Causes and types of conflicts during electioneering process in Kenya with reference to Kisumu County

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Abstract-The causes and types of conflicts are multifaceted as they are deeply embedded in ethno-political and cultural issues of the community. The study was guided by Galtung's theories of structural violence and structural peace-building and Agenda Setting theory. The study employed qualitative and quantitative methods. The data were collected through questionnaires, interviews schedule, FGDs guides and review of literature through document analysis. The data were analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS 21). The data were presented in tables, pie charts and bar graphs. The findings of the study revealed that conflicts in Kisumu County are attributed to historical injustices, socio-economic factors and political issues. The findings of the study further revealed that Kisumu County experienced electoral and politically instigated ethnic conflicts recurrent largely during electioneering process with the major architects as youths and political class. These conflicts have had greater impacts on socio-economic, psychological and health aspects of people. The study concluded that historical injustices, election rigging claims and ethnicity are the major causes of conflicts while electoral and political conflicts are the key types of conflicts and as such community members and political class are the key players in averting the conflicts for a long term development.

Keywords: Causes of conflicts, Electioneering process, Ethnicity, Media, Types of conflicts

1. Introduction

Today, intra-state conflict is the major type of conflict in the world in general, and especially in Africa (Rupesinghe *et al*., 1996:26; Sandole, 1999:136; Lund 2006:3; Dokken 2008:3). Walter (2009:3) argues that exceeding half of all civil wars in 2008 were fought between ethnic minorities and their central governments over superior autonomy or independence. According to Lund (2006:3), the vast majority of conflicts are national in nature, dealing with secessionist, ethnic, or ideological issues. Dokken (2008:3), writing at the time, observed that 56.6% of African states were experiencing some form of intrastate conflict.

Sisk (2003:1) contends that democracy as a structure of political determination is in many ways a technique of conflict management in which the aftermaths are anonymous but the ultimate rules of the game provide a benign ground in which to contest. For this motive, many profoundly divided postwar cultures in the 1990s have curved to democracy as a system to depart from intractable conflicts (Sisk 2003:1). Along these lines, Brahm (2005: 3) and Lyons (2009:91-92) assert that elections have been a portion of almost all bargained settlements of civil warfare in the post-Cold War epoch. Where secession or division is not an alternative (and it seldom given customs of sovereignty), unadventurous wisdom is that uncensored elections are the truly efficient means of channeling competition to peaceful means. In a different perspective, Deng (1996:226) maintains that Western-Style consensus of the vote, with the 'winner take all' effect, runs pawn to the African native principle of power- allotment and conciliation, and consequently, cannot be a core for dispute resolution in the African traditional milieu.

The continent of Africa has agonized several armed conflicts, some of which the media played a key role. Media has been accused as one of the gears for stimulating conflict. Researches have shown that contribution of mass media on conflicts were by inflaming violence, failing to focus on emerging wars and procrastinating to report struggles. For instance, the Rwandese Radio- Television Libre des Milles Collines (RTLM) is a unique examples of media that abetted stimulate conflict by encouraging the Hutu population to exterminate the Tutsi terming them as "cockroaches" that must be eliminated to ensure peace in Rwanda (Mutua 2001). This resulted in the massacre of almost 1,000,000 Tutsi and displacement of many others.

The widespread community clashes in African continent has repeatedly frolicked contrarily to milieu of high ignorance, dearth, and feeble administrative structures diluted by unfavorable indebtedness and leadership botches (Zartman, 1995). It is contended that amalgamation of resource struggle, ethnicity, socioeconomic and politics triggered several electioneering violence in African continent. Kenya has never been immune from armed conflict. More specifically, Kenya has experienced both intra and inter conflicts. These clashes

mostly display themselves as economic, political, environmental as well as natural resources conflicts, land and ethnic conflicts and recently terrorism (Wotzka *et al.*, 2003). The inception of multi-party politics in Kenya generated new aspects of election conflicts. Election-related violence has been experienced during every election period starting 1992, with the 2007/2008 election ensuing as the severest bloodshed ever in the history of the nation.

