

A STUDY OF THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE AMONG YOUTH AND ELECTORATES IN ZAMBIA

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Phiri, George.,
School of Social Sciences,
Mulungushi University
Kabwe, Zambia

Hamauswa Shekesphere.,
School of Social Sciences,
Mulungushi University
Kabwe, Zambia

Abstract

This study was designed to investigate the nature, causes and effects of electoral violence in Zambia. Electoral violence is regarded as any harm or threat of harm to any person or property involved in the electoral process, or the process itself during the election period. This study aimed to establish empirical evidence on the causes and effects of electoral violence in Africa focusing on Zambia in particular. The predictions of the study were that structural, social and psychological factors are likely to be associated with electoral violence in communities. A sample of 130 participants comprising youth, electorates was randomly selected to respond to questionnaire and interview schedule on electoral violence on Zambia. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used in the study. Results showed that delayed announcing of results (25.9%), corruption (18.1%), are the leading causes of electoral violence. Thematic analysis and descriptive statistics revealed the main effects of electoral violence are social psychological effects (43.9%) characterized by regionalism, division of tribal groupings, hatred, lack of

freedom of speech, movement and association, stress trauma and loss of self esteem.

Political effects of electoral violence (25%) include reduced desire to participate or contest in elections, loss of trust in Zambian politicians, and perceptions of political instability. Economic effects (21.9%, are characterized by destruction of buildings and property, reduction of economic activity and unwillingness of investors to invest in the country. The study recommended sensitization of youth against electoral violence, increased transparency and accountability in handling elections in order to promote youth participation in national development.

Key Words__ *Electoral Violence, Youth, Electorates, officer*

The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes and effects of electoral violence and to establish the strategies for preventing electoral violence in Zambia. Many people including the youth have been affected directly or indirectly by acts of electoral violence in most elections conducted in Zambia. According to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), electoral violence is regarded as any harm or threat of harm to any person or property involved in the electoral process, or the process itself during the election period according to Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP). Electoral Violence can be targeted against people or things, communities or candidates or the deliberate destruction of campaign materials, vehicles, offices, or ballot boxes.

a. Statement of the problem

Zambia is known to be a peace loving country. However, recent elections have been characterized by high incidents of electoral violence which has resulted in displacement of some families, injury and loss of life among youth. According to Bieg (2009), elections in Africa are periods during which the stability and security of African states hangs in the balance, due to the threat of election related violence. However, the challenge has not been widely researched to understand the scope of the problem as well as determining the underlying factors that influence human beings to engage in electoral violence. In addition, research has not explained the particular culture, perception and beliefs, values or norms in Zambia that manifest themselves in violent encounters during the elections.

b. Theoretical Framework

The Social learning theory proposed by Albert Bandura suggests that violence or aggressive behaviour is a social phenomenon that we learn from people around us by watching others and the consequences of their actions. People engage in aggressive or violent behaviours because of observing models. Therefore violence can be common in certain cultures that reinforce such behaviour due to differences in values, traditions and beliefs. (Bandura A. 1977, in Baron, 2001).

This study, examines various structural social psychological issues related to electoral violence in order to understand why electoral violence is common to electoral process in Zambia.

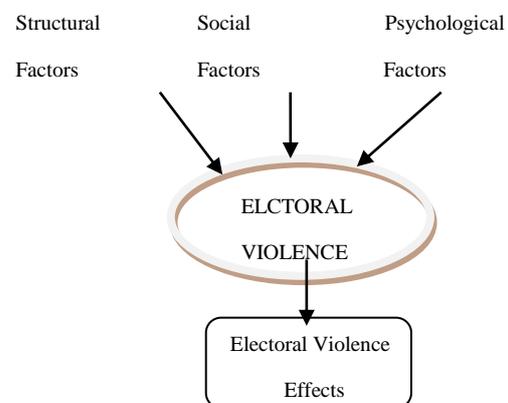


Fig. 1: Causes and Effects of electoral violence

Figure1 shows the conceptual framework provides a model of the structural, social and psychological factors related to electoral violence.

