

## Political Education: A Panacea to Reduce Election Violence in Papua New Guinea

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### ABSTRACT

In PNG, the widespread acceptance of a culture of violence is leading to a growing sense that political action, which entails obtaining and wielding power in public affairs to affect decisions within a community or country, is socially undesirable. The popular acceptance of this culture of violence directly contributes to this attitude. There are many different manifestations of political violence, including but not limited to physical confrontations, intimidation, organised criminal activities, hired thugs, the death of innocent bystanders, property damage, and thievery on the part of individuals. This study was conducted with the intention of analysing the elements that contribute to political violence, the majority of which are caused by a deficiency in democratic governance and inadequate political education. In addition, it examined preventative methods that could help manage political violence. To ensure that a preventive plan is properly implemented, it is vital to provide young people with the knowledge they need to make choices based on accurate information and to take the right activities to create their own future. This technique successfully captures the essential concepts of sustainable development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that politics is the basic activity of acquiring and using power in public affairs in order to exert influence over choices. Electioneering is the deliberate activity of attempting to convince people to show their support for a certain candidate or political party by casting their ballots in their favour. A man's ability to formulate and implement policies directly correlates with his upbringing in a secure environment. In the present moment, the political situation in PNG is at a crucial crossroads. It is possible to make a connection between this and the problems associated with political violence. As a result, the nation is having a great deal of difficulty holding elections that are not only free and fair, but also free from violence. The Sandline incident in 1997 established a culture of violence in PNG. The Sandline affair, a political scandal, emerged as a pivotal event that marked a crucial turning point in PNG's history, especially concerning the Bougainville conflict. The government was overthrown, putting PNG on the verge of a military uprising. Popoola (2005) identifies various components of this culture, such as a state-sponsored violence, series of coups, political killings, religious conflicts, acts by ethnic militants, community disputes, and the on-going trend of kidnappings.

The majority of industrialised and developing nations around the world have accepted that a peaceful and safe environment is necessary for social and economic well-being in the 21st century. Most of these countries share this perspective. According to Gale (1994), political literacy is a mind-set that reinforces the notion that individuals need to have a high degree of education that allows them to see both the political aspect of society and the connection that they have with the government are fundamentally political. This perspective lends credence to the concept of preserving the relevance of political literacy in the United States, a nation with a longstanding tradition of democratic activities. The people of PNG have not made much of an effort to foster an atmosphere that is favourable, free from political violence, and to promote the beneficial influence that political education has on public welfare and development. The purpose of this article is to examine topics related to political education and conflict resolution.

## 2. Electoral Violence

The act of inflicting harm, causing destruction, or resulting in death by the use of physical force is what we mean when we talk of violence. Hornby (2003) defines "violence" as any action that aims to cause harm or death to another individual. Acts of violence, manifestations of aggression, or criminal acts committed against anyone have the potential to cause emotional injury to that individual, regardless of whether the acts are physical or emotional in nature. Another definition of violence is the deliberate use of physical force with the intention of inflicting harm and abuse on another person. Any action that violates human rights and laws with the goal of inflicting injury, whether it be physical, mental, psychological, or social, by physically assaulting persons or, by other methods, insulting and degrading people and institutions is considered to be an act of violence. This definition applies to any action that falls under the category of "violence." In many cases, violence begins as an ill-defined border that

progressively becomes more distinct as a result of a string of episodes. An illustration of this is the fact that the process of competing in elections often commences with the exchange of verbal insults, which initially appear insignificant enough for the voters to overlook. We can classify the term "violence" into three distinct categories: intra-personal violence, interpersonal violence, and mass or societal violence.

Individuals who engage in intrapersonal violence, a form of intentional self-harm, typically disrespect their own bodies. Most often, this occurs during the initial stages of the enrolment process for cults and other restricted societies, including instances of suicide. When it comes to the political system, the most common kind of violence is that which occurs between individuals. There is a possibility that the principal kind of violence includes interpersonal violence as a sub-population. This scenario could unfold if a deviant individual, actively engaged in a process of self-destruction, does not seek assistance from health care and mental health professionals. It is possible that he would turn his anger, despair, and restlessness against other people or against those who support the party. Disagreements between two individuals often occur at this stage, leading to the development of opposing groups on a variety of topics. Failure to take necessary steps may lead to a full and violent revolt during or after elections. Failure to take proper measures may lead to the multiplication of organizations. Interpersonal violence, as demonstrated by the recent post-election violence in PNG following the vote of no confidence in the Prime Ministerial election, has the potential to escalate into mass or societal violence if left unaddressed.

### **3. The Causes Of Electoral Violence In Papua New Guinea**

On July 6, 2019, a tribal massacre occurred in my home province, leading to the horrific deaths of more than twelve women and children, including numerous pregnant individuals (ABC News, 2019). I was profoundly impacted by this awful incident, and it continues to be one of the most challenging days of my life. Before I received a message from my family, it had already emerged as a worldwide news phenomenon. Sixteen victims, including eight children aged one to fifteen and eight women, two of whom were pregnant, sadly perished in a massacre in the province of Hela, PNG. The murder in question signifies a notable intensification of tribal violence in the nation, being one of the most brutal occurrences in recent years (The Guardian, 2019). On Monday morning, a raid transpired in Karida, a secluded community with a population of around 800, leading to many casualties.

