



THE ROLE OF OPINION POLLING ON THE OCCURRENCE OF ELECTION VIOLENCE IN KENYA

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Abstract

One of the modern inventions in the democratic space is the practice of opinion polling. Opinion polling gained popularity in Kenya in the dawn of Kibaki regime which widened the democratic space in the society. It has been in use since introduction in 2002, studying the voting behaviour of different groups, the voting decision-making process, the impact of campaigns, and other phenomena. However, it has been widely speculated that opinion polling might have been the trigger for election violence. Post-election violence experienced in 2007 in Kenya has been widely linked to opinion polling. However, though opinion polling has been widely studied, no evidence of studies showing the link of polls to occurrence of election violence. This study sought to establish the influence of opinion polling on election violence in selected counties in Kenya. The study is guided by liberal, two step, and media framing theories. The study utilized descriptive research design on population of media practitioners, State officers, Polling Firms, government, and Social Groups in Nakuru, Kwale, Nairobi and Kisumu Counties, from whom a study sample of 317 (251 respondents; 66 Interviewees) respondents was acquired. A semi-structured questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect data from the study sample which was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found existence of manipulations of the studies and polling firms are compromised while the media is ready and willing to cash in on the polls. It was also found that ethnic based polling; statistical disparities in polling and commentaries on polls influence occurrence of election violence. The study concludes that election violence occurrence is significantly influenced by opinion polling. The study recommends the state to impose laws that control the practice and media, sensitize citizens on opinion polling, and create a code of conduct.

Keywords: *Opinion Polling; Polls Manipulation; Media Commentaries; Errors of Polling; Election Violence; Polling Biasness*

INTRODUCTION

Opinion polls carried out by market research agencies have been a familiar feature of the post-war political scene. While they represent a source of income in themselves, they have also been an opportunity for agencies to increase potential commercial clients' awareness and to construct databases for corporate exploitation. For those whose estimates are closest to actual election results, it appears that there are commercial gains (Gakero, 2008). Opinion polls can exercise particular influence on the outcome of elections and can also be quite distorting (Ndeti, Wambua & Mogambi, 2014). McQuail (2005) observed that publishing opinion polls or stating editorially what the public view is on a given topic adds an element of potential influence.

In Kenya the history of political opinion polling is rather brief and became controversial in the run-up to the 2007 elections. The year 2002 marked a great change in the Kenyan political atmosphere, with the change from an intolerant regime to a more democratic government. According to Ajulu (2002), the intolerance of the earlier regime was the cause of there being no elections based opinion polling in earlier elections in Kenya where even laws and regulations restricted the publication of electoral opinion polls (i.e- Some as studied in the Article 19 Law Programme, 2003). The need for democratic expression was the platform used by the market research firms to enter into opinion polling (Ochieng 2007). The first widely acknowledged political opinion polls emerged in the 2002 general elections, which rightly predicted the victory of Mwai Kibaki, the then National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) presidential candidate by a margin of 65%. The actual figure turned out to be not far off at 62.21%. Steadman Group established its presence in opinion polling in the intervening period, more notably during the 2005 referendum on constitution review. Since that time the pollster affirmed its presence by a quarterly poll

gauging the popularity of political players, their parties and opinion on issues that citizens felt needed to be addressed urgently (Gakero, 2008).

According to Gakero (2008), opinion polls in the run-up to the 2007 were conducted extensively in the three months to elections and the media hype almost literally latched on any opinion poll. Starting late September 2007, the Steadman Group began a fortnightly poll that ran up to about 11 days to elections. In the three months to elections the Steadman poll was almost always reported on the front pages of the two main dailies in Kenya, either as the lead story or less often as the second story. These polls created a big suspense and placed the country on prone edges of violence. The polls offered anticipated fears, hatred and mistrust, where they offered the possible winners heightening the expectations of some and lowering those whose results were not favoured. If the polled winners lose the general elections, violence is a key end result due to the problem of those with heightened emotions disputing the outcomes (Ajulu, 2002; Andre, n.d; Atkin and Gaudino, 2004; Barry, 2014; Bishop, 2005; Mbugua, 2007; Ochieng 2007).