Kenya as a nation-state has been regarded as a representative democracy in Africa and has on several instances been depicted as an isle of peacetime in Africa (Wolfsfeld, 2004). In as much as expected, traditionally the media is a tool for peace and peace-building. In rare situations the media has triggered conflict. The research question, therefore, was why has the media served to trigger conflict rather than the expected and anticipated peace-building in Kisumu County, Kenya?

Despite having many studies done on media and election violence, hardly any of these studies substantially identified the influence of media on the peaceful conduct of electioneering process, more so in Kenya and Kisumu in particular where the relationship has not received interest by researchers in any of the accessed studies despite the country having experienced both pre- and post-election violence. The study, therefore, pursued to assess the association between media and conduct of electioneering process and more so the extent to which it contributed to either conflict/violence or peace-building in Kenya with reference to Kisumu County.

2.   Theoretical framework and conceptual framework

According to Galtung (1969) structural violence stems from violence in the structure of society, rather than actor-generated personal and direct violence. By relating violence to the structure of society, Galtung created a connection between peace, conflict and development research. Galtung goes further to state that, since personal and direct violence are often built into social structure, it is much better to focus on the bigger picture revealed by structural violence as this would reveal the causes and effects of violence and conditions for peace. Galtung (1969) went on to introduce the concept of cultural violence as those aspects of culture that can be used to legitimize and justify violence. The flow of violence was from cultural via structural to direct violence. To understand the direct structural and cultural violence triangle, Galtung (2000) employs the concept of power and identified four dimensions of power impacting positive and negative peace: cultural, economic, military and political. Galtung (2000) maintains that the vicious spiral of violence can be broken with the virtuous spiral of peace flowing from cultural peace through structural peace to direct peace. This process would bring about positive peace.

Agenda-setting theory explains how audiences can perceive a given news item depending on the significance that media give to the news story in terms of the coverage and position (McCombs and Reynolds, 2002). . In this way, the agenda-setting function may have been altered, either by diminishing the ability of mainstream media to set the political

agenda or by reversing the flow of information (Sawers, 1996). Rwanda's radio RTLM urged listeners to pick up machetes to take to streets to kill what they called cockroaches. Broadcasters in the Balkans polarized local communities to the where violence became an acceptable tool for addressing grievances. Media involvement in electioneering violence has been widely criticized to having been part of conflict, being used by government or politicians to cultivate public support. It has been alleged that media framing of stories distorted the reality of the war.

3.   Materials and Methods

This study adopted descriptive study designs as recommended by Kumar (2011) whose thrust was to examine causes and types of conflicts electioneering process and how it affects the human factors during conflicts. This study was conducted in Kisumu County nicknamed as "*kisumo*". The county is viewed as the epicenter of 1992, 1997, 2007/08 and 2013 election violence in the former Nyanza Province (KNCHR, 2008). Kisumu County has experienced heightened political violence since the resuscitation of multi-party system thus it is imperative for this study to analyze this situation. The rationale for choosing Kisumu County and especially the two sub-counties was that those regions have experienced violent conflicts since the resuscitation of multi-party democracy coupled with multi-ethnic groupings. According to Singleton (1993), the perfect location for the research is one that is unequivocally connected to the interest of the researcher. Additionally, he notes that the study area must be simply reachable by the researcher and that it must permit faster relationship with the participants. The researcher adopted both probability and non-probability methods in selecting a representative sample for the study. Throughout the study, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. The questionnaires were hand delivered to the target population including local community, businesspersons, journalists, registered voters, CSOs, security officials and survivors. Four hundred and fifty (450) questionnaires were administered to some members of the community residing in Kisumu County. The dependability factor was calculated based on the accepted 95% coefficient/index of reliability (Norland, 2010). The study found a reliability coefficient of 0.8551 showing high reliability. Content and construct validity were examined by the supervisors as well as scholars at the Department of Peace and Conflict studies.

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed descriptively and inferential statistics using Chi-Square goodness of fit in order to establish the level of significance of correlation between study variables. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 21 and presented in tables, pie charts and bar charts. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic techniques analysis to support quantitative data and presented in form of verbatim reports.

