larger groups in facilitating, civic education, candidate debates (including televised public debates) and election monitoring. More so, Nasir (2019, p.15), codes of conduct have been recognized as one of the Islamic strategies in preventing political thuggery; this is made possible as public commitment by all Islamic stakeholders to non-violence can be effective in preventing tensions from escalating the activities of political thugs. Most importantly, Mustapha (2022) asserted that intra- and inter-faith dialogue and inter-faith initiatives has been another strategy to curb the activities of political thugs; this is possible as Islamic religious leaders have been engaged insuch initiatives through religious umbrella organisations, development agencies and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in order to improve relations, educate on electoral processes, and prevent political thuggery.

It is against this background that this study seeks to assess the spate of Islamic preventive strategies on the menace of political thuggery in Igalaland in Kogi State.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design adopted for this work is the survey research design method quantitative research methodology. Through this method, primary data were gathered, using questions from copies of the administered questionnaire, with the assistance of a Research Assistant. Meanwhile, relevant materials from documents and other materials have served as part of the sources of secondary data. The study is predominantly based on data collected from primary sources. Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, out of which three hundred and ninety (390) were effectively retrieved, giving a response rate of 98% from the total population, as it is scientifically significant. This effort has served as the basis for the data presentation and analysis, which were categorised into three sections for easier and better interpretation of the data, including cross tabulations.

2.1 Aim and Objectives of the Study
The primary aim of the study is to examine Islamic preventive strategies on the menace of political thuggery in Igalaland, Kogi State. The specific objectives of the study are to;

i. To find out the negative impacts of thuggery on the political development of Igala land, Kogi State .

ii. To examine the extent thuggery has had negative impacts on the socio-economic development of Igala land, Kogi State

iii. To evaluate the potential of Islam in addressing the issues of thuggery in Igala land, Kogi State

2.2 Research Questions
The following questions will be utilized to guide the study of this nature. These include;

i. To what extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the political development of Kogi State?

ii. To what extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the socio-economic development of Igala land, Kogi State?

iii. What is the potential of Islam in addressing issues of thuggery in Igala land Kogi State?

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Concept of Islamic
The concept of Islamic relates to or characteristic of Islam or its adherents. The word 'Islam' in Arabic means submission to the will of God (Nasir, 2019). Islam "Submission to God" is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion centered around the Quran and the teachings of Muhammad. Adherents of Islam, called Muslims, number approximately 1.9 billion globally and are the world's second-largest religious population after Christians (Basedau & Koos, 2015). Muslims believe that Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith that was revealed many times through earlier prophets such as Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, among others; these earlier revelations are attributed to Judaism and Christianity, which are regarded in Islam as spiritual predecessor faiths. Muslims consider the Quran to be the verbatim word of God and the unaltered, final revelation. They also consider Muhammad as the main and final Islamic prophet. The teachings and normative example of Muhammad, called the sunnah, documented in accounts called the hadith, provide a constitutional model for Muslims. Islam teaches that God is one and incomparable. It states that there will be a "Final Judgement" wherein the righteous will be rewarded in paradise (jannah) and the unrighteous will be punished in hell (jahannam).

The Five Pillars considered obligatory acts of worship comprise the Islamic oath and creed (shahada); daily prayers (salah); almsgiving (zakat); fasting (sawm) in the month of Ramadan; and a pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca. Islamic law, sharia, touches on virtually every aspect of

life, from banking and finance and welfare to men's and women's roles and the environment. Prominent religious festivals include Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha. The three holiest sites in Islam in descending order are Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, Al-Masjid an-Nabawi in Medina, and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem (Idris, 2019).

Islam originated in the 7th century in Mecca. Muslim rule expanded outside Arabia under the Rashidun Caliphate and the subsequent Umayyad Caliphate ruled from the Iberian Peninsula to the Indus Valley. In the Islamic Golden Age, mostly during the reign of the Abbasid Caliphate, much of the Muslim world experienced a scientific, economic and cultural flourishing. The expansion of the Muslim world involved various states and caliphates as well as extensive trade and religious conversion as a result of Islamic missionary activities (dawah), and through conquests (Nasir, 2019).