Various studies done on opinion polling have found a probable link between the occurrence of election violence and opinion polling. Studies done by Wimmer (2002); Wilkinson (2004); Wei et al., (2014); Waki (2008); Tom (2015); Sunshine (2011); Sarah (2008); Neil and David (2014); Lewis (2001); Hoeffler (2012); Bishop (2005); Atkin and Gaudino (2004); and Alpert (2001) have offered mixed outcomes on the existence of this link. One such study was done by Hafner-Burton, Hyde and Jablonski (2012) who found that "some incumbents are able to gauge their popularity prior to an election through public opinion polls, and the most straightforward electoral threat to the incumbent is revealed by reliable public opinion polls that indicate that the incumbent is unpopular. If reliable polls indicate that the incumbent is likely to

lose the election, the incumbent is more likely to use election violence in an effort to reduce political competition; and if reliable polls indicate that incumbent is popular, violent manipulation tactics are unnecessary". However, in all these studies, none has substantially identified this link between opinion polling and the occurrence of election violence, more so in Kenya. This study therefore sought to interrogate the relationship between opinion polling and election violence and more so the extent to which it contributed to post-election violence in selected counties in Kenya.

Objective: The objective of this study was to establish the influence of opinion polling on election violence in selected counties in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review

In most developing countries, the incumbent government in most of the cases must anticipate whether the outcome of the election is likely to be favourable to her or her party. If she believes that she is popular enough to win the election outright (or to win by a large enough margin), election violence, one potential tactic in the "menu of manipulation," is unnecessary, risky, and even counterproductive (Schedler, 2002a). However, if she cannot be certain of a decisive victory, or if she believes that the election outcome is likely to be unfavourable, she may resort to election violence in an effort to reduce her political competition (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

Incumbents are most threatened by elections when they might lose, but judging when they might lose is difficult, particularly in countries in which the flow of information is restricted and expression is limited. Some incumbents are able to gauge their popularity prior to an election through public opinion polls, and the most straightforward electoral threat to the

incumbent is revealed by reliable public opinion polls that indicate that the incumbent is unpopular. If reliable polls indicate that the incumbent is likely to lose the election, she will be more likely to use election violence in an effort to reduce her political competition; if reliable polls indicate that she is popular, violent manipulation tactics are unnecessary (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2003).

A lack of information about the incumbent's popularity can also signal a threat. If public opinion polls are not available or polls are known to be grossly inaccurate, the incumbent may have difficulty estimating her actual popularity and her chances of a favourable election outcome will be uncertain. We argue that if reliable polls prior to the election are not available, the incumbent will also be more likely to resort to election violence. Put another way, both uncertainty about her popularity and reliable proof of her unpopularity prior to an election can motivate a worried incumbent to use election violence as a strategy to stay in power (Bunce and Wolchik, 2010).

Of course, polls are not the incumbent's only source of information about her popularity, and public statements about the election can also signal the incumbent's confidence of victory. The incumbent's and opposition candidates' own statements about their probability of victory provide clues about whether the incumbent appears to be concerned about an unfavourable election outcome. In general, a leader who is confident of victory has little reason to use election violence—gauging the incumbent's level of confidence is thus another way to gauge threat to the incumbent and predict the likelihood that she will use violence (Tucker, 2007).

Reporting of public opinion poll results was prominent in coverage of the Kenyan election campaign. The Kenyan public, which had only experienced three previous presidential elections in the era of multi-party democracy, had its pulse taken by a variety of polling operations: The Steadman

Group, Infotrak Harris, Strategic PR, and Consumer Insight, as well as a range of party-affiliated pollsters (BBC, 2008). Officially all the political players would show contempt for opinion polls. But as the results appeared, everybody started getting glued to them. As the election was going to the wire, the country stopped every Friday to see what the polls would be. This was a key part of election fever (Kegoro, 2008). Questions arose, however, about the accuracy of some Kenyan polling. The former information officer of a provincial government, described survey practices that were hardly scientific, and included polling firms paying people to forge hundreds of poll responses (Osborn, 2008).

A similar kind of reporting of opinion polls that could have potentially set the stage for hardening of feelings if the elections did not go the way of a candidate, given how opinion polls are interpreted in Kenya, was carried in the headline of the Standard December 21, 2007. It read, Dec 27 poll results: what Kenyans want. Below it, were photos of the three leading presidential candidates addressing rallies. On each photo was a tag indicating poll 21 results by infotrak Harris and Strategic Public Relations Research for Kibaki as 37% and 39% respectively, 45% and 43% respectively for Raila, and 16% and 15% for Kalonzo Musyoka. The certainty of the headline here coupled with the various ongoing claims of plans of rigging by Kibaki's group and casting aspersions on Steadman, the other major opinion pollster at the time, which had reported a close election, by the same newspaper (Standard November 11, 2007:4 had carried a story titled: Kibaki men's link with Steadman now disclosed), could have certainly raised political temperatures that would have easily spilled over into violence if the presidential election was adjudged any other way.

