The Psychological Impact of Post-Election Violence on Airline Employees: The Case of Kenya
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Abstract

**Background:** Widespread violence is a major contributor to psychological stress and trauma. Kenya’s 2007 elections were disputed resulting in widespread violence in major parts of the country displacing and killing thousands. Different sectors of the work industry were negatively affected by the disturbance. Those which were particularly affected include; education, agriculture, tourism, transport and health sectors. A lot of emphasis was directed to the social and economic impact. However, the psychological impact of the post-election violence on employees of different sectors was neglected.

**Aims:** The present study was designed to explore the psychological effects of the post-election violence on a sample of airline employees. The objectives of the study were to (i) explore the psychological effects of the violence on the employees, (ii) determine how the situation in Kenya affected interpersonal relationships among employees, (iii) investigate whether employee motivation was affected adversely and lastly, (iv) to identify the coping mechanisms the employees utilized during the period.

**Methods:** The study utilized the qualitative research method. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with two samples of participants from two airline companies. The first sample included 8 employees of a company based in Eldoret (2 Female and 6 Male) and the second one included 10 employees of a company based in Nairobi (5 Female and 5 Male). The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

**Results:** Four main themes emerged from the study including (i) stress (caused by high work overload and insecurity), (ii) trauma, (resulted from individuals witnessing violence and injured/dead bodies), (iii) employee motivation, (e.g. getting incentives and not being in the mood to work, performance, commitment), (iv) coping strategies (e.g. organizational support, social support and family support). The results suggested that participants from both the towns were affected by the post-election violence. However, there is a difference in the traumatic experience between Eldoret and Nairobi participants. Participants in Eldoret reported to have witnessed more violence as opposed to the Nairobi participants.

**Conclusions:** The study provides an insight on how employees were psychologically affected by the post-election violence and how the individuals managed to deal with the situation. Recommendations will also be outlined.

**Key Words:** psychological stress, trauma, work motivation, coping strategies