

Political violence in Kenya (Since 1992) and mitigation mechanisms: A scoping review

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ABSTRACT

Kenya has developed various mitigation mechanisms to address political violence. The 2010 Constitution created a system that established democratic governance, human rights safeguards, and devolution. The judicial system has enhanced powers, which allows it to take a more active role in handling election-related conflicts. The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission introduced transparency enhancements through biometric technology for voter registration and results transmission. Peacebuilding initiatives have also made important contributions to reduce political violence. In spite of these legal, structural, and institutional reforms, the risk of political violence in Kenya is high. There are threats of ethnic divisions, political intolerance, misinformation, and the lack of accountability. The purpose of this study was to examine political violence in Kenya (since 1992) and mitigation mechanisms. The study was anchored on the relative deprivation theory and the conflict transformation theory. An exploratory research design is employed. Qualitative and quantitative studies were included. Only studies written in English, accessible at no cost, and peer-reviewed are included. Additionally, only studies in the past 6 years were considered. Mendeley, Cochrane Library, Google Scholar, and EBSCOhost databases were searched for articles published between 2020 and 2026. Data analysis for the study used Microsoft Excel to organize and interpret relevant data. Results reveal that post-election violence in Kenya develops through structural factors, institutional systems, ethnic groups, and economic conditions. Historical grievances and land disputes exacerbate political violence in Kenya. The institutional frameworks determine political violence in the country. The youth are at the center of political violence in Kenya. The intensity and patterns of post-election violence are determined by contextual factors and local-level dynamics. Civic education, issue-based politics, and inclusive governance are effective methods for implementing disaster response systems. The study concludes that the political violence problem in Kenya requires active solutions that create multiple layers of protection to manage its basic and its immediate conflict drivers. This study recommends that the IEBC should develop better systems for electoral processes that will enhance their transparency and credibility and hold electoral results accountable. Political parties should establish internal democracy systems to reduce ethnic-based voting and promote issue-based manifestos. The ministries of youth affairs, education, and labor should develop youth empowerment programs to create employment opportunities and provide skills training and civic engagement programs to empower the youth. The local community should strengthen its inter-ethnic dialogue forums to involve community leaders, religious organizations, and local peace committees to build social unity and reduce distrust between different groups. Law enforcement agencies should develop their community policing methods and establish linkages with local residents to manage election-related issues.

Keywords: Election Violence, Institutional Frameworks, Kenya, Mitigation Mechanisms, Political Violence

I. INTRODUCTION

Political violence has become a permanent element of Kenya's political system since the re-establishment of multiparty democracy in 1992. The democratic system requires elections as a fundamental element, yet these elections have caused violent outbreaks, social unrest, and governmental instability (Odote & Kanyinga, 2021). Political violence in Kenya is manifested through inter-ethnic violence that damages the democratic system, divides people, and curtails economic development. The return to multiparty politics in 1992 marked a significant turning point in Kenya's political history (Mbogo et al., 2025). The 1992 elections were marred with ethnic violence that erupted in the Rift Valley and Coast regions (Ochieng et al., 2023). Political parties competed for voter support, which resulted in violent clashes. Politicians used their ethnic backgrounds to recruit voters and barred their opponents from winning elections (Klaus, 2020). Violence resulted in deaths and property damage and forced thousands of residents to flee their homes. This developed a persistent pattern that connected election processes with public fear of security risks in regions with different ethnic groups.

The 2002 general elections brought a new electoral pattern as elections proceeded peacefully and produced Kenya's first democratic power transfer since the country achieved independence. The opposition parties worked together, the public exhibited hope for change, and there was less ethnic division (Odidi & Imbali, 2024). However, the temporal peace ended as political parties' fundamental issues remained unsolved. Land disputes, unfair resource allocation, youth unemployment, and weak institutional systems cause political violence (Ndungú, 2024). The most severe political violence incident occurred after the 2007 general elections. The presidential results announcement led

to nationwide protests, which turned violent. Ethnic violence escalated when citizens started attacking each other in the Rift Valley, Nairobi's informal settlements, Western Kenya, and the Nyanza region (Dyzenhaus, 2026). In Western Kenya, political violence was linked to political loyalty and ethnic identity. Civil disorder affected Kisumu, Kakamega, Bungoma, and Busia counties (Onyango et al., 2024). The 2007 elections turned Kisumu into a violence hotspot, where protests resulted in fatalities, extensive property damage, and citizen displacements. The region has always been an opposition stronghold; thus, it causes a strong reaction to allegations of electoral fraud (Omole et al., 2025). Political violence results from political power struggles, youth unemployment, and public distrust in the electoral process (Malik, 2024). More than 1,000 people died during the 2007/2008 post-election violence, and hundreds of thousands fled their homes. The violence revealed that Kenya had deep social divisions and the democratic system of the country had serious threats to its stability.