Philip Pimua, the official in charge of the Karida sub-health facility who was present in the village during the incident, stated that the invaders killed the victims when they opened the door. Pimua informed the Guardian that the event occurred at about six o'clock in the morning on Monday. Pimua described awakening in the morning and subsequently igniting a fire in the kitchen. They also heard the sound of gunshots and saw several houses ablaze, leading them to conclude that enemy troops had entered the settlement.

*"I escaped and hid among the foliage. Upon my return at about 9 or 10, I saw mutilated corpses and ablaze structures. The attack used both machetes and weapons. The*

*things were shattered. Certain people had indistinguishable body features; only their faces were identifiable."*

Tribal violence has consistently plagued the province of Hela and other highland parts of PNG since the beginning of the last ten years. I contend that this violence is linked to the on-going elections. During the national elections, the province became infamous for the illicit practice of stealing ballot boxes and using them for its own purposes. The increased availability of weapons has led to more recorded instances of sexual assault, homicides, and retaliatory violence. Identifying the factors that lead to ethnic conflict may present a problem. Ikoya (2004), Rotimi (2005), and Omoteso (2010) assert that political violence emerges from a society's inability to effectively differentiate between morally acceptable and unacceptable options, as well as between correct and incorrect moral assessments. Multiple causes contribute to election violence in PNG. These dimensions include the economic, political situations, and socio-cultural. From a cultural perspective, the economic divide between the governing class and the general public fostered a climate in which many individuals were prepared to make significant sacrifices to secure political positions.

PNG has a protracted history of political violence. Conversely, around 2017, there was a significant rise in the prevalence of new manifestations of political violence. Since that time, politicians have either recruited young individuals to commit acts of violence against their opponents or to pose as their defenders. Proponents of violent activities have demonstrated the effectiveness of this method, leading to its widespread adoption for the acquisition and maintenance of power. If Papua New Guineans continue to view political roles as mere business ventures, the perpetuation of violent and brutish politics is inevitable. PNG recognises the zero-sum nature of politics as a contributing factor to political violence. A zero-sum competitive political system, as articulated by Ahmed (2009:24), is characterised by a scenario where the victor acquires all the benefits associated with political office, while the other contenders who vied for the position incur the losses. Ahmed asserts that the prevailing political atmosphere precludes the establishment of a comprehensive administration since electoral failures lead to the swift decline of political factions, even those with substantial support. As a result, political struggle becomes extremely difficult and a matter of survival. Idakwoji (2014:19) articulates that many individuals aspiring to political positions engage in politics with the conviction that by prioritising the political sphere, they will attain financial gain and other forms of prosperity. Individuals in PNG often see political roles as the most accessible means to enhance their social standing. As a result, those seeking these positions recruit accomplices to infiltrate the government and misappropriate public monies, with the objective of accumulating riches and prestige.

As far as economic views are concerned, the frequency of criminal activity in PNG is influenced by factors such as poverty and unemployment. As a result, political violence occurs during democratic elections. There are a number of factors that provide a severe barrier to the growth of democracy in PNG. There is a widespread lack of discipline in PNG society, which is partly responsible for the electoral violence that occurs within the political system. To put it another way, the political elite as a whole lacks self-control, which is one of the reasons

for the high rate of electoral violence. A significant number of people who are involved in politics are still not acquainted with democratic ideas and goals. To achieve the goals of democracy in PNG and eliminate thuggery, it is imperative that politicians put aside their own interests in order to prioritise the welfare of the community as a whole.

The current negative state of politics in PNG is a direct result of colonialism's lingering impacts, which will continue to exert influence in the future. As a result of this momentous historical event, the people who lived in PNG moved away from their traditional beliefs and adopted the individualistic principles that are prevalent in Western civilization. This movement resulted in a transition from humanism to materialism. The everlasting concept of caring and showing concern for one another has lost its relevance and is now hardly a reality. Meanwhile, there has been a lack of integrity, a rise in harsh behaviour, an increase in selfishness, and an insatiable demand for riches. All of these things have occurred simultaneously. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that people place a significant amount of importance on their material possessions and have an insatiable drive to gain wealth.

In PNG, the basis for the functional and cultural expansion of liberal democracy is the traditional ontology of Melanesian culture, which places an emphasis on communalism and harmonious coexistence. The failure of those in positions of power to recognise the electoral violence as a societal issue and to take intentional action to address the systemic damage it caused to society contributed to the effectiveness of the violence. This idea that the existing state leadership draws its authority and legitimacy from thugs is the major cause for the successful electoral violence that has occurred. Due to a deeply held belief, thugs have become prominent contractors for the government, wielding significant influence over political appointments. As a result, they now play a crucial role in all government operations. The number of violent incidents that occur during elections in PNG is rising at an alarmingly rapid rate. This tendency should disturb all Papua New Guineans who sincerely desire peace and development in our beloved nation, as it poses a significant threat. Election officials are required to preserve their impartiality and abstain from showing favouritism to any particular political party in order to contribute to the reduction of political violence in the nation. There are a number of variables that lead to political violence in PNG:

- **一、Corruption:** This persistent issue has spread across almost every aspect of Papua New Guinean society. In some areas, the electoral process may be manipulated, suppressed, or altered due to the influence of money, which is sensitive to the electoral system.
- **二、Poverty:** PNG's extreme poverty can quickly turn an otherwise morally decent person into a barbarian. Those who hold positions of power in the nation's political system are well aware of this fact and use it. They can distribute money, if possible, to gain support and maintain the cycle of violence.
- **三、Failure of the Justice System:** The existing system, which allows politicians accused of electoral violence to roam free, is likely to encourage corruption within the political class. As a result, politicians have developed the mentality that they are free to participate in violent acts during election campaigns without fear of

repercussions. Efforts within the judicial system are essential to ensure adequate and proportionate consequences for electoral criminals.

