Examination of Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts Resulting From Political Competition in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract— **Political competitions within and between political parties in the society and other forms of violence have negatively affected many African societies, Kenya included. This has led to deaths, destruction of property and displacement of citizens. This study is based on the recurrence of ethnic conflict especially during electioneering period in Nakuru County, unlike other regions in the Country. The specific objective of the study was to examine solutions to ethnic conflicts caused by political competition in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study was guided by the social change theory. The study used descriptive research design. A sample of 417 respondents was selected using both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Both secondary and primary data were collected. Primary data was collected by use of questionnaire, focus group discussion, interview schedules and field observation. Secondary data was obtained through desk research, libraries and journals. Data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 21 and presented using two measures of distribution; percentages and frequencies. Key findings for the study were the only way to tame electioneering period violence is by having members of the society purposely choose to coexist using homegrown solutions for each area and involving all community members. The study findings would contribute to helping policy makers in coming up with new policies or modifying the existing ones to address the influence of political competition on ethnic conflicts and add knowledge in the field of peace and conflict studies. (242 Words)**

Index Terms— **coexistence, electioneering period, ethnic conflict, political competition**

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

According to Moser and Clark (2001), the acts of violence can be as a result of conscious or unconscious desire to maintain or obtain political power. Thus, the motive behind violence is that of the pursuit to attaining political objectives (Hibbs, 1973). Defining political violence is typically dependent on a typology, which separates the socially and economically motivated from the politically motivated forms of violence. Hansen (2009) argues that, violent acts take place in the collective sphere where a certain group of individuals, against another group, commits them just because the targeted individuals happen to fall under that particular group. It typically takes the form of murder, assaults, sexual abuse such as rape, forced pregnancy or sterilization.

Studies such as that of Driscoll (2009) indicate that ethnicity and ethnic affiliations in African societies are the main causes of political conflict and domestic instability. Rivalry in various communities in Africa is viewed by Driscoll (2009) as often of a political nature where a particular ethnic group or

community would prefer a particular person to ascend to power, failure to which violence and conflicts erupt.

Ntshoe (2002) views political unrest, rivalries within various ethnic groups in a society and other forms of violence to have negatively affected many African societies. In Kenya, such rivalry has affected the Kikuyu and Luo relations, and more recently has developed to include other ethnic groups.

Although political violence in Kenya is often at its extreme during election periods, it also exists as an 'everyday phenomenon'. Assassinations of political leaders, prominent businessmen, civil society leaders, and other figures that possess significant influence on the allocation of resources or political development in the country are far from exceptional (Wabala and Mukinda, 2009). While researches on ethnic conflicts in Nakuru County have been done, whose causes have been attributed to historical injustices, there is very little documented research on solutions to the ethnic conflicts caused by political competition in Nakuru County, Kenya. This study attempts to contribute to filling this gap.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Many people in Nakuru County have been affected by ethnic conflicts leading to deaths and destruction of property worth millions of shillings and displacement of many citizens. These conflicts are majorly experienced during the electioneering period and take an ethnic dimension where different ethnic groups rise against each other. The Kikuyu ethnic community in Nakuru County has been at the centre of these conflicts with the Kalenjin ethnic community which avers that, they should migrate back to their ancestral land in Central Kenya. Nakuru County, being cosmopolitan, other smaller ethnic communities have tended to side with either of the two, making conflicts assume an ethnic dimension. According to Klopp, 2002; Ndegwa, 1997, ethnic tensions have only typically evidenced themselves during electoral contests. Ethnicity *per se,* however, is not the cause of conflict, but politicized ethnicity.

During the non-electioneering period, business partners work together as suppliers and buyers irrespective of their ethnic background. This relationship dramatically changes during the electioneering period. Each supports their own, whom they believe will protect their business interests. On the other hand, opposing ethnic groups perceive their political leaders as people who instigate violent acts against their otherwise business partners affiliated to different political parties. This leads to loss of life, serious injuries and loss of property. Ethnic communities are by and large affiliated to particular political parties which become voting blocs.

