

ETHNICITY AS THE CAUSE OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT : Background: KwaZulu Natal has been a battlefield of political violence over the past few years in a democratic South Africa where many other provinces were no longer resolving their conflict through violence. This study aimed to find reasons why this province still experiences high levels of violence and the UMzimkhulu area was identified as the area of the study.

Objectives: the objective of this paper was to examine the public responses to ethnicity as the cause of political violence in the province of KwaZulu Natal at the UMzimkhulu area. Using descriptive analysis, we investigated the root cause of political violence in the UMzimkhulu area. In a comprehensive analysis of the case of the UMzimkhulu area, we argued that to explain the causes of political violence, it was necessary to look into the type of people that are living in the area and their ethnic origin.

Method: in this paper, we applied a mixed research methodology, which is the Qualitative and quantitative research methods. Twenty-five questionnaires were successfully distributed to participants and responded to. Interviews were conducted with five participants.

Results: we found that the people that are living in the area are of a Xhosa tribe and a Zulu tribe, that alone created an identity conflict amongst the people. Twenty-five questionnaires were distributed to local community members and both tribes were represented, five interviews were conducted to both tribes.

Conclusion: the intervention of the police and political office bearers will always be temporal because the root cause of the political violence in the area is not addressed. Every local government elections will be characterized by political violence in the area unless the ethnic disparities are properly addressed.

KEYWORDS: Tribe, Political violence, Ethnicity, Identity, Government, Community

I. INTRODUCTION

The involvement of local police officials and political leaders to provide a solution in ending the political violence at uMzimkhulu area have been unsuccessful. Even though their involvement might have assisted to reduce the violence, but the tensions between tribes still exist and it seems like people are seating on a time ticking bomb (Haas, 2020: 01). The involvement of police and political office bearers is not focusing on the root cause of political violence which makes it difficult for them to provide a solution that will end the violence. Descriptive analysis was used for this study to lead a reader through systematically to understand the relationship between political violence and ethnicity. The descriptive analysis also assists the reader to understand why the political violence of this nature cannot be stopped by the law enforcement agencies easily like any other criminal activities (Lawless and Heymann, 2010: 228). The community of uMzimkhulu has people of the Xhosa tribe and the Zulu tribe. Both tribes are fighting for political power, the area is located in KwaZulu Natal which was previously demarcated by the apartheid government as the area of Zulu Speaking people. The area is also close to Eastern Cape which was previously demarcated by the apartheid government as an area for Xhosa speaking people (Lehman, 2007: 302). The South African government has established a commission to investigate the political violence in the area and provide possible solutions. The focus of this study is different from the scope of the commission. This study investigated the root cause of political violence in the area. The Moerane Commission (2018: 02) reported that the political violence in the area was instigated by corrupt officials. This article argues that many people in the country are corrupt and public officials in many parts of the country are involved in corruption but there is no political violence (Koelble, 2017: 282). Therefore, the main reason for the high levels of political violence in the area as per the findings of this study is the ethnic

disparities in the area. Based on these analytical deliberations, this article examines the responses of community members on the government attempt to stop political violence in the area. This study therefore, aimed at showing a different perspective on what causes the violence in the area.

II. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Harkness (2018: 04) argued that organized political violence and political resistance is informed by ethnic differences. In the most extreme cases of political violence in Africa, ethnic tensions have contributed and ethnic cleansing has not been successful. Adam (1995: 457) states that the multiracial coexistence and class distinctions in South Africa contribute to ethnic political violence. Political violence is not only caused by different political views but by racial divisions and ethnic division as well. Many reports and researchers on political violence in South Africa such as Gottschalk (2016: 01) focused on tensions in political parties as the causes of political violence. While there is evidence that tensions within political parties contribute to political violence in South African political parties, it is not the only cause.

