

Islamic Preventive Strategies on Political Thuggery Among Muslim Youth**Babaji Inuwa (Ph. D)**

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08034470564 bbjtilde@gmail.com**Abstract:**

Political thuggery, characterized by the use of intimidation and violence to influence political outcomes, poses significant challenges to social cohesion and governance, particularly within the context of Muslim communities. This paper explores the preventive strategies rooted in Islamic teachings that aim to mitigate the risk of political thuggery among Muslim youth. By examining relevant scriptures, historical examples, and contemporary practices, the study underscores the importance of promoting ethical conduct, social responsibility, and community engagement as foundational elements in preventing youth involvement in political violence. The analysis demonstrates that fostering a strong Islamic identity, combined with education and mentorship, can empower Muslim youth to embody principles of justice and accountability. Ultimately, this paper highlights the critical role of religious and community leaders in cultivating an environment that discourages political thuggery, promoting peace and stability across Muslim societies.

Keywords: Preventive Strategy, Political Thuggery, Muslim Youth**Introduction**

Political thuggery can be understood as a manifestation of broader socio-political issues, including corruption, disenfranchisement, and a lack of engagement in peaceful political processes.¹ Such maladaptive behaviours can exacerbate social tensions, contributing to cycles of violence and instability. Muslim youth, often caught between the aspirations for socio-political change and the harsh reality of oppressive systems, can easily fall prey to extremist groups that manipulate their frustrations for political gain.²

Political thuggery, often characterized by the use of violence and intimidation to control political narratives or outcomes, poses significant challenges to the social and political fabric of societies across the globe. In Muslim-majority countries, as well as among Muslim communities elsewhere, the youth are particularly vulnerable to involvement in such illicit activities. The phenomenon warrants a thorough examination of preventive strategies grounded in Islamic teachings and values, which can serve as effective tools to counteract the allure of political thuggery.

Islamic teachings offer several frameworks for addressing social injustices, promoting peace, and fostering communal responsibility. Key concepts such as

Ummah (community), *Adl* (justice), and *Ikhlas* (sincerity) provide foundational values that can counteract the tendency toward political thuggery. The Islamic ethical framework emphasizes the importance of justice and non-violence, underscoring the inherent value of human life and the necessity for peaceful coexistence.³

TYPES OF THUGGERY

Thuggery, a term often associated with violence and intimidation, manifests in various forms within societal contexts. It is essential to define thuggery broadly, as it encompasses not only physical aggression but also psychological manipulation and socio-political coercion. This essay will explore several predominant types of thuggery: gang-related violence, political thuggery, and economic thuggery.

Gang-Related Violence

One of the most notorious forms of thuggery is gang-related violence, which involves organized groups that exert control over territories and engage in aggressive confrontations. Studies indicate that gang activity is often fueled by socio-economic factors, such as poverty and lack of education, leading individuals to seek belonging and status through violent means.⁴ In addition, gang-related thuggery often involves drug trafficking, extortion, and other illegal enterprises, which further perpetuate cycles of violence and societal instability.⁵

Political Thuggery

Political thuggery represents another significant form, characterized by the use of intimidation and violence to influence political outcomes. This type is often employed during elections or in the context of authoritarian regimes, where dissent is met with aggression. Scholars have noted that political thuggery can undermine democratic processes, as fear tactics deter public participation and suppress opposition.⁶ For instance, reports of violence against political activists and suppression of free speech in various countries illustrate the detrimental impacts of political thuggery on governance and civil liberties.⁷

Economic Thuggery

Economic thuggery, often overlooked, involves coercive tactics that threaten individuals or businesses into compliance for financial gain. This type can include practices such as extortion, where threats are made against a person or company to obtain money or services.⁸ Moreover, organizations engaged in economic thuggery may exploit legal loopholes to intimidate competitors, thereby maintaining monopolistic control.⁹ The ramifications of such actions can be far-reaching, affecting not only targeted individuals but also broader economic stability and fairness in the marketplace.

CAUSES OF POLITICAL THUGGERY AMONG MUSLIM YOUTH

Political thuggery, defined as the use of violence or intimidation in political contexts, has increasingly affected various communities worldwide, including among Muslim youth. This phenomenon arises from a complex interplay of socio-economic, political, and cultural factors that create an environment conducive to such behavior. Understanding these causes is essential for addressing the issue and fostering a more peaceful political engagement among youth in Islamic communities.