Nakuru County has, for a long time been the epicenter of what is generally referred to as "Ethnic Conflict" (Klopp, 2002 & Ndegwa, 1997). The researcher, however, opines that on serious relook, at this conflict, is apparently a manifestation of political rivalry and competition amongst protagonists. This study therefore sets out to interrogate this conception. Simply

put, what are the solutions to these ethnic conflicts caused by political competition in Nakuru County?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The specific objective of the study was to establish solutions to ethnic conflicts caused by political competition in Nakuru County, Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Literature

One of the most sensitive areas of social life in Africa is the problem of cultural pluralism which usually rears its ugly face in inter-ethnic relations. This is caused by failure of national institutions to explicitly recognize and accommodate existing ethnic divisions and interests, in the society. To keep the problem within manageable bonds, Aluko (2011) recommends that nations adopt political arrangements which will accord the ethnic groups a meaningful role in the national life. Iro (1994) suggests that African leaders in multi-ethnic nations learning to accommodate one another and to tolerate criticism of their policies. Nnoli (1998) suggests a fundamental change in the nature of the national leadership in Africa.. Other suggestions include institutionalised power sharing to ensure democratic sharing of power among the various ethnic groups making up the nation. This mitigates against 'the winner takes all' syndrome which encourages dictatorship and subsequent marginalisation of opposition and minority groups. Further, empowering the different ethnic nationalities in the nation can help to reduce ethnic problem Ibeike (1995) argues that there is need for institutionalised indignation whereby both the international community and the various ethnic groups show indignation and condemn brutal or despotic conduct of whatever leader is in power. According to Ibeike, when Jomo Kenyatta victimised and brutalised people from other ethnic groups, the Kikuyu in general found it difficult to condemn his conduct. Likewise when Arap Moi took over and did same thing, many Kalenjin and Masaai found it difficult to condemn the conduct.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The study was guided by the social change theory. Macionis (2011) defines social change as a social process whereby the values, attitudes, or institutions of the society become modified. In order for social change to occur, a group of people must have certain characteristics. These include: a belief that they are at risk for a problem with serious consequences; a belief that a suggested behavior will lessen or eliminate the problem; and, the skills and intention to perform the suggested behavior (Pezone, Palacio, & Rosenberg, 2003).

Deducing from the argument by Macionis (2011), this study presupposes that, for ethnic conflict to be effectively managed or eliminated in the community, the community members must believe that the conflicts exist and they have a responsibility to end them. The community must willingly say no to the impacts of conflicts in their community and embrace tactics that ensure that there is concern for wellbeing of all; men, women and children.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was employed the descriptive research design. Kothari (2011) avers that, the design is concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual, or a group, with specific predictions, with narration of facts and characteristics concerning individual, group or situation. The descriptive design was ideal because the study involved different kinds of fact-finding enquiries and was important in description of the state of affairs as it existed at that particular moment. The design was considered an efficient way to obtain information needed to describe the attitudes, opinions, and views of the people in the establishment of the dynamics of political competition and ethnic strife within Nakuru County in Kenya.

From the population, a sample was selected within each group in proportionate numbers of the whole using the stratified random sample, which gave every item within the population a fair chance of being selected. Random selection was determined objectively by means of random number tables. According to Cooper and Schindler (2003), random sampling frequently minimizes the sampling error in the population.

A multi-stage cluster sampling procedure was used during this survey. First, the identification of the sub-counties and the hotspots was done with the assistance of the County Commissioner's office, four sub-counties of Nakuru County, were included where ethnic conflict had been experienced. These were Molo, Nakuru, Naivasha, and Kuresoi. In every hotspot, 3 starting points with unique identity, such as school, bus stop, a physical feature (tree), *boda boda* (bicycle) shed among others, were identified making sure that all the population within the hotspot were represented. The researcher then selected the household systematically where every fifth household on the left was selected for interview. Simple random sampling procedure was used to get respondents from the household. This method involves giving a number to every subject or member of the accessible population, placing the numbers in a container and then picking any number at random (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2009). The researcher used simple random sampling procedure to sample Members of County Assemblies (MCAs) and Local administrators, CSOs and religious leaders in Nakuru County. Purposive sampling was also used to get members to participate in the FGDs from the CSOs, who were considered *as par* the positions they held in these organisations and especially those in decision making positions, and residents (men and women). According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2009), purposive sampling allows a researcher to pick from the population samples that are either knowledgeable in a particular area or possess required characteristics for his/her study.

The selection of the respondents was done using a sampling approach with a statistical significance at the 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval. The study sample size was 417 respondents: 384 residents of Nakuru county and 33 key informants. The key informants included: 9 Members of County Assembly, 8 Religious Leaders, 8 Civil Society Organisations and 8 Administrators.

The researcher collected both primary and secondary data. Primary data was gathered using questionnaires, focus group discussions (FGDs) and interview schedules. Questionnaires were considered a suitable method of data collection because they allowed the researcher to reach a larger sample within

limited time (Orodho, 2003). The questionnaires were divided into sections representing the various variables adopted for the study in either closed or open-ended questions. The interviews were semi-structured giving the researcher a chance to use probing techniques to get in depth information in case there was need for any clarification.

