Effects of Political Competition on Socio-economic Context during Non-electioneering Period in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract:
Political competitions within and between political parties in a 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 unlike other regions in the Country. The specific objective of the study was to examine the socio-economic context during non-electioneering period in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study was guided by the social change theory. The study used descriptive research design. A sample of 384 respondents was selected from Nakuru residents and 33 key informants: 9 Members of County Assembly, 8 Religious Leaders, 8 Civil Society Organisations and 8 Administrators, using probability and non-probability sampling techniques. This gave a sample size of 417 respondents. 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 that men, women and children experience varied forms of both physical and psychological violence as a result of electioneering conflicts. The only way to tame this violence is for members for the society to purposely choose to coexist. The study findings would contribute to helping policy makers in coming up with new policies or modifying the existing ones to address influence that political competition has on ethnic conflicts and add knowledge in the field of peace and conflict studies. (274 words)

Keywords: socio-economic context, non-electioneering period, political competition, ethnic conflict, coexistence

1. 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, and 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 influence of political competition on socio-economic context during non-electioneering period. 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 which has resulted in 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 where the Kalenjin ethnic community believes should migrate back to their ancestral land in central Kenya. Nakuru County being cosmopolitan, other smaller ethnic communities have tended to side with either, 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 politicised ethnicity.

During 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 shall instigate violent acts against their otherwise business partners who happen to be 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 thesis therefore sets out to interrogate this conception. Simply put, what is the effect of political competition on socio-economic context during non-electioneering period in Nakuru county?

1.3. Objective of the Study
The specific objective of the study was to examine the effects of political competition on socio-economic context during non-electioneering period in Nakuru County.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Literature
Gilligan (1997) defines political strife as a form of violence that stems out of competition for control and ascendancy. Larger (1997) adds that, political conflict is considered one of the most treacherous threats in global security. This is because inter-group conflict represents an intractable and difficult problem in many countries around the world. Aluwihare (1997) avers that, problems such as population displacement, political insecurity and state disintegration are exacerbated in cases of conflicts. Weingarten (2004) views incidences in a political turmoil as likely to affect victims psychologically and in effect reach out to other people witnessing the sad state of affairs from different parts of the world.

According to Gilligan (1997), the effects of political turmoil such as armed struggles, tyranny, repression, skirmishes, forceful rape and displacement surpass the expected outcomes of a war that is loss of property and lives. Parker (2002) adds that death, disability and decay of social values, and cultural practices are all remnants of war. Significantly, this further leads to hostility between communities that were once good neighbours. It also leads to ill- treatment of women and children, murder, wrecking of lives through drug abuse and alcohol indulgence and prevalence of contagious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, cervical cancer, STDs and HIV/AIDS. Although the effects of war have an immediate impact on individuals during the conflicting period, which in Kenya most of the time is during the electioneering period, the current study considers the impacts long lasting. It thus sought to establish the influence of political competition amongst the political leaders on the socioeconomic status of men, women and children during non-electioneering period in Nakuru County.

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. socio-economic activities are also at risk when conflict persists in the society. Conflict will end if, in the words of Galtung (1973), basic human needs, such as survival, physical wellbeing, liberty and identity are respected.

3. Research Methodology

The study was employed the descriptive research design, which 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 (Kothari, 2011). 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 shed etc., 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 respondent 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 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 (1999), 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 designed to give a brief introduction of respondents. 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. This permitted the observer to spend time thinking about what is occurring rather than on how to record it and this enhances the accuracy of the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2009). The researcher observed and took photographs of some of the houses, sops and hotels that were burnt down or destroyed during the conflicts. This was to support the information collected from the respondents on the destruction and loss experienced during the violence.

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 require 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. Inferential data such as charts and frequency tables were basically applied in the presentation of findings by use of SPSS in all objectives. Quantitative analysis was used to interpret patterns in numeric data using graphs, tables and diagrams as items of analysis.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section sought to find out the influence of political competition amongst the political leaders and its impact on the socioeconomic status of men, women and children during non-electioneering period in Nakuru County.