4.   Study Findings and Discussions

To examine the causes and types of conflicts during electioneering process in Kenya, a total of 450 questionnaires were administered and 400 were filled and returned.
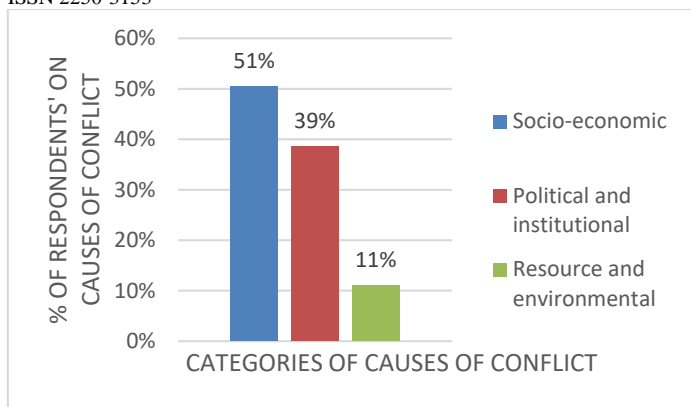
Figure 1: Causes of conflict during electioneering process in Kisumu County

Source: Field Data (2019)

The findings in Figure 1, reveals that the major causes of conflict in Kisumu County is socio-economic factors 51%, political and institutional factors 39% while resource and environmental factor 11%. The study, therefore, shows that socio-economic dynamics are the major instigate of clashes as majority of people are unemployed and poor thus could be easily manipulated. Majority of respondents (67%) mentioned historical injustices and electoral issues as the major cause of conflicts. The study also reveals that political conflicts only occur during electioneering process as people have mentality of win and support of one dominant political party. The study further found out that the political culture of the community lead to conflict.

Culture was mentioned as a cause of conflict as alluded by most respondents to be the order of political wrangles in Kenya. Consequently, leaders are elected based on their culture and where they come from. This was supported by an interview with former South West Nyakach MCA who stated that:

For instance, Kikuyu political leaders barely be voted for in this region that Luos occupy, dominant and so on. We only elect our members of the Luo community. (Interview with MCA Nyakach held at Travellers Hotel, Katito. 7/04/2019).

Several conflicts have risen in Kenya with their main cause as ethnic disagreements or ethnic inclination. The concept of ethnicity occurs when people's needs and interests are solved or addressed based on tribal inclinations. When conflicts arise from ethnic differences they are driven by non-fulfillment or threats to the fulfillment of basic needs (Kamoet, 2011). In Kenya, ethnicity is being used by many people as their form of identity and influences a lot of things like politics. It is a cause of distrust and mistrust between communities. Many stereotypes have come out of ethnicity leading to different strains of conflicts. An interview with Luo council of Elders at West Nyakach on 4/04/2019 confirmed that:

Political conflicts in Nyanza started way back in the 1970s when Jaramogi Oginga differed and drifted with Kenyatta. When Kenyatta came to Kisumu to open Nyanza General Hospital and

a rotten eggs was thrown to him, this led to shooting and killing of many people (Interview with Luo council of Elders held at Kabondo on 4/04/2019).

This finding was supported by Nyukuri (2008) who claimed that; "At this point the hatred between Luos and Kikuyus heightened and aggravated till now". From the findings, it could be debated that amalgamation of factors such as culture, political and socioeconomic "Factors such as culture, politics, external intervention, socio-economic, and dysfunctional governance would also explain the inter-state conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia that occurred in 1998 (Jhazbhay, 2008: 15)". The findings of the study reveals that Kisumu County has had a long history of conflicts as supported by Oucho (2002), who traces the Luo and Agikuyu ethnic rivalry to 5th July 1969, when Tom Mboya, Kenya's illustrious politician was shot dead on a Nairobi street. The findings revealed that electoral injustices and rejection of results lead to conflicts. Ethnicity is also another factor that could lead to ethnic conflict. Dominant ethnic communities that seek to impose their rule over the weaker ethnic communities could lead to ethnic conflict where the smaller ethnic groups seek equal distribution of resources and power. Power of wherewithal is also a key cause of clash in Kisumu County.
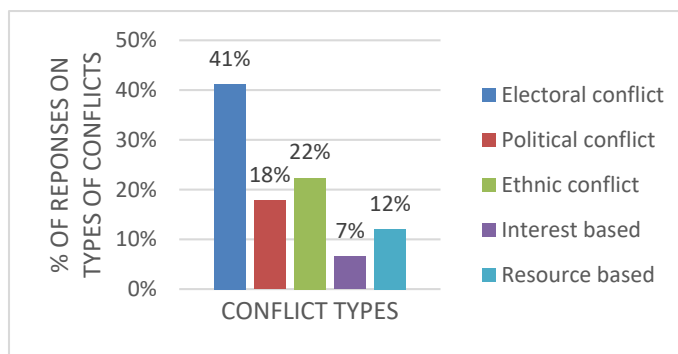