- **四、 Inadequate Voter Education:** Educating voters on the appropriate behaviour and regulations to follow before, during, and after elections is a key task that falls into the hands of the electoral commission. In order to demonstrate and educate voters about the importance of exercising their right to vote in accordance with the law, it is essential to make a concerted effort to physically interact with members of the voting population.
- **五、 Lack of Integrity from Electoral officials:** A situation in which the person in charge of deciding the election shows clear favouritism towards one group over another is one of the factors that contribute to political instability. Individuals who are responsible for ensuring that the election process is both transparent and impartial have actively engaged in electoral malpractice. As a result, political parties have been left with the impression that they have been duped, and public anger has increased. One of the most important aspects is that the electoral process has to be reliable in order to eliminate the recurrent incidents of violence that occur during elections.
- **六、 Political Parties lack internal democracy:** The primary task of political parties, which is to instil in their members the importance of adhering to the organisation's established principles, has been largely unsuccessful. This lack of supervision at the party level may occasionally lead to the encouragement of violence, whether it is done consciously or unconsciously, when candidates are being selected for political office in big elections. There is a possibility that the parties involved have developed a flawed internal method.
- **七、 Unemployment:** The bulk of young people who are now without jobs have already been enlisted into an army by politicians who lack ethics. The political elite's ambition to capture or keep political power by any means imaginable is directed at the disgruntled, hungry, and unemployed adolescents who are eager to survive at any cost. These youths are the target of the political elite's desire. In 2024, the PNG National Research Institute (PNGNRI) produced research that indicated that the high rate of unemployment in PNG posed a severe danger to the nation's general development.
- **八、 Misinterpretation of Politics:** A significant number of people in society, particularly in PNG, are of the opinion that violence is a common occurrence. Regrettably, they have gotten used to it, particularly during election years. In order to incite disruptions, scare voters, and target their political enemies, politicians recruit a substantial number of young people to serve as private militias. These individuals are adamant in their belief that their main purpose is to fulfil these objectives. As a result of their actions, the political elite, the general public, and party followers all have a fundamental misunderstanding of politics.

The structural and non-structural features, often highlighted, contribute significantly to election violence. The structural factors, commonly referred to as the root causes, include issues such as marginalisation, poverty, and unemployment. Other relevant problems are also relevant to these structural aspects. Conversely, psychological and physical factors primarily trigger non-structural factors, acting as swift stimulants. Several factors could have contributed to the election violence. These categories include the historical repercussions of colonial dominance, identity politics, economic imbalances, and governance efficiency, provocative words that inspire violence, militarisation, repressive acts, and cultural influences from other countries. In PNG, there have

been several instances of electoral violence that have disrupted the electioneering process. Depending on the specific circumstances, a person may face either physical or psychological abuse. Electoral violence has resulted in a significant loss of lives and property. For example, the East Asia Forum stated in 2016 that political violence led to the killing of four students, the injury of twenty others, and the exposure of hundreds of others to tear gas. The government of former Prime Minister Peter O'Neill was the source of this violence, which happened as a result of students' decision to boycott the Prime Minister and demand his resignation due to their worries over the growing political corruption that transpired during his administration. Because of this, the country has been experiencing persistent political or electoral violence that poses a risk to both people's lives and property during election campaigns. Because of these circumstances, voters have developed a condition of political apathy, resulting in a lack of interest in political involvement and, more specifically, indifference in the election process. During the initial elections, eligible voters often opt not to register and participate in the voting process. Some individuals now view the government-offered public holidays for voter registration as sufficient opportunities to engage in leisure activities like farming or resting at their homes. This is the case despite the government's efforts to educate the general public. Additionally, some young adult men take advantage of these vacations to play open football games on the streets. This phenomenon results in a government that lacks legitimacy and exhibits poor governance due to insufficient voter participation.

The general public often ridicules the period the government has set aside for voter registration. The adult population forms their political ideas for the nation's elections based on the dangers they face to their lives and possessions. In addition, when the PNG Electoral Commission (PNGEC) establishes a timetable for the updating of voter registration, electorates demonstrate a clear lack of interest in political matters. The PNGEC has set aside this specific time and location for eligible voters who have completed the registration process, where they can verify their names, residences, and other relevant details. A significant number of people in PNG have lost interest in voting as a result of electoral violence, which may take the shape of mental or physical manifestations and might take place before, during, or after the election. Furthermore, their lack of motivation to obtain a permanent voter card (PVC) renders the process of registering eligible voters futile.

