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RESEARCH ARTICLE

FORMS OF VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY CHILDREN IN KENYA DURING THE 2007 POST ELECTION VIOLENCE (PEV) AND THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT

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ABSTRACT

Most nations strive to ensure that citizens choose their political leaders in a free and fair way during elections. It is also their responsibility to ensure that citizens are protected and live in a safe and healthy environment afterwards. However in the recent past years, various forms of violence have erupted soon after elections and caused a lot of damage on property and also death of its citizens. The general objective of the study was to establish the implications of the post election violence on the psychosocial adjustment of children between 10-18 years. The concern to carry out the study came after realizing that children's psychological needs were not adequately addressed after 2007 post election violence. Specifically the objectives were to establish the forms of violence on children between 10-18 years went through during the post election violence 2007, determine the psychological effects of post election violence on children, to determine the influence of post election violence on the social adjustment of children and evaluate the mitigation strategies used to alleviate the effects of post election violence on children between 10-18 years. The aim was to come up with intervention measures to assist children affected by post election violence in future. Descriptive survey design was used to establish forms of violence children experienced during the PEV in Uasin Gishu County. Children who were directly not directly affected by the PEV in the same areas were included in the study. Teachers of primary schools in the affected areas, parents and their children between 10-18 years were involved in the study. Questionnaires were used for teachers in primary schools, Interview schedules were administered to parents of children affected by the 2007 PEV and key informants. Psychological tests were administered to children between 10-11 years while children between 12-18 years wrote essays on the 2007 PEV. Purposive sampling and snowballing sampling techniques were used to identify children affected by the 2007 post election violence and their parents, stratified and simple random sampling were used to select two groups children between 10-18 years in classes. Data from the interview and observation schedules was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics were used to analyze data from psychological tests and questionnaires using mean, modes and percentages. Data was presented in form of pie charts and graphical presentations. Discussions and conclusions were made from the findings on each objective. The findings will be shared with counselors, teachers, parents and other stakeholders to help children after election violence. Recommendations have been made to governments and organizations that help persons affected by disasters to improve services in future. It is hoped that from the study findings, mitigation strategies will be put in place to alleviate the effects of post election violence on children.

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INTRODUCTION

According to UN (1996), more than 20 million people have been killed in over 150 armed conflicts in developing countries since World War II most of whom have been women and children. In countries such as Iraq, children continue to suffer psychologically and emotionally due to insecurity, fear of being kidnapped and explosive devices making many of the children suffer from extreme stress (UNICEF, 1996). Worst of all are fears that the relentless bloodshed and the lack of professional help could see a number of these children grow up

either deeply scarred or so habituated into violence that they may keep the pattern going as they enter adulthood (Howard, 2007). Under international law, States bear the primary responsibility for protecting the rights of all individuals within their territory, including the rights to life, security, physical integrity, movement, property. In sub-Saharan Africa, Mozambique alone was reported to have lost 454,000 children between 1981 and 1988 as a result of armed conflict (UNICEF, 1996). In Rwanda, politically instigated violence in 1992 between two rival tribes, the Hutu and Tutsi witnessed one of the most horrific human massacres in recent years. Nearly a million deaths of both adults and children were reported (Veale and Dona, 2002). In Uganda, several years of war lasting for over 10 years, left many families devastated. In Somalia, more than half the deaths of children in some places

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have been caused by opportunistic diseases such as measles for lack of medical services due the war (UNICEF, 1996).

In Kenya, the 2007 post election violence had devastating effects on people of all walks of life. According to the **Waki Report (2008)**, nearly 1,300 people lost their lives with 250,000 people fleeing their homes following destruction of their property and fear of death. It is estimated that due to post-election violence 42,000 houses and many more businesses were destroyed and/or looted. Uasin Gishu in Kenya, was one of the most affected County in the Rift Valley. The area's most affected in the county include; Turbo, Burnt Forest, Moi's Bridge and Eldoret town.

