



**OPINION POLLING INFLUENCE ON ELECTION VIOLENCE IN SELECTED COUNTIES IN KENYA SINCE 2002**

**PETER KIBE MBAE, PROF. FRANK K. MATANGA, DR. EDMOND WERE**

## OPINION POLLING INFLUENCE ON ELECTION VIOLENCE IN SELECTED COUNTIES IN KENYA SINCE 2002

Peter Kibe Mbae<sup>\*1</sup>, Prof. Frank K. Matanga<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Edmond Were<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya

<sup>3</sup>Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences, Kisii University, Kenya

Accepted: November 20, 2016

### Abstract

*Opinion polling has been practiced in Kenya since 2002 and receive wide acceptance especially by the Kenyan media. However, the post-election violence occurrence in 2007 is widely linked to polls which offered one contestant a sure win, thus heightening the emotions and expectations of his supporters, which is widely thought to have led to the occurrence of the violence. Though opinion polling has been widely studied, it was observed that there is no established link to the occurrence of election violence. This study therefore sought to establish the influence of opinion polling on post-election violence in selected counties in Kenya, by examining the nature and extent of opinion polling, the influence of opinion polling on the occurrence of election violence, and challenges of the process of opinion polling. Adopting a descriptive research design on a population of media practitioners, state officers, polling firms, government, and social groups in Nakuru, Kwale, Nairobi and Kisumu Counties, the study acquired a sample of 317 (251 respondents; 66 Interviewees) from whom data was collected using a questionnaire and interview guide which was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found that the nature and extent of opinion polling is that there are ongoing manipulations of the studies and polling firms are compromised while the media is ready and willing to cash in on the polls. The study also found that ethnic based polling; statistical disparities in polling, and commentaries on polls, influence occurrence of election violence. It was also observed that regional biasness of the polls, tribal based polling, and a must win mentality are challenges linked to election violence. The study conclude that election violence occurrence is significantly attributed to opinion polling and recommend that state should enforce laws, sensitize citizens, and a code of conduct on opinion polling.*

**Keywords:** Election Violence; Opinion Polling; Elections Polls; Polling Biasness; Challenges of Polling

## INTRODUCTION

Opinion polls are politically motivated polls undertaken to assess political positions. Unlike most market research reports, political polls are continuous, and subject to wide and intense debate. Polls are conducted and published at any time in a political cycle up to some days to the actual voting. Their immediacy precludes great depth of information but fundamental attitudes and preferences can be addressed. Polls cover current voting intentions, perceptions of party leaders, government performance, current issues and much else. They also differ from other marketing research activities, because they are available to the market as well as the “manufacturer” (Patrick & Neil, 2004). According to a 2009 guide to public opinion poll surveys by ESOMAR / WAPOR, a properly undertaken and disseminated survey ought to offer the general public the chance for its voice to be heard. Through opinion polling; the public, politicians, the media and other stakeholders acquire precise measure of public attitudes and intentions.

The publishing of polls and the subsequent debate influence several aspects of the political process (Crewe, 2000). For example, in the 1992 Danish referendum on the Maastricht Treaty, Suine and Svensson (2003) demonstrated how feedback from polls influenced significant changes in the protagonists’ campaign emphasis. “Yes” campaigners, conscious of the positive outcome of economic arguments in the past, redirected their emphasis from the mainly political to the economic. Party morale and policy formation are acutely affected also. Party activists and policy makers tend to be surrounded by people holding similar political views, and public opinion polls provide a source of relatively reliable information. Polls also serve to determine party agendas, themes, communications, the general tone of the campaign and even the election date. Crewe (2000) argues that separating the impact of the polls from other campaign

influences is almost impossible, but the evidence is that it is neither strong nor consistent. Little support can be found in the literature for either a “bandwagon” or “underdog” effect (Denver, 2008).

In most democracies in the world, there is a legal provision that ensures that electorates are kept off political rallies or any undue influence by politicians a few days/day to the general elections. However, opinion polls are not affected by these provisions hence offer to provide information in late polls, a major consequence of which is political marketing (either positively or negatively) for the candidates at this very sensitive points, thus enabling voters to practice tactical voting (Ndeti, Wambua & Mogambi, 2014). When the same data used in these late polls is erroneous - either by mistakes or influence, the undue political marketing won’t be in tandem with the public opinions but might change the final decision of the electorates hence unduly influencing the political results at the end of the elections. Ndeti, Wambua & Mogambi, (2014) further maintained that 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 offering significant information that may prompt unsure voters to acquire vote preferences. This is particularly observed in polls commissioned or conducted by a biased polling firm.

Studies shows that it is widely accepted that polls may have an effect on the vote itself, rather than simply reflecting public sentiment (Gakero, 2008, Ochieng 2007, Mbugua, 2007, McQuail 2005). Therefore, polls that don’t reflect the people’s views are highly conflicting as they also shape the views of others, convincing them to adopt a view that they think it is society view while it is not. That is, the opinion polls influence the society in how they vote by what they have learned or what they think they

have learned from the outcomes of polls. Therefore, broadcast coverage by the media houses of opinion polls merits special attention to guarantee balance, fairness and objectivity is maintained so as to ensure that the members of public are able to precisely consider and understand the poll's process, elicited views and their significance. However, McQuail (2005) is of the view that existing laws do not address the issue of opinion polling broadcast coverage in uniform fashion, but the only provisions range from bans on the publication of election poll results from a certain date onward to general prohibitions on opinion polls or the use of certain questions in polls. Worse is the case of Kenya where very few legal restrictions have been availed to avoid the challenges of undue influence of opinion polling to the society (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 literary 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.

### **Objectives**

The general objective of this study was to establish the influence of opinion polling on election violence in selected counties in Kenya. The specific objectives are to: Examine the nature of opinion polling in election violence context in selected counties in Kenya since 2002; Assess the influence of opinion polling on election violence in selected counties in Kenya since 2002; and, examine the challenges of opinion polling in the context of election violence in selected counties in Kenya since 2002.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Nature of Opinion Polling**

Public opinion polls are regularly conducted and published in many countries. They measure not only support for political parties and candidates, but also public opinion on a wide range of social, economic and political issues. Public opinion is a critical force in shaping and transforming the society. The history of public opinion polling can be traced to the early 19th century (Atkin and Gaudino, 2004; Brettschneider, 2008). Straw polls were first used on July 1824, with coupons printed in newspapers to attract readership (Bradburn and Sudman, 2008). They were published in the Harrisburg Pennsylvania, showing presidential contender Andrew Jackson leading John Quincy Adams. The Raleigh Star newspaper later jumped on the bandwagon, whose poll had showed Jackson well ahead. The polls were right as Jackson won the 1824 American election in a landslide victory of 178 electoral college votes over Adams' 83 ones (Moon, 2004). Straw polls were later published in the New York Herald, Cincinnati Enquirer, St Louis Republic and Boston Globe during presidential elections, thus making them important in the history of election polling (Smith, 2000, p.31; Robinson, 2009, pp. 51).