The FGDs were structured in a way that they allowed further probing wherever clarification was necessary. Observation checklist was used to observe certain aspects and behavior during data collection. Mugenda and Mugenda (2009) consider the checklist a good tool enabling the observer to spend time thinking about what is occurring rather than on how to record, hence enhancing the accuracy of the study.

The researcher carried out a pilot study to pre-test and validate the questionnaires and the interview guides. According to Cooper & Schindler (2003), the pilot group can range from 25 to 100 subjects depending on the method to be tested but it does not need to be statistically selected.

The pilot study allowed the pre-testing of the research instruments in order to familiarize with research and its administration procedure as well as identifying items that required modification. The result helped the researcher to correct inconsistencies that arose from the instruments, which ensured that they measured what was intended. To establish the validity of the research instruments, the researcher sought opinions of experts in the field of study especially the supervisors.

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed in data analysis. Likert type scale items were analyzed depending on whether they were favourable or unfavourable. Charts and frequency tables were applied in the presentation of findings.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This section discusses the different solutions to political competition experienced in Nakuru County.

V. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

The study sought to establish the type and sources of interventions put in place to counter violence).

5.1 Types of interventions

This research question sought to find out the types of interventions provided during the violence. At least, 191 (51.8%) of the respondents reported that there were fora for preaching peace among people championed by the council of elders, and peace committees. This was facilitated by the Government who provided transport for the committee members and also to the affected people to safer grounds and offer security in the affected areas. Political leaders and other Government officials visited the affected areas and participated in the *Barazas*. At least 188 (51.2%) respondents said that the intervention were basically on the provision of basic needs which also involved offering psychosocial support to the affected people. From the interviews the following NGOs were identified as offering the interventions: Red Cross, USAID, UNDP, Mercy Corps, PeaceNet, CJPC and UN Women. The government was reported by 29 (7.9%) by the respondents as offering security. Table 6.1 summarizes the interventions during the political violence and ethnic conflict in the study area:

Table 5.1: Types of interventions

Types of interventions	Percentage
Preach peace among people	51.8%
Provide basic needs	51.2%
Provide security	7.9%

Source: Field Data 2016

5.1.1: Involvement of CSOs and Religious leaders during conflicts period

The CSOs and Religious Leaders were involved in different ways during the conflict period, where 11 (67%) of the respondents reported that they had peace building initiatives which involved communal work with the community members irrespective of the ethnic background or political party they were affiliated to. This was in the hope of bringing the communities back together and putting their differences aside. Some of the CSOs and religious leaders were involved in the provision of the basic needs such as food to the violence victims who had been displaced from their homes, which was reported by 8 (50%) of the respondents. Transportation of the victims and spiritual counselling of the victims were reported by 3(17%0 of the respondents, to have been carried by some CSOs and religious leaders. Table 6.2 tabulates the different roles played by CSOs and Religious leaders during the ethnic conflict.

Table 6.2: Involvement of CSOs and Religious Leaders during conflict period

Involvement	Percentage
Peace building initiatives	67%
Provision of basic needs e.g. food	50%
Transportation of victims	17%
Spiritual counselling to victims	17%

Source: Field Data 2016

5.1.2 Involvement of administration during the conflict period

The Local Government Administrators played different roles during the conflict period with 7 (90%) of them indicating that they were part of peace building committees in their various areas of jurisdiction. They participated fully in the outreach programs to the community members, where 2 (30%) reported to have had peace forums with the community members, which comprised of representatives from different communities. Some CSOs and religious leaders were involved in initiating youth sensitization programs where they had activities for the youth such as football, which they would play together irrespective of their ethnic background or party affiliations. This was reported by 2 (20%) of the respondents. The leaders also had programs for the youth who would be used as peace ambassadors. Another 1(10%) of the respondents reported to have been involved in the distribution of non-food items which were donated by well-wishers or overseeing the distribution to the victims. Table 6.3 represents the findings on the roles played by administrators during the ethnic conflict.

Table 5.3 Roles played by administrators during ethnic conflict period

Activity	Percentage
Peace building committees	90%
Forums for peace	30%
Youth sensitization programs	20%
Distribute food and non-food items to victims	10%

Source: Field Data 2016

5.2 Conflict Resolution

The study sought to establish the steps that the respondents felt would be more appropriate in resolving conflict to avoid a repeat of the same in the future years. The respondents revealed different steps that can be taken in resolving conflicts towards achieving peace before, during and after elections.

