



The Function of Urban Adolescents in Reducing Political Conflict. An Example of Makokoba Region in Zimbabwe Metropolitan Area

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Abstract

The primary goals of this study were to identify the characteristics of political violence, investigate its root causes, analyze its effects on urban youth in Makokoba, and suggest potential strategies for reducing political violence in order to maintain the nation's peace and security. With particular emphasis on the young political violence in Makokoba, a descriptive research methodology was adopted in this study. Data collection methods for the study included purposive sampling. It was picked because the study wanted to help the study concentrate on certain traits of an interesting group. The data collection methods employed in the study were focus group discussions and interviews. For better credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability of the data, the responses were presented in a thematic fashion and content analysis was used. The participant revealed that youth political violence takes the form of intraparty violence, which is fueled by succession disputes and access to resources for party leaders. This violence may manifest as demonstrations by rival factions within different parties, fights, assaults, hate speech, and hate messages exchanged in person, on social media, and in the media. Youth political violence was believed to be primarily motivated by competition for political sway. According to the study, youth political violence has led to voter apathy, apprehension about willingly participating in national decisions, loss of life, unfair election results, destruction of public and private property, disruption of the electoral process, and an increase in crimes like assaults, murder, attempted murder, forced disappearances, and rape cases.

Keywords: Political violence, accountability, peacebuilding, and democracy

Introduction

Political violence has persisted despite the emergence of democratic regimes in the majority of sub-Saharan nations. With a focus on Zimbabwe's Makokoba High Density Suburb of the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province, the research set out to determine the role of urban youth in reducing political violence. This chapter provided information on the study's background, problem statement, purpose, research aims, research questions, and significance. The chapter goes on to discuss the scope, restrictions, and definitions of words used in the study.

Background of the Study

In both scholarly and media circles, political violence in Africa has drawn a lot of attention. It puts political stability, democratic reform, and economic development under danger, causes hardship for people, and in some cases, may turn into civil war. The risk of civil war is increased by poverty and reliance on basic resources, while the impact of ethnic variety and group grievances on the commencement of conflict is downplayed (De Juan, 2012). This is according to a number of recent studies that have looked at the onset of civil war. Although these research used highly aggregated

measurements, they did not completely uncover the mechanisms that relate sources to outcomes. A corpus of scholarship that goes beyond the macro level and seeks to understand the mechanisms that encourage violent conflict has recently come into the spotlight (Alao and Olawale, 2007). These cases center on civil war, which occurs considerably less frequently than political violence. The last incident before a full-fledged civil war is often political violence. For instance, in Cote d'Ivoire, where major areas of the country were overrun by armed insurgencies, there were instances of political violence prior to the outbreak of those insurgencies (De Juan, 2012).

In other words, civil wars do not occur haphazardly and are frequently preceded by acts of political violence. Consequently, it is beneficial to take a step back in order to better comprehend the processes that lead to major civil strife. Furthermore, governments and donors may be able to prevent conflicts from turning into civil wars by recognizing the variables that predict political violence.

Instead of focusing on violent civil wars in Africa, the research aims to comprehend how people regard political violence as a political alternative in the context of Zimbabwe. Few studies have looked at the connection between state

characteristics and a propensity for violent conflict. One exception is research by Cedarman and Girardin from 2007, which shows that the state has a significant impact on ethnonationalist conflict when one ethnic group is in power and the other is out of it.

Youth historically played a significant role in the resistance against colonial control in specific states and the continent as a whole, but they were written off after a few decades as a lost generation that was marked by brutality and violence (Everett, 2000). In South Africa, a big portion of the younger generation campaigned against apartheid but was eventually ignored in favor of the more established generation, as stated in Everatt's comment from 2000. Young people consequently developed a reticence in policymaking for a few decades.

For instance, the Soweto-based June 16 Uprising of 1976, which extended across the entire nation (Alao and Olawale, 2007), significantly altered South Africa's sociopolitical environment. According to MacNeil (2013), the events that precipitated the revolt can be linked to Apartheid government policies that led to the implementation of the Bantu Education Act in 1953. Many students developed a stronger political awareness as a result of the Black Consciousness Movement's emergence and the founding of the South African Students Organization, while others joined the anti-Apartheid feeling that was spreading among students.

Black pupils started organizing themselves in 1974, when Afrikaans instruction alongside English became a requirement in schools. Between 3000 and 10 000 students were mobilized by the Action Committee of the South African Students Movement on June 16, 1976, with the help of the Black Consciousness Movement, and they marched in a peaceful protest against the government order (Honwana, 2012). The gathering in Orlando Stadium planned to serve as the march's finale. This tends to indicate that it is beyond rhetoric to recognize and value Africa's dynamic youth population.