Research show that the media reportage of opinion polls influences the public to vote in elections (Chan 2003; Lee, 2004), though the press may commission opinion polls to mainly generate news stories that favour it more than the public (Paletz et al., 1980). In Kenya, print and broadcast media organizations such as Citizen TV, NMG and Standard Media Group commissioned pollsters to assess public opinion prior to the March 4 2013 general election by conducting benchmark and tracking opinion polls. These pollsters were Consumer Insight, Ipsos Synovate, IHRC and Strategic Research and Public Relations (PR). A poll by IHRC and Ipsos Synovate commissioned by NMG between January 12 and 20, 2013, found that none of six presidential candidates would win the election in the first round. However, CORD contender Raila Odinga would win in the next round with a 46 percent vote (Shiundu,

2013). In a study by the Media Council of Kenya of the analysis of press coverage of opinion polls in the Daily Nation, findings suggest that it was skewed towards the CORD coalition (2013). Official results by IEBC showed that the Ipsos Synovate polls was wrong, as Jubilee contender Uhuru Kenyatta won in the first round with a 50.07 percent vote in the first round (IEBC, 2013). This implies that public opinion polls have an influence on media coverage, even when they are wrong. Though Kenya media reliance on opinion poll coverage is good for their agenda, in 2017, prior to the 2018 general election, perhaps the press could be more investigative.

Other methodological reasons include pollsters who skew samples for those who commission opinion polls. The reason is to make them more representative by calculating the responses of the people in groups that are a minority in the study (Battersby, 2013). This has two implications that are unscientific- that the sample is not random, and, the margin of error or probability of accuracy is false. The truth of the public or respondent deception bias is also another variable, which occurred in the Gallup poll of 1948. Respondents may say that they are going to vote, though this may not occur. For instance, though Ipsos Synovate on February 22, 2013 had predicted that Uhuru Kenyatta would win the vote with a 44.8 percent vote over Odinga's 44.4 percent using a +/-1.26 percent margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level, the official results by the IEBC and Supreme Court showed that Ipsos Synovate still fell short of the accurate prediction with a difference of 5.27 percent. What this implies that the margin of error by Ipsos Synovate was also faulty. Yet, in another poll by Ipsos Synovate carried out between January 20-12, 2013, it had predicted a run-off between the candidates, with Odinga as the winner. How could the public trust the pollster to make an accurate prediction, days before the election? Another reason for the lack of credible opinion polls is horse-race journalism. This refers to



how media organizations pit one presidential candidate over another during elections on the basis of opinion poll results (Graber, 2007). This was the case in the 2000 presidential election in America, where exit polls by media polling conglomerate, National Election Pool (NEP), had predicted a win for the then vice-president Al Gore, though Bush won the election (Roberts, et al, 2012). It later emerged that there were sampling errors in the NEP poll. This implies that if journalists report the wrong opinion polls results, it diverts public attention from real issues.

Inaccurate media reporting of opinion polls is another cause for lack of credibility in opinion polls. In a study of opinion polls published by various newspapers including the Washington Post and Wall Street Journal, (Welch, 2002) found that journalists do not give their readers the methodological aspects of poll results, which might prompt the reader to misinterpret or disregard the polls. In another study, an opinion poll's credibility is lowered when broadcasters of US network news fail to correct statement about the poll results, for instance margin of error without understanding what it means (Larson, 2003). They neither explain if a poll will be representative of voters' expectation instead of an election (Lewis et al., 2005). What this implies that media audiences can make the wrong voting choices based on what they read from the media. Since the 1960s, global presidents, senators and governors have hired their own pollsters during election campaigns King and Schnitzer, (1968). For instance, in a review of the Gallup poll presidential election prediction, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) newspaper (1996) found that it has forecasted all 20 American polls from the start of scientific polling in 1936 to 2008. Despite this, there are firms whose research methodology is questionable when they have biased samples, slanted reports and unethical procedures (Krosnick, 2008). For instance, the public dismissal of the Literary Digest's demographically

unrepresentative sample in 1936, which though huge sample did not poll all demographics.

Researchers argue that opinion polling methods are understandably subject to a substantial range of error (Bogart, 1972). Bad interviewing, unrepresentative cross sections, poor questionnaire design and slips in data analysis can all contribute to make the final results unreliable, apart from the statistical tolerances of probability laws (McNair, 2003). This explains why opinion poll results are often viewed with much skepticism, yet the public is largely ignorant of sampling principles (Bogart, 1972). A perfect case of this occurred in Kenya. A month prior to the 2007 general election, the United States (US) embassy in Kenya doubted the accuracy of opinion polls projections because the sample that local pollsters used resulted in a wide lead for the presidential candidate for the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) political party, Raila Odinga (Mutiga, 2011). This wide lead would likely fuel ethnic tensions if he were to lose the election. The basis of the wide lead was due to the wrong sample chosen by pollster IHRC from a raw population size, rather than the regional distribution of registered voters. Consumer Insight sample from voter registration rates, its poll results showed that Odinga had 41% while President Mwai Kibaki from the Party of National Unity (PNU) had 40.6%, with a 0.4% gap. This was a more accurate predictor of the election outcome due to the wide variances in high population density areas in the country. Conversely, IHRC used a sample from a raw population size, which showed that Odinga had a 47.3% lead, while Kibaki followed at 37%, a 10.3% gap (Mutiga, 2011; Mutahi, 2008). Thus, although Odinga was leading in both polls and likely to win the general election, the narrow gap between the two candidates by the Consumer Insight poll reflected an accurate sample and justifies the argument by the US embassy. In what is still disputed today, the IEBC (formerly Electoral Commission of Kenya [ECK] ), announced

on 30th December 2007 that Kibaki had instead won the general election by a 46% vote to Odinga's 44% (Larfargue and Katumanga, 2008).

### **Influence of Opinion Polling on Election Violence**

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 - as 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). 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). Crucially, the pre-election polling consistently showed Odinga leading Kibaki in the final weeks (Osborn, 2008). This gave opposition supporters the sense that victory was inevitable. This was to be suddenly contradicted when Kibaki was announced the winner. The polls may have been mistaken or the public mood could have easily shifted, as is often the case, or the election may indeed have been stolen.

Whatever the reality, the discrepancy between polling and outcome was a major catalyst for the violence that Followed In 2007.