Figure 2: Types of conflicts experienced in Kisumu County since 1992
Source: Field Data (2019)

From Figure 2, it is evident that electoral conflict constituted (41%), political conflict (18%), ethnic conflict (22%), resource based conflict (12%) while interest based conflict constituted 7%. These findings show that Kisumu County is prone to electoral conflict mostly followed closely by ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflict is attributed to the borders of Kisumu and Kericho and Nandi. This is due to the high rates of cattle rustling and natural resources like boundaries and water. The findings reveal that electoral conflicts are mostly associated with the claims of rigging, poor electoral management and unfair coverage of events during casting and counting of ballots. Political conflicts was found to be associated with who belongs to which party and how ethnicity is driven based on issues affecting   them.

Table 1: Types of conflicts having widespread impact on Kisumu County

Descriptive Statistics

Types of conflicts	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Resource based	400	152	.38	.486	.236	-1.763	.243
Ethnic conflict	400	245	.61	.488	.238	-1.794	.243
Electoral conflict	400	330	.82	.387	.150	.960	.243
Political Conflict	400	250	.63	.485	.235	-1.740	.243
Interest based conflict	400	106	.27	.442	.195	-.862	.243
Valid N (listwise)	400						

Source: **Field**   **Data**   (2019)

The results in Table 1, reveal that electoral conflict constituted 330 (82.5%), resource based 152 (38%), ethnic conflict 245 (61.5%), political conflict 250 (62.5% while interest based 106 (26.5%). These findings show that electoral conflicts have had a wider impact on the residents of Kisumu County. The study further shows that electoral conflicts have been felt during every electioneering process since 1992. Electoral conflict is followed closely by ethnic conflict. The study reveals that ethnic conflicts are rampant and recurring along the borders of Nyakach and Nandi or Kericho. These results were in agreement with findings from FGDs and Key informant interviews. During the interview with Women Group Leaders and council of Elders in an FGD conducted at East Nyakach and Kondele respectively, eight (8) out of the ten respondents in an FGD agreed that politics have a lot to do with ethnic and electoral conflicts in the study area. The respondents from the FGDs itemized that the election periods, were the times of highest conflicts in the area with Sondu and Kondele leading in creating tension and putting up fires on the road.

The results are in tandem with the assertion by Peters (2009), who claimed that, in Kenya each electioneer time is tarnished incidents of political provocation, land issues, ethnic clashes and ethnic divisions which ultimately lead to dangerous conflicts among ethnic groupings during electioneers and after elections. Additionally, Oyugi (2002) indicated that clashes in Nyakach and Kisumu areas during and after 1992, 1997 and 2002 elections were as a product of ethnic balkanization constructed on political attachments.

The findings further are supported by Adar (2001) who argues that elect alteration of ethnicity as the central point for political authority is a usual experience in Kenya's post-independence history, with the 1992 and 1997 multiparty elections evidently validating this pattern. At the heart of this tendency of electoral process is the issue of state control, the center of political power and wealth accrual. Exactly, ethnic purgative is aftermath of elect osteopathy.

On the other hand, media has the ability of presenting and analyzing the history of the conflicts as observed from different parties' involvement and creating awareness on the historical and recognized injustices. This was in agreement with the interview findings at Nyakach;

The 2002 General elections marked the end of Daniel's Moi 26 year political regime after being ousted by a united front mounted by opposition leaders who the first time in their political careers put their personal differences aside. The end of Moi era was perceived as a positive move for democracy and media houses pushed the democratic transformation agenda most. The key message from the media was urging people to "vote wisely" (Interview with the former MP of Nyakach, Sondu Hall, 02/04/2019).