Young people's active participation has been shown to be a key tool in reducing political violence in various African nations. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Fondation Chirezi (FOCHI) organized "baraza courts" (conflict resolution and mediation sessions in local communities) to settle minor disputes and land issues in villages (Sedra, 2010). FOCIH is a grassroots program that offers peace education, mediation, and conflict resolution to communities and youth. Most of the young people who have received training use communication and mediation techniques to settle disputes in their own areas. This illustration demonstrates how important a role young people may have in resolving conflicts and maintaining the peace.

Purpose of the Study

The project looks to see what part urban adolescents can play in reducing political violence. It is important to avoid separating violent situations from political processes by, for example, reducing them to criminal activity, such as murder and drug trafficking, or to social issues, such as high rates of youth unemployment, the use of illegal drugs, and gang culture. There is little room for outside actors to contribute to the mitigation of violence because of the complicated and deep relationship between political order and authority and violence in nations and regions that experience high levels of violence. According to the data, whereas external interventions may contribute to a brief period of stability, they also run the risk of failing to promote comprehensive and long-term solutions (Bob-Milliar, 2012).

Additionally, there is a low likelihood that they will be accepted and embraced by the target countries' governments and populaces. By granting or withholding legitimacy to/from rulers, including by resorting to violence, citizens shape and shatter political agreements (Malu, 2008). Political settlement changes therefore take place at both the macro and micro levels, and in order to achieve the goal of effective violence mitigation, policies must support political processes at both levels concurrently. In this light, the research aimed to offer long-term mitigation techniques that young people could employ to end political violence.

Statement of the Problem

Many young people all throughout the world have experienced cultural, direct, and structural violence, and occasionally they have even perpetrated it (Yair and Miodownik, 2016). Urban youth of Bulawayo's Makokoba suburb were at the forefront of political violence during the 2008 Harmonized general elections in Zimbabwe, which received the support of the country's two major political parties (Mkandawire, 2010). Some teenagers from both parties were negatively impacted by the political violence's outcome. 210 young people were detained in Makokoba for engaging in political violence in 2008 (Mukandawira, 2013). 254 youths were detained for political violence in 2013. In 2018, According to the Zimbabwe Electoral Network Report (2018), each urban political seat in Zimbabwe has at least 266 youths who were either perpetrators or victims of political violence (Zimbabwe Election Network, 2019). Given the foregoing, it is sufficient to say that urban teenagers are still more often utilized to incite political violence and cause unrest than to encourage positive community engagement and the promotion of peace. This can be done to try and discourage them from using political violence. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine what functions the urban young in Makokoba High Density Suburb should perform in order to reduce political violence.

Objectives of the Study

The Study Seeks to:

- i). Examine the reasons behind young people in Makokoba's political violence.
- ii). Describe the ways in which youth participated in political violence in metropolitan areas.
- iii). Look at the impact of political unrest on young people in Makokoba
- iv). Make suggestions for potential methods to reduce political violence so that the nation can effectively maintain its security and peace.

Assumption of the Study

The study assumes that:

- i). Political violence affected young people in Makokoba.
- ii). Youth from Makokoba will volunteer to take part in the study since they are aware of ways to lessen political violence in their region.
- iii). The study makes the supposition that every interview will be conducted in good faith.
- iv). Respondents will answer questionnaires sent to them truthfully, secondary data for the study is accessible, and the data gathered will be reliable with statistical results that are sufficient to explicitly exploit the issue at hand.

Limitations of the Study

Due to his dual responsibilities as a full-time work and student, the researcher has a restricted amount of time to complete the study assignment. Due to some employment obligations, he has little time to conduct the research as a result. However, the researcher took time off from work to make sure he had enough time to complete the research on schedule. Due to financial constraints in this unstable and tumultuous environment, the research has a limited budget to conduct the research. To complete the investigation, the used a small amount of contingency money from his poultry project. The research project's geographic scope was constrained. Only the Makokoba constituency in Bulawayo was the subject of the research, making it challenging to generalize the results to other seats without additional study. But the researcher meticulously gathered information and performed thorough analysis.