One further thing to take into consideration is that electoral violence is a significant factor that prevents a considerable fraction of voters from participating in an election. Elections have been converted into a type of warfare as a result of unprecedented levels of political thuggery and unrestrained violence, which is typified by the indiscriminate destruction of lives and property (Ake, 2001). There has been an increase in people's concern for the safety of their lives and the property they own. The controversy surrounding the electoral politics in question has given rise to substantial concerns over the formation of democratic and partisan politics in the nation. In essence, each and every instance of electoral violence that takes place during an election has a direct and

significant effect on the number of people who register to vote in the election that follows. At present, the majority of people in the country see their voter identification cards more as a means of establishing their personal identity than as a device for casting their vote in elections. A number of individuals have, once again, lost interest in engaging in political activities as a result of the predominance of electoral violence. Crowd-sourcing is becoming more important for political rallies and campaigns as a result of the public's impression that political demonstrations and campaigns are synonymous with violent behaviour. Political campaigns and rallies are increasingly serving as breeding grounds for targeted violence and deaths. It is especially concerning because the presence of security officials at political campaign locations makes it easier for illegal political activity to take place.

One of the most concerning aspects of electoral violence is that it discourages people who are both knowledgeable and enthusiastic about politics from running for elected posts in PNG. This is primarily due to a lack of faith in the political orientation of the government that is now in place. Certain political parties participate in the practice of buying votes, particularly those who are in positions of power or possess large financial resources. The political elite has consistently used vote-buying as a strategy during nationwide election campaigns to intimidate citizens present at various polling stations and booths. In other cases, political henchmen, often referred to as thuggery, directly participate in this activity by committing acts of violence and intimidation at various polling stations. This erodes the public's faith and confidence in the electoral process, frequently leading to immediate civil disturbances whenever the electoral body, PNGEC, declares an election official.

#### **4. The Concept Of Political Education**

In a 1968 publication, Coleman emphasised the importance of political education as a catalyst for human development. Through this process, people nurture their views, feelings, and perspectives on their position in society. The educational system plays a significant part in the process of inculcating and shaping attitudes and behaviours with regard to politics. Beginning in childhood, this process has the greatest impact on a person's development during the years that are considered to be formative. Individuals experience its effects long into their adult years. According to Freire (1994), political education is a method of political indoctrination that aims to uphold and advance human rights, encourage active participation and adherence to the law, foster accountability and transparency, and establish a responsible government. The implementation of political education aims to accomplish all these goals. The connection between the state and society is essential to the democratic process, and he emphasised the significance of democracy and political education in the process of establishing and maintaining a democratic administration.

Political education is critical because it enhances political aptitude, comprehension, and participation in democratic processes. Political education, a long-discussed topic in political theory, has recently seen a surge in interest in modern political science. Experts today are more likely to agree, in contrast to

those of previous generations, that it is not sufficient for a society to just have well-structured institutions in order to function well. According to Galston (1991), proponents of an effectively organised political system argue that individuals must possess the necessary information, talents, and character qualities in order to have such a system. Since Plato and Aristotle were the first to present the idea of political and civic education, it has been abundantly evident that the form of political education is contingent upon the sort of government that is now in existence. Demonstrations of democracy necessitate the presence of individuals with the necessary information, talents, and characteristics, which is not ideal for non-democratic political systems. In their 1999 study, Popkin and Dimock explored the concept of low information rationality theory. According to their findings, those with a limited knowledge base have a difficult time comprehending public talks on a variety of topics and are less likely to participate in political activities.

It is critical that the PNG Election Commission (PNGEC) and politicians make voter education a top priority in order to improve the processes involved in the PNG election process. In previous elections, the system's failure to acknowledge the importance of voter education led to both violence and the invalidation of a significant number of ballots. Not only is it unfortunate that PNG uses a fire brigade approach in a number of our programs, but it is especially regrettable when it comes to voter education.

Academic members have provided several interpretations of the subject of political education. The field of socialisation studies traditionally uses the phrases "political education" and "political literacy" interchangeably to describe the purpose of political education. Denver and Hands (1990) hold a similar perspective, defining political literacy or education as the process of acquiring knowledge and comprehension of political concerns, empowering individuals to effectively fulfil their responsibilities as citizens. According to Westholm et al. (1990), political education is defined as the fundamental concepts and facts that are required to comprehend public conversations. It is a common misconception that political literacy is synonymous with learning political information. However, Zaller (1992) referred to it as political awareness. An individual's level of political awareness may be defined as the amount to which they actively interact with political issues and comprehend them as a result of their presence in the political environment. Furthermore, when people receive political education, they are able to participate in political activities with a well-informed and educated perspective. In 2000, Annette coined the phrase "education for democracy" to describe the process of political education. According to his concept, education for democracy consists of studying politics with the goal of fostering civic involvement, cultivating virtues, and acquiring information about politics. Utilising opportunities for service learning or active learning in the community can help achieve this accomplishment. Annette (2000) used this concept to explain the idea of political education.

Nonetheless, the PNGEC is not the only organisation responsible for teaching those who could vote in the future. In this sense, the electoral body needs to participate in collaborative efforts with political parties, schools, civic

organisations, religious organisations, and traditional institutions. No matter the socioeconomic status of voter education campaign participants, the government must provide financial support. The government needs to prioritise preventing the exclusion of people's identities, raising public awareness of the dangers of violence and manipulation, providing voting protections, and implementing measures to keep the value of voting at the forefront of public consciousness. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the election process, it is recommended that all information about the election be made available to the general public in advance (Tsa, 2014).