There are two major Islamic denominations: Sunni Islam (85–90%) and Shia Islam (10–15%). While Sunni–Shia differences initially arose from disagreements over the succession to Muhammad, they grew to cover a broader dimension, both theologically and juridically. Muslims make up a majority of the population in 49 countries. Approximately 12% of the world's Muslims live in Indonesia, the most populous Muslim-majority country; 31% live in South Asia; 20% live in the Middle East–North Africa; and 15% live in sub-Saharan Africa. Sizable Muslim communities are also present in the Americas, China, and Europe. Due largely to a higher fertility rate, Islam is the world's fastest growing major religious group, and is projected to be the world's largest religion by the end of the 21st century.

Islam is a system that governs the entire aspects and spheres of human life activities. It aims at establishing righteous individuals, virtuous family, just state and prosperous universal co-existence of mankind. It is meant to be a universal system applicable and suitable to all time, people and place. This is readily achievable only through the concerted and collective efforts of its committed believers. The Prophet (SAW) fully realized this has established a group of lieutenants who work collectively and diligently with him in an organized and systematic way to establish the first ideal Islamic state of Madinah. Islam also made it obligatory that a group among Muslims should constantly exist to invite people to righteousness and forbid evil andcorrupt practices in the society (Qur'an 3, p.110).

3.2 Concept of Political Thuggery

Political thuggery is an illegal act put forward by a thug in political activities of a country. A thug is any person who uses violence or brutality (Agba, 2021). Thuggery is defined to mean a violent behaviour in which people fight and attack others. The word is thus clothed with criminal flavour and is consequently associated with all negative synonyms such as violence, brutal acts, hooliganism, gangsterism, assassins, criminal, delinquent, troublemakers. Thuggery, simply means violent act or behaviour by ruffians. Also, Idris (2021) viewed political thuggery has to do with criminalization of politics. When politics is criminalized, it is left in the hands of ruffians, thugs and hooligans, while the good citizens are scared away. Political thuggery is characterized by robbery, intimidation, gangersterism, murder, physical assault and often involves physical combat between two opposing gangs or groups which ultimately generates inter-personal or group hostilities. Political thuggery a behaviour that contradicts peace, harmony and co-existence among groups during political exercise. Political thuggery is an illegitimate and violent means of seeking political power with a view to subverting national opinion for parochial ends through self-imposition (Abekhale & Anyin, 2020, p.27).

Political thuggery is simply the criminalization of politics. When politics is criminalized, it is left in the hands of ruffians, thugs and hooligans, because the good people are scared away. In fact, contemporary events, across the country have clearly demonstrated that Nigerian politics has been hijacked by political thugs (Asiegbu, 2011). The politicians recruit the youths comprising of men as their thugs and touts. These thugs compelled innocent people to vote against their wishes. The party agents at the polling booths were threatened to compromise, and INEC officials were forced to do what they would not have done ordinarily.

Political thuggery imply act of thuggery in relation to the political process. Thus political thuggery can be defined as any act of intimidation, violence, hooliganism, brutality or gangsterism, whether leading to death or not, calculated to pose a threat or scale political opponent or perceived political opponents before, during or after elections and aimed at achieving an undue political result or advantage (Davies, 2016, p.14). Political thuggery, especially at elections may range from such acts as inciting or causing others to act in a disorderly manner, being in illegal possession of or usage of offensive weapon/s with the aim to scare or intimidate voters, snatching or destruction of election materials, acts resulting into undue influence as by compelling any person to vote or refrain from voting against his/her will, ballot stuffing etc. This illegal interference with the electoral process no doubt is electoral fraud, is criminal and has severe consequences on democratic stability in general and national security in particular.

Political thuggery has become useful tools in the hands of ruling elite or the potential ruling elite to the extent that it has become institutionalized to the point of subverting the constitution for their self and economic gains (Mbaya, 2019). According to Mbaya (2019), thugs are entitled