Literature Review

The phrase "rational choice theory" is used to describe a wide range of models that explain social phenomena as the results of personal decisions that may or may not be considered to be reasonable. "Rational behavior" refers to behavior that, given the constraints of the circumstance, is appropriate for achieving a specific purpose. All rational choice explanations relied heavily on the preferences, assumptions, and limits of the individual. The positive or negative assessments that people have about the potential results of their activities are referred to as preferences. Preferences can have a variety of origins, from ingrained habits and convictions to culturally inherited tastes in food or other things. Beliefs pertain to perceived cause-and-effect relationships, such as the believed chance that a person's activities will lead to a variety of potential outcomes.

In politics, for instance, political party "A" might think that smearing political party "B" has a higher chance of fostering a political environment that would ultimately lead to political party "A" obtaining a predominate representation in parliament. However, a critique of the rational choice theory points out that most people conform to social standards even when doing so does not benefit them. According to some detractors, the rational choice theory does not take into consideration decisions that were taken as a result of situational factors or that were context-dependent.

According to the popular press, political violence frequently arises from long-standing ethnic disputes or from intense emotions at a period of political maneuvering (Buchard, 2016). It is frequently employed as a political tactic to raise one's chances of success or to gain advantage during political maneuvers (Mkandawire, 2010). Political violence is more likely to occur as a result when it is believed to have the capacity to cause substantial changes in the balance of power (Sedra, 2010). According to research based on global statistics, incumbents who are endangered and face a strong challenge are more likely to resort to violence to win elections than incumbents who are not under threat, especially when their power is unchecked (Vold, Bernard, and Snipes, 2012).

Based on research of four African countries and political game models, stronger, non-threatened incumbents may actually prefer to use bribery over violence (Collier and Vicente 2012). These incumbents, however, are likely to put themselves out of reach by commanding or persuading local party members to take action on their behalf (Bruce, 2014).

Since authoritarian nations don't hold legitimate elections and actively suppress violence, while established democracies

often favor peaceful discussion, new and semi-democracies are especially vulnerable to violence (Hedre *et al* 2001). Due to the emergence of once-hostile factions as potent political forces, post-conflict circumstances may be more dangerous (Brancati and Snyder 2013). Elections also have the potential to incite violence through nationalist politics practiced by powerful elites in the absence of strong, moderating political institutions (Snyder 2000; Mansfield and Snyder 2005). Determining voting procedures to improve justice and decrease violence, especially after conflict or during times of transition, has garnered a lot of attention. Winner-take-all electoral systems may promote violence because they concentrate power in the hands of the president and make it worthwhile to engage in violent conflict to obtain the position, as in Kenya (Klopp 2001). It appears to be a weak factor, though, according to conflicting results from Ghana.

Malu (2008) says that a culture of political violence appears to have developed among Nigerians. Political culture has embraced youth political violence to the point where it practically permeates every election since. Numerous forms of electoral violence or violence related to party politics and the conduct of elections significantly impacted all of these elections. Therefore, preventing violence before, during, and after elections is one of the main issues of managing the electoral institutions in Nigeria. Although elections are one of the most important aspects of democracy and the idea that people should choose for themselves who would represent their interests and serve as their representatives, Paolo (2017) notes that there have only been a very small number of cases in Nigeria where these aims have been achieved.

Elections are now regarded as one of the most important factors in the choice of leaders in modern states, despite the fact that methods of choosing representatives and those who would rule have changed between eras and countries. Elections were also seen as an important aspect of democracies because, in the absence of them, the struggle for power would be much more disorderly. According to David (2007), one of the most important roles of elections is to legitimize a political system, secure the accountability of leaders, and strengthen public participation in the political process. Elections were more frequently utilized as battlegrounds where youngsters were enlisted in political violence as a result of electoral frauds that undermine the democratic system's stability and tarnish its credibility.

According to studies conducted in Kenya, there was a significant increase in young violence after the contentious Presidential Election of December 2007 (Bodea and Elbadawi, 2008). In some areas of the Rift Valley, gangs of armed Kalenjin and Kikuyu adolescents engaged in looting, rioting, and killing with the encouragement and support of politicians and local authorities (David, 2007). The stability of their towns and nation, however, was greatly impacted by the small number of young people who did. The post-election violence caused 1,500 deaths, 660, 000 displaced persons, extensive property and land loss, and a torn apart of the nation's fabric (Bob-Milliar, 2012). However, young people's involvement in peace talks had little impact on how much they trusted or interacted with other Kenyans. The fact that adolescents were frequently incorporated into larger community conversations rather than independent, youth-led dialogues may have reduced the influence of their participation on their levels of trust. The conflicting results raise concerns about whether and how attempts to improve young people's conflict resolution abilities and support peace talks contribute to better stability (Corps, 2007).