Elections tend to be events that citizens look forward to most of the time. Some look forward to this time to have change, or to have politicians running to support

their communities with free gifts, or change of regime (Leo, 2004: 93). Emotions are often high as divergent views are exchanged during this period. Verbal exchanges and competitions are also common with rival parties promising to do better than each other. For these reasons clarity of mind and fairness must be upheld by the media, government officials/politicians and the voters (Leo, 2004: 86, 91, and 97). The media therefore informs the public of illegal activities and corruption, violation of human rights and rules of the election process. In the event the media works for the politicians, then they cannot expose these mishaps. The media therefore must be familiar with election process, and be able to anticipate any possible mishaps as well as mitigate them by exposing these activities to public criticism.

The media is a key molder of public opinion (Traugott, 2009). This occurs when journalists are trying to report on public affairs. In opinion polling, for instance, journalists use the surveys to make news about public opinion. By publishing political opinion polls and interpreting the findings, the media may simultaneously influence citizens' attitudes on political matters and put pressure on political actors to deal with public policy to fulfill the expectations of citizens (Hotlz-Bacha, 2012). For the public, opinion polls are a way of learning the truth about politicians in order to remove myths that might otherwise mislead public discourse. In addition, the media discussion of polls in elections and constitutional referenda can be positive because the public enjoys the competitive aspect of who is ahead of whom (Genovese and Straub, 2004). Consequently, public opinion polls stimulate and intensify their interest in such democratic processes.

Political communication studies show that journalists are not always trained in interpreting public opinion poll results. For instance, in a study done on newspaper coverage of opinion polls in Hong Kong after the city handover to China from the United

Kingdom in 1997, findings suggest that while opinion polls indicated that the Chinese public favoured a change of government, the media was more interested in reporting about the popularity rating of different political candidates (Lee, 2006b). This suggests that uneducated media audiences may be misled into believing that such results are factual. It is against this context that global news media and their audiences are so fascinated with public opinion polls, especially during election campaigns. McCombs (2004) argues that the main sources of the public's information are the mass media and political elites whose views are reported in them. But are they able to critique the information that they receive? Research suggests that citizens are very poorly informed about public affairs in general (Bishop, 2004). Even if they are, people do not have the time to engage in informed debate, but instead rely on their perceptions.

The potential of public opinion polls to strengthen the democratic process cannot be achieved without the co-operation of the news media. The topics that the mass media choose to cover in forums like the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal that largely set the mirror-like agenda for the questions pollsters ask (Gollin, 2006). Public opinion polling organizations frequently encourage respondents to answer questions by presuming they are familiar with the topic. For instance "As you may know..." "As you may have heard...", implying that they lead respondents to answer queries in a way that they know. Thereafter, newspapers became the Gallup opinion polls. In another instance, though Martin Luis Guzman pioneered the use of public opinion polls more than fifty years ago in Mexico, polling became common practice only in 1988 through the publicity generated by the country's newspapers when trying to predict the outcome of the presidential election (Herbst, 2005).

Theoretical Review

The Spiral of Silence Theory: The spiral of silence is a mass communication theory introduced by Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann (1974) - a German public opinion expert, to describe the process of public opinion formation. The theory explains the growth and spread of public opinion. It is a mass communication theory directed towards understanding public opinion which is more apparent within the election atmosphere. Noelle-Neumann defines the "spiral of silence" as the process an individual experiences when "he may find that the views he holds are losing ground; the more this appears to be so, the more uncertain he will become of himself, and the less he will be inclined to express his opinion" (p. 44). Shelly (2009) posits that the term spiral of silence refers to the increasing pressure people feel to conceal their views when they think they are in the minority.

The theory posits that the media accelerates the spiral, though so as to grasp the role of the media in the process; one must understand the people's extraordinary sensitivity to the dynamic standard of what society tolerates. According to Shelly (2009), how an individual views his social environment is strongly influenced by the media. If the individual sees the more prevalent opinion (not his own), more and more in his social environment, he becomes less inclined to voice his own opinion publicly. The media influence is exacerbated by the lack of self-certainty fueled by how an individual perceives his social environment. Noelle-Neumann views this as the "quasi-statistical picture of the distribution of opinions." She postulates that, "the tendency of the one to speak up and the other to be silent starts off a spiraling process which increasingly establishes one's opinion as the prevailing one" (p. 44). Thereby, public opinion is identified, by the silenced individual as the opinion that is generally acceptable by the public and can be voiced openly with no fear. Therefore, given the fact that the media has a role within the spiral, they can significantly influence the formation of public opinions.