### **Challenges Facing Opinion Polling**

Unlike most survey research topics, pre-election polls have a truth benchmark—the election results. So, after each new election, there is a postmortem assessment of the accuracy of pre-election polls to see how closely the polling industry and individual pollsters matched the official election returns. The reputation of survey firms rests in no small part on these accuracy assessments. The death of the *Literary Digest* has been attributed to their failed prediction of the 1936 election despite successful predictions from 1916 to 1932 (Squire 2008). John Zogby, labeled the “prince of pollsters” after nailing the 1996 election prediction, saw his reputation tarnished by poor predictions in subsequent years, with NY Times election blogger Nate Silver more recently calling him “The Worst Pollster in the World” (Silver 2009). Like any survey, the quality of predictions can be affected by sampling error and non - sampling errors, including coverage error, non - response error, measurement error, processing error, and adjustment error (Groves et al. 2009). It is most recognized that random sampling error can produce fluctuations in polling estimates based on chance alone, simply because a poll includes a sample of respondents rather than the full population. Such error is expressed with the margin of error that is typically reported alongside polling estimates, and the simple (but costly) solution is to increase the sample size. Of greater concern are the systemic errors introduced by the pollsters (or analysts) and respondents that can bias the election forecasts.

Pollsters must make a variety of design decisions—about the mode, timing, sampling method, question formulation, weighting, etc.—and each of these methodological decisions can potentially bias the

results. Research has found, for instance, that the number and type (weekend vs. weekday) of days in the field were associated with predictive accuracy, reflecting nonresponse bias (Lau 2004). Mokrzycki, Keeter, and Kennedy (2009) found that telephone based polls excluding cell-phone-only households had a slight bias against the democratic candidates, an illustration of coverage bias. Highlighting the importance of measurement error, Crespi and Morris (2004) demonstrated that question order produced different estimates of candidate support. As other essays in this issue discuss in more detail, there are a wide variety of other methodological decisions that can directly affect data quality; for pre-election polling, the definition of likely voters and the treatment of undecided voters are of particular concern. Respondents are another source of error in pre-election polls. An accurate election prediction relies on respondents providing honest answers to the turnout and vote intention questions. Extensive research has documented over reporting of turnout (and turnout intention), primarily the result of social desirability bias (Belli et al. 2004). In 2008, the presence of an African American on the ticket increased concern that respondents would lie to pollsters about their vote preference. Previous elections had found evidence of a “Bradley effect,” in which pre-election polls overestimate support for a black candidate because white voters tell pollsters they are undecided or will support the black candidate when they do not intend to do so. In the end, research found no evidence that polls systematically overestimated Obama support (Hopkins 2009); in fact, polls were more likely to underestimate support for Obama, likely reflecting higher turnout among groups often not considered likely voters (Silver 2008). Future research should consider the variety of other reasons that respondents might not give incomplete or untruthful answers to the vote choice questions, such as privacy concerns or respondent competence.



Polling predictions can also be jeopardized by individuals changing their minds about their turnout and vote intention between the time of the survey interview and Election Day. Although scholarly research often emphasizes the stability of vote intention, panel data has found that more than 40 percent of respondents change their vote intention at least once during the campaign Hillygus and Shields, (2008). There remains debate, however, about the source of these individual-level dynamics. Gelman and King (2003) argued that movements in poll numbers reflect predictable movement toward the fundamentals, but others have shown that specific campaign events produce movements in the polls (Johnston et al. 2002). In an analysis of the dynamics of pre-election polling, Wlezein and Erikson (2002) attributed as much as 50 percent of the variability in poll numbers simply to sampling error, but they also found that campaign shocks produced real movements—early in the campaign the effects dissipated quickly, but there were smaller, persistent shocks late in the campaign. There remains much to be learned about who in the electorate is most likely to change their minds, when they are most likely to do so, and in response to what stimuli, and such findings will have clear implications for election forecasting. Voter instability is considered the primary explanation for the polling debacle of 1948. Pollsters called the election for Dewey weeks before the election, but a sizeable chunk of voters changed their vote and turnout intention in the final weeks, and they overwhelmingly supported Truman (Crespi, 2008). To minimize sources of error, pollsters now continue to do election polling as late as the night before the election, and it is this final poll that is used in the post-election assessments of polling accuracy. It is noteworthy that opinion polls when conducted by reputable organizations in a scientific manner do provide a ‘snapshot in time’ of a particular question (Dennis and Merrill 2003:84). However, opinion polling is not unproblematic and indeed the conduct

of the Kenyan 2007 opinion polling and reporting did raise pertinent issues. Firstly, the opinion polls and their reporting tended to personalize the campaigns into a dramatic popularity contest of persons and by extension the ethnic community or coalition of ethnic communities the presidential contestants represented. Positions and issues the candidates represented were only given token considerations in the polling, with the reports consumed by who is ahead of who, as aptly captured in nearly all the opinion poll headlines, which overwhelmingly gave prominence to the ratings of the presidential candidates and very rarely or only as secondary issues on policy, as these headlines picked at random demonstrate: Raila tips scale but Kibaki stays close, Raila widens gap, Kibaki gains two points but Raila still leads in latest opinion poll, Raila’s third win, New poll shows mixed fortune for candidates, Kibaki narrows gap on Raila in new poll, The last sprint (Gakero, 2008).

A fourth problematic issue in opinion polling in Kenya’s 2007 election campaigns concerned commentaries carried in the news section in which some material couched as facts, but pertinently misleading, sounded more as a pitch for a candidate or worse an unassailable fact. In the Saturday Standard (October 13, 2007:3) a columnist wrote, as a carry-over story of Steadman opinion poll reported in the front page of the paper, which had Raila leading at 53% rating, Kibaki at 37% and Kalonzo at 8%: There are two clearly known scientific facts about political opinion polls, the world over. First, once ratings of an individual start plummeting, it is unlikely that such a politician can weave his way back to a favourable position. The simple logic of this is that as the voting date gets closer, political players and voters want to associate with the winning side.