to ammunitions without hindrance. They are entitled to police escorts and are immune to the crime of abduction assassination, violence harassment and rigging of election maiming. Some of them are placed on regular salaries, with allowance accompanying their remuneration. Some are equally employed as special advisers, special assistants and personal assistants. Thuggery is therefore, a behavior that contradicts peace, harmony and co-existing among groups (Mbaya, 2019). It has become a common feature in Nigerian since independence, but it is quite difficult to ascertain the exact time it became an indispensable part of the Nigeria polity. The use of thugs by politicians to gain political advantage has become widespread. Political thuggery appears to be the only means of gaining political power without any consideration for meritocracy and popular opinion of the masses (Abekhale & Tor-Anyiin, 2020). Memberships of thugs are predominantly youths (males and females). Ortese (2014) described political thuggery as an "organized act of violence, intimidate and blackmail directed against a political opponent to achieve a selfish political objective. He remarked that thuggery is an instrument of terrorism organized against political opponents; to threaten or harm political opponents or rig elections (Agba, 2021). As UNESCO (2020) observed, it could results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury death, psychological harm, deprivation or mal-development. Godfatherism though not absolutely in all parts of Africa, endangers political violence and encourages political thuggery (Samuel, 2017). Godfathers make possible the maintenance of army of thugs who intimidate political opponents, snatch ballot boxes during elections and play other key roles in manipulation of election result in accordance with the wishes of the godfather (Samuel, 2017). Godfatherism as a factor in perpetuation of political violence manifest through funding that lures unemployed youths to be recruited for thuggery. Nnamau (2020) observed that godfathers are simply self-seeking individuals who use government for their own purposes. The ability of godson to meet the demand of the godfather, sometimes, results into political violence and use of political thugs. If conflict arises between the godfather and godson over the appropriation of resources, the incumbent godson faces the risk of instability in his administration (Njoku, 2015).

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study of this nature will be anchored on political theory of Marx. This is because Karl Marx's political theory provide radical alternative to functionalist view of the nature of political unrest (political thuggery). Karl Marx believed that political societies are divided into two major social groups: a ruling class and a subject class. The political theory, suggested by Karl Marx, claims society is in a state of perpetual disorder because of competition for limited resources. The competition for limited resources make the politicians (a ruling class) take advantage of subject class which induce an element of political thuggery. Political theory states that political tensions and unrest (political thuggery) arise when resources, states and power are unevenly distributed between groups in society and that this problem becomes the engine for political and social change (Mbaya, 2019, p.22).

The theory states that problem arises as a result of control of material resources and accumulated wealth, control of politics and the institutions that make up society. In Marx's explanation, the ruling classes were the upper class people who had plenty of resources and imposed many rules and their superiority over the subject class (Njoku, 2015, p.19). The subject class consists of those with no power who are mainly peasants and low-class people. The implication of this is that where there are two or more people of diverse interests, there will be political thuggery. Political thuggery emerges from the clash of opposing interests. It opposes those who are more or less satisfied with the existing social order that want to conserve it, and those for whom the existing order does not suit and so desires or want to change it.

Political thuggery therefore may arise out of competition for greater power or efforts to maintain one's share as a member of a favorable group. Politics as we have seen is the quest for power. It involves the struggle for power, which is aimed at controlling the resources of the state. The powerful groups use their power to exploit other groups with less power. The exploitation is carried out through brute force and economics. The privilege groups realizing that it is political power that will protect and sustain their wealth usually attempt to seize political power through both legal and illegal means. This situation, where force is applied by all means to control political power usually lead to political violence through employment of political thugs (Ekanem & Simon, 2021, p.25). However, in order to maintain peaceful coexistence among the populace comes the need for religious leaders (ruling class) to preach to their subject class (Islamic believers) the end point of political thuggery through different channels.

5. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Presentation of Data
5.1 Research Question 1
To what extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the political development of Igala land, Kogi State

Table 1
Respondents' Views on the Impact of Thuggery on the Political Development of Igala Land, Kogi State

S/N	Questions	Responses	Frequency	Percentages
1	To some extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the political development of Igala land, Kogi State	SA	62	57%
		A	46	43%
		SD	0	0%
		D	0	0%
2	To a great extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the political development of Igala land, Kogi State	SA	28	26%
		A	54	50%
		SD	10	9%
		D	16	15%
3	To a very much extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the political development of Igala land, Kogi State	SA	70	65%
		A	22	20%
		SD	10	9%
		D	6	6%

Source: this Researcher, 2024

From the Table 1, we observed that in the first questions, 57% of the respondents strongly agreed that to some extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the political development of Igala land, Kogi State, 43% agreed, 0% strongly disagreed while 0% disagreed.

In the second question, 26% of the respondents strongly agreed that to a great thuggery has impacted negatively on the political development of Igala land, Kogi State, 50% agreed, 9% strongly disagreed while 15% disagreed.