Socio-Economic Factors

One of the primary drivers of political thuggery among Muslim youth is socio-economic inequality. Many urban areas with significant Muslim populations experience high unemployment rates and limited access to education and resources, leading to feelings of disenfranchisement. According to Kalyango and Okwabi, economic marginalization can lead to frustration and a sense of hopelessness, which may compel youth to resort to thuggery as a means of asserting their power in a politically indifferent society.¹⁰ Moreover, organizations exploit these socio-economic grievances, attracting vulnerable youths to participate in extremist political activities.¹¹

Political Factors

The political landscape in many Muslim-majority countries and communities often fuels political thuggery. Authoritarian regimes, corruption, and lack of transparency in governance can lead to widespread disillusionment with state institutions. When young Muslims perceive the political system as rigged or unresponsive to their needs, they may be more likely to engage in violent political activism. Mumtaz and Raza argue that when traditional avenues for political participation are blocked, youth may turn to thuggery as a form of protest, believing that such actions might bring about the change they desire.¹² The lack of representation in political spheres can cultivate a sense of resentment and radicalization among young individuals who seek a voice.

Cultural and Ideological Influences

Cultural narratives and ideological influences also play a critical role in promoting political thuggery among Muslim youth. In some contexts, religious or cultural justifications for violence can emerge, leading individuals to view thuggery as a moral obligation or a patriotic duty. As noted by Abdulwahab, radical interpretations of religious texts or cultural traditions may legitimize aggressive political behavior, framing it as a necessary response to perceived injustices.¹³ Additionally, youth subcultures that valorize violence and aggression can perpetuate cycles of thuggery, as individuals seek to gain respect and recognition among their peers.

IMPLICATIONS OF POLITICAL THUGGERY ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Political thuggery, characterized by the use of violence, intimidation, and coercion to achieve political ends, is a pervasive issue that undermines democratic processes and national development. This phenomenon has detrimental effects on governance, economic stability, and social cohesion, thereby stunting the potential for comprehensive national development.

One of the most significant implications of political thuggery is its impact on governance. When political actors resort to violent means to assert their dominance, the rule of law is undermined. This erosion of legal frameworks deters citizens from participating in democratic processes, as fear of reprisal looms large.¹⁴ Such an environment breeds political apathy, where citizens become disenchanted with their leaders and governmental institutions. Consequently, effective governance, which is essential for the implementation of policies that foster development, becomes nearly impossible.

In addition, political thuggery stymies economic growth. Investors, both domestic and international, are hesitant to engage in markets where violence and intimidation prevail. The World Bank highlights that unstable political environments lead to reduced foreign direct investment, which is critical for economic development.¹⁵ Without a stable investment climate, job creation is hampered, and economic disparities widen. This reality is evident in countries plagued by political violence, where economic indicators often reflect stagnation or regression.

Furthermore, political thuggery disrupts social cohesion. Societies are often divided along political lines, leading to heightened tensions and conflicts among different groups. The pervasive presence of thuggery can foster an atmosphere of mistrust and hostility, diminishing community collaboration essential for national development.¹⁶ Social unrest and violence divert attention and resources away from developmental goals, as communities are compelled to focus on security and survival rather than productivity and progress.

CONSEQUENCES OF POLITICAL THUGGERY AMONG MUSLIM YOUTH

Political thuggery, characterized by the use of violence or intimidation to influence political outcomes, has emerged as a significant concern among young Muslims in various contexts. This phenomenon is often exacerbated by socio-economic factors, religious extremism, and underlying political grievances. The consequences of political thuggery among Muslim youth are multifaceted, impacting individual lives, community dynamics, and national stability.

One of the primary consequences of political thuggery is the erosion of trust within communities. When young individuals engage in violence or

intimidation to achieve political objectives, it breeds a culture of fear and suspicion. This distrust can fracture social ties among community members, complicating social cohesion within Muslim communities. According to Hamid, such divisions can hinder collaborative efforts toward social development and contribute to a cycle of violence and retribution.¹⁷

Moreover, political thuggery can have devastating effects on the youth themselves. Young individuals who participate in violent political acts often face legal repercussions, including arrest and incarceration. This criminalization can lead to a loss of future opportunities, such as education and employment.¹⁸

Consequently, these youths may become marginalized, further entrenching their grievances and potentially leading to a cycle of violence, as they may see no legitimate avenues for political engagement or social advancement.

Another serious consequence is the radicalization of youth. Political thuggery can create an environment conducive to extremist ideologies, as disillusioned young people may turn to radical groups that promise a sense of purpose or belonging. Studies indicate that youth who experience socio-political disenfranchisement are more susceptible to recruitment by violent organizations.¹⁹ This cycle not only perpetuates violence but can also compromise regional and global stability.

Furthermore, the implications of political thuggery extend beyond individual communities to national governance. When segments of the youth population engage in political violence, it challenges the legitimacy of state institutions. This response can erode public confidence in government entities, making it increasingly difficult for authorities to implement effective policies.²⁰ A weakened state apparatus often leads to an escalation of violence, exacerbating existing tensions within society.