### **Theoretical Framework**

**The Two Step Theory:** Also known as the two-step flow of communication theory, it was first

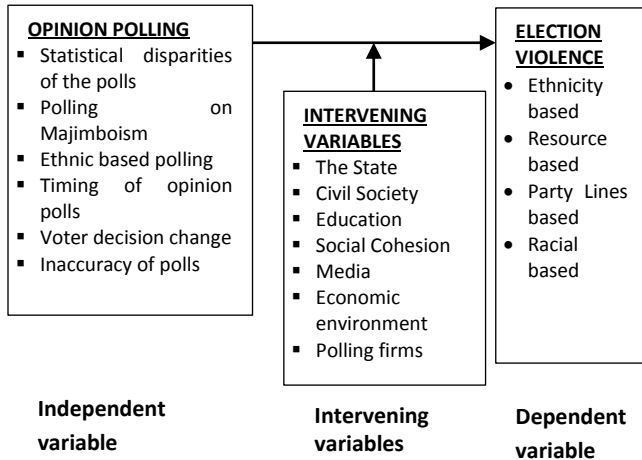
introduced by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet in *The People's Choice*, a 1944 study focusing on the process of decision-making during a Presidential election campaign. The theory posits that the media itself isn't very powerful in influencing people given the observation that people are more influenced by people that they know and see on a daily basis. It asserts that information from the media moves in two distinct stages: first, individuals (opinion leaders) who pay close attention to the mass media and its messages to receive the information, then opinion leaders pass on their own interpretations in addition to the actual media content (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). The term 'personal influence' was coined to refer to the process intervening between the media's direct message and the audience's ultimate reaction to that message. Opinion leaders are quite influential in getting people to change their attitudes and behaviours and are quite similar to those they influence (Baran 2002). It therefore suggests that personal influence shapes people's attitudes more than the media influence (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955) specifically acquired through one group of people referred to as 'opinion leaders' (Baran 2002). These are those whose views and ideas are respected and seen as being important by the society. The 'opinion leaders' absorb information from the media and pass it on to the less active population. The 'opinion leaders' have strong political beliefs so they pay closer attention to the media. These leaders aren't necessarily rich or powerful as they can be from any background, but their views in society are greatly respected. This study is grounded on the two step theory based on the fact that the media plays a great role in popularizing opinion polls; and the theory explains the media influence on people and electorates behaviours. The theory suggests how electorates are swayed by their opinion leaders (politicians / political activists and community elders) to form their voting preferences. Media is key in popularizing the outcomes of opinion polls which

makes them able to influence public behaviours, but this theory explains the role played by the media in influencing public opinion, hence the study undertake its mandate conscious of these positions.

**Media Framing Theory:** Framing refers to how the news story emphasizes certain values, or themes, through selection and thereafter giving them salience, by either making them noticeable or memorable to audiences (Entman, 2003, p.52). This is by defining concepts, analyzing them and recommending proper solutions for them. In elections, the uses opinion polls media portray candidates as either winning or losing, instead of complex political issues (Patterson, 2003; Zaller, 2001; Fallows, 2007). This referred to as a game or strategic frame and has been observed in how American television covers elections. However, Akuto (2006) in content analysis of 1979 gubernatorial elections in Tokyo, he found that newspapers focused less on game frames but more on public policy issues or substance frame reporting. In Kenya, game frames are not rare. Take the following headline by The Standard newspaper published on January 11, 2013. Titled "Kenyan opinion poll shows Raila's CORD alliance in front", it serves as a heuristic to Kenyan voters who might use it as a basis to vote for the candidate, yet they have not evaluated the candidate based on the issue he supports. A Kenyan example of substance frame reporting is in a poll by IHRC published in all Kenyan media newspaper on January 12, 2013, where facts such as number of respondents in the survey, data collection and analysis methods were published (Saturday Nation, 2013). Media framing has psychological and sociological roots, for instance in the works of John Locke and Sigmund Freud (Bateson, 2004; Pan and Kosicki, 2003; Goffman, 2005). These researchers argue that people cannot understand the world and hence require "interpretative schemas" to classify information and interpret it meaningfully. These schemas comprise

different presentations of information through the media, thus leading to different choices for how people can make sense of their world. Scholars argue that media framing thus occurs when journalists present information to their audiences in a way that relates to existing schemas (Shoemaker and Reese, 2006).

### Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher 2016

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on positivism research philosophy and employed a descriptive survey research design often used to describe or define a subject, by creating profile of a group of problems, people, or events, through the collection of data and tabulation of the frequencies on research variables or their interaction. The study concentrated on four locations which are Nairobi, Nakuru, Kwale and Kisumu counties which had high incidences of election violence reported in the year 2007 (Waki Report 2008) and their geographical position make them representative of the study zones. The target population comprised of the senior staff of polling firms, media houses, politicians, state officers and civil society groups making up a population size of 1256 from whom a total sample size of 317 respondents was acquired. Data was collected from the target sample by use of a questionnaire and an

interview guide. The questionnaire was developed using items based on opinion polling and election violence themes applied by scholars in similar studies. Interviews were conducted to get in-depth views offering adequate understanding of the phenomenon under study. Prior to data collection, a pilot study was undertaken to enhance the study output and ensure validity and reliability of the data collected. Data analysis included search for trends, patterns and relationships in the data which are relevant in answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings were presented by use of tables, bar charts, graphs and pie charts. Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis and was presented in prose. The proposed regression model was given as:  $Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + e$ ; Where  $Y =$  Election violence;  $b_0 =$  constant;  $X_i$ 's = Variables of the study;  $b_i$ 's = coefficient of the variables;  $e =$  represents the error term.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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.

#### Nature of Opinion Polling and Political Violence in Kenya

The study found that most of the respondents 56% were of the views that the opinion polls done in Kenya before elections were 'not' objective whereas 44% said that the polls were objective, as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Objectivity of the opinion polls in Kenya before elections.**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	102	44.2
	No	129	55.8
<b>Total</b>		<b>231</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Researcher 2016**

They believe that the polls are conducted fairly from all the parts of the country. Others consider the polls to be objective in that it influences the decision of the undecided voters. It also forecast the political weather in the country. Moreover; some argue that the polls are conducted in favor of a particular party or candidate. Some of the respondents also believe that the polls are most of the times influenced by politicians for their self-interests. Another respondent agreed that opinion polls are objective since the respondents are chosen randomly while a few disagreed that the polls are objective on the premise that according to them, they are “created to favour a given candidate” hence the outcomes are always skewed towards favourable candidate. A media practitioner offered that ‘the opinion polls give an overview/opinion of mwananchi, hence if the

information is sampled fairly representing all the counties, its objectivity would be realized”.

As indicated in Table 2, the study observed that majority of respondents (68%) are of the views that opinion polling influence the voting behaviour while those who disagreed were only 32% of the study respondents. Respondents therefore believe voters tend to get influenced by the opinion polls. In his paper to examine the effects of opinion polls as well as additional media coverage on voters prior to the parliamentary elections in Germany in 2009, Hanna Hoffmann, (2012) undertook a multilevel analysis whereby the poll results as well as the statements regarding the individual parties’ chances for the elections made in news programmes were considered as context characteristics.