The Constitution of Kenya provides that everybody in Kenya is entitled to security and protection by the law (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). It was estimated that about 100,000 (40-60%) of the displaced and affected were children (UNICEF, 2008). The scale of the violence and destruction indicates the failure of the Kenyan State to protect its citizen's right to life, security and property during these events (UN, 1996). The future of Kenya may be very dark because some of the children we are bringing up experienced and witnessed traumatizing incidences and we do not know how those things are going to affect their lives (IRIN, 2008). One of the greatest challenges following the post-election violence in Kenya is to restore the physical and mental wellbeing of 150,000 displaced children, many of whom have witnessed atrocities and lost contact, in many cases permanently; with their families. Many children also lost their personal belongings alongside their families and missed school (WERK, 2008). Children may still be harbouring a lot of anger, hatred, resentment and frustration. They know some of the people who chased them from their original homes and that the other tribe is the enemy (IRIN, 2008).

Mitigation strategies by Red Cross Kenya were not adequate to assist children adjust appropriately because of inadequate personnel and administrative structures as many cases were not reported (CIPEV, 2008). Others never received medical treatment or counseling because they worried about being traumatized again if they spoke of what had happened to them (CIPEV, 2008). In the Commission's report, the delay by government in responding to the violence when it began, the failure to anticipate it, the admission by officers in the public administration and security forces of being overwhelmed, and their lack of coordination in dealing with the violence, all meant that law and order increasingly broke down, thereby inviting a further spread of violence, including sexual violence (CIPEV, 2008). It is therefore imperative to investigate the effect of 2007 Post Election Violence (PEV) on Kenyan children. In view of this, this study seeks to investigate the 2007 PEV on psycho-social adjustment of children in Kenya and perhaps recommend intervention strategies that may help re-orient and forestall similar scenario in future. The study attempted to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What forms of violence were experienced by children during the 2007 PEV?
2. How did the 2007 Post Election Violence affect children psychologically?

3. What was the effect of 2007 PEV on children's social adjustment
4. How effective were the mitigation strategies used to alleviate the effects of 2007 PEV on children?

Literature review

UNICEF REPORT (1996) indicates that over the last ten years, two million children have been killed in conflict. Over one million have been orphaned, over six million have been seriously injured or permanently disabled and over ten million have been left with serious psychological trauma and extreme stress. For instance young children and adolescents who were exposed to war in Bosnia, Croatia and Cambodia, Lebanon were reported to suffer from PTS disorder (Kinzie, Sack, Argell, Manson and Rath, 1986; Kuterovac-Jagodic, 2003; Macksound, 1992; Laufer and Solomon, 2006; Pat-Horenczyk et al., 2007). Children are often threatened by sudden attacks, shelling, snipers and landmines.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights deployed a Fact-Finding Mission (OHCHR Mission) to the Republic of Kenya to look into the violence and allegations of grave human rights violations following the presidential elections in December 2007. The OHCHR (2008) Mission also analyzed underlying civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights issues and formulated recommendations on possible accountability mechanisms.

The OHCHR (2008) Mission conducted on-site visits to the affected areas and met with a wide range of actors in the Government, among the opposition, and met with victims, human rights defenders as well as the diplomatic community. The Mission, based on its limited investigations, could not substantiate allegations of a steep increase in the number of cases of sexual violence. OHCHR (2008) is nevertheless concerned that some 322 women and girls sought hospital treatment for sexual assaults and rape during this period despite a generalized reluctance to report and the fact that many victims were displaced. While the violations of democratic rights provided the trigger for the bulk of the street violence and human rights violations, a number of underlying causes also contributed to fuelling the outburst. Violations of economic and social rights pre-existed in the recent violence as evidenced in the lack of access to water, food, health, decent housing together with the rate of youth unemployment and the gross inequality reported by civil society organizations (UNHCR, 2008).