To the contrary, the interview with MCA of South Nyakach claimed that;

Kenyans went to the ballot on the 27th December 2007. The media portrayed an atmosphere marred with violence and antagonism between Mwai Kibaki of PNU and Raila Odinga of ODM. All the news and polls evidently declared our own was winning but "wakia gimanotimore" meaning we don't know what happened. The power just went off and when it came back, Kibaki was leading. "Wan joluo imayowa to waneno, ne litnwa marach" Meaning we Luos we are stolen from while seeing, it was very painful. (Interview with MCA, South Nyakach held at ward Office, 03/04/2019).

From the FGD one participant stated that:

The blackout of media and power could aggravated further the fueling of violence. It was evident something was going thus the government didn't want people to see. They had ample time to manipulate the votes on their favor. Many local stations incited

their members to fight for their rights, politicians used local radios to incite hatred and hate speech and propaganda (One of the discussants in FGD, held at Kondele Market, 7/04/2019).

This was supported by the findings of the National Communication on Human Rights report claimed that, the entire electioneering period was characterized by hate speech and incitement to violence. One thing that is memorable about 2007 elections is the role played by all manner of information from all sources, unsolicited and solicited-SMS, blogs, newsletter, leaflets, TV and radio sources.
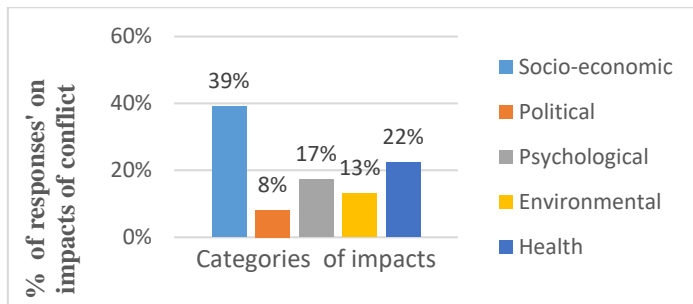

Figure 3: Impacts of conflicts on Kisumu County

Source: Field Data (2019)

The results in Figure 3 indicate that 39% of the respondents experienced socio-economic impacts, health impacts were 22%, political 8%, psychological impact 17% and environmental impact 13%. These findings indicate that conflicts have greater impact on the socio-economic aspects of the study area. The majority of the respondents had experienced the impacts of the conflicts in study. These findings agree with a study by Akinyi *et al*., (2011) "which opined that communities from the two sub-counties had been affected by recurrent conflicts for many years, these conflicts have been more common since 1992 and have since then recurred over the years and thus justifying why majority of the respondents have been affected by conflicts". In an interview, the chief of North Nyakach location indicated that:

The recurrence of conflicts in the border areas of Nyakach led to the deployment of police and establishment of police post thus reducing the incidences of conflicts (Interview with Chief of North Nyakach, 04/04/2019).

All the chiefs, security officers who were interviewed indicated that Kenyan armed forces had really assisted in reducing the conflicts. It also emerged from the Luo council of elders FGD in Sondu construction and camping of armed forces helped. KNHCR (2008) indicated that among the challenges the police face are hostility, bad weather and unfavorable working conditions. An official from Kenya Red Cross Kisumu Central also opined that conflicts are not common within Kisumu central sub-county unless and only during electioneering period. The sentiments of the Red Cross official were in agreement with those of the MCAs, chiefs and security officers

interviewed in Nyakach. One of the participants in the FGD, a member of the council of elders from Nyakach opined that:

Most of the areas prone to conflicts are borders and Sondu town. These places are hotspots due to the cattle raiding which goes on in these areas and electioneering period. During 2007/2008, nobody could easily pass Sondu. There was fire lit everywhere mostly on the main roads. (Sondu FGD participant, 5/04/2019).

An interview with women group leaders FGDs, Kisumu Central indicated that:

During electioneering period any results that goes against Luos will escalate conflicts. The starting point for all conflicts in Kisumu is Kondele. It has remained hotspot for a long period. The worst area again is Nyalenda, the gangsters takes advantage of the electoral conflicts to loot, murder and threaten people (Luo Women group leaders FGD in Kondele Market, 27/03/2019).

The findings show that post-election violence had an impact on the country in different ways. For example, it had an impact on the economy, displacement of people, looting and burning of property, re-awakening of latent ethnic hatred among other impacts. The findings of the study indicate that journalists seemed to condemn violence.