5.2.1 Preaching peace

Men and women, 300(81.6%), CSO 9(53.3%) Administrators 2(20%) Children 3(18%) acknowledged preaching peace to be one solution to conflict experienced in Nakuru county that the political leaders, administrators and community leaders can embrace during their campaigns and other meetings to ensure the community members coexist peacefully. This, they believe should be done throughout the year and not necessarily when election near or when there is violence. This was also echoed by the FGD in Molo who reported that the DPC formed were only active during the conflicts though they did not have enough funding and thus did not have much impact at the grassroots.

The respondents also revealed that the peace committees should comprise representatives from all ethnic groups in the county and people from the grassroots together with the county administrators, who do understand their issues well and the committees should be well funded in order to reach out to all community members. Buchere (2011) argues that, county administrators play an important role in peace building and conflict management, and therefore strengthening their capacities as members of the peace and security committees is necessary to equip them with competences that will enable them eliminate and support effective conflict management. This is particularly true given that the county administrators operate up to the grassroots level and are able to identify and monitor conflict indicators which serve as early warning signs for prevention of conflicts.

5.2.2 Distribution of Resources and Opportunities

Equal distribution of resources was cited by 73(19.9%) Men and Women, 2(13.3%) CSOs and Religious leaders, 2(11.1%) Administrators and 1(9.1%) children, as a way of resolving conflict and should not be dictated or determined by the ethnic background or political affiliation that one comes from. This is because most of the political leaders during their campaigns use resource distribution as a campaign tool against their opponents to portray marginalization by those in leadership who favour those who supported them or those from their ethnic groups. This concurs with Aluko 2011 who argues that the state is the primary source of private wealth accumulation in Africa and this makes the struggle for state power so intense. He continues to argue that distribution of the national resources (resource allocation) must be based

upon objectively measurable and generally accepted criteria by all the various ethnic groups in the country where justice, fair play and equity must be ensured in the distribution of these resources.

5.2.3 Civic education

Civic education was cited by 174(47.2%) men and women, 1(6.7%) CSOs and Religious leaders, 6(33.3%) Administrators, and 3(18.2%) Children as a measure that can avert conflict in Nakuru County, by creating awareness to the community members on good governance. The respondents recommended that the government should put in place programs offering civic education to communities to educate them on issues of governance to prevent the political leaders from taking advantage of their ignorance during their campaigns where they give false information and incite them against each other. The study findings agree with Nnoli (1998) that empowering the different ethnic nationalities in the nation can help to reduce ethnic problem

5.2.4 Single party

Moving back to a single party system was cited by 74(20%) men and women, 2(13.5%) CSOs and Religious leaders, 2(11.1%) Administrators, as a measure to avert conflicts. The respondents revealed that during the single party error, though the competition was there between the candidates, the conflicts were minimal. However, ethnic conflicts were witnessed at a lower magnitude. This was echoed by one respondent in the focus group discussion in Keringet who said:

- Single party kind of leadership would be the best for this Country because there are so many ethnic groups and each would wish to have their own as the leader. Therefore, to avoid the competition culminating to violence, we better go back to the 'dark' days of President Moi and Jomo Kenyatta (Field Data, 2016)

This is unlike during the multi-party error where political parties are so many and majority of them are formed along their ethnic lines. This makes the competition between the parties to turn out to be competition between the ethnic groups and follows that the defeat is seen to be a loss for the ethnic group. This agrees with Aluko 2011 who argued that collective security can prevent ethnic problem in the sense that a threatened nation, exercising its inherent right of collective self-defence can call on others for help. He continues to say that collective security is a far more potent weapon for deferring aggression and maintaining peace and security than is the traditional right of self-defence standing alone.

5.2.5 Action against perpetrators

Action against the perpetrators was cited by 55(15%) men and women, 5(33.3%) CSOs and Religious leaders, 2(9.1%) Administrators as a measure to avert conflicts, as a lesson to those with intentions of perpetuating the same. The respondents revealed that most political leaders during their campaigns incite their supporters against their opponents who violate them as a way of intimidating them. This has resulted to loss of life and property and displacement of people. This agrees with Ibeike (1995), who argued that there is need for institutionalized indignation whereby both the international community and the various ethnic groups show indignation

and condemn brutal or despotic conduct of whatever leader is in power. Ibeike continues to give an example of Jomo Kenyatta and Arap Moi, when they were in power, they victimized and brutalized people from other ethnic groups but their fellow ethnic group members did not condemn their actions.