In the third question, 65% of the respondents strongly agreed that to a very much extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the political development of Igala land, Kogi State, 9% strongly disagreed while 6% disagreed.

5.2 Research Question 2

The extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the socio-economic development of Igala land, Kogi State.

Table 2
Respondents' Perceptions on the Negative Impact of Thuggery on the Socio-Economic Development of Igala Land, Kogi State

S/N	Questions	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	To some extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the socio-economic development of Igala land, Kogi State	SA	65	60%
		A	25	23%
		SD	6	6%
		D	12	11%
2	To a very much extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the socio-economic development of Igala land, Kogi State .	SA	64	59%
		A	30	28%
		SD	6	6%
		D	8	7%
3	To a great extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the socio-economic development of Igala land, Kogi State	SA	78	72%
		A	26	24%
		SD	0	0%
		D	4	4%

Source: this Researcher, 2024

From the Table 2, 60% of the respondents strongly agreed that to some extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the socio-economic development of Igala land, Kogi State, 23% agreed, 6% strongly disagreed while 11% disagreed.

In the second question, 59% of the respondents strongly agreed that to a very much extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the socio-economic development of Igala land, Kogi State, 28% agreed, 6% strongly disagreed while 7% disagreed.

In the third question, 72% strongly agreed that to a great extent thuggery has impacted negatively on the socio-economic development of Igala land, Kogi State, 24% agreed, 0% strongly disagreed while 4% disagreed.

5.3 Research Question 3

What is the potential of Islam in addressing issues of thuggery in Igala land, Kogi State.

Table 3
Respondents' Views on the Potential of Islam in Mitigating Thuggery in Igala Land, Kogi State

S/N		Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	Islam has the potential to mitigate issues of thuggery in Igala land, Kogi State.	SA	30	28%
		A	60	56%
		SD	9	8%
		D	9	8%
2	To some extent has the potential to mitigate issues of thuggery in Igala land, Kogi State..	SA	76	70%
		A	22	20%
		SD	6	6%
		D	4	4%
3	To a great extent has the potential to mitigate issues of thuggery in Igala land, Kogi State..	SA	64	59%
		A	40	37%
		SD	2	2%
		D	2	2%

Source: this Researcher, 2024

From the Table 3, we observed that in the first question, 28% of the respondents strongly agreed Islam has potential to mitigate issues of thuggery in Igala land, Kogi State, 56% agreed, 8% strongly disagreed while 8% disagreed.

In the second question, 70% of the respondents strongly agreed that to some Islam has potential to mitigate issues of thuggery in Igala land, Kogi State, 20% agreed, 6% strongly disagreed while 4% disagreed.

In the third question, 59% of the respondents strongly agreed that to a great extent Islam has potential to mitigate issues of thuggery in Igala land, Kogi State, 37% agreed, 2% strongly disagreed while 2% disagreed.

6. SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

The study, to some extent, has delved into the menace of thuggery and its implications on the political and socio-economic development of Igala land, Kogi State, Nigeria. In a general term, the study has evaluated the fact that Nigeria is one of the most blessed countries in the world. But challenges such as lacks of leaders that have the potentials and willness to manage the nation's huge resources for the betterment of the country have been one of the nation's problems. In other words, the political classes in Nigeria have used different means such as

thuggery among other things to mismanage the nation's political system and huge resources. These challenges have over the years have had serious negative impacts on the development of the country. However, many means have been used to discuss the aforementioned challenges. Yet, the problem seems to be on the increase. Thus, this work has investigated the roles and potentials of Islamic preaching in addressing the menace of thuggery in the country using Igala land, Kogi State as a paradigm with findings such as issues of thuggery has impacted negatively on the development of Nigeria and Kogi State in particular.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

√ Since bad governance has been identified as a major problem in Nigeria, political leaders should endeavour to change their ways by enhancing the socio-economic lives of the people.

√ Parents should use different means to discourage their children from criminal activities such as thuggery.

√ Seminars, conferences and workshops on governance should be organized frequently across the nation to promote governance in the country.

√ Mass media such as radio, televisions stations and newspapers outlet should capture issues of thuggery and its sequences to create among the nation's youths.

√ Since Islam has been identified as a viable tool of addressing thuggery in the course of this study, government should promote Islamic activities that focus on the aforementioned theme.

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