Different ethnic identity in politics and its influence in politics is not the only South African problem but many African countries are victims of this. According to Higashijima and Houle (2018: 910), ethnic inequality in the Sub-Saharan African countries affects political decisions. Ethnic inequality breeds political violence, destabilize democracy, and also obstructs economic development. Houle and Bodea (2017: 382) states that ethnic inequality induces war and civil war. Most coups d' etat in Africa are influenced by ethnic inequality. Africa has many ethnic groups that have different preferences on who must be in leadership positions. South Africa is not immune to ethnic challenges that are facing Africa as the continent. According to Guariso and Rogall (2017: 01), the fight against ethnic dominance in leadership positions is associated with resources. Those who are in leadership positions have proximity to public resources and those who supported the elected leaders have direct contact and access to resources. Ethnic differences create a commotion for the community.

Ethnic problems in Africa are mainly caused by the colonial system. Inequality in societies divided society to focus on their ethnic origin. Ethnicity plays a major rule in the well beings of people in Africa. The ethnic group that is in leadership positions cater for the people that are in the same ethnic group. This creates conflict and political violence because all ethnic groups want to be led by the people of the same ethnic group as them. Countries such as Nigeria and Zimbabwe are experiencing more challenges of ethnic divisions (Alesina, Hohmann, Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2018: 02). This paper, therefore, argues that ethnic diversity has costs and benefits. Ethnicity costs the society a caliber of leaders that might have skills and expertise to provide the needs of the people. The public service delivery requires capable leaders who have the knowledge and a passion to provide public services and the ethnic preference is not an issue. In most African countries, people do not look for capable leaders but they elect leaders based on ethnicity, charismatic, strong political views, and political affiliation. Ethnicity is important and benefits the African societies because people do not forget their roots. Ethnicity is often abused in Africa and those who have a chance to change the status quo are not interested because they are the beneficiaries of the system. Ethnicity is used to fight political battles and those who want to be in leadership positions mobilize those who are in the same ethnic group (Alesina, Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2016: 428).

Ethnic conflict theories predict that between two groups- inequality should be associated with greater violence. According to Alcorta, Smits and Swedlund (2018: 769), different types of inequalities have opposing effects on the likelihood of conflict. The conflict is mostly created by inequalities within the community. The ethnic identity of those in leadership creates more conflict in society because of leaders taking much care of their ethnic groups. (Abebe and Nabassaga, 2018: 108) argued that 38 countries in Africa are experiencing a higher level of inequality and ethnic division is the main cause. Inequality and political violence in Africa are persistent because of the ethnic diversity and intolerant of people. Leaders present opportunities for people of a certain ethnic group and that provokes and infuses anger for the marginalized ethnic group. According to Fenske and Zurimendi (2017: 397), ethnic biases exist in Africa and it is known. Ethnic groups use their power of the majority to have their preferred leaders and dominate the less represented ethnic group. The less represented ethnic groups mostly find violence as the solution to have leaders of their ethnic group. The ethnic group that has a majority of people in Africa is in control of resources such as oil and other mineral resources.

Some ethnic groups in Africa make decisions and vote along ethnic lines while others are genuine and vote for leaders based on capability. The economic questions remain the reason why some people in Africa vote along the lines of ethnicity. Some leaders convince people to vote based on their ethnicity. Ethnic voting increases the levels of inequality and also divides the communities further (Houle, Park and Kenny, 2019: 182). The poverty

and inequality make people realize that they are of different ethnic groups. Good economic conditions have a possibility of ending the ethnic divisions and political violence in Africa Care should (Nel, 2018: 02).

III. DATA AND METHODS

This paper is based on responses from participants and case studies. The data for this study were compiled following a community-based field research project. The data were collected through well-structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Community members voluntarily participated in this research. Twenty-five community members participated in questionnaires and seven community members were part of the interviews. Besides, the interviews were conducted to individuals that are politically active and stayed in the area for a long time. Questionnaires were also distributed to people that are politically active and stayed in the area for a long time. The interviews were conducted in January 2020 and the questionnaires were distributed. The researcher conducted the interviews and the researcher personally distributed the questionnaires. The questions for the questionnaires and the interviews were linked to the causes of the political violence in the area. The questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The interviews were transcribed, coded with the NVIVO software. Reports from the commission about political violence in the province of KwaZulu Natal were also used to make conclusions. The analytical focus of this study was based on the collected data and the existing data. The data also included the government's attempt to address the problems of political violence.