Based on the conceptual framework and literature the researchers predicted that structural, social and psychological factors are likely to be associated with electoral violence among youth and electorates in communities. In turn, Electoral violence is likely to result in problems such as political instability, loss of life, and decline in economic activity and development.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Nature and causes of electoral violence*

This section examines existing studies on violent conflicts in general and electoral violence in particular. As such studying the nature, causes and effects of electoral violence in Zambia is part of a long standing struggle in the field of political science and psychology to find solutions to violence.

Musgrave (2015) has looked at poverty and failed states as preconditions that are likely to cause political violence and terrorism. It is argued that structural factors of poverty and weak governance result into social grievances which can be a recipe of terrorism and radicalism. But other researchers argue that political violence can be understood as being affected by strategic and psychological factors (Horgan 2003, in Musgrave 2015).

In Africa, the electoral process has been characterized by violence at various stages from pre – election, during election and post elections. Research on the subject has not been subjected to substantive evidence base. Among the causes of electoral violence identified are factors such as ethnic conflict, armed conflict, terrorism, provocation, civil war, police brutality, famine, revolution and capital punishment. Electoral violence in an African election has been manifested in various forms as psychological or physical harm, the illegal use of fire to destroy houses, building or property, snatching of ballot boxes and murder.

Social economic causes of electoral violence in Africa include poverty, unemployment, cultural values, ineffective security forces, and weak punishment for perpetrators of violence, lack of legislation against

perpetrators of electoral violence, corruption and weak governance (Frimpong 2016). Corruption can trigger structural violence. Weak governance and corruption can make people feel desperate to seek any means of revenging against the political authority to avert their grievances.

Based on grievance theory, Collier and Hoeffler (2000) identify three types of grievances namely, hatred between in –group and out – group members, political exclusion and vengeance as the sources of electoral violence. They also note that hatred between religious and ethnic groups are the most frequent causes of violent conflicts. Flawed national constitutions maybe sources of political violence during elections. In Zimbabwe, the constitution was negotiated under the conditions of duress and amendments initiated later on Sachikonye (2011:4). After having enacted a new constitution, in 2016 the Zambian government conducted presidential and Parliamentary elections in Zambia. However, the elections were marked by somewhat unprecedented levels of electoral violence. Possibly, the answer could be that the new constitutions retained fundamental features of the old ones which have a bearing on the management of elections.

B. *Some Incidents of Electoral violence in Zambia:*

Election campaigns in Zambia have continued to be characterized mainly by clashes between supporters of the ruling party (PF) and the opposition United Party for National Development (UPND) as the country headed for the August 11, 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections with over five million registered voters.

In Northern Province, police recorded incidents of violence in which PF cadres were injured in an attack by UPND at Kafulafuta village 60 Km west of Kasama (Kitwe Times, 2016). In the Copperbelt, UPND cadres beat up an Election Commission of Zambia (ECZ) official in Ndola after suspecting the official was diverting the consignment of ballot papers. At the same time, the UPND leader harassed the ECZ officials at Mulungushi Conference center where the totaling was being done.

In another development, UPND supporters were attacked by security personnel and a woman was stripped naked during Youth Day Celebrations. Earlier, The Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) condemned the violence reported in Chilanga during the nomination of parliamentary bi- elections. Other incidents of violence have been reported in Mufumbwe where the Zambia Police service (ZP) and other security wings were implored to put in place proactive measures in policing election activities following the experiences in 2011 elections.

In Lusaka province, incidents of electoral violence were reported in which police opened fire on UPND supporters killing one person after the party refused to cancel a campaign meeting in Chawama. This prompted the Electoral Commission of Zambia to suspend political campaigns in Lusaka for ten days. About 30 families of Mpande resettlement area in Kafue were displaced after suspected UPND cadres burned their houses following the run up to the August 2016 elections. (Times of Zambia: Monday 12th Sept 2016).