Children may walk for days with only limited quantities of water and food. Under such circumstances, children become acutely undernourished and prone to illness, are separated from their parents and families, fall victims of trauma as a result of being exposed to violence, are deprived of education and recreation (UNICEF, 1996). They risk becoming child soldiers and are often the first to die in conflicts. The girls in flight are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation (UNICEF, 1996).

Fischer (2002) highlights some other forms of violence in elections such as "threats, verbal intimidation, hate speech,

disinformation, physical assault, forced 'protection', blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination. **UNDP (2009)** observes that election violence can include assassination of opponents or spontaneous fisticuffs between rival groups of supporters and threats, coercion, and intimidation of opponents, voters or election officials. **Human Rights Council (2009)** indicates that police were responsible for 405 deaths (35.7 per cent of the total number of deaths experienced in the 2007 election violence. In some cases, the police indiscriminately used live ammunition, and over half of the gunshot victims had wounds from the back (**Human Rights Council, 2009**). During the PEV in Kenya, Kenyatta National Hospital experienced an upsurge of sexually assaulted women and children. There was an average of five rape or sodomy cases every week totaling to over 48 cases between January and March 2008 alone out of which 9 were children (**YAK, 2008**). Cases of sexual violence did not only happen during the violence but also in camps especially at night in exchange of food and protection (**KRCS, 2008**). The attackers took advantage of the breakdown of law and social order during the 2007 PEV to attack innocent people (**CLAN, 2008**). Many of the cases were not reported due to factors such as cultural barriers, fear of reprisal, and lack of faith in the criminal justice system. There was lack of resources and personnel devoted to the PEV problem by the government (**YAK, 2008**).

Behavioral theorists argue that behavior whether adaptive or maladaptive is learned, shaped and maintained through stimulant responses. Behaviorists see maladjusted behavior as a result of trauma that occurs as we encounter disturbing experiences within our environment such as the post election violence that occurred in early 2008. From the point of view of the classical conditioning theory, an event like unanticipated ethnic violence will trigger certain responses like fear, uncertainty and hopelessness which with time will cause post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). On the other hand, threats and fear of eviction and attack reinforce traumatic feelings in the victims of the violence as the operant conditioning theory by Skinner would explain (**Parke and Locke, 1999**).

Research methodology

The study was on the 2007 Post Election Violence and psychosocial adjustment of children in Uasin Gishu County – Kenya. Survey research design was used to collect data on forms of violence, psychological tool test on younger children between 10-11 years to get the psychological effects from the 2007 PEV and essays from older children between 12-18 years. Normothetic evaluation design was used to find out the effectiveness and efficiency of mitigation strategies used during the 2007 Post Election Violence. The study was done in Uasin Gishu County in the Rift Valley of Kenya. Children between 10-18 years and their teachers in primary schools around the IDP camps were involved in the study. Parents of children between 10-18 years were included in the study. The forms of violence on children during the 2007 PEV were established. The psychological effects of the 2007 PEV and social adjustment were examined to come up with recommendations to improve services towards children in such events. The adjustment areas addressed in children included; their attendance to school programs, their residential place,

their school performance in general, availability of basic needs, social interactions, their emotional state and perceptions on elections and certain groups of people. The target population included Counselors working in NGO's around Uasin Gishu, Chiefs, DOs and Education Officers in Uasin Gishu area were as key informants. The IDPS at the camps were selected for Focus Group Discussions. Parents of children between 10-18 years and teachers in the primary schools around the camps were involved in the study. Six different tools were used to collect data from different groups of respondents. Questionnaires, interview schedules, psychological tool tests, observation guides, essays and drawings by children on 2007 PEV were used to collect data. The study used interview guides for parents and younger children 10-11 years, questionnaires were used for teachers, psychological tests were used for younger children and older children between 12-18 years wrote essays. 3 FGDs were done and observation guides used to find out the living conditions and facilities in the camps. To get more information on the children affected by the 2007 PEV psychosocial adjustment, The study employed purposive and snowball sampling technique to select children who were affected by the 2007 PEV. Respondents described their current situation and the experiences over time from December 2007- to March 2013 election time. Analysis was done basing on the findings and discussions done according to themes. The psychological tool used in collecting data from children between 10-11 years needed a detailed training of research assistants to empower them on the use of the tool accurately to get data from the children.