In accordance with Boggs (1991), adult education groups have a special capacity to foster civic and political attitudes and capabilities, both of which are essential for active engagement in a democratic society. He claims that the public forum or study group is often believed to be the approach to adult political education that is most commonly accepted and normally effective. In a similar vein, Gastil (2004) asserts that the incorporation of political topics has the ability to alter not just the form of political conversations but also the manner in which people participate in speech. Barber (1994) has brought attention to the fact that in order for democratic individuals to be able to participate effectively in public life, they were required to have a solid awareness of the significant policy concerns. The first step in successfully promoting democratic development inside a political system is for the system to educate itself and the broader public on the basic concepts of democracy. This is the first stage. At the same time, the government must create an environment that encourages citizens' participation in the development process through voter registration and voting activities. In addition to laying the groundwork for a more prominent engagement of people in decision-making processes, this will also offer the framework for a heightened commitment to attaining justice and equal treatment. One of the most important aspects of any capacity-building effort is ensuring that the goals of both genders are coordinated. The younger generation should be actively engaged and empowered by being given major responsibilities in order to overcome the negative consequences of indifference and lack of interest among voters. This is why it is vital to assign them considerable responsibilities. The province and civil society have formed an alliance to fulfil their obligations to disseminate information, educate voters, and mobilise the electorate for the 2027 elections.

As a result, this study defines the term "political literacy" as equivalent to "political education." A political education is the process of imparting and developing political information, skills, and attitudes that are essential for informed involvement in the political process. Political education is also known as political consciousness. A person is considered to be a "politically educated citizen" if they have obtained the fundamental political knowledge and awareness that is required to participate in traditional political activities. Participating in elections, registering to vote, running for political office, joining a political party, and having conversations about political issues are all examples of actions that fall under this category. In other words, political education should prioritise the essential concepts of democracy and effective government.

## **5. Political Education And Democratic Governance Safety In Papua New Guinea**

In a democratic society, the electorate, also known as voters, plays a crucial role in determining who is worthy of holding this position. It is essential for voters to be aware of their rights and the responsibilities that are associated with those rights in order to ensure that the democratic process they participate in is genuine. PNG has established loopholes that enable politicians to control the electoral process. These loopholes have been formed as a result of poverty, corruption, political apathy, and a lack of information about the processes involved in elections. Politicians take advantage of the little information that citizens have about their voting rights, and they do so without confronting any penalties, in order to purchase votes from the general public at a minimum cost for their personal gain.

The sequence of elections in PNG between 2012 and 2022, characterised by incidents of electoral violence and fraud, does not seem to have contributed to the improvement of democracy. This is because the scenario suggests a potential threat to the country's democracy and sustainability. On the other hand, the safety of democracy in Papua New Guinea is put in jeopardy by a variety of electoral violence and fraud, such as the theft, stuffing, or destruction of votes and ballot boxes, acts of thuggery, loss of life and property, and fabrication of election statistics. To cultivate and strengthen a democratic culture that is both healthy and durable, it is necessary to provide continuous political education via the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in order to reach a large number of people throughout the country.

## **6. Role Of Political Education In Curbing Violence In Papua New Guinea**

In PNG and elsewhere, elections require a lot of work. To ensure a successful election for the prime minister position, it is essential to educate the general public about the necessary activities and processes for selecting a democratic leader. On the other hand, elections cannot be considered democratic in their entirety unless citizens gain a comprehensive understanding of the lives, goals, and policies of the various candidates vying for public office. Voters will cast their ballots based on accurate and trustworthy information (Uchendu, 2012). It would be fair to request further political education in order to offer the general public direction in the selection of leaders and to involve those individuals who are now uninterested in the current situation.

Individuals who get a political education not only acquire the information and awareness necessary to make informed decisions, but they also gain the ability to have a substantial effect on the world. Additionally, political education is an essential component of the democratic system, which is why it plays such an important role in every democratic society. Not only does it spread information about democracy and the constitution of the Independence State of Papua New Guinea, but it also plays a role in the dissemination of information about these topics. Political education equips voters with specific actions they can take independently to safeguard and uphold democratic principles. The fact that democracy has been around for over twenty years helps people understand their

role as engaged citizens. Education about politics is critical to ensuring that people are aware of how they can use the information they have gained to improve the political system.

The electorate's apathy, characterised by indifference, is counterproductive. If voters gained political education, they could participate in the election process with collective passion. This would allow them to choose candidates that they think have shown successful performance. According to Ejiofor (2007), we should not entrust such responsibility to an individual who views political service as a tool to gain money, syphon public funds, commit theft, or preserve their own economic interests. Individuals who are hungry for power and prepared to use hate speech to distort the political climate must be stopped throughout the democratic process. This must be done regardless of the views of the general public. The only way to do this is to provide comprehensive political education.