4.1. Influence on Men

The study sought to establish the influence of conflict on men in Nakuru County. Table 1 summarises the findings:

Influence	Percentage
Loss of life and properties	85.6%
Displacement/ forced migration	34.8%
Family separation	6.3%
Unemployment/ loss of job	31.3%
Diseases attacks/ stress	2.2%

Table 1: Influence on men
Source: Field Data, 2016

From Table 1, the greatest influence of political competition on men was loss of life and property according to 315(85.6%) respondents. Men were always the main target of the perpetrators and would easily be killed as they try to fight back to protect their families and properties. Their properties would either be burnt or taken away by the perpetrators. One respondent from Matumaini - Molo reported:

- ".. *hawa watu ni wabaya, walichukua ngombe and mbuzi zetu na bado tunaziona kwa mboma zao lakini hakuna kitu tunaweza fanya. Ni uchungu sana*..." (".. These people are so bad, they took away our cows and goats which we can see in their homesteads but there is nothing we can do, it's too painful...") (Field Data, 2016)

However, 128(34.8%) of the respondents reported that men were displaced or forced to migrate to escape the wrath of the attackers. Men also relocated to other areas and not in the IDP sites after their homes are torched. As was reported by one man from Kuresoi;

- (.. *"siwesi kavumilia kuwaona watoto wangu na bibi wakitezeka kwa camp, ni kikubuka vile nilikua na mali mingi kabla ya hii vita..."*). (".. I can't bear the pain of seeing my children and wife suffer in the IDP camps when I remember the property that l had before the violence...") (Field Data, 2016)

Further, 115(31.3%) of men lost their job after relocation to other areas where they were not able to commute to work or out of fear of a recurrent attack. Family separation was also very common as men remained in the farms while the women left for the IDP site with the children. Another 8(2.2%) of the respondents revealed that men got sick with depressions and other opportunistic diseases after the attacks and died. This they reported was caused by a sense of hopelessness, despair and egocentrism.

These findings agree with Weingarten, 2004, who argues that incidences in a political turmoil psychologically affect the victims at the heart of the violence. It also agrees with Fortuna, Porche and Alegria in 2008, who argued that remnants of war are mostly associated with alcohol abuse which they used to console their souls.

4.2. Influence on Women
This question sought to find out how political competition influenced women's socioeconomic status in Nakuru County. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Influence	Percentage
Raped/ sexual and gender based violence	55.3%
Displacement/ forced migrations	21.9%
Family burden/ separation	37.0%
Unemployment/ loss of job	8.2%
Loss of life and properties	54.8%

Table 2: Influences on women
Source: Field Data, 2016

The results in Table 2 show that 204(55.3%) respondents reported that one of the highest effect is that, women were raped by the perpetrators and fellow men especially in the IDP sites. They ended up contracting diseases such as STIs and HIV/AIDs and unwanted pregnancies. This concurs with Munyiri (2007), who argued that in both events of the political skirmishes of 1992 and 2007 in Kenya, women faced the most devastating effects. Many were displaced from their homes, widowed and sexually abused. One man reported that:

- ("..These men were so inhuman, l witnessed them rape my own wife in front of my children, and l could not say or do anything, and her pleas got to deaf ears… ") (Field Data, 2016)

 A further 202(54.8%) of the respondents revealed that women were also killed and their property stolen. The perpetrators killed indiscriminately so long as one belonged to the targeted ethnic group especially the parents. The property carried away was cattle, goats and sheep and also dried food from the granaries.

However, 136(37.0%) of the respondents reported that women were left with a huge family burden of taking care of the children when their husbands were killed or disappeared to unknown destinations. They were also divorced by their husbands especially when they are from different ethnic groups or due to children born out of wedlock, who were as a result of rape or as they sought favours from the humanitarian workers for the rations. The women were also forced to migrate or were displaced from their home to safe places. Majority ended up in the IDP sites while others moved in with relatives in the non-affected areas which was very traumatizing. This was reported by 81(21.9%) of the respondents. This study findings agreed with an affirmation from UNCEF (1996) report that these problems were further aggravated by forceful deportation of populations, who were not only vulnerable to prolonged political

skirmishes, but also to other forms of sources of torment and anguish such as the case of harassment and sexual exploitation in the camps.