ISLAMIC PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES AGAINST POLITICAL THUGGERY

Political thuggery undermines democratic institutions and inhibits national development. In predominantly Islamic societies, the principles of justice, respect, and community are integral to societal functioning. Islamic teachings can provide a framework for preventive strategies against such malpractices.

Islam emphasizes the importance of ethical conduct and accountability in leadership. The Qur'an advocates for justice, stating, "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses in justice".²¹ Accordingly, Islamic teachings encourage leaders to prioritize the welfare of their communities over personal gain or political ambition. By nurturing a culture that values ethical governance, Islamic societies can mitigate the conditions that allow political thuggery to flourish.

Education plays a crucial role in the promotion of peace and justice within communities. Islamic organizations can leverage educational initiatives to

instill values of tolerance and respect for human rights. Programs focused on conflict resolution and civic education can empower citizens, particularly the youth, to become active participants in the democratic process without resorting to violence. Studies have shown that education reduces susceptibility to extremist ideologies, thereby contributing to political stability.²²

Moreover, grassroots movements rooted in Islamic teachings can promote community engagement and political participation. Organizations that advocate for peaceful dialogue and community organizing can counteract the influence of thuggery by fostering environments that prioritize discussion over violence. When citizens feel empowered to voice their opinions and work collaboratively towards common goals, the likelihood of political thuggery decreases significantly. For instance, initiatives that encourage voter education and participation can help build a more informed electorate resistant to coercive tactics.²³

Islamic principles also advocate for accountability and transparency, which are essential in curbing political corruption—one of the root causes of political thuggery. Leaders are reminded that their authority is a form of trust (*amanah*) bestowed upon them by their communities. The Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) admonition that "the leader of a people is their servant" underscores the moral obligation of leaders to act in the public's best interests.²⁴ By establishing systems of checks and balances that adhere to Islamic ethics, societies can foster a political climate that is less conducive to thuggery.

Finally, promoting interfaith dialogue based on Islamic principles can enhance social cohesion and reduce tensions that often lead to political violence. Recognizing the diverse makeup of societies, Islamic teachings can guide leaders and citizens towards inclusivity and mutual respect. Engaging different religious communities to address common concerns can build unity and reduce divisive practices that political thugs exploit.

Role of Muslim Scholars in Preventing Political Thuggery Among Muslim Youth

Political thuggery, characterized by the use of violence and intimidation to influence political processes, poses a significant challenge to democratic governance and societal harmony. In many regions where Islam is a dominant faith, the participation of the youth in political processes is influenced by various factors, including the teachings of religious leaders.

One of the primary responsibilities of Muslim scholars is to provide ethical guidance grounded in Islamic teachings. The Quran and the Hadith emphasize the importance of justice, honesty, and respect for authority.²⁵ Scholars can thus serve as role models, articulating how these principles should inform political participation. By promoting an interpretation of Islam that condemns violence and coercion as tools of political influence, scholars can help reshape the

mindset of the youth. Moreover, scholars can effectively utilize platforms such as social media and community forums to communicate these values, reaching a broader audience.²⁶

Education also plays a crucial role in curbing political thuggery. Muslim scholars are uniquely positioned to provide youth with the necessary knowledge about political systems, civic engagement, and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. This education can empower young Muslims to participate in political processes constructively and peacefully, fostering critical thinking and discouraging blind allegiance to political factions that engage in violence.²⁷ Creative educational initiatives, such as workshops, seminars, and youth mentorship programs, can facilitate this learning and encourage active citizenship devoid of thuggery.

In addition to ethical guidance and education, community engagement is essential in preventing political thuggery. Scholars can lead community dialogues that address the grievances and frustrations of the youth, providing a platform for open discussion and conflict resolution. These dialogues can help bridge the gap between the youth and political leaders, fostering mutual understanding and respect. By advocating for peaceful means of expressing dissent and engaging in political discourse, Muslim scholars can help cultivate an environment where political thuggery is not only discouraged but also recognized as detrimental to both the community and the faith.²⁸

Role of Muslim Parents in Preventing Political Thuggery Among Muslim Youth

As the primary socializing agents, parents play a fundamental role in guiding young individuals toward constructive citizenship and away from destructive paths. First and foremost, parental engagement is crucial in fostering a sense of identity and belonging in Muslim youth. Many adolescents grapple with dual identities, navigating the intersection of their religious beliefs and societal expectations. When parents actively instill a sense of pride in their cultural and religious heritage, they can help youth build a resilient identity that counters extremist ideologies.²⁹ This foundational sense of self can deter youth from seeking affirmation or belonging in destructive groups, as they are more likely to embrace peaceful expressions of their identity.