In order to contribute to voter education, religious institutions might tell their members that receiving money from politicians may convey the appearance that they are reliant or in need of assistance. The purpose of political education is to demonstrate to politicians that they are more dependent on them than politicians themselves. Once people understand this, undoubtedly, beneficial changes will occur. According to Yakubu (2002), this understanding would prevent people from sacrificing their votes for a lacklustre outcome, which could lead to regret when circumstances worsen. Politics education is a potent tool that can foster organic growth and guarantee political stability. By providing sufficient information and encouraging direct or indirect participation in political activities or the election process, we can increase people's degree of political involvement. This, in turn, leads to a more efficient democratic process and enhances political stability. According to Nwolise (2007), face-to-face encounters during political campaigns are a direct method of reaching a much larger number of individuals.

Voters in a democratic society have the opportunity to exercise their right to vote and choose the candidates they wish to represent them in public office via the process of elections. Since the country's independence, concerns about election fraud and violence have persisted, with the occasional spread of hate speech contributing to these problems. While the general elections in 2017 and 2022 marked the beginning of the current democratic period, there have been claims of widespread and serious electoral malpractices and irregularities. These charges have been made. Since the establishment of the current democratic system in PNG, there has been minimal focus on voter education. PNG's elections have been marked by significant electoral violence, intimidation, manipulation of electoral commissions, workers, and security forces, as well as election tampering, vote buying, double voting, and ballot box hijacking. These issues have marked most of these elections with distinction. Voter education plays a crucial role in every democratic system in PNG, as it equips voters with the necessary knowledge about the importance of voting and participating in the democratic process. As a result, voters are not only more motivated and encouraged, but they also feel more confident in the government's abilities. This

strategy will undoubtedly result in the construction of a democratic regime that can endure in PNG.

Majechodinmi and Adejuwon (2012) suggested that successful voter education ensures citizens are ready, enthusiastic, and capable of participating in the electoral process to the fullest extent possible. Educating voters is critical to ensuring that they have the appropriate knowledge, the ability to exercise their voting rights competently, and the ability to express their political choices on Election Day. It is important to raise awareness and educate consumers. Implementing public information programs and voter education helps to eliminate erroneous views and misconceptions among voters. It is possible that these efforts may aid people in understanding and opposing intolerance in their own lives, as well as in recognising and rejecting hate speech that is perpetuated by public authorities, candidates, their supporters, and the media. Continuing voter education may achieve two of the most important goals: increasing voter literacy and reducing the public's susceptibility to hate speech and violent incitements. Political education can achieve outcomes such as enhancing the electorate's comprehension of hate speech, assisting them in identifying it, and fostering a deeper understanding of its detrimental impact on individuals, groups, communities, democratic institutions, and society at large. This initiative has the ability to successfully address and counteract negative stereotypes and unjust treatment of individuals based on the protected qualities that they possess.

#### *6.1 Controlling And Managing Election Violence Through Political Education*

It is important for parents and guardians to model behaviours that offer a solid foundation of positive attitudes for their children and other young people to imitate. This is especially true in the areas of security, love, positive reinforcement, and acceptance. Parents should aggressively encourage their children to share their concerns if they see or become aware of any potentially dangerous circumstances. Parents must monitor their children's conduct in order to prevent them from emulating negative role models. For instance, children who experience aggressive behaviour are more likely to actively participate in violent acts during political or electoral processes.

School officials must respond promptly to student concerns to prevent the escalation of issues like absenteeism, cultism, and bullying, which can escalate into violence if not addressed. Parents and teachers should strictly monitor children's finances, leisure activities, social contacts, and other lifestyle habits to ensure proper conduct and prevent exposure to violent situations. Establishing counselling clinics on a national scale is imperative to provide therapy for children and adolescents grappling with psychological and behavioural disorders. Summer (1991) asserts that a wide range of psychological and behavioural difficulties are associated with the brutality and hostility of wars. These issues include anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and drug abuse.

In PNG culture, it is crucial to monitor political assassinations and dispel the belief that assuming political roles is a sure-fire path to wealth. In order to proactively prevent election violence, religious institutions such as political leaders, churches and mosques, traditional authorities, and the whole citizenry

should work together. This can be done by communicating with members and encouraging law compliance. An ethnic or political group that is dominant may control the political processes; nevertheless, it is essential that this dominance does not come at the expense of the interests of groups who are less privileged or that are members of minority groups. Failure to do so could lead to physical confrontations. The government's actions during violent conflicts should focus on urgent efforts to restore order while also pursuing conflict resolution via mediation in order to prevent the conflict from reoccurring in the same or other regions of the country in the future.

### *6.2 Political Education: The Way Forward*

Young people, who make up the largest demographic group and are typically willing to participate in policy formulation, should be the focus of information collection. People must fully understand the necessary components for establishing a secure democratic society through the use of established election processes (Okwechime, 2007). It is imperative that political authorities step up their efforts to encourage open and honest communication, especially in circumstances when there is a substantial ethnic divide. Alongside the active engagement of young people, it is essential to encourage and support the participation of women in electoral processes that are both fair and transparent.

The promotion of young activism and the development of social justice should serve as the focal point on which politicians should remind themselves of their mission and the people they represent. In order to foster the growth and empowerment of young people, it is essential to execute a wide range of youth programs that emphasise the importance of civic involvement, academic enrichment, and community-based youth groups. Constructive use of youth activism yields positive outcomes and mitigates political violence. The development of democratic ideals and principles should serve as the basis for political education in general and, more specifically, for education that aims to support democracy. This method allows people to cultivate and maintain their own ideas and activities.