McQuail (2005) argues that in avoiding isolation on important public issues (like candidate or political party support), many people are guided by what they think to be dominant or declining opinions in their environment. Therefore, they choose to hide their views when they feel they are in minority and are eager to reveal them if they think they are dominant. This results in a situation where those views perceived to be dominant advance even more ground and the alternate views retreat still further. Therefore, this theory is pertinent to the current study in that it clarifies how electorates acquire their voting inclinations when barraged with the electoral opinion messages and if the electoral opinions are wrongful, it might inform how that is a root cause of political violence.

Liberal Theory: Liberalism is a theory of reforms, for it has stood for reforms in economic, social and political fields. It is a theory of liberty, individual liberty, and individual autonomy, for it has argued in favor of the development of human personality. It is a theory of democracy, for it has favored constitutional government, government based on the consent of the people, rule of law, decentralization, free and fair elections. We can highlight three aspects of liberalism which clearly help us in understanding its meanings: in social sphere, liberalism stands for secularism and a society that opposes, all kinds of social discrimination; in economic sphere, it favors a capitalistic economy, individual ownership of the means of production and maximum profit-earning motive and in political sphere, it stands for a democratic polity, individual rights and liberties, responsive and responsible government, free and impartial judiciary and the like.

This theory is used to highlight the freedom attached to voting rights of the electorates in Kenya. The theory is used to understand the voting process and freedom to vote from any part of the Kenya by any eligible voter. The freedom gives every voter the right to vote to whoever pleases her or him without

intimidation. It explains how under certain circumstances election polls do affect voting behavior. They can provide a kind of interpretative assistance which helps undecided voters make up their mind. But the media are full of such interpretative aids, which are usually disguised and exert a subtle influence, whether in the form of journalist's speculation, politicians show victory, or the selective choice of photos and quotes. Among these judgmental sources, election polls are a relatively neutral and rational interpretative aid. The study seeks to establish the relationship between opinion polling and post-election violence in Kenya. The independent variables of this study will be ethnicity, accuracy and biasness, commentaries influence and mode of reporting of the polls by the newspapers. The dependent variable will be post-election violence. Intervening variables will be polling firms, media houses, politicians, state officers and civil society groups.

Conflict Theory: The several social theories that emphasize social conflict have roots in the ideas of Karl Marx (1818-1883), the great German theorist and political activist. The Marxist, conflict approach emphasizes a materialist interpretation of history, a dialectical method of analysis, a critical stance toward existing social arrangements, and a political program of revolution or, at least, reform. The materialist view of history starts from the premise that the most important determinant of social life is the work people are doing, especially work that results in provision of the basic necessities of life, food, clothing and shelter. Marx thought that the way the work is socially organized and the technology used in production will have a strong impact on every other aspect of society. He maintained that everything of value in society results from human labour. Thus, Marx saw working men and women as engaged in making society, in creating the conditions for their own existence. Marx summarized the key elements of this materialist view of history as follows: In the social

production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production.

The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness (Marx 1971). In recent years Marxist theory has taken a great variety of forms, notably the world-systems theory proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1980) and the comparative theory of revolutions put forward by Theda Skocpol (1980). Marxist ideas have also served as a starting point for many of the modern feminist theorists. Despite these applications, Marxism of any variety is still a minority position among American sociologists.

Research methodology

This study focused on establishing the influence of opinion polling on post-election violence in Kenya where the positivism philosophical foundation and a descriptive research design were adopted. The researcher focused on the four main counties which were most affected by post-election violence and most strategically positioned geographically to ensure representation of the whole country i.e. Nairobi, Nakuru, Kwale and Kisumu counties. The study targeted mainly the senior staff of polling firms, media houses, state officers, civil society groups and the politicians making up a population size of 1256 from which a sample of 317 respondents was

acquired by use of the formula given by Sekaran (2006) as $n = Z^2 P (1-P) / d^2$. The sample was acquired through stratified random sampling method. The adopted descriptive research design assisted to describe and define the subject of the study through the collection of data and tabulation of the frequencies on research variables and their interaction. The study used a semi structured questionnaire to collect primary data whereas interview was conducted to get in-depth data. A pilot study was done using the questionnaires through chosen respondents from the four counties to test for the validity and reliability of the questionnaires. Lastly the data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and was presented by use of tables, bar charts, graphs and pie charts, considering the ethics and the scope of the study.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study realized requisite response from targeted respondents with ample representation in terms of location (Nairobi county 36%; Nakuru county 25%; Kisumu county 21%; Kwale 19%), gender (male 66%; female 34%), age, and education, leading to the views that the respondents were able to give valid information on polls and post-election violence, since they could fully understand the questions posed. Thus, information collected from respondents can be considered informed and relevant to the research objective.