Furthermore, Muslim parents must encourage critical thinking and open discourse about political issues within the family. By creating an environment where political discussions are welcomed, parents can equip their children with the tools to analyze information critically and understand various perspectives. This approach helps counteract simplistic narratives that may glorify violence or thuggery as a means to achieve political ends.³⁰ In addition, when parents model respectful discourse and debate, they set a standard for how their

children engage with differing viewpoints, fostering an atmosphere of respect over aggression.

Moreover, the importance of emotional intelligence cannot be overstated in the context of preventing political thuggery. Parents who prioritize emotional education can help youth manage their feelings, particularly anger and frustration, which can often lead to volatile actions. By teaching children to express their emotions constructively, through dialogue and peaceful protest rather than violence, parents can significantly mitigate the risk of their offspring engaging in thuggish behavior.³¹ This emotional grounding is critical in today's politically charged atmosphere, where young people may feel disillusioned and marginalized.

Lastly, community engagement plays a vital role in nurturing responsible citizenship among Muslim youth. Parents should encourage their children to participate in community service, civic engagement, and peaceful activism. This involvement not only helps youth develop a sense of social responsibility but also connects them with mentors and role models who exemplify constructive engagement.³² By fostering positive community connections, parents can help their children find healthier avenues for expressing their political beliefs and grievances.

Above all, parents are given responsibilities to feed, cloth, house, educate and nurture their children for a better future among others. Neglecting these fundamental responsibilities brings about a very wide gap between parents and their children which eventually leads to disrespect that will make children not listen to their parents.

Role of Community Leaders in Preventing Political Thuggery Among Muslim Youth

In recent years, political thuggery has emerged as a significant issue affecting democratic processes globally. This phenomenon is particularly concerning within Muslim communities, where young individuals may be susceptible to manipulation and exploitation for political gain. Community leaders play a pivotal role in addressing this issue, as they possess the unique capability to influence and guide youth towards positive civic engagement.

Community leaders, including religious figures, educators, and grassroots organizers, serve as critical role models and mentors. Their status within the community enables them to promote constructive dialogue about political values and social justice. According to Boulton and Haffajee, positive engagement and mentorship can significantly deter youth from participating in violent or unlawful political activities³³. By fostering an environment conducive to open discussions about civic duties and democratic principles, community leaders can inspire a sense of responsibility among young individuals.

Community leaders can implement educational programs that emphasize critical thinking and media literacy, which are essential for recognizing and resisting extremist rhetoric. Educators within the community have the opportunity to incorporate discussions about the consequences of political thuggery and the importance of participation in democratic processes through peaceful means.³⁴ Such programs can empower Muslim youth to make informed decisions and resist the allure of thuggery that is often romanticized in political discourse.

Furthermore, community leaders can facilitate safe spaces where Muslim youth feel free to express their concerns and frustrations about socio-political issues affecting their lives. These spaces not only encourage youth participation but also enable leaders to address misconceptions and grievances that can lead to feelings of disenfranchisement. By engaging with young people and validating their experiences, community leaders can nurture a sense of belonging, reducing the likelihood of youth resorting to political violence or thuggery.³⁵

Engaging with local law enforcement and governmental authorities is another essential role that community leaders can play in preventing political thuggery. By fostering relationships built on trust and collaboration, leaders can help bridge the gap between law enforcement and youth, encouraging a culture of respect and understanding.³⁶ Community leaders can advocate for initiatives that address systemic issues leading to disenfranchisement, thereby mitigating the risk factors associated with political thuggery.

Conclusion

In the contemporary socio-political landscape, the convergence of socio-economic disparities, political disenfranchisement, and a burgeoning digital landscape has rendered young Muslims increasingly susceptible to exploitation by political actors seeking to engage in violent or coercive tactics. However, the teachings of Islam provide a framework for preventive strategies that can mitigate the prevalence of political thuggery and promote civic engagement characterized by moral integrity and social responsibility.

Foremost, the Islamic emphasis on justice, peace, and civic responsibility lays the foundation for a paradigm shift among youth away from violence. The Qur'an delineates the principle of justice as central to the Muslim identity, as highlighted in Surah An-Nisa³⁷, which urges believers to stand firm in justice even against themselves. Educational initiatives that reinforce these teachings can empower youth to reject violence and unauthorized influence in politics, thereby fostering a culture of peaceful activism.

Furthermore, community engagement plays a pivotal role in operationalizing Islamic preventive strategies. Mosques and community centers can serve as platforms for political education, where youth are encouraged to engage in dialogue about the ethical implications of political actions and the importance

of peaceful advocacy. Programs promoting critical thinking about political narratives and the discernment of legitimate political participation will equip the youth with the tools necessary to resist coercive political pressures. The role of mentorship cannot be understated. Introducing youth to positive role models within the community who embody the principles of Islamic ethics and engage in non-violent political discourse can provide aspirational examples. These mentors can also act as mediators, resolving conflicts that may otherwise escalate into violent political confrontation.

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