The political elite in PNG must overcome their ignorance to understand that political ambition often means resorting to violence. The government is responsible for monitoring and controlling the proliferation of ethnic identities, which frequently leads to power conflicts between competing ethnic groups. PNG education should focus on instilling the right mind-set to ensure individual and community survival.

### *6.3 Re-Evaluating The Pathways Of Political Education In Papua New Guinea*

To gain a better understanding of the formal and informal approaches to political education, it is beneficial to conduct a thorough analysis of the channels and institutions that play that function. It is a well-known fact that these channels and institutions are intrinsically fraught with difficult hurdles, but, despite this, they continue to be essential for the progress of the country. When it comes to a child's physical, emotional, and social development, the family is the basic biologic and social unit that acts as the starting point. As a result, it forms the fundamental basis of PNG society. The child's conducts, as well as their sense of security, confidence, responsibility, and respect for authority, are all significantly

influenced by the family, and the family must acknowledge that this plays a significant role in each of these areas.

Conversely, a young person who lacks love and a sense of belonging may develop into a troublemaker and social outcast. Religious institutions such as churches and mosques, along with humanitarian and non-governmental organisations, should intensify their efforts to raise awareness and promote their networks among families in both urban and rural areas. It is critical that these organisations emphasise the importance of reinforcing their inherent responsibilities. Furthermore, it is essential to uphold societal or indigenous ideals such as honesty, reverence, love, loyalty, diligence, self-respect, compassion, patriotism, and so on. These are only a few of the concepts that should be maintained. In light of this, the government needs to take measures to counteract this tendency by enacting certain policies and regulations, such as the Family Support Fund, the Family Patriotic Initiative (FPI), the Child and Parent Advocacy Network, and several Social Security Legislation. The purpose of these measures is to assist families in the process of raising a patriotic, values-orientated, and industrious generation that is essential for the country's change.

Furthermore, the school, as a recognised institution, has a great deal of influence in shaping individuals' cognitive and character development by imparting relevant knowledge, expertise, and self-control. Evidently, the educational system in PNG offers a wide variety of subjects and classes at the elementary, intermediate, and university levels. The primary objective of these institutions is to cultivate professionalism, a strong sense of responsibility, and a feeling of patriotism. Political science, social studies, government, citizenship education, and civic education are some of the subjects and classes that fall under this category. The instructional strategies and materials used to teach these subjects and classes require significant attention. Teachers, therefore, serve as role models for children and pupils, exhibiting both character and knowledge in terms of their behavioural characteristics. It is equally important to have comprehensive textbooks that authentically reflect PNG's nationalist leaders, national symbols, country history, political development, and national anthem. It is also necessary for us to re-evaluate elementary education in order to address these urgent needs.

Furthermore, political education serves as a commendable tool for fostering political mobilisation and commitment. Organisations such as the PNG Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), Transparency International PNG (TIPNG), and the PNG National Research Institute (NRI), among others, play a crucial role in classifying students enrolled in colleges of education, secondary, primary, polytechnics, monotechnics, and universities into national and patriotic groups. Young people have the chance to learn and process values such as patriotism, national unity, discipline, duty, productivity, and self-sufficiency via their participation in these forums. In order to improve the capabilities of educational and national regulatory bodies in the areas of seminars/workshops, research, and logical thinking, the government needs to take action, which includes granting financing and putting legislative measures

into effect. This outcome would greatly enhance the significance of political education.

There is a significant contribution that the mass media makes to the process of lobbying for a variety of issues and expanding civic consciousness. Public and private electronic media, including television and radio, specifically offer a variety of programs to improve Papua New Guineans' information, viewpoints, and comprehension of significant policy decisions, governance difficulties, and political events. There is little question that the print media plays an equally important role in this movement. As a result, the media bears a significant burden, particularly during this extremely challenging phase of the nation's growth. Now, as a sovereign nation, PNG grapples with challenges related to political leadership as well as issues arising from ethnic and regional affinities. Consequently, the mass media need to disassociate itself from the inconsequential and seductive activities of these dividing tendencies and instead give priority to the exigencies of patriotism and national unity. The inhabitants of PNG, for example, need to be educated on the following factors:

- PNG operates as a sovereign nation independent of any individual, collective, or political entity.
- Despite the country's fragmentation, PNG must continue to develop and preserve its unity.
- As PNG citizens, it is the responsibility of each person to contribute to the nation's development, irrespective of their region, ethnicity, province, faith, or socioeconomic status.
- The primary objective of governance is to take into account the well-being of the people rather than focus on achieving personal or collective benefits.

As a prominent force in political or civic education, the mass media have a vast audience, and as a result, they continue to function as a catalyst for the advancement of the country. Religious organisations, such as churches and mosques, have the potential to serve as vehicles for promoting cultural values and patriotism as an additional point of interest. It is thus possible that the moral teachings of the church and the mosque have the ability to impact the attitudes and actions of individuals, which in turn helps to create loyalty to the state. Religious organisations may condemn the government and political processes due to discrepancies, while at the same time appreciating the challenges and ambitions of the general public. In PNG, where people are intensely religious, the teachings of religion have a significant impact on and shape the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the people. Beacons of hope, national unity, rejuvenation, national healing, and forgiveness should be the primary functions of religious organisations, and they should refrain from participating in party politics. The occupant of this post will contribute to the establishment of efficient governance, the acceleration of social well-being, and the promotion of economic development and industrialisation.