The study found that conflicts also had serious implications on the economy and livelihoods of the people living in Kisumu County. According to the results, majority of respondents agreed that conflicts led to lack of market for farm produce and businesses. While only a few of the respondents had contrary opinion. This was attributed to the fact that during these conflicts, movement is limited and traders would not go to the market to their goods. This finding was in line with a key informant interview at Nyalenda:

During conflicts mostly election violence, all roads leading to Kondele market are closed. None is allowed to pass unless you are carrying twigs and accompanying the demonstrators. Nyalenda is usually worst during election times. (Interview with Pastor of Anglican Church, Nyalenda, 08/04/2019).

The results from the FGDs and interviews concurred with findings from the council of elders. Participants in the council of elders FGD in West Nyakach opined that conflicts greatly affected important economic activities in the area, mainly agriculture and trade. Kibuye market is the major market situated within the town. The findings were consistent with a study by Masaka *et al.* (2017), in which cross-border conflicts in Kenyanya and Rongo Sub-counties have a great implication on the economic activities of the communities living in the area. According to the study frequent inter-ethnic violence affects the livelihood of the border residents in many ways. It affects the livelihoods of small-holder farmers in the sense that when clashes break out most of them are unable to access their farms

to cultivate, plant or harvest crops. The conflicts also cause inaccessibility to nearby Rongo.
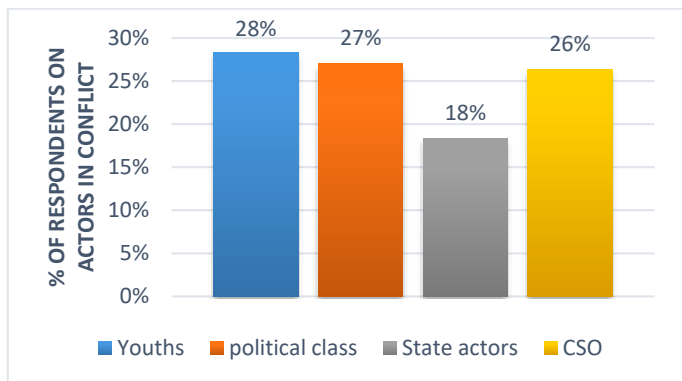

Figure 4: Actors involved in conflicts, Field Data (2019)

From figure 4, it is evident that most actors involved in conflicts are youths (28%), political class (27%), CSO were 26% and state actors 18%. In this sense, therefore, majority were of the opinion that youths are actively involved in conflicts. This can be a result of joblessness which leads to idleness. The findings also reveal that youths can be easily manipulated by the political class as they mostly need hand-outs. In an interview with the chief of Manyatta location it emerged that the youths are the most active participants in electoral and political conflicts. Similar claims were made by the Women Group FGD and victims of PEV at Nyakach South.
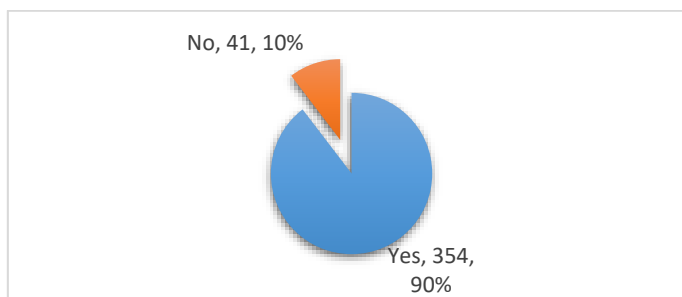

Figure 6: Media playing a role in conflict
Source: Field Data (2019)