In a post election period, cases of electoral violence have been reported in some parts of Zambia. The opposition UPND has continued to refuse to recognize the ruling government as legitimately elected. The

government has warned the UPND that refusal to recognize the president elect is a treason offence (Times of Zambia April 3 2017).

FODEP has noted that political and electoral violence is recipe for voter apathy and should be condemned by all well meaning Zambians. "We want to appeal to all political parties to avoid engaging in such vices because the current constitution criminalizes any political party that engages in violence and intimidation of opponents..." FODEP Executive Director McDonald Chipenzi said voters fear to be caught up in the violence perpetrated by cadres during campaigns hence decide to stay away from polling stations on the day of voting due to fear of being caught in the middle. (Chipenzi, 2016).

General Objective

1. To investigate the nature and prevalence of electoral violence in Zambia elections.
2. To investigate the causes and effects of electoral violence among youth and electorates in Zambia

Specific objectives

1. To investigate the social psychological and structural factors associated with electoral violence
2. To investigate whether youth, electorates and leaders are aware of strategies that can be used in the prevention of electoral violence in Zambia.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed descriptive research designs. Descriptive research design was used as a complementary approach to offer a descriptive analysis of the nature of electoral violence in Zambia. In terms of the approaches to the study, qualitative method was used to collect, analyse and present data.

B. Population

The study site was Kabwe district of central Zambia which has 39862 households, and a total population of 202360 people out of which 98781 are males and 103579 are females. The study targeted the youth, electorates who include community leaders, civic leaders and officers in the age range of 15 and above. According to the National Youth Policy (2002) *Youth* is a male or female person aged between 15 and 35 years. The *electorates* constitute the Zambian citizens who are 18 years and above and are eligible to vote according to the Zambian Constitution. Key informants include Youth leaders, and officers like civic leaders, community leaders and church leaders.

C. Sampling

A purposeful sampling procedure was used to select 10 residential areas in Kabwe district. A random sampling procedure was used to select a sample of 130 participants from the ten residential areas: Five were urban areas (Highridge, Dallas, Luangwa, Pollen, and Chowa) and the other five were Peri urban areas (Makululu, Kamushanga, Nakoli, Kakumbi and Makwati). These areas were selected based on their accessibility, limited funds for the project, costs involved in conducting the study as well as prevalence of incidences of electoral violence.

A sample of 114 youth and electorates was then randomly selected from ten residential areas in Kabwe district. The youth and electorates were required to respond to a questionnaire on electoral violence. In addition, 16 Key informants or leaders were

purposefully selected from among the Civil servants in the local authority (n = 4), Church leaders (n=3) Community leaders (n =2) the Head teachers (n = 4), and the Civic leaders (n= 2), Youth leader (n = 1). They were purposefully selected based on their previous participation in conducting and monitoring elections. The rationale for using purposeful sampling technique it could facilitate access to people with information on electoral violence required for the research.

D. Data Collection

A survey was conducted to collect data from the respondents in urban and peri urban areas of Kabwe district. A questionnaire was administered to the respondents to elicit their perceptions about issues related to electoral violence. Structures in depth interviews were also conducted with key informants who had knowledge with regard to electoral violence in Zambia, because of either their status as leaders, local authorities, or due to their profound knowledge from their educational backgrounds. In this regard, youth leaders, civic leaders, community leaders, teachers and government officials were interviewed.

E. Data Analysis

For the purposes of data analysis the researcher used thematic analysis and descriptive statistics to analyse qualitative data. The thematic approach was used to group the collected data according to the emerging themes.

III. RESULTS

A. Nature and prevalence of electoral violence

Results showed that electoral violence is likely to be higher before elections (48%) compared to after elections (28%) or during elections (24%). (Table I): The nature of electoral violence according to youth and electorates respondents is mainly characterized by assaults, injury (70%) and loss of lives (15%) threats 10% and insults (5%) for wearing party regalia, flashing a party symbol in support of particular political party.