**Table 2: Influence of opinion polls on voting behavior**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	155	68.0
	No	73	32.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>228</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Researcher 2016**

Although respondents in this study were of strong view that opinion polls do predict how voters will cast their vote at the ballot, scholars posit that opinion polls really have no actual bearing on how voters are likely to vote in the final elections and may be very misleading if not out rightly wrong (Hanna H., 2012; Elizabeth C., 2014; Michael B. and Eldred M., 2012). The respondents supported their views by the claims that they influence since:

‘Because opinion polls companies are sponsored by candidates or parties, people tend to prefer association with the winner, with some aligning to the swing vote. According to the respondents, the opinion polls have influence on the voting behavior in that; some of the politicians collude with the companies conducting the opinion polls and also go ahead and give bribes to the voters. Some of the respondents argued that the influence of the opinion

polls on the voting behavior is because voters need to be associated with the winner as per the opinion polls. In addition, the voters who are not decided tend to be carried by the wave of the polls and end up voting for the candidate who had higher percentage according to the polls. Results indicate a strong influence that opinion polls have on the voting behavior of respondents in Kenya as voters try and associate themselves with winners rather than wasting their vote on losers. Other than opinion polls though, some other factors also affect voter behavior and include; ethnicity which in this case is

the strongest factor in Kenyan politics, media, personal preferences, the scale of political campaigns and voter bribery.

Table 3 offers a look at the extent of contribution to incorrect prediction by some of the factors which revealed that inaccuracy of polls to a great extent (Mean 3.78) affects the incorrect prediction of the election results and that timing of polls (Mean 3.15) and change of decisions of the voters (Mean 3.38) to a moderate extent affects the incorrect prediction of the election results.

**Table 3: Extent of contribution to incorrect prediction by some of the factors given**

Factors	N	Percentage extent Levels					Mean	Std. Deviation	
		Valid	Not at all	Low extent	Moderate extent	Great extent			Very Great extent
Inaccuracy of polls	225		7.6%	7.6%	18.7%	31.6%	34.7%	3.78	1.21
Timing of polls	219		10.5%	16.4%	28.8%	37.0%	7.3%	3.15	1.11
Change of decisions of the voters	223		9.9%	15.7%	21.5%	31.8%	21.1%	3.38	1.25

**Source: Researcher 2016**

Other factors that affect the accuracy of opinion polls on elections in Kenya were suggested to be; corruption, tribalism, illiteracy, biasness, poor data collection methods and sampling techniques, inaccessibility of some areas, assumptions made by the persons conducting the polls small sample size among others. Predicting election outcomes is a difficult and high-stakes business, so it is important to understand why some polls get it right and some get it wrong Sunshine (2011). As a form of survey the accuracy of predicting election outcomes can be affected by many factors including; sampling error and non-sampling errors, coverage error, non-response error, measurement error, processing error, and adjustment error (Groves et al. 2009). Random sampling error has been found to produce fluctuations in polling estimates on the basis of chance alone majorly because a poll covers only a sample of respondents as opposed to the entire

population being studied. Such an error is normally expressed with the margin of error that will in most cases be reported alongside polling estimates. According to Sharad and Houshmand (2015), the reported confidence intervals are too narrow because polls only measure attitudes at the time they were conducted as opposed to the Election Day, and the standard error estimates neglect to account for this. Sampling Error: This is the one source of error that pollsters do report, and it captures the error associated with only measuring opinions in a random sample of the population, as opposed to among all voters. Coverage Error: Pollsters aim to contact each likely voter with equal probability and a deviation from this result is what is known as coverage error. Non-Response Error: Even after identifying a random set of likely voters, they must actually answer the survey questions. If those willing to be interviewed systematically differ from those



who are not, this will introduce another source of error referred to as non-response error. Survey Error is also a problem and involves the exact wording of the questions, the order of the questions, the tone of the interviewer, and numerous other survey design factors which all affect the result.

### **Influence of Opinion Polling on Election Violence in Kenya**

**Table 4: Influence of opinion polling on occurrence of election violence**

Does opinion polling influence election violence		Frequency	Valid Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Yes	138	60.3
	No	91	39.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>229</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**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.

As presented in Table 4, 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.

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.

A look at factors that are influenced by electoral polls that lead to elections violence presented in Table 5 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 5: Polls influence on Ethnicity and Election Violence**

	N	Percentage Agreement Levels					Mean	Std. Deviation
		Valid	Strongly disagree	disagree	Don't know	Agree		
<b>Ethnicity</b>								
Voters liking polls which favoured their tribal candidate	226	6.2%	6.2%	9.0%	35.0%	51.8%	4.20	1.14
Voters hated and dismissed polls which trailed their tribal candidates	224	5.8%	14.7%	6.7%	42.0%	30.8%	3.77	1.20
Polls are influenced by tribalism	222	2.7%	17.7%	7.7%	36.5%	36.0%	3.86	1.16
Polls have been observed to create tribal segregation	222	5.9%	16.7%	12.2%	39.2%	26.1%	3.63	1.20

**Source: Researcher 2016**

Opinion polls in Kenya 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 presented in table 6 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 6: Statistical disparities of the polls influence election violence**

Statistical disparities of the polls	N	Percentage Agreement Levels					Mean	Std. Deviation
	Valid	Strongly disagree	disagree	Don't know	agree	Strongly agree		
Differences between the highest and the lowest ratings	224	8.9%	17.9%	23.2%	37.9%	12.1%	3.26	1.15
The inconsistencies of the polls	204	5.9%	18.1%	13.7%	47.5%	14.7%	3.47	1.12
Biased statistical measures and sampling	204	6.7%	14.7%	8.9%	41.1%	28.6%	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. 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. These outcomes are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: The polling on majimboism and election violence**

The polling on majimboism	N	Percentage Agreement Levels					Mean	Std. Deviation
	Valid	Strongly disagree	disagree	Don't know	agree	Strongly agree		
The polls were influenced by majimbo talk	217	16.1%	20.7%	17.1%	34.1%	12.0%	3.45	1.30
Majimboism polling debate sparked heated debate and tension	220	7.7%	10.9%	20.0%	39.5%	21.8%	3.57	1.17
Polling on majimboism was linked to land eviction which bore hate between communities.	222	3.2%	10.8%	15.3%	43.7%	27.0%	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 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 at the Coast here 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). 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. These outcomes are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8: Commentary influence on polls and election violence**

Commentary influence on polls	N	Percentage Agreement Levels					Mean	Std. Deviation
		Valid	Strongly disagree	disagree	Don't know	agree		
The inaccurate presentation of polls results by the media houses	216	7.4%	21.8%	10.6%	38.9%	21.3%	3.65	1.25
Media bias on opinion polling results	220	2.3%	19.5%	21.4%	36.8%	20.0%	3.63	1.09
Political influence on the polls commentaries	222	4.1%	14.0%	13.1%	44.1%	24.8%	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 9. This confirms that media influence contributed towards

PEV in Kenya during and after the 2007 general election.