Influence of Opinion Polling on Election Violence in Kenya

The study found that most of the respondents (60%) agreed that opinion polling contributed to post-election violence in 2007 while only 40% disagreed. This indicates that majority of people believe that the post-election violence that was witnessed in 2007 was in a way influenced by opinion polls that were conducted before the elections as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Influence of opinion polling on occurrence of election violence

opinion polling and election violence		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	138	60.3
	No	91	39.7
Total		229	100.0

Source: Researcher 2016

The study found that most of the respondents blamed opinion polls for the post-election violence in that, the announced results were contrary to what the opinion polls had been showing which fueled tensions and the stand point that Raila won the election. The opinion polls results also rose political temperatures and captured the minds of voters towards a given outcome of the election hence triggering the violence. The opinion polls moreover, portrayed a particular political party to be popular but when the contrary happened, violence erupted. On the other hand, a significant contingent of some of the respondents disagreed that the 2007 post-election violence was influenced by opinion polls (40%). According to them, the violence was caused by incitement by politicians who had some expectations of winning and lost the battle. In addition, the study found that some blamed politicians for pre-planning the election violence before the election was conducted. The electoral commission of Kenya (ECK) was also blamed for announcing false results and also rigging the elections to favor a particular candidate. Some respondents blamed opposition for not accepting defeat which led to their supporters causing mayhem and unrest.

When the study enquired how opinion polls contributed to post-election violence, the study found that most of the respondents claim that “all the polls before election showed one candidate ahead of the other hence was perplexing when eventually the trailing candidate won”, which “fueled anger among the people to refuse to accept the outcome”. A key informant explained that when the opinion polls provide the popularity statistics, this at times can even bring about laxity of parts of the politician

support group which can directly lead to issues observed earlier. The failure to accept election results has been one of the worst reasons for starting a war in many African countries occurring for the first time in Kenya in 2007 PEV. Despite these findings, the Waki commission which investigated the 2007/8 post-election violence in Kenya does not mention the opinion polls anywhere in their report but rather considers direct violence perpetrators. This confirms how hard it is to justify a case against a secondary perpetrator since the polling institutions only fueled tensions by doing what they are legally allowed to do hence there were no grounds that the Waki Commission or any other investigative body could directly link them to the violence experienced. However, the media was widely mentioned as the tool that was applied in inciting people to action, with the outcomes of opinion polls being a key area the media dwelt in.

As presented in Table 2, a look at factors that are influenced by electoral polls that lead to elections violence indicates that ethnicity is one of the most influenced. It was observed that voters liked opinion polls which favored their tribal candidate (Mean 4.20), voters hated and dismissed polls which trailed their tribal candidates (Mean 3.77), polls are influenced by tribalism (Mean 3.86) and polls have been observed to create tribal segregation (Mean 3.63). Wolf (2009) confirms the deep entrenched ethnic loyalty in Kenyan politics where he claims that “the widespread perception, reflecting a history of the both blatant and subtle use of state and ‘shadow-state’ power, that even the most established professionals in Kenya are sometimes unable to resist

the pressures of ethnic loyalty or the lure of financial gain, let alone to ignore direct threats. In the context of such a highly polarized political contest, therefore,

such assumptions are bound to affect the pollsters' credibility no matter what results they produced".

Table 2: Polls influence on Ethnicity and Election Violence

Ethnicity	n	Mean	Std. Dev
Voters liking polls which favoured their tribal candidate	226	4.20	1.14
Voters hated and dismissed polls which trailed their tribal candidates	224	3.77	1.20
Polls are influenced by tribalism	222	3.86	1.16
Polls have been observed to create tribal segregation	222	3.63	1.20

Source: Researcher 2016

Opinion polls have been a feature of Kenya politics since 1997 when Strategic Research conducted the first pre-election polls (Kiai, 2007). According to Handa (2007), then as now, criticisms and praises were directed at the poll firms depending on which side of the political divide the polls seemed to favour. No qualms were raised on the manner of reportage by media pundits. Issues have been raised by politicians and academicians alike covering sometimes substantive scientific matters but also trivialities such as the ethnic or racial background of the pollsters (Mutua, 2007).

A look at the statistical disparities of the polls influence on election violence are as presented in Table 3 and shows that according to the respondents' opinion, statistical disparities of the opinion polls (differences between the highest and the lowest ratings - Mean 3.26; the inconsistencies of the polls – Mean 3.47; and biased statistical measures and sampling – Mean 3.70) contributed to the PEV which were witnessed in Kenya in the recent past.