TABLE I. NATURE AND PREVALENCE OF ELECTORAL

PREVAL ENCE OF ELECT ORAL VIOLEN CE	TOT AL	%	EXPLANATIO NS
a. Bef ore elections	12	48	Because it is the time the country has no leader/president to make orders. 'Because it is the time political parties are so eager to form government'.
b. Aft er elections	7	28	After elections - because most leaders are not willing to accept the results/or being defeated.
c. Du ring elections	6	24	
TOTAL	25		

VIOLENCE

B. Causes of electoral violence

The youth, electorates and leaders were asked to indicate their perception regarding the factors could contribute to electoral violence in Zambia. Results showed that delayed announcing of results (25.9%), corruption (18.1%), and perpetrators of electoral violence not brought to book (16.8%). ethnicity and regionalism (15.5%) are the leading causes of electoral violence

F. Social Psychological and structural effects of Electoral violence.

Analysis of the results regarding the effects of electoral violence revealed higher social psychological effects of electoral violence among participants (43.9%). This aspect is associated with behaviors like perceptions of regionalism, division of tribal groupings, hatred, lack of freedom of speech, movement and association, stress trauma and loss of self esteem. Political effects of electoral violence (25%) include reduced desire to participate or contest in elections, loss of trust in Zambian politicians, and perceptions of political instability. Economic effects (21.9%), is marred by destruction of buildings and property, reduction of economic activity and unwillingness of investors to invest in the country. Physical effects (9.1%) are characterized by injury and loss of life. (Table II):

TABLE II. EFFECTS OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

EFFECTS OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE	TOT AL	%
Social psychological	72	43.9
Political	41	25.0
Economical	36	21.9

		9
Physical	15	19.1
TOTAL	164	

G. Strategies for preventing electoral violence

Respondents were asked to indicate their views concerning strategies that can be used to prevent electoral violence among youth, electorates and leaders in Zambia. Results showed that youth and electorates need more sensitization and education on electoral violence (50%), advocate for stiff punishment to perpetrators of violence (20.4%), improve transparency and dialogue among leaders (15.9%).

Other measures cited include Leader control on followers appointment of credible electoral commission employees and installation of cameras at polling stations (15.9%).

TABLE III. STRATEGIES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE IN ZAMBIA

STRATEGY TO PREVENT ELECTORAL VIOLENCE.	TOTAL	%
Sensitizing and educating the youth and leaders on the dangers of electoral violence	22	50.0
Introduce stiff punishment to violence perpetrators.	9	20.4
Improve transparency and dialogue.	7	15.9
Other measures	7	15.9
total responses	44	

DISCUSSION

A. Nature and prevalence of electoral violence.

Electoral violence is higher before elections compared to during and after elections. This is because before elections there is an apparent leadership gap as leaders can't make orders. Therefore youth and opposing party members perceive this as an opportunity for other political parties to form government. High arousal and tension among youth and electorates is more likely as youth aspire for top positions or desire to gain political mileage against opposing political parties.

Research findings also suggest that electoral violence among youth and electorates is mainly characterized by assaults and injury, loss of life. Failure by losing leaders to concede defeat can be a source of electoral violence. Some youth and electorates take advantage of the leadership gap and opt to cause violence because of misconceptions over leadership during the election period. This suggests the need for education and sensitization among aspiring candidates regarding accepting the outcome of an election.

B. Causes of electoral violence

The causes of electoral violence are diverse. The current study has revealed that delayed announcing of results (25.9%), corruption (18.1%), failure to bring perpetrators of electoral violence to book (16.8%), ethnicity and regionalism (15.5%) are the leading cause of electoral violence.

Previous study on the subject has classified causes of electoral violence in terms of

structural causes, social, and psychological cause. The current study has revealed that electoral violence mainly originates from delay in announcing the election results, corrupt practices; lack of capacity by the electoral commission of Zambia to punish would be offenders of electoral violence which are linked to structural factors in the electoral process (Fig. 1). This suggests that such factors can contribute to electoral violence in our community.