IV. POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN KWAZULU NATAL

It is a shame that after 25 years of democracy in South Africa, political violence remains one of the greatest challenges. The political violence undermines the efforts that were made to transgress from the apartheid government to a democratic government. The province of KwaZulu Natal has more cases of political violence in South Africa. Political violence in the province is more visible or noticed during the local government elections. The province is dominated by rural areas; rural communities in the province are diversified. Political violence during the preparations of local government elections is caused by community groupings (Krelekrele, 2018: 01). Political violence in the Province of KwaZulu Natal has been the most serious threat to the integrity of the post-apartheid government. There is a slight decline in political violence in the province if compared with the political violence during the apartheid government. The decline of political violence is informed by the continuous engagements amongst ethnic groups and political parties. The province is dominated by Zulu Speaking people and the mechanism used now to end the existing political violence in the province cannot be the same as the one that was used during the apartheid government. Some areas in the province such as the UMzimkhulu area still have political violence that is mostly informed by the ethnic identity (Johnston, 1996: 78). Political violence in KwaZulu Natal is caused by political party members. Previously, the violence was between two different political parties that were dominant in the province. The province was dominated by Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the African National Congress (ANC). The IFP was viewed as the political party that is pro Zulu while the ANC was multi ethnic political party which is promoting diversity in societies. The political violence in the province was therefore informed by the territorial conflict (Taylor, 2008: 01). In some areas of the province, people still have ethnic discrimination. The province still has areas that were developed by an apartheid government to accommodate people based on their gender, which is normally known as men and women's hostels. Zulu speaking people whether in males or females hostel dominate the hostels. This arrangement of ethnic belonging still exists in many areas of the province. The area in which this study was conducted is one of the areas that have ethnic challenges as a result of the apartheid arrangement (Parliamentary Liaison Committee, 2018).

The South African national local government elections in 2016 were characterized by many incidents of political violence. The province of KwaZulu Natal had many political violence cases during this local government preparations. The political killings in this province took place in hostels and that led to the government to form a Moerane Commission (Marry, 2017: 02). The commission only investigated the people that were the perpetrators of political violence in the province. The conflict and contradictions on ethnic groups in the province were not investigated. There is no doubt that political violence is also caused by greediness, corruption, and unethical behavior but the element of ethnic differences in some areas such as UMzimkhulu exist.

V. ANALYSIS: QUESTIONNAIRES

Bauerdick, Bianchi, Bockelman, Castro, Cranmer, Elmer, Gardner, Girone, Gutsche and Hegner (2018: 05) describe analysis as the way of bringing order in research. Raw data is disordered, unclear, and time-consuming, but as a creative and fascinating process. Data analysis is the activity of making sense of, interpreting, theorizing data that signifies a search for general statements among categories of data. Questionnaires were distributed to 25 participants of the study, and all questionnaires were fully completed. Data was recorded in an excel spreadsheet and uploaded in a Statistical Packages for Social Sciences software known as SPSS. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze data and various methods to test data were explored. Chi-square tests were explored, cross-tabulations, and the data was also presented in charts and graphs. Quantitative data were presented in graphs and a specific interpretation under each table was provided. Descriptive statistical analysis was presented and interpreted instead of explaining each graph because it posses the entire questions and responses from the participants of the study. Graphs, chi-square, and charts results are available should there be a need to provide them at a later stage.

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	10	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Female	15	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: Gender of participants

The above table, present the gender of respondents of the study. The table indicates that females were more than males. Females that were part of the study entail 60 percent while males consist of 40 percent.

Do you think political violence in the area is caused by ethnic group differences?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	19	76.0	76.0	76.0
	2	6	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Causes of political violence in the area.

The participants of the study were asked about the cause of political violence in the area. The above table represents the responses of the participants about the causes of political violence in the area. The ethnic disparity was highlighted as the main cause of political violence in the area. The majority of responses indicated that the ethnic differences in the area are the main cause of political violence in the area. About 76 percent as presented by the table above, indicated that the causes of political violence in the area are the ethnic conflict amongst the people living in the area and apolitical leaders.