The results in figure 6, shows that 90% of respondents said yes while 10% disagreed. Majority of respondents agreed that actually media have played a role in conflict. The findings reveal that media played many roles both positive and negative. Some of the positive roles suggested by the respondents were; education of the public, training of the journalists, calling for peace and advocating for human rights. On the contrary, the negative roles were incitement of groups, hate speech, propaganda, corruption by media houses and withholding information. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Thompson (2007) who opine that, in the Balkans broadcaster's polarized local communities to the point where, violence became an acceptable tool for addressing grievances. In the case of Rwanda, the media was also used to guide the perpetrators of the genocide towards their victims. The media may also incite violence through manipulative, negative

presentation of facts that create the impression that the situation is worsening.
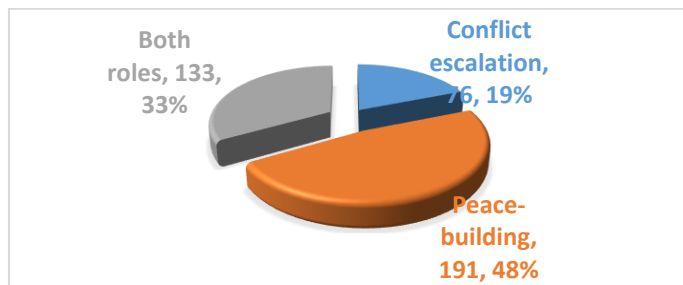

Figure 5: Roles played by the media during electioneering process

Source: Field Data (2019)

The results in figure 5, shows that 76(19%) of respondents were of conflict escalation, 191(48%) of respondents were of peace-building while 133(33%) were of both roles. This study, therefore, found that media played a greater role in peace-building than conflict escalation. While those who said both roles show that media remains a powerful tool and a double edge sword on both sides. Only minority said media played conflict escalation role. The study therefore found that Media is used to send messages between conflicting sides. In this case media acts as the diplomats by sending messages to test reactions on negotiations. Messages and signals may be sent to other groups through the media. This was in line by Gilboa (2002) who opined that the news media also invites leaders from the opposing sides to TV or Radio to discuss matters openly hence creating a bridge among enemies and building confidence that is needed to negotiate and bring the conflict to an end.

These results are in tandem with findings of Gopin (2001) who opined that, media used the special opportunities to work towards peace and reconciliation in Colombia so that people could obtain truth and reparation in relation to violations. The findings are in agreement with Williams and Gulati (2007) who claimed that observers provide physical presence that is intended to discourage violence, corruption and human rights violations in Sudan. Smith (2010) also supported this study finding by observing that media with willingness have gone beyond responding to effects of conflicts and have advocated and agitated for peace. Given the need for peace-building in Kenya after 2007, Nasongo *et al., (2009),* raised the question, "Are forgiveness and amnesty a panacea to Kenya's post conflict crisis?"

The findings of this study were further supported Viggo (2011), who opined that a conflict- galloped states, media often play an important role in generating and advancing both accelerating factors and activating factors linked to internal and external issues or threats facing the nation. According to Terzis & Melone (2002), media can create divisions by not revealing diversity in the social and political constructs. Summary of the correlation are shown in the table below.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis between influence of media based age and gender

Correlations[b]

		Gender	What role did media play	Age	Do you think media played a role in conflict situation
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	-.056	-.283[**]	-.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.326	.000	.504
What role did media play	Pearson Correlation	-.056	1	.084	-.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.326		.139	.442
Age	Pearson Correlation	-.283[**]	.084	1	.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.139		.652
Do you think media played a role in conflict situation	Pearson Correlation	-.038	-.043	.025	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.504	.442	.652	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field   Data   (2019)

The findings in table 2, reveal that the coefficient of age is 0.652 showing a strong positive correlation that age has an effect on the media role in conflict. The finding also reveals there is a weak negative correlation between gender and media role in conflict. Therefore, the study confirms a strong positive correlation between age and media role in conflict. This study shows that there is statistical significance between age and media influence. Most respondents are influenced based on their age. While there is no significant difference between gender. This shows that both gender are influenced on same degree.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that historical injustices, election rigging claims and ethnicity were the major causes of conflicts within Kisumu County. Youths are actively involved in conflicts due to high level of unemployment. People are always prepared that their own will win and address the historical injustices. People were prepared for violence as media reported an atmosphere of rigging or volatile for conflicts. A win mentality in Kisumu County where there are only winners and no losers also precipitated conflicts. The study also concludes that the major types of conflicts in Kisumu County are electoral and political conflicts. Most conflicts in Kisumu occur during electioneering process. However, ethnicity was also alluded to as a major type of conflict that affects mostly the border of Nyakach and Nandi. Negative ethnicity has influenced the recurrence of conflicts along the Nyakach and Nandi border.

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