**Table 9: Media influence on polls contributions to election violence**

Media influence	N	Percentage Agreement Levels					Mean	Std. Deviation	
		Valid	Strongly disagree	disagree	Don't know	agree			Strongly agree
Bias in reporting of the polls	220		7.7%	13.2%	18.6 %	43.2 %	17.3%	3.50	1.52
Imbalanced reporting of the polls	219		5.0%	16.4%	17.4 %	43.4 %	17.8%	3.53	1.11
Presentation of unverified political influence on the polls.	217		8.3%	12.4%	17.1 %	49.3 %	12.9%	3.46	1.12

**Source: Researcher 2016**

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 presented in Table 10 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.

**Table 10: 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 <sup>a</sup>	.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 <sup>a</sup>	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.

### Challenges of Opinion Polling in Kenya

The study took a look at the challenges of opinion polling in Kenya. Majority of the respondents agreed that failure to accept election results posed a challenge in opinion polls. The study found that people were prepared for confrontation prior to elections which were brought about by opinion polling. The study also found that regional biasness of opinion poll in Kenya is a challenge to opinion polls. Tribal based opinion is also a big challenge to the opinion polls industry. The study also found other challenges as including; must win mentality that is generated by the opinion polls, hate speech from some of the communities in relation to the opinion polls predictions, opinion polls are

conducted in favor of given candidates and corruption prevails in the companies conducting the polls. In addition, the opinion polls create tension in the country by portraying given candidates to be unpopular in the country. Also, the opinion polls were blamed for creating gaps between given communities and candidates. The study found that there are challenges facing opinion polls which included; the failure of accepting election results people were prepared for confrontation prior to elections brought about by opinion polling, regional biasness of opinion polls, tribal based opinion polling, a must win mentality that is generated by the opinion polls, hate speech from some of the communities in relation to the opinion polls predictions, opinion polls conducted in favor of given candidates and corruption in the companies conducting the polls. Moreover, the opinion polls create tension in the country by portraying given candidates as underdogs.

**Table 11: Challenges of opinion polling in Kenya**

Challenges	N	Percentage Agreement Levels					Mean	Std. Deviation
		Valid	Strongly disagree	disagree	Don't know	Agree		
Failure of accepting election results	208	3.8%	2.9%	2.9%	33.2%	57.2%	4.37	0.96
People preparedness for confrontations prior to elections	208	3.8%	17.3%	12.5%	48.1%	18.3%	3.60	1.10
Regional biasness of opinion polls	206	5.3%	17.0%	6.8%	39.8%	31.1%	3.74	1.22
Tribal based opinion polling creating tribal segregation	208	3.8%	7.20%	4.8%	51.4%	32.7%	4.02	1.01

**Source: Researcher 2016**

Among the interviewees who included general and research managers of various pollsters, government officials, media practitioners and social groups in Nairobi, Kenya, they declared that they face few challenges. The main pollsters that the interviewees

worked for were namely: IPSOS – Synovate, Infotrack Haris and Strategic Africa. Consumer Insight did not participate in this study. Therefore, two of the interviewees were from Strategic Africa, one from IPSOS-Synovate and the other Infotrack Haris. The

interviewees indicated to have worked for their respective positions for a number of years. For instance, both the General Manager and Research Manager at Strategic Africa indicated to have worked there for a period eight and seven years respectively. The Research Managers at Infotrack Haris and IPSOS - Synovate failed to disclose their period of service in the Company. All the interviewees indicated that their work environment was good and they have been at home with it. This is what one of them had to say: "Indeed, having worked at IPSOS-Synovate for a long time I appreciate the appreciation around this place. I am sure this has not only benefited me but even other staff members." The other interview captured the opinion of the respondents on what they thought were the functions of opinion polls. In general, they all expressed that they act as intermediate channels where the public get to know and anticipate the future. These were some of their views: Interviewee 1: "Well, am reminded of the time when Kenya never used to have pollsters. Therefore, the citizens did not have a way to predict current pressing issues politics, economic and social matters. However, this has changed since in our company we have succeeded to capitalize on current issues or affairs and relate them to the future of Kenyans. This way they have been able to make informed decisions like in choosing candidates during elections."

Most of the interviewees indicated that electoral opinion polling in Kenya is influenced by a number of factors such as ethnicity, preference for a candidate, political parties, personal beliefs, and euphoria. In the same vein, most of the interviewees also indicated that same factors influencing electoral opinion polling in Kenya equally impacted on factors influencing the people's voting patterns in Kenya. The issues above also featured in the responses of the other interviewees. When asked about the factors they consider when conducting polls they unanimously settled for the following issues. Truth,

validity and reliability of data and the relevance the issue at hand would add value to the society. They stated that the motivation for conducting opinion polls is the degree to which would add value to Kenya as a country. They also noted challenges faced when conducting opinion polls, which appeared similar across. Turning to the extent to which the legislation influenced voter's access to credible, reliable and representative polls one of the interviewees expressed as follows: "For me the current legislation risks preventing voter's to access, credible, reliable and representative polls. This is because there is tendency to deny pollsters freedom to present facts as they are on the ground".

## **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.

### **Nature and extent of Opinion Polling in Kenya:**

Although the exercise of opinion polling in Kenya is very old, the practice has recently come into prominence in the political sector in the country. Being a scientifically proven method of measuring the political climate it is evident in this study that most pollsters manipulate their studies and are not very forthcoming on their methodologies which raises the question of credibility of their results. The coverage of pollsters in terms of sampling has been a grey area as polling firms rush to make quick money while the media tries to make news out of these polls. The polling firms are also compromised and their poll results are only as good as their clients want them to be.

**Influence of opinion polls on election violence in Kenya:** 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.

**Challenges of opinion polling in Kenya:** Failure to accept election results was a challenge in the management of post-election violence in Kenya brought about by opinion polls. People were prepared for confrontation prior to elections which were brought about by opinion polling. Regional biasness of opinion poll was also a challenge in post-election violence management in Kenya which was brought about by opinion polls. Tribal based opinion polling was a challenge to opinion polling since it does not give a true picture of the political situation to the electorate. A must win mentality that is generated by the biased and misleading opinion polls

predictions are a challenge to opinion polling in Kenya. The study also concludes that the opinion polls are conducted in favor of given candidate and corruption prevails in the companies conducting the polls. moreover, the opinion polls creates tension in the country by portraying given candidates to be unfavorites in the country and also creating gaps between given communities and the candidates as well. Polls are influenced by tribalism and have been observed to create tribal segregation.

### **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.

**Nature and extent of Opinion Polling in Kenya:** All pollsters must be compelled to make public the methodologies used in carried out their surveys so that their activities are unbiased towards certain outcomes that may drive a harmful agenda for the country. A regulatory law should be put in place that monitors ownership of these polls firms. In cases where politicians and local businessmen are owners of the poll firms, their motivation to carry out opinion polls may be for their own selfish gains as opposed to portraying the views of fellow countrymen. There should be a body set up by the government to oversee and standardize how opinion polls are carried out in Kenya. This can increase legitimacy of pollsters in the eyes of its consumers and create transparency.