Youth-Related Consequences of Political Violence

According to research conducted in Zambia, youth involvement in political violence has the following effects on electorates: disenfranchisement of electorates, voter apathy, fear of willingly participating in national decisions, loss of life, unfair election results, destruction of public and private property, disruption of the electoral process, and rise in crime (Bodea and Elbadawi, 2008). The results caused voters to flee in fear, preventing them from exercising their freedom to freely choose a candidate of their choice since they were beaten up and had their property destroyed.

According to studies conducted in Africa South of the Sahara, political violence is frequently linked to a variety of negative effects, such as bodily harm, disruption of social relationships, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety (Alao & Olawale, 2007). However, the social and political settings of people's lives provide a lot of insulation from the negative psychological repercussions of political violence. Studies in Asia, however, warn that despite the significance of social and political environments for people's health, there is little research on how political violence undermines essential social and political systems and prevents people from engaging in social and political life (Buchard, 2016). This narrative review, which draws on literature from a variety of fields such as public health, anthropology, and psychology, adopts a multi-level, social ecology framework to advance our understanding of how political violence affects health.

People's faith in democratic institutions, government agencies, and social norms is eroded by political violence. According to Peters' (2011) research in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, people's trust in communal and organizational procedures dropped when their own governments participated in political violence. This was also discovered by Lindberg (2006), who claimed that political violence led to a lack of trust in authorities and the legal system. In Mozambique, David (2007) discovered that participants' judgments that those responsible were not punished added to the stress of the war. This conviction was linked to a decline in survivors' faith in the fundamental decency of individuals and the justness of the world. According to Paalo's (2017) research of political violence in Kenya, people have a lingering animosity toward society as a whole because of the notion that those who use violence are not held accountable. People's faith in democracy also declined as a result of their declining confidence in human decency and the justness of the world.

Techniques for Reducing Juvenile Political Violence

Urban youth's efforts to reduce political violence have been the subject of numerous studies conducted around the world, according to MacNeil (2013). Different approaches to presenting these factors were frequently associated with different presumptions about the fundamental causes and motivators of the political violence. Program planners will need to carefully examine which strategies to use as long as funding for youth businesses to reduce political violence remains limited. Policymakers effectively promote one specific idea of peace building because the chosen policies frequently feed back to analytical principles.

But as the literature illustrates, many actors follow various practices. Nevertheless, it is conceivable to pinpoint a few crucial intervention areas that will be the focus of efforts to reduce political violence among urban youth. The main areas of intervention may include providing security (MacNeil,

2013), preventing spoilers through the use of intelligence, mediation, negotiation, conferences, youth participation in electoral processes, non-official conflict management such as peace commissions, workshops, (Alao and Olawale, 2007), promoting development (MacNeil, 2013), advocating for the reconstruction or strengthening legitimate political processes and institutions, governance, promotion of good governance, and promoting peace.

Alternately, Sedra (2010) proposed that it is possible to conceptualize the various dimensions of urban youth mitigation of political violence in terms of three crucial areas: those that seek to directly reduce or contain violence, those that seek to transform relationships, and those that seek to build capacity.

Elections, according to Bodea and Elbadawi (2008), are crucial components of democratic processes. They guarantee the peaceful and open transfer of power and the changing of the government. Due to this, foreign policy circles began to place a lot of stress on democratization as a path to long-lasting peace in the early 1990s. The idea of promoting democratization and peacebuilding simultaneously emerged as a result of the realization that political oppression and discrimination frequently serve as the very catalysts for why certain groups turn to armed conflict in the first place. Therefore, democratization is considered as a solution to resolving the underlying causes of conflict as well as opening up for the expression of political rights.

Research Methodology

Research Philosophy

In an effort to accomplish its goals, this research is built on the interpretivism paradigm. Researchers who practice interpretivism add human interest to their studies by interpreting various study components (Myers, 2008). The term "interpretivism," which is linked to the idealist philosophical viewpoint, is used to encapsulate a variety of methodologies, such as social constructionism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics (Collins, 2010). Interpretivism studies may also use a variety of techniques to reflect various facets of the problem. They often center on meaning. According to interpretivism, the ontological thought used in this study is relativist in nature. It aims to comprehend the identities, meanings, and experiences of various populations in the context of opposing worldviews (Guba, 1990).