To establish the forms of violence experienced by children during the 2007 PEV Cross sectional survey was carried out. The design was used to get data on the forms of violence from various large groups of people including children themselves REF. The forms of violence entailed eviction, physical bodily harm, rape, destruction of property, verbal threats, psychological torture and observing some of the events during the violence. Some children had their parents, siblings and relatives killed. Some witnessed their neighbors and friends killed. Other forms of violence included going without food and water for days, not having proper shelter and not going to school. All these forms of violence had diverse impact on children and adjusting may take different interventions to assist children. Analysis was done using Chi Square to find out the significance of responses from teachers, and descriptive statistical analysis for data from parents, district officers, chiefs and counselors from NGOs. Keys words and interpretations were sort from children's' essays and drawings to analyze their data. The data from FGDs was analyzed and their views on mitigations strategies ranked for efficiency and sufficiency. Views from all the respondents on the adequacy of the assistance offered during the 2007 PEV and recommendations were analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings on objective 1 on the forms of violence children experienced by children during the Post Election Violence (PEV) indicated that majority (95%) of children were affected emotionally and socially as property got destroyed and family

members mimed and killed by gangs and security men. Some (10%) of children were either raped or witnessed their relatives and parents raped as well. Physical harm was inflicted on (50%) children in addition to verbal abuse by the attackers. This is in line with what **UNICEF (1996)** cited as effects of conflict on children, which indicates that children affected by armed conflict may be injured or killed, uprooted from their homes and communities to become IDP or refugees and orphaned. 55% (54) teachers indicated that, children were raped during the PEV 2007 in Uasin Gishu County while 45% (42) teachers disagreed (Table 1). Data from the children indicated that some children were raped during the 2007 PEV. In some of their responses children reported having been raped by the attackers who included Mungiki groups and security officers (Table 2). Data from district officers, parents and FGDs also indicated that their children were raped during the 2007 PEV. Many of rape cases were not reported since services in public institutions were paralyzed including some police stations (**CIPEV, 2008**). Transport was also paralyzed in many places and many people could not travel to seek medical assistance. There were roadblocks on major roads paralyzing transport. Other forms of violence as cited by teachers are indicated in Table 1. They cited lack of food, lack of proper shelter and exposure to unhygienic conditions.

Table 1. Teachers responses on other forms of violence experienced by children during the 2007 PEV

Form of violence	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of food	76	80.0
Children lack proper shelter	10	10.0
Exposure to unhygienic conditions	10	10.0
Total	96	100.0

Source: Field Data 2013

Children expressed views on how they were affected during the 2007 PEV and their comments are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Responses from children on how they were affected during the 2007 PEV in Uasin Gishu

How children were affected	No of responses	%
Chased from home	89	90%
Children lost friends	85	87%
They missed school for days	80	82%
Their property destroyed	75	76%
They were traumatized seeing dead bodies	71	72%
They witnessed family members killed	60	61%
Children got lost	55	56%
They went without food	50	51%
They were beaten by attackers	45	46%
Children verbally abused	36	37%
Witnessed shooting of people in the street	35	36%
Witnessed neighbours killed	30	31%
Witnessed family members being raped	10	11%
Children were raped	5	6%

Children affected have developed fear towards certain tribes and security men. The implication of this attitude if not addressed would mean that in the event of future violence such persons may not seek help from security personnel for lack of trust and therefore either take the law in their hands.