Which ethnic group do you define yourself with					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	20	80.0	80.0	80.0
	2	5	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Ethnic group of respondents

It was necessary to find the ethnic group of respondents to reach proper conclusions to say ethnic belonging is a factor or not. The above table, therefore, represents the ethnic group of participants. Because of the national geographical spread and location of the area, only two ethnic groups were listed for the participants to choose from. Participants were provided with Zulu and Xhosa ethnic groups to choose from because the majority of the people living in the area belong to either of the two. The results show a higher number of Zulu ethnic group of people living in the area. This is mainly caused by the historical-geographical arrangements of the apartheid system. The area is in the province that was originally designed by the apartheid government to cater to Zulu speaking people only. 80 percent of respondents are Zulu speakers while 20 percent are Xhosa speakers. Results, therefore, prove that the differences in ethnic groups create a conflict. Those who are originally from the area and Zulu speakers feel the sense of entitlement to take leadership positions while those who originally from Eastern Cape and Xhosa speakers fight for the representability.

How many years have you stayed in this ward?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	2	8.0	8.0	8.0
	3	5	20.0	20.0	28.0
	4	7	28.0	28.0	56.0
	5	6	24.0	24.0	80.0
	6	4	16.0	16.0	96.0
	7	1	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: number of years stayed in the ward

It was necessary to ask participants the number of years they stayed in the area to ensure that the collected data is accurate. People that have stayed in the area for a longer time have more experience with what is happening in the area. 96 percent of the participants have stayed in the area for more than 26 years. The majority of participants know exactly what they were talking about. The information supplied by the participants is therefore relevant and accurate.

Do you know anyone that was killed in your area because of political violence?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	6	24.0	24.0	24.0
	2	19	76.0	76.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Knowledge of anyone that was killed

Participants were asked if they have any knowledge about people in the area that were killed during the political violence. It was necessary to ask this question to find out if the participants have primary information or secondary information about the political killings. 24 percent of the participants personally know the people that were killed during the political violence in the area. 76 percent of participants do not know the people that were killed during the political violence but they have heard about the killings.

Have you witnessed any political violence in your area?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	21	84.0	84.0	84.0
	2	3	12.0	12.0	96.0
	5	1	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Political violence in the area

The above table represents what the participants have said when asked if they have witnessed the political violence in the area or not. This question was asked to find out if the participants are aware of the political violence in the area or not. The participants were expected to answer if they have witnessed political violence or if they have heard about the violence from someone else. 84 percent of respondents have first-hand information about the political violence in the area. This indicates that the participants have seen political violence in the area.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	25	1	2	1.60	.500
Age	25	1	6	3.16	1.675
Highest level of education	25	2	5	3.12	.927
Your current marital status	25	1	2	1.12	.332
Number of dependents	25	2	7	4.36	1.934
Are you the sole breadwinner in your household	25	1	2	1.40	.500
Do you think political violence in the area is caused by ethnic group differences?	25	1	2	1.24	.436
Which ethnic group do you define yourself with	25	1	2	1.20	.408
How many years have you stayed in this ward?	25	2	7	4.32	1.314
Do you know anyone that was killed in your area because of political violence?	25	1	2	1.76	.436
Have you witnessed any political violence in your area?	25	1	5	1.28	.843
No response at all	25	1	5	3.84	1.519
Sometimes they respond	25	1	5	2.08	1.320
I don't know	25	1	5	2.36	1.524
They respond quickly	25	1	5	1.76	1.300
They respond and come immediately	25	1	5	2.64	1.411
Valid N (listwise)	25				

Table 7: Descriptive statistics

The data was also analyzed through descriptive statistical analysis to present an overall report of the study. The above table is the descriptive statistics table that presents overall information about the data analyzed in the SPSS. The means test results and standard deviation prove that the ethnic disparities in the area are the cause of political violence. The results also prove that the response of police on political violence is not effective. During political violence, police only respond after someone have badly being affected. In some cases, police respond after someone has lost a life because of political violence.