**Influence of opinion polls on election violence in Kenya:** 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

some of the politicians for personal interests, professionalism and ethics should be portrayed by the people collecting the data. The pollsters must adhere to the code of conduct of opinion polling and desist from manipulation of poll results in order to favour certain candidates or influence the actions of voters in the final general elections.

### **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

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.

**Challenges of opinion polling in Kenya:** The study recommends that the data collection for opinion polls should be done across the country; the sample size should be increased to a bigger number for accuracy and the same sample must be well representative of all kinds of citizens. All age groups should be involved in the data collection to get a wide range of opinions, the people conducting the study should not take sides by being manipulated by

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.

## **REFERENCES**

Ajulu, R. (2002). Politicized ethnicity, competitive politics and conflict in Kenya: A historical perspective. *African Studies*, 61(2), 251-268.

Alpert, H. (2001). "Opinion and Attitude Surveys in the U.S. Government," *Public Opinion Quarterly*.



Andre B. et al, (n.d). Did the Polls influence the vote? <https://www.press.umich.edu/pdf/0472099213-ch11.pdf>  
Accessed on 24th June 2016.

Archer, S. (2009, June). Why do Kenyans Vote along Ethnic Lines? (Unpublished Master's Thesis). University of Oslo, Norway. Retrieved May, 15, 2013 from <https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/.../siax-xmasteroppgave.pdf>

Atkin, C. K. and Gaudino, J. (2004). "The Impact of Polling on the Mass Media." In: Polling and the Democratic Census (ed.) John Atkin, Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, pp. 119-28.

Baran, Stanley (2002). "Theories of Mass Communication". Introduction to Mass Communication. McGraw Hill.

Barry P., (2014). Results of post-election violence in Kenya. <http://www.hollandhelpt.org/barrypaul1.pdf> Accessed on 2nd July 2016.

BBC World Service Trust (2008). "The Kenyan 2007 elections and their aftermath: the role of media and communication." Policy Briefing Available at [http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/kenya\\_policy\\_briefing\\_08.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/kenya_policy_briefing_08.pdf)

BBC, (March 30, 2013). "Kenya Supreme Court upholds Uhuru Kenyatta election win"  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-21979298>

Belli, R. F., Traugott, M. W., Young, M. and McGonagle, K. A (2004). "Reducing Vote Overreporting in Surveys." Public Opinion Quarterly 63:90-108.

Bishop, G.F (2005). The Illusion of Public Opinion: Fact and Artifact in American Public Opinion Polls. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bradburn, N. M. and Sudman, S. (2008) Polls and Surveys: Understanding What They Tell Us. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brettschneider, C. (2008) Democratic Rights: The Substance of Self-Government. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bunce, Valerie J., and Sharon L. Wolchik. (2010) Defeating Dictators: Electoral Change and Stability in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes. World Politics 62 (1): 43-86.

Commission of Inquiry on Post-election Violence (Waki Commission). (2008) Waki Report. Government of Kenya.

Converse, J. (2006) Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence, 1980-1960. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Crespi, I, and Dwight M. (2004). "Question Order Effect and the Measurement of Candidate Preference in the 1982 Connecticut Elections." Public Opinion Quarterly 48:578-91.

Crespi, I. (2008). Pre-Election Polling: Sources of Accuracy and Error. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Crespi, I. (2008). Public Opinion, Polls and Democracy. Colorado: Westview Press.

Crespi, Irving. (2008). Pre-election Polling: Sources of Accuracy and Error. New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Crewe, I. (2000). Matters of Opinion. *Social Studies Review*, 6(2).

David N., (2013). What if Kenya's election violence points to corrupt pollsters?.

<http://www.theafricareport.com/News-Analysis/what-if-kenyas-election-violence-points-to-corrupt-pollsters.html>  
Accessed on 22nd June 2016.

Dennis, E. E. and Merrill, J. C., (2003). 'Public Opinion and the Polls', *Media Debates: Issues in Mass Communication*. 3rd Edition, London & New York: Longman. 84-99.

Elizabeth Carlson, (January 2014). Social Desirability Bias and Reported Vote Preferences in African Surveys. *Afrobarometer Working Papers*. Working Paper No. 144.

Gallup, G. and Rae, S.F. (2009). 'The Quintamimensional Plan of Question Design', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Fall, Vol. 11, Issue. 3, pp. 387-393.

Gallup, G. and Rae, S.F. (2009). *The Pulse of Democracy*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Gelman, A., and Gary K., (2003). "Why Are American Presidential Election Campaign Polls So Variable When Votes Are So Predictable?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23:409–451.

Groves, R., Floyd J., Mick P., James M. Lepkowski, and Eleanor Singer. (2009). *Survey Methodology*. 2nd ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Hafner-Burton E.M., Hyde S.D., and Jablonski R.S., (2012). When Do Governments Resort to Election Violence? *British Journal of Political Science*

Hanna Hoffmann, (2012). Effects of Opinion Polls and Media Reporting on Voters: A Multilevel Analysis. July 8-12, 2012, IPSA World Congress of Political Science Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf Department of Social Sciences, Madrid.

Hillygus, D. S, and Shields, T., (2008). *The Persuadable Voter*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hoeffler, A. (2012) 'On the Causes of Civil War,' M. Garfinkel and S. Skaperdas, eds (2012) *The Oxford Handbook of the Economics of Peace and Conflict* Oxford: Oxford University Press: 179-204

Hopkin, J. (2006). "Clientelism and Party Politics", in W. Crotty and R. Katz, *Handbook of Party Politics*, London: Sage, 406-12.

Human Rights Watch (2008). *Ballots to Bullets: Organized Political Violence and Kenya's Crisis of Governance*, Human Rights Watch,

Human Rights Watch (2011) 'Turning Peddles,' Human Rights Watch: United States of America.

Human Rights Watch. (2010). *Cambodia: Tribunal's First Step in Search for Justice*. Available from <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/07/26/cambodiatribunal-s-first-step-search-justice>.

Human Rights Watch. (2010). Cambodia: Tribunal's First Step in Search for Justice. Available from <<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/07/26/cambodiatribunal-s-first-step-search-justice>>.

IEBC, (2013). "Post-Election Evaluation Report on the March 4th 2013 General Election". Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

IEBC, (2014). "Post-Election Evaluation Report on the March 4th 2013 General Election". Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

Ipsos Synovate (n.d). 'Public opinion polls: Transforming Africa into an information based society'. Retrieved 28 March 2015, Nairobi: IpsosSynovate.