Table 3: Statistical disparities of the polls influence election violence

Statistical disparities of the polls	n	Mean	Std. Dev
Differences between the highest and the lowest ratings	224	3.26	1.15
The inconsistencies of the polls	204	3.47	1.12
Biased statistical measures and sampling	204	3.70	1.22

Source: Researcher 2016

The Bill on Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls, (2011); observes that lack of scientific threshold of the local survey influences the electoral opinion polls in Kenya. Additionally, there is argument that rich politicians and businesspeople have used opinion polls for a long time to manipulate electoral opinion poll results to suit themselves and their candidates, an indication that if the polls are influenced by individuals then the results are not transparent hence they don't reflect the will of the people. The Kriegler Commission, (2008) that was established to determine the main causes of the 2007/8 post-election violence pointed out that electoral opinion

poll results contributed to the violence. This gave room for esteemed individuals to point out biasness, lack of objectivity and manipulation in electoral opinion polling, all which can be observed in this study.

As presented in Table 4, an overall observation on the polling on majimboism indicates that, the polls were influenced by majimbo talk (Mean 3.45), majimboism polling debate sparked heated debate and tension (Mean 3.57), and polling on majimboism was linked to land eviction which bore hate between communities (Mean 3.81). According to most of the respondents,

polling on majimboism contributed to post-election violence in Kenya in 2007 although a few of the respondents disagreed.

Table 4: The polling on majimboism and election violence

The polling on majimboism	n	Mean	Std. Dev
The polls were influenced by majimbo talk	217	3.45	1.30
Majimboism polling debate sparked heated debate and tension	220	3.57	1.17
Polling on majimboism was linked to land eviction which bore hate between communities.	222	3.81	1.05

Source: Researcher 2016

A provincial commissioner is cited in the Waki report to claim *“In the way it was being put was that Majimbo would ensure that local people would benefit from the resources accrued from local enterprises, i.e the revenue generated in Coast province would be for the benefit of Coastals. I think this is how they were looking at Majimbo. That key positions, revenue accrued from tourism, from the ports, would be- will remain here at the Coast and benefit the Coastal people.”* It is clear that there was great misinformation on the part of the Kenyan citizens on the meaning of majimbo form of governance which exacerbated the already building tension. Majimboism provides a brilliant example of an ethnically-loaded campaign issue:

The study looked at commentaries as factors influencing polls impact on election violence where it was found that there is: inaccurate presentation of polls results by the media houses (Mean 3.65), media bias on opinion polling results (Mean 3.63), and political influence on the polls commentaries (Mean 3.72), as presented in Table 5. The study therefore confirms that generally, commentary influence on polls contributed to PEV in Kenya in 2007 as per the study findings. This is clearly indicated by the high number of the respondents who expressed their approval although a few of them disapproved and others were neutral.

Table 5: Commentary influence on polls and election violence

Commentary influence on polls	n	Mean	Std. Dev
The inaccurate presentation of polls results by the media houses	216	3.65	1.25
Media bias on opinion polling results	220	3.63	1.09
Political influence on the polls commentaries	222	3.72	1.11

Source: Researcher 2016

It’s the role of the media to publicize the poll results. The media coverage and outreach make it impossible for key political actors to ignore these poll results, thus ensuring that they become central subjects of the campaign. This prominence (and general acceptance) means that such polls remain a fixture in Kenyan public life, warranting an assessment of their potential role in future elections as well as in the country’s evolving political culture (Wolf 2009). The media plays a very key role in the political direction of

a country, and the Kenyan media has been very vocal. When giving his statement during the Waki Commission, Dr. Ndemo – the then Communication Principal Secretary observed that some media took advantage of absence of regulatory and legislative framework and began to “operate freely and sometimes recklessly and irresponsibly” including using individuals who were not trained journalists, who were partisan, and sometimes were politically biased.

The study looked at media influence on the opinion polls impact on election violence where it was found that there was bias in reporting of the polls (Mean 3.50), imbalanced reporting of the polls (Mean 3.53), and presentation of unverified political influence on

the polls (Mean 3.46), as presented in Table 6. This confirms that media influence contributed towards PEV in Kenya during and after the 2007 general election.