VI. ANALYSIS: INTERVIEWS

According to Burnard (1991: 461), interviews are transcribed and analyzed once interviews have been completed. It is, therefore, important to know what sort of method analysis a researcher intends to use. For this study, the mixed-method approach was applied and in this section, the qualitative data in the form of interviews are analyzed and interpreted.

Interviews were conducted to five participants that are staying at the uMzimkhulu area. Four open-ended questions were asked to all participants. The interview responses are summarized below.

1. Are you politically active?

The participants were asked if they were politically active or not. The responses are presented below.

I don't participate in political activities because political activism is dangerous and can lead to death. So many people have lost their family members because of politics (interview 1, February 2020).

I participate in political activities but I do not avail myself of any leadership position. Taking a leadership position in this area is dangerous, even those who are supporting you for leadership positions are dangerous (Personal interview 2, February 202).

I hate politics because of the people that are in leadership positions. Leaders have portrayed the wrong image of politics in the area (Personal interview 3, February 2020).

I like politics and I participate but my participation is limited. I focus more on business and my social life but I attend political meetings (Personal interview 4, February 2020).

I do not participate in politics at all (Personal interview 5, February 2020)

2. Are you willing to leave the area because of political violence?

No, this is the place of my ancestors and I will not abandon this area. I will only leave this area as a dead person (Personal interview 1, February 2020).

Yes, maybe that will give me a peace of mind (Personal interview 2, February 2020)

No, I will not leave this area (Personal interview 3, February 2020)

I will not voluntarily leave the area but it seems like the political pressure will force many of us to leave the area (Personal interview 4, February 2020)

I am willing to leave the area but I will not leave anytime from now to fast track the solutions to end political violence in the area (Personal interview 5, February 2020).

3. Have you participated in any form of political violence?

Yes, I had to defend the people of my ethnic group. The fight amongst ethnic groups in our area affects our communal relationship. We do not have a good relationship with our neighbors because of ethnic differences (Personal interview 1, February 2020).

For me, I would not say it is political violence but I rather say it is ethnicity violence. Our conflict in this community is seen as political violence but it is ethnic identification violence (Personal interview 2, February 2020).

Not at all. I am a very reserved person and I do not want people to enter my personal space (Personal interview 3, February 2020).

No. I do not want to put my family at risk (Personal interview 4, February 2020).

Yes, I did. I had to defend my interests and that of my family (Personal interview 5, February 2020).

4. Do you think the ethnic disparity is the cause of political violence in the area?

Definitely. Without ethnic disparity, there would be no political violence in our area (Personal interview 1, February 2020).

Yes. That has always been my argument in all community meetings that we had (Personal interview 2, February 2020).

No. I think politics have divided us into our area. I have been living in this area for years, political leaders in senior structures are dividing us and they come with ethnic divisions. Without politics, our community would not divide themselves according to their ethnic groups (Personal interview 3, February 2020).

Yes. I think we are all biased to our ethnic groups (Personal interview 4, February 2020).

Yes, and it also affects the public service delivery. Those who are in the same ethnic group with local leaders have more access to public services (Personal interview 5, February 2020).

VII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the collected information and analysis, it is therefore proven that the political intervention to end political violence in the uMzimkhulu area is not effective. The focus of the intervention is not addressing the actual causes of political violence in the area. This study presented a different perspective on the causes of political violence in the area. Any political intervention or government intervention to permanently end political violence in the area will need to address the ethnic disparities first. The political violence in the area is not constant but it is more visible during local government elections. Without addressing the ethnic disparities in the area, all local government elections will always be characterized by political violence. Government, traditional leaders, political leaders, and community formations will have to seat and discuss the ethnic disparities and find a possible way of balancing ethnic representability. All ethnic groups in the area must be represented in decision making structures and feel taken care of by local leaders.

VIII. ETHICAL STATEMENT

The authors solemnly declare that all information provided in this article is original and where the information was taken from a third party, a full source was acknowledged and cited.

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