The 2007-2008 political violence led to multiple reforms that established measures to halt electoral violence incidents. The 2010 Constitution forced major institutional changes and governmental transformations through its implementation. The Constitution established decentralized government systems through its power distribution system that established judicial reforms and created independent institutions (Mutuku, 2023). The elections that occurred in 2013, 2017, and 2022 showed progress; they had better results but needed resolution of their post-election problems. The 2013 elections had less violent conflict than the 2007 elections as existing security systems and public awareness about violent results had improved, according to Linke (2022). The 2017 elections presented another critical test for Kenya's democracy. Opposition supporters protested the presidential results announcement as they claimed election fraud. Subsequently, the Supreme Court declared the presidential election results invalid because of electoral process violations and electoral system violations (Kawishe, 2025). This was a major judicial independence declaration; however, repeat elections resulted in political unrest that caused injuries and fatalities (Mondoh & Musya, 2024). The establishment of electoral processes requires maintenance of public trust and handling internal party conflicts. The 2022 electoral process was largely successful, although election outcomes and transparency issues indicate that the nation should enact reforms for establishing public trust.

Political competition in the country is influenced by ethnic divisions that determine electoral battles. Ethnic identity is the main technique through which political leaders in history have gathered public support, yet this has resulted in social divisions between different communities (Muchiri et al., 2022). Socio-economic variables expose people to political risk due to potential exploitation. The youth, who experience high unemployment and poverty conditions, are more prone to political violence (Ochieng et al., 2024). The electoral management bodies have various challenges that include the public's view of partiality and their inability to run operations effectively; this reduces trust in election results. The security sector has faced criticism for its use of excessive force and violation of human rights, which creates more conflict between police forces and the public (Mutuku, 2023). The culture of impunity, which prevents law enforcement from holding electoral violence offenders accountable, has created a situation where these violent events reoccur.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Kenya has developed various mitigation mechanisms to address political violence. The 2010 Constitution created a system that established democratic governance, human rights safeguards, and power division between different government entities (Barasa & Njagi, 2025). The judicial system has enhanced powers, which allow it to take more active involvement in handling election-related conflicts. The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) introduced transparency enhancements through technology for voter registration and results transmission (Kawishe, 2025). Peacebuilding initiatives have made essential contributions that help to reduce violence during elections. Various organizations, which include civil society groups, religious institutions, and community leaders, work to enhance peace (Barasa & Njagi, 2025). Peace programs focus on early conflict detection to identify potential violence hotspots and act before any violent incidents occur (Omole et al., 2025). Additionally, reforms in the security sector and preparedness measures have strengthened the capacity to handle security threats. The government has increased security personnel deployment for elections and established better security agency coordination (Kasera, 2025). In spite of the legal, structural, and institutional reforms, the risk of political violence in Kenya is high. Consequently, there are threats of ethnic divisions, political intolerance, misinformation, and the lack of accountability. The resolution of these problems requires elaborate solutions that extend beyond electoral seasons to establish mitigation mechanisms that promote inclusive governance, economic progress, and national unity. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine political violence in Kenya (since 1992) and mitigation mechanisms.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To assess political violence in Kenya (since 1992)
- ii. To propose mitigation mechanisms for political violence in Kenya

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The relative deprivation theory was developed by Gurr (1970). Accordingly, people and groups become violent when there's a significant difference between expected outcomes and prevailing living conditions. Gurr (1970) uses the term "relative deprivation" to describe this gap, which he believes will lead to collective violence through political unrest and rebellion. Perceived deprivation is the main cause of conflict; actual poverty is secondary (Bettarelli & Van Haute, 2022). Additionally, people will fight when their expectations exceed actual outcomes. Likewise, shared frustration will lead people to commit political violence when their political system lacks proper functioning officeholders (Brown et al., 2024). The theory explains political violence as it highlights the role of various political groups in election violence. State resources, employment opportunities, and political power should be distributed unequally to meet citizens' expectations (Özdemir & Özkan, 2020). They may become more frustrated when they view election results as invalid, which could lead to violent outbreaks. The theory helps establish linkages between economic inequality and social inequality.

The conflict transformation theory was proposed by Lederach (1997). The theory shifts its emphasis from conflict resolution to conflict management. Thus, it changes the fundamental relationship, structural system, and environmental conditions that create conflict. The theory proposes that people should handle conflict as a natural process that enhances positive results (Borah, 2024). Additionally, sustainable peace should address fundamental issues that include economic inequality, social discrimination, and complete system exclusion (Ham, 2025). Moreover, sustainable change requires transformation across all personal, relational, structural, and cultural spheres. The theory develops an approach that combines inclusive dialogue processes with reconciliation efforts and institution development to build systems for justice, equity, and conflict resolution (Abiakam, 2026). The 1992 election violence in Kenya demonstrates the theory operates through analysis of political violence mitigation strategies. The 2010 constitution adoption, devolution, judicial system changes, and community-based peacebuilding programs demonstrate attempts to change the fundamental causes that lead to political violence. The theory demonstrates that civil society organizations, religious groups, and community leaders could work to establish