Table 6: Media influence on polls contributions to election violence

Media influence	n	Mean	Std. Dev
Bias in reporting of the polls	220	3.50	1.52
Imbalanced reporting of the polls	219	3.53	1.11
Presentation of unverified political influence on the polls.	217	3.46	1.12

Media are the first order consumers of the opinion poll outputs which they use to form public opinion. When public opinion is embodied in media accounts, it acquires certain independence and this becomes an objective “social factor” that has to be taken into account by political and other actors. Therefore, opinion polls are seen as tools providing significant information that may cue undecided voters to formulate vote preferences. This is particularly true of polls and projections commissioned or conducted by a biased source (Ndeti, Wambua and Mogambi 2014). Poll results featured as key news items and spawned a new type of interactive programming on radio, television and on electronic media. Without any doubt, the media in Kenya were instrumental in illuminating the path for opinion polls, supporting the regular practice of opinion polling and providing the platforms for the dissemination of poll results. The debate is still contentious as to why many seem to believe that unbalanced or biased reporting by media will directly determine who wins or loses the elections. Through amalgamations and conglomerations, media entities have been accused of fostering more than ever corporate interest, which supersedes governmental or social responsibilities. That being said, there is no gainsaying in the fact that opinion polling can be manipulated and misused to give credence to unpopular programs and or to legitimize policies that do not have public support (Kovach & Rosentiel, 2001). Since its inception, public

opinion polls have always elicited great debates among scholars and piqued media pundits hence is a very fertile ground for manipulation and biasness by politicians. Considering other factors related to election violence, tribalism was the most mentioned factor by most of the respondents (63%), followed by corruption (44%) and incitement/statements from politicians (29%). These views are in line with what was observed in other studies including Waki (2008), Wolf (2009) among others. Wolf (2009) concluded that maintenance of peace in Kenya ultimately requires that those political leaders who intend to run for seats to go beyond the narrow margins of tribalism in order to avoid conflict by forming inter-ethnic alliance that includes the main antagonized groups.

An inferential analysis revealed that all the independent variables (ethnicity based polling, statistical disparities in polling, influence of commentaries on polls, polling based on majimboism, and Influence of Media on Polls) were included in the model indicating positive regression coefficients to indicate that they have influence on the occurrence of post-election violence. The study observed that all the factors considered in the model were statistically significant as indicated by p-values/Sig. less than 0.05 (ethnicity based polling (p=0.047), statistical disparities in polling (p=0.008), influence of commentaries on polls (0.020), polling based on majimboism (p=0.036), and Influence of Media on

Polls (p=0.030). It was confirmed that statistical disparities in polling was the most significant effect followed by influence of commentaries on polls, Influence of Media on Polls, polling based on majimboism and then followed by ethnicity based

polling. All the regression coefficients indicate that there is positive influence on the occurrence of post-election violence. These outcomes are as presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Regression on the polls influence on election violence

Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients							
		Chi-square	df	Sig.			
Step 1	Step	12.265	5	.031			
	Block	12.265	5	.031			
	Model	12.265	5	.031			
Model Summary							
Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square		Nagelkerke R Square			
1	282.162 ^a	.654		.874			
a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 4 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.							
Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	Ethnicity based polling	.412	.207	3.960	1	.047	.662
	Statistical disparities in polling	.003	.196	.000	1	.008	.997
	Media commentaries effect on polls	.089	.222	.159	1	.020	.915
	polling based on majimboism	.157	.173	.825	1	.036	.854
	Influence of Media on Polls	.019	.210	.008	1	.030	.982
	Constant	2.073	.795	6.800	1	.009	7.946
a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Ethnicity, Stat Disparities, Commentary Influence, Majimboism Polling and Media Influence.							

Source: Researcher 2016

From the analysis the model extracted was as follows: $Y = 2.073 + 0.412 X_1 + 0.003 X_2 + 0.089 X_3 + 0.157 X_4 + 0.019 X_5 + e$; Where Y is the Occurrence of Post-election Violence; X_1 is ethnicity based polling; X_2 is statistical disparities in polling; X_3 is influence of commentaries on polls; X_4 is polling based on majimboism; and X_5 is Influence of Media on Polls.

However, opinion polling isn't the only cause of the occurrence of post-election violence. Other factors that may have contributed to PEV in Kenya include: statements by politicians, corruption in the body that was executing the exercise of elections, tribalism, incitement to violence by leaders and failure to concede or accept results, illiteracy and bribery since

many youths were paid to cause chaos, hatred between tribes, rigging claims and ethnic imbalance in distribution of resources, lack of skilled measures during voting periods, unemployment leading to idleness of youths and hence the participation in chaos.

From the study findings most of the respondents believe that the post-election violence that was witnessed in 2007 was in a way influenced by opinion polls that were conducted before the elections. Most of the respondents blamed opinion polls for the post-election violence in that, the announced results were contrary to what the opinion polls had been showing and also what the voters expected due to the

influence of the opinion polls. The opinion polls results also rose political temperatures and captured the minds of voters towards a given outcome of the elections hence triggering the violence. The opinion polls moreover, portrayed a particular political party to be popular but when the contrary happened, violence erupted.