Methods of Qualitative Research

Because the characteristics, concepts, definition, and description of the real world are the focus of this study, along with an assessment of the role of urban youth in reducing political violence, particularly with regard to Makokoba High Density Suburb in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province, the researcher chooses qualitative methods as the most effective approach to learning more about the phenomenon under investigation. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research includes all types of studies that yield conclusions that aren't reached by the use of statistical techniques or other quantification methods. It is acknowledged in this study that using qualitative research makes it possible to comprehend how participants' roles as youths in reducing political violence were understood by the participants. The point of view of each participant is taken into account in qualitative research, according to Green (2000). Thus, it then concentrates on determining the contextualized meaning of the many points of view in order to

produce a joint, collaborative reconstruction from the various realities that are present (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

Research Design

The research design outlines how the research procedure will be carried out (Newman, 1998). A research design, according to Chalse (2000), acts as the binding agent for the research project. It is used to organize the research and demonstrate how all of the key components of the project work together to try to address the main research questions and achieve the study's goals (Rowley, 2012). It is a framework that covers the factors that influence the methodology to be used, how respondents should be chosen, and how the data should be analyzed (Flick, 2011).

Descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory research designs are just a few of the unique types that exist (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). According to Bryman (2012), the purpose of the descriptive research design is to reflect respondents' experiences. In order to successfully explain a population's or a social phenomenon's characteristics, an explanatory study design is used (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). An issue is investigated in an exploratory study before sufficient information is available to carry out a conventional research project. It is typically used to guide future study in the area (Neuman, 2003). Descriptive technique was utilized in this study to address the main research issues and achieve the study's goals in order to respond to the research questions raised above.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Ten focus group participants were chosen in Makokoba during a focus group discussion from among the four political parties that have been running for office there over the last five years, through April 2022. Regarding respect to ethical considerations, the researcher chose not to publish the names of the participants, the names of their parties, or the reference 3.11 of this study. The respondents for this research, ref 3.7, were chosen using a purposeful sampling strategy. All 10 participants in the focus group discussion ran for various posts within their parties and ranged in age from 18 to 36.

Youthful political violence is present in Makokoba

The first participant in a focus group reported that the youth of Makokoba encounter political violence in a variety of ways. According to the participant, it may take the form of intraparty violence, which is fueled by disputes over leadership succession and resources, and may take the form of protests by rival factions inside other parties. The second participant claimed that hate speech and hate messages exchanged directly between people, on social media, and in the media were the main causes of teenage political violence. The third participant reported that young people from opposing parties frequently made verbal threats.

Young people's political violence in Makokoba: the causes

Respondent number five stated that practically every element of daily life for Zimbabweans is influenced by which political party they support, or are thought to support, when asked what the reasons of youth political violence are. everything from who holds important positions in state organizations to who receives company licenses to who distributes and receives the government's emergency food supplies. The importance of politics on all facets of life cannot be overstated, according to participant number 5. The repercussions of this were extensive. Participant number three asserted that Zimbabweans express their political views at

their own peril and have little faith in the government to serve as an impartial arbitrator in matters of policy. This tends to imply that political allegiance frequently influences decision-making throughout Zimbabwe, from the top to the bottom of society. A common justification for or impediment to necessary access in a variety of political, economic, or social affairs is membership in or the allegation of membership in a political party. This includes, for instance, whether basic services are offered or whether a business is given a license to operate in a specific area. This was in line with Buchard's (2016) suggestion that, from the outset, it should be acknowledged that the social, political, and economic environment in which African youth operate is rife with enormous challenges.

When asked about the role of ethnicity in youth political violence, participant number 6 stated that ethnic characteristics, such as language, territory, and cultural practices, were objective and that their objectivity was partially underscored by the fact that they were perceived as significant indicators of identity by both insiders and outsiders of a given ethnic community to the point where they could be used as bases for political mobilization. In contrast to participant number 6, participant number 8 believes that ethnic communities are continually changing and that the characteristics that define an ethnic group are not set in stone. The amount to which these elements were defining features varied depending on the circumstances. In one political setting, these attributes might include language, territory, political unit, cultural values, or symbols, whereas in another some of them might not be present. The ninth participant made the argument that ethnic groups are dynamic, without a fixed foundation, and occasionally even made up.

Conclusions

The researcher gets to the conclusion that young political violence is a challenge not just in Makokoba but globally after comparing the research findings with the literature review. Economically, socially, and legally, it has impacted the countries' reputation. Youth political violence in Makokoba was brought on by intolerance, the urge to occupy political space, political patronage, ethnicity, and the need to preserve acquired money, among other things. Inequality in society, fighting, a surge in politically motivated rapes, murder, national insecurity, and property devastation were some of the impacts of teenage political violence. According to the study, if youth political violence is not stopped in its tracks, it will be harmful to future generations.

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