Table 3. Responses from parents of young children on forms of violence on children during the 2007 PEV in Uasin Gishu County

Forms of violence on children	%
Property destroyed	98%
Displaced from previous homes	95%
Affected emotionally and socially	95%
Witnessed relatives killed	60%
Went without food	60%
Verbally abused	50%
Physically harmed	50%
Witnessed family members killed	40%
Witnessed relatives and parents raped	10%

Source: Field Data 2013

They may not also value the services of security personnel in future. 75 % of children were fearful about the March 4th 2013 elections and in their essays they prayed that the elections would be free and fair and not be rigged again. They hoped that the new body IEBC would ensure a peaceful election. They blamed the previous ECK for rigging and bringing chaos in the country after the 2007 elections. Some (60%) of children went for days without food and water as they ran away and hid from the attackers.

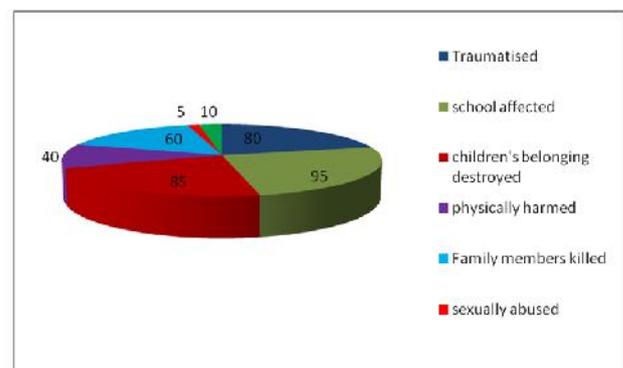


Figure 1. Effects of 2007 PEV on children by parents

UNICEF (1996) indicates that when children are deprived of food, medical assistance and education, this may have a severe and lasting impact on their adjustment. This trauma brings anxieties and sad memories about future elections. (85%) of children missed school for over two months and some were separated from their families. These explains why (70%) of

children to date have not recovered in their academic performance and perform below average owing to the fact that some had to be transferred from their previous schools and took long to settle and adjust to the new schools. 70% of children living in IDP camps lacked basic requirements for school and this affected their participation in school activities. **UNICEF (1996)** observed that during a conflict children may be deprived of their education, basic needs and recreation. In addition relief for children tends to be the last priority in war resulting in insufficient or no protection for minors. By the time of the study between September 2012 and February 2013 children were still living in deplorable conditions in the IDP camps and lacked basic needs. Many tents were in poor states as they were torn, covered with polythene papers and sticks, were dark and damp and with no ventilation. They were not conducive for studying in the evening as lighting was poor and they were congested.

Half (50%) of children looked malnourished as teachers observed and this was due to lack of food as noted from the FGDs. The IDPs indicated that they no longer receive food rations as before and about 55% went without food for some days. These situations affected children in both growth and mental development and hence led to the poor academic performance. These could be affecting children psychologically as the study revealed that 70% of children were dull most of the time, 60% looked disturbed, 60 % looked sad and depressed, and 70 % had temper tantrums and were angry most of the time. This also explains why children have formed attitudes towards those who forced them to live in the current conditions they are living in. 70 % expressed hatred towards their attackers during the 2007 Post Election Violence. About 50 children who were not directly affected by the Post Election Violence also showed anxieties towards the next elections of 4th March 2013. In their essays on Post election violence 30% prayed for peace in the next election, 40% hoped that the ICC would charge the offenders during 2007/2008 post election violence, 40% hated those tribes and gangs who attacked innocent people after the elections. About 10% were happy with the change of the election body and blamed the previous one for causing the Post Election violence by rigging.

Findings on objective 4 to evaluate mitigation measures on persons affected by post election violence indicated that they were not adequate. 90% of the parents indicated that they did not receive adequate assistance. Although the government provided tents for shelter, and food rations during the violence and for sometime after the violence, this was not adequate as indicated by families still living in the IDP camps. Out of the 14 District Officers and chiefs 10 indicated the assistance was not adequate because of lack of funds, inadequate personnel and poor infrastructure. About 80% of counselors from Kenya Red Cross and other NGOs had some counseling sessions with persons affected by the post election violence but this was not adequate because there were no proper administration structures in place, there was lack of funds and personnel. The centers established were not well known to those who needed counseling assistance and for some it was difficult and dangerous travelling to the centers during the violence.