Poll institutions have been described by insiders as likely to be subjective to the private clients commissioning polls, including politicians, whose names were never disclosed. In addition, the field officers hired to do these surveys answer to the wishes of the recruiting agency and may not generate data that is representative. Testimonies shared by some field agents indicate they are poorly paid. Others claimed they were never paid their dues by the recruiting pollster. A few acknowledged that surveys could be done through emails, or texts. Some even stated that questionnaires could be filled out by themselves to save on the meager pay received. It is an allegation few opinion pollsters would publicly own up to, while most of the firms were hesitant to disclose how much field agents were paid (David, 2013).

From the findings commentary influence on polls contributed to PEV in Kenya in 2007 as per the study findings. This is clearly indicated by the big number of the respondents who expressed their approval although a few of them disapproved and others were neutral. Most of the respondents agreed that Bias in reporting of the polls contributed to PEV, imbalanced reporting of the polls contributed to post-election violence in Kenya, Presentation of unverified political influence on the poll was approved to contribute to post-election by violence revealing that the media influence contributed towards PEV in Kenya in 2007.

From the findings, other factors that may have contributed to PEV in Kenya are; statements by politicians, corruption in the body that was executing the exercise of elections, tribalism, Incitement to

violence by leaders and failure to concede or accept results, illiteracy and bribery since many youths were paid to cause chaos ,hatred between tribes, rigging claims and ethnic imbalance in distribution of resources, lack of skilled measures during voting periods, unemployment leading to idleness of youths and hence the participation in chaos.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The overall conclusion of this study is that opinion polls have a significant impact in that it contributes to the occurrence of violence in Kenya after the elections are undertaken. This mainly arises due to the disparity between the opinion polls and the actual results of the elections which dashes the hopes of those whose candidate or party may have been placed a head of polls in the run up to the general elections as it happened in 2007. Ethnicity based polling; statistical disparities in polling, influence of commentaries on polls, and polling based on majimboism are related to the occurrences of post-election violence in Kenya. Statistical disparities in polling was the most significant effect followed by influence of commentaries on polls, Influence of Media on Polls, polling based on majimboism and then followed by ethnicity based polling. The study further concludes that opinion polls influenced the occurrence of post-election violence in that, the announced results were contrary to what the opinion polls had been showing and also what the voters expected, hence occurred due to the influence of the opinion polls. The opinion polls results also raised political temperatures and captured the minds on the voters towards a given outcome of the elections hence triggering the violence. Though opinion polling was observed to directly influence the occurrence of post-election violence, the study concludes that its major influence is that it acts as a trigger of other factors contributing to PEV in Kenya such as negative political statements, the impartial state of electoral

body, tribalism, incitement to violence by leaders and failure to concede or accept results, illiteracy and bribery, rigging claims, ethnic imbalance in distribution of resources, and unemployment.

Recommendations

The study found that opinion polling has a significant influence on the occurrence of election violence in the four studied counties of Nairobi, Nakuru, Kisumu and Kwale in Kenya. The study therefore observes that control of opinion polling may lead to a significant decline in the probability of the occurrence of election related violence. The study therefore makes the following recommendations based on these findings.

There is urgent need to educate citizens on what opinion polls are and the specific role they play in our national politics. It should be made clear that opinion polls are not the equivalent of the final general elections. The study recommends that the companies conducting the polls should give accurate results of the polls which should include samples from across the country and not just certain regions, avoiding naming the regions where a given candidate is popular or unpopular and also, improvise different methods of data collection that guarantees transparency. Voters should be educated on the importance of the opinion polls in the democracy of Kenya. The number of the companies conducting the opinion polls should be regulated by the government in order to root out rogue companies from the opinion polls industry in Kenya. This will ensure that the electorate is not subjected to misleading and

biased poll results. The media should avoid overhyping the results of opinion polls based on individuals who in Kenyan politics represent tribes. The media can do better by interrogating the ideologies and issues for which these candidates stand for.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study investigated the influence of opinion polls on the occurrence of election related violence in Kenya. It should be noted that opinion polling in itself may not be the overriding factor as to why Kenyans are ready engage in lawlessness and destruction of property after every election. Although some of these other factors were touched in the study including ethnicity, the land problem and others, there is one factor that according to this study may be the source of this post-election upheavals and this is youth unemployment. The 'youth bulge' bulge that has for a long time characterized less developed countries and the accompanying unemployment may just be the real fuel that stokes post-election fires in this country. This study therefore suggests future study that can critically and empirically establish the youth unemployment connection to post-election violence in Kenya. This arises from the observation that even though some developed countries encounter election disagreements like it was the case in the USA in the 2004 Al Gore and George Bush election duel it was resolved amicably without shedding of blood that characterizes our case here in Kenya.

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