5.2.6 Employment
Creation of more employment especially for the young people was cited by 85(23.1%) men and women, 2(13.1%) CSOs and Religious leaders, 3(20.0%) Administrators and 6(35%) Children as a solution to violence experienced in Nakuru County. The respondents reported that the young men are used by the political leaders in perpetuating crimes against their opponents with a promise of opportunities once they get to power. The study findings agree with Nnoli suggestion in 1998 that empowering the different nationalities in the nation can help to reduce ethnic problem. The study findings also agrees with Aluko 2011 that nations must adapt political arrangements which will accord to all groups meaningful role in national life and which are able to keep ethnic problem within manageable bounds.

5.2.7 Media
Media was cited by 37(10%) men and women, 7(45%) CSOs and religious leaders, 10(52.4%) Administrators, and 2(9.1%) children as a trigger to conflict in Nakuru County. The respondents reported that media, especially the vernacular stations should not be used for campaigns, because the political leaders used them as an incitement platform against their opponents more so those who cannot understand the language

VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Summary
The study findings revealed various measures that can be used as solutions to minimize or avoiding the violence completely, by eliminating competition amongst the political leaders during their campaigning periods. The residents felt that there should be interventions to resolve and minimize conflict issues to avoid revenge attacks. For instance, 49(13.4%) and 46(12.5%) reported that *barazas* can be used in arbitration and intermarriages or socialization activities respectively.

Among the men and women 67(18.2%) of them, 9(53.7%) of the CSOs and religious leaders cited civic education on good governance and awareness creation on importance of peaceful co-existence to be a major issue to avoid misguidance from the political leaders, while 67(18.2%) of men and women and 2(13.3%) of the CSOs cited equal and fair treatment to all ethnic groups irrespective of their political affiliations. This will reduce the rate of competition and the concept of leader takes it all. The CSOs and religious leader also recommended the prosecution of rape, theft and murder cases making it a lesson to those others who may have the intentions of violating others in a similar way, which intimidates them and normally pull out from the competition.

The study findings also revealed that the change of Government system from multiparty to a single system form of Government would minimize competition experienced in Nakuru because political parties are formed along ethnic lines

which leads to competition among the ethnic groups. This was revealed by 50(13.5%), 1(6.6%) and 1(11.1%) of men and women, CSOs and religious leaders and chief and assistant chiefs, respectively, as a way of minimizing conflict experience in Nakuru County.
The media, especially the vernacular speaking stations, according to 1(6.7%) of the CSOs and religious leaders, should never be used in the campaigns because they are used as tools to incite people at the expense of those who could not understand the language.

5.2 Conclusion
The study established that political competition and ethnic alignments were the nexus of violence in Nakuru County. Similarly, it was clear that ethnic conflict can be avoided if only the underlying issues that are used by the political leaders to trigger violence during electioneering periods are addressed.
The study also found out that political competition could be minimized through establishment of stronger peace committee from the grassroots and to be in operation even during non-electioneering period, Government resources to be shared equally and employment for the youth who are usually lured into destruction activities. All other factors cited to cause ethnic conflict, such as unemployment, unequal distribution of resources, nepotism, and hate speech come into play as those who take over power try to compensate those who supported them and also use them as campaign tools during their campaigns, against their opponents.

5.3 Recommendation
There should be building of community agencies to identify and respond to their common problems instead of being left to solve them on their own to reduce the level of conflict between them and also avoid flaring up or being used as trigger during the election period. Security agencies should be well distributed in the County even during non-electioneering period and to comprise of representatives from all ethnic background in order to avoid partisan during the times of conflict.
The Government and other leaders and representatives should deliberate and review on policies or laws to prohibit the media from being used for the campaigns especially the vernacular stations. Heavy penalties should be put in place to prosecute the perpetrators of rape, theft and murder and the political leaders who are behind the incitement and funding the perpetrators, in order to have it as a lesson to those others who may have the same intentions to deter them from doing it.
Deliberate policies and programmes are needed to address the level of unemployment especially for the young people who are normally idle and used by the political leaders in perpetrating the offences. The Government should consider reverting back to one single party system of Government to reduce political competition amongst the different political parties which are formed on ethnic lines and thus turns to ethnic groups' competition which brings about ethnic conflicts before, during and after electioneering periods.

5.4 Suggestions for further study
A research study should be done to assess the success of the commissions and committees that have been put in place to counter conflicts experienced in the Country.

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