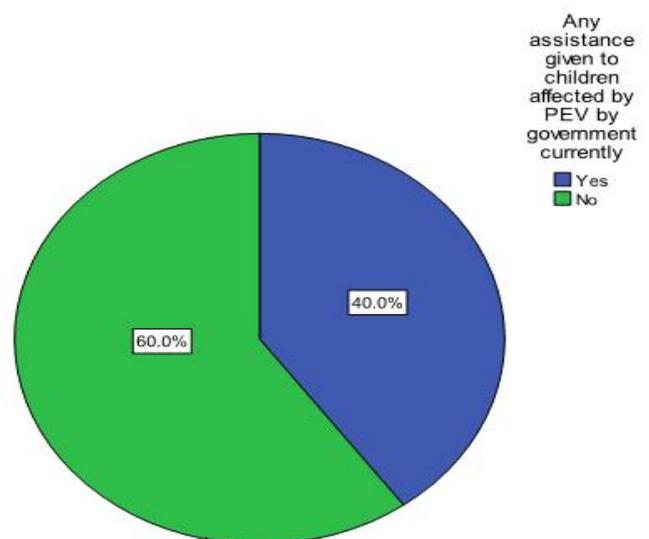
The counseling centers could not therefore serve the victims effectively as intended. For a counseling therapy to be effective it takes more than one session and sometimes goes for several months. This was not so during and after the 2007 post election violence. **IRIN (2008)** observes that one of the greatest challenges following the 2007 PEV was to restore the physical and mental wellbeing of the displaced children. The future of the affected children may be dark as they grow up harboring things they saw that may not have been addressed. From the FGD children have come up with coping strategies to deal with their situation after the 2007 PEV.

Table 4. FGD responses on how children and families are coping with their situation after the 2007 PEV

Coping mechanisms	
-	They work hard on the farms to make a living
-	They have adjusted to sit on the floor; sleep on the floor
-	They are now used to bending as they enter the tent and while inside
-	Their children go to nearby schools for both primary and secondary education.
-	Children play together with other children at the camp
-	Have adjusted to live and budget on very little money
-	Have adjusted to be able to share the little space in the tent
-	They have cut down their food intake to one meal a day
-	Their privacy has been affected since they share the small space at the tent
-	We pray together and hope one day we shall be resettled
-	We have now acquired a new family of IDPs at the camp

Source: Field Data 2013

When children were asked whether they received assistance after the 2007 PEV 40% said they did while 60% said they did not receive any assistance (Figure 2)



Source: Field Data 2013

Figure 2. Responses on whether children affected by 2007 PEV receive assistance from government in Uasin Gishu County

Conclusion

From the research it can be concluded that children were psychologically affected by the post election violence emotionally and socially. They have developed hatred for certain tribes and fear security men. They feel bitter against their attackers and hope that justice will be done. Many children are not happy with the current state they are living in. Children have not adjusted adequately five years after the post election violence of 2007 to date. They still have sad memories, are fearful and anxious about their future and lack basic needs. The mitigation measures used during the post election violence were not adequate. The government lacked adequate personnel and funds to offer adequate support to children affected by the PEV. Therapeutic counseling sessions should have taken more time to ensure children were healed completely. Guidance and counselling help students to develop coping skills in the face of social and psychological problems (Mutie and Ndambuki, 1999). Guidance and counselling programmes in the areas affected by the post election violence needed trauma counselling to cope with the problems they encountered.

Recommendation

- Children's rights should be taken into account during and after any conflict to ensure that they are protected from any forms of violence.
- Education on consequences of violence and prevention be done in the community. Centers should be set up at church grounds and other safe places to give therapy to children affected during and after violence to help them heal from psychological effects.
- The government should set aside funds to cater for the basic needs of victims of conflict.
- There should be civil education to all to sensitize the public on the effects of war on children to help prevent the consequences of war on children.

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