Women lost their jobs after displacements which was revealed by 30(8.2%) of the respondents. The study findings agrees with Fortuna, Porche and Alegria (2008), that violence of a political kind wrecks the lives of all in the society especially women and children who suffered the most during the skirmishes. It also agrees with Amnesty International (2004), that human rights situations across the region of Africa is characterized by widespread armed conflict and political regression and that in all, women were at risk.

4.3. Influence on Children
The item sought to establish the influences that political competition had on children. Table 3 gives the findings.

Influence	Percentage
Lacked basic needs	18.1%
Family separation/ orphaned	45.6%
School drop out	32.8%
Violence based on gender	12.5%
Forced labour	12.5%
Emotional stress	5.6%
Loss of life	52.5%

Table 3: Influence on children
Source: Field Data, 2016

From Table 3, 193(52.5%) of the respondents reported that, this included loss of life, especially the boy-child. The boys were seen as a threat to the perpetrators in protection of the family members and property. However, 168(45.6%) of the respondents reported that children were separated from their families and some ended up being orphaned. During the attacks, people run to different directions and the children ended up being separated from their families, while others had their parents killed in the attacks. The rate of school dropout was also high, due to lack of fees, basic needs and displacement, as they moved to areas without the school facility. Others were forced to repeat classes in their new schools for them to be admitted, which was reported by 121(32.8%) of the respondents.

Another 46(12.5%) of the respondents reported to have experienced sexual gender based violence, where boys were killed and girls raped or mutilated by the perpetrators. However, 21(5.6%) of the respondents revealed that children experienced emotional stress, as some could not comprehend what was happening. Some reported that they would see neighbours, whom they had known all through as friendly attacking them and destroying their property and carrying away some. As children witnessed their parents or other people being killed or dehumanized, left them with the urge of revenge without necessarily being forced to join in these groups, as Wessells (2005, reported.

The study findings affirm the UNCEF (1996) report that these problems were further aggravated by forceful deportation of populations, who were not only vulnerable to prolonged political skirmishes, but also to other forms of sources of torment and anguish such as the case of harassment and sexual exploitation in the camps. This agrees with Sagi-Swart *et al*(2008), who established that political violence and war have negative effects on children. Such negative effects include heightened aggression and violence, revenge seeking, depression, withdrawal and poor school performance.

5. Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

5.1. Summary
The study findings revealed loss of life to be a common effect on men, women and children, with 315(85.6%), 202(54.8%) and 193(52.5%) respectively, of the respondents. This is where majority of the people were killed by the perpetrators who targeted mostly the men but also killed the other members of the family. Displacement, migration and family separation was also cutting across the various categories where the men, women and children reported it being 134(34.8%), 84(21.9%) and 175(45.6%) respectively. People had to leave their home and move to safer areas, especially the churches and schools compounds, to avoid being attacked by the enemies. Sexual and gender based violence was cited to affect women this being 204(55.3%) and children, especially the girls with 2(12.5%), which was caused by perpetrators and their own men and husbands after moving to the IDP sites.

The study revealed that children dropped out of schools after the displacement, fear of attacks and due to lack of fees after their parents and guardians lost their jobs and property. Further, 2(12.5%) of the children were reported to have been forced to child labour after the loss of their parents and during the emergency of child headed households and had to feed their siblings.

5.2. Conclusion
The study established that ethnic conflict that resulted from the competition between the political leaders affect men, women and children differently where women were the most affected, followed by children and then men. All the three groups studied experienced both physical and psychological violence in the hands of the perpetrators of violence. Women faced the sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), separation or divorce if they were from different ethnic background from that of their spouse, unemployment and death.

Children were orphaned, dropped out of school, faced violence based on gender where girls were raped while boys were killed by the perpetrators and go through emotional stress as they witness the animosity from the perpetrators. Men, who are normally targeted by the perpetrators are killed, displaced, lose properties through destruction and stealing, unemployed and some have developed health problems such as heart attacks and stress.

5.3. Recommendation
In view of the foregoing discussion, the study recommends that 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. This would reduce the level of conflict between them and hence 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. This will also minimize the losses that are incurred during the violence.

5.4. Suggestions for Further Study
Similar study should be done in other areas which are cosmopolitan and do not experience ethnic conflict as benchmark for peaceful coexistence before, during and after electioneering period.

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