Throughout history, the political party has traditionally played the role of an organisation that encourages individuals to become politically educated and assists them in gaining political power. Unfortunately, the ambiguous nature of intra- and inter-party politics has led to the adoption of dividing attitudes among the people of PNG. These attitudes include ethnic politics, tribal affiliations,

regionalism, manipulative methods, election irregularities, and other Machiavellian tendencies. These behaviours directly contradict the principles of democracy and the values of patriotism. Consequently, the irregularities that have tainted the political process in PNG are the result of undemocratic conduct within the nation's political parties. Therefore, it is crucial to provide comprehensive political education to all political parties in PNG, including both the ruling party and the opposition party, to instil democratic values in the behaviour of both party members and government officials. It is recommended that the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission (PNGEC), which serves as a regulatory authority for political parties, strengthen its statutory requirements in terms of regulating and assessing party processes in line with democratic ideals, public interests, and constitutionalism. Therefore, the PNGEC must establish a state-wide set of regulations for political parties in PNG and enforce strict adherence to democratic norms and procedures, imposing sanctions on those who violate them, particularly during internal selection processes within PNG's political parties.

It is also important to note that the PNGEC, which is PNG's national electoral organisation, acts as a complementing institution in an attempt to increase civic knowledge, advocacy, and involvement in the political process across the country. There is a need for the political education unit or department of the PNGEC to increase its efforts in order to provide constructive enlightenment to the residents of PNG on the significance of voting as a civic duty for all individuals who are qualified to vote, as well as the necessity of holding elections that are credible and transparent. On the other hand, it is more than acceptable to see a significant number of invalid votes in PNG, which may range anywhere from hundreds to millions. This context underscores the importance of fostering civic consciousness and education. By adhering to democratic ideals, the electoral body can strengthen the openness and validity of the elections, which is a basic pillar of the country's progress.

Statutory agencies such as the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) of PNG, Transparency International PNG (TIPNG), and the Community Development and Religion Department (CDRD) are responsible for raising public awareness and combating corruption. On the other hand, they have had difficulties properly carrying out their responsibilities in a number of the country's provinces, particularly in the areas of political education and campaigning. As a result, the findings of this study suggest that the federal government pursue either the elimination of the program or the improvement of its institutional leadership and procedures in order to increase its effectiveness. The government and other agencies should take action to revitalise the national anti-corruption agency or institution by providing financing, policy options, legislation, and monitoring tasks. Without this, the agency would struggle to effectively implement the legislated activities, particularly those that promote a sense of nationhood and unity. Thus, the institutional efficiency of ICAC and TIPNG, as well as committed leadership, is critical for national advancement.

## **CONCLUSION**

The goal of this study is to contribute to maintaining a stable democratic system. This will be accomplished by shedding light on the relevance of political education in terms of enhancing election processes. This study emphasises the importance of youth development communication and political education as a method to inform voters about the risks associated with violence and misunderstandings. Additionally, this study will offer recommendations for achieving sustainable development.

This article concludes that both official and unofficial institutions involved in political education, whether directly or indirectly, are dysfunctional. It is therefore essential to enhance these institutions in order to drive the process of political education and achieve the goals of boosting patriotism and national development.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is essential to realign and enhance the channels for political education to successfully tackle the substantial difficulties of governance and national development, especially concerning the attitude of political leaders and the public. Therefore, it is crucial for families, educational institutions, religious organisations, mass media, and political parties to strengthen their traditional and obligatory roles in amending the deeply ingrained values that have hindered or undermined PNG's national development. To ensure growth in PNG, it is essential for the government to take appropriate measures to avert all sorts of election violence. In these situations, it is essential for the police and other law enforcement agencies to actively manage the situation.

Moreover, as previously said, strengthening laws, regulations, and governmental support would augment the capabilities of these institutions. The process of imparting and integrating recognised values and standards starts with institutions that prioritise and function according to responsibilities. These organisations identify issues, set priorities, and delineate strategies for the nation's advancement and rejuvenation. Consequently, political education must consistently emphasise the significance of values including responsibility, dignity, integrity, diligence, selflessness, a positive disposition, patriotism, tolerance, national unity, acknowledgement of competence and excellence, entrepreneurship, innovation, civility, and freedom. Furthermore, to efficiently organise and enhance public awareness on a national level, it was imperative to convert these notions into national brigades and institutionalise them inside public schools. This issue is both urgent and essential due to the significance of our national identity.

As a sovereign state, it is essential to diminish the emphasis on specific quirks and activities that violate law and cultural norms. Consequently, it is imperative for the National Policy on Education to emphasise political education as a vital instrument for national advancement. To inform the public about the necessary criteria for holding impartial and fair elections, it is essential to prioritise political education. To ensure that students receive an education that respects others' rights, it is imperative that the educational system include citizenship education in the curriculum across all levels of instruction. Members

of political parties should be accountable for any misbehaviour they engage in during the election period. It is essential for parents, educational institutions, authorities, religious figures, and community leaders to impart awareness about the dangers of violence within their communities.

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