Johnston, R, Blais, A., Brady, H. E. and Crete., J., (2002). Letting the People Decide: Dynamics of a Canadian Election. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Kenyan National Committee on Human Rights (2008). 'On the brink of the precipice: a human rights account of Kenya's post-2007 election violence. Final Report.' Nairobi: The Government Printer.

Kriegler Commission Report (2007). Report of the Independent Review Commission on the General Elections held in Kenya on 27 December, 2007;chap 4. Retrieved October 10, 2015 from [http://kenyastockholm.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/the\\_kriegler\\_report.pdf](http://kenyastockholm.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/the_kriegler_report.pdf)

Lau, R. R. (2004). "An Analysis of the Accuracy of \_Trial Heat\_ Polls in the 2002 Presidential Election." Public Opinion Quarterly 58(Spring):2-20.

Lewis, J. (2001) Constructing Public Opinion: How Political Elites Do What They Like and Why We Seem to go Along With It. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lewis-Beck, Michael S., and Mary Stegmaier. (2000). "Economic Determinants of Electoral Outcomes." Annual Review of Political Science 3:183-219.

Mbugua, K., (2007), 'Do opinion Polls Inhibit Choice in a Democracy'. The Standard Newspaper October 17, 7.

McNair, B. (2003).An Introduction to Political Communication, London: Routledge.

McQuail, D. (2005). McQuail's Mass Communication Theory, Sage Publication, London.

Michael B. and Eldred M. (August 2012). Voting Intentions in Zimbabwe: A Margin of Terror? Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 103.

Mokrzycki, Michael, Scott Keeter, and Courtney Kennedy. 2009. "Cell-Phone-Only Voters in the 2008 Exit Polls and Implications for Future Noncoverage Bias." Public Opinion Quarterly 73(5):845-65.

Moon, N. (2004) Opinion Polls: History, Theory and Practice .1st edition. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Mutahi, P. (2008). The Polling Debate in Kenya's 2007 Elections. In: Jerome L. (ed) General Elections in Kenya, 2007. Nairobi: African Books Collective.

- Mutiga, M. (2011). 'US diplomats query the accuracy of opinion polls,' Sunday Nation, 20 March, p.11.
- Mutua, M. (2008). Kenya's quest for democracy: taming the leviathan. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Ndeti N., Wambua P., & Mogambi (2014). The Impact of Legislation on Electoral Opinion Polls in Kenya. European Scientific Journal, 10(34) ISSN: 1857 – 7881
- Neil M. and David R., (2014). Opinion polls can be self-fulfilling prophecies. The Huffington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/10/30/opinion-polls-can-be-self-fulfilling-prophecies/> Accessed on June 27, 2016.
- Neuman WR. 2000. The impact of the new media: fragmentation, stratification and political evolution. In Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy, ed. WL Bennett, RM Entman. New York: CambridgeUniv. Press
- Ochieng, P., (2007), 'Why Poll Ratings can't be Ignored', Sunday Nation Newspaper, 21 October, p.11.
- Osborn, M., (2008) "Fuelling the Flames: Rumour and Politics in Kibera." Journal of Eastern African Studies 2, no. 2: 315-327.
- Patrick Butler, Neil Collins, (2004) "Political Marketing: Structure and Process", European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 28 Iss: 1, pp.19 - 34
- Patrick H. and David R., (undated). Fundamental Models for Forecasting Elections [http://researchdmr.com/HummelRothschild\\_FundamentalModel.pdf](http://researchdmr.com/HummelRothschild_FundamentalModel.pdf). Accessed on June 27, 2016.
- Republic of Kenya (2002) Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate Ethnic Clashes in Western and other parts of Kenya [The Kiliku Report]. Nairobi: Government Printer. investigate Ethnic Clashes in Western and other parts of Kenya. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Republic of Kenya (2004) Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Illegal/Irregular Allocation of Public Land> Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Robinson, C. (2009). Straw Votes: A Study of Political Prediction. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sarah, B. (2008) Post-election Violence in Kenya: An assessment for the UK Government, April.
- Saturday Standard (October 13, 2007:2& 3)
- Schedler, Andreas. (2002a). The Menu of Manipulation. Journal of Democracy 13 (2): 36–50.
- Sharad G. and Houshmand S.M., (2015). Hidden Errors and Overconfident Pollsters. The Huffington Post. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-rothschild/hidden-errors-and-overcon\\_b\\_6090226.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-rothschild/hidden-errors-and-overcon_b_6090226.html). Accessed on June 27, 2016.
- Silver, N. (2008). "Debunking the Bradley Effect." Newsweek, October 28.
- Silver, N., (2009). "The Worst Pollster in the World Strikes Again." FiveThirtyEight.com., <http://www.fivethirtyeight.com/2009/03/worst-pollster-in-world-strikes-again.html>.

- Siringi, S. (2013). Marginal Gains for Top Two in Elections. Daily Nation, February 27, p.4.
- Smith, T. W. (2004). Freedom to conduct public opinion polls around the world. International Journal of Public Opinion Research Vol. 16, No. 2.
- Squire, P. (2008). "Why the Literary Digest Failed." Public Opinion Quarterly 52:125–33.
- Sunshine D.H., (2011). The evolution of election polling in the United States. Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 75, No. 5, 2011, pp. 962–981. Oxford University Press.
- The Daily Nation (2008a) '8 more killed in chaos,' January 18 2008, <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/226946/-/seoik3/-/index.html>
- The Daily Nation (2008b) 'End of turmoil in sight as AU boss jets in,' January 8, 2008, [http://www.nationmedia.com/dailynation/nmgcontententry.asp?category\\_id=1&newsid=114181](http://www.nationmedia.com/dailynation/nmgcontententry.asp?category_id=1&newsid=114181)
- Tom P., (2015). Election 2015: Five reasons why the pollsters got it so wrong.
- Tucker, Joshua. (2007). Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems, and Post-Communist Colored Revolutions. Perspectives on Politics 5 (03): 535–551.
- Waki, P.N. (2008) 'Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Post-election Violence (CIPEV).' Nairobi: The Government Printer
- Wei W. et al., (2014). Forecasting elections with non-representative polls. International Journal of Forecasting.
- Wilkinson, S.I. (2004) 'Votes and Violence, Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India.' New York: Cambridge University Press
- Wimmer, A. (2002) 'Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity.' Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Wolf T. P. (2009). 'Poll poison'?: Politicians and polling in the 2007 Kenya election. Journal of Contemporary African Studies, 27:3, 279-304, DOI: 10.1080/02589000903137714
- Young, C. (2004) 'The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective.' New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Zaller, J. R. (2002).The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zogby (2006) Polling Market Research Nationwide. Poll of African American Adults: Zogby Analytics 1747 Call Street Lake Luzerne, New York 12846.