In Zambia, the Electoral Commission of Zambia has worked tirelessly to improve information dissemination through the media and the use of Information communication systems (ICT) in the electoral process. However much needs to be done by the local authorities to speed up the process of verification and announcing electoral results. Stiff punishment needs to be introduced to deter electoral violence. According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory most behaviour including electoral violence among youth are learned through modeling and observation learning (Bandura, 1977).

C. Youth competence in preventing violence:

Leaders or key informants' opinion over whether youth have knowledge and competence in preventing electoral violence was investigated to elicit other causes of electoral violence. Results showed that 50% of youth lack knowledge and competence in preventing electoral violence because they don't have sufficient knowledge on political affairs; they rely on party leaders to tell them what to do; they are living in poverty and perceive politicians as assurance for employment in this regard, they are used and

incited to do wrong things because of their ignorance.

d. Electoral officer competence in curbing violence:

In another development the scheduled interview with leaders required them to indicate their opinion over whether electoral officers have competence in preventing electoral violence. Results showed that almost all respondents (100%) indicated that the officers were trained and competent to execute their responsibilities but showed the following reservations: "They have knowledge but it is not implemented by them". "If only the electoral code of conduct can be respected, followed and reinforced", "But no serious action is taken to those who cause violence". These responses suggest the need for the electoral commission to work closely with the law enforcement agencies in order to institute punishment to would be offenders of electoral violence.

D. Perceived effects of electoral violence

Social, psychological, political effects and economic effects.

The study required participants to indicate their perceptions regarding the effects of electoral violence among youth and electorates. The results revealed that social psychological effects (43.9%) are the main effects associated with electoral violence. They are characterized by behavior like perceptions of regionalism, division of tribal groupings, hatred, lack of freedom of speech, movement and association, stress trauma and loss of self esteem. Political effects of electoral violence (25%) include reduced desire to participate or contest in elections,

loss of trust in Zambian politicians, and perceptions of political instability. This explains why anarchy in participating in elections is more likely in situations of electoral violence. Economic effects (21.9%), is marred by destruction of buildings and property, reduction of economic activity and unwillingness of investors to invest in the country. Physical effects (9.1%) are characterized by injury and loss of life.

IV. STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

The respondents were asked to indicate their opinion regarding what should be done to prevent electoral violence. Results showed that education and sensitization of youth (37.2%), is among the top priority followed by stiff punishment against the perpetrators of electoral violence (29.4%). The Electoral commission of Zambia (ECZ) should avoid delay in announcing results and seriously engage political parties in dialogue (11.7%) respectively. Political parties should be advised to control their supporters (7.8 %) in order to prevent electoral violence (Table

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Electoral violence is most prevalent before the elections compared to the period during and after elections. This suggests that necessary precautions should be undertaken before elections in order to avoid electoral violence among political players. This observation calls for concerted efforts by authorities governing the electoral process to ensure that preventive measures are taken against electoral violence. The social psychological and structural causes of electoral violence center around delayed announcing of results which poses high anxiety among youth electorates and leaders as they experience stress and anxiety due to delayed processing of election results. This

should be addressed seriously to increase voter's confidence in ECZ. The electoral commission should be mandated to ensure that perpetrators of electoral violence should be subjected to punishments to reduce electoral violence.

Social psychological Effects of electoral violence are varied and mainly include tribal politics, regionalism, lack of freedom of speech, movement and association stress, trauma loss of self esteem and fear to express political views. People are likely to develop apathy toward elections due to unwillingness to participate or contest an election. This could be a recipe for political instability which is likely outcome as regional politics and tribalism take their toll. Reduction of business activity is a possible outcome of electoral violence as indicated in this study. Such situations can be counteracted through free and fair elections in order to gain the confidence of investors and increase the opportunity for poverty reduction through enhanced economic stability and development.

The researcher recommends that studies in this area should consider diverse ethnic views on electoral violence by including participants across regional groupings in the country. The research instruments should be validated and reliability determined on a wider sample of participants. In order to increase the confidence in generalization of the results, future studies on the subject should obtain a wider sample and apply quantitative data analysis method to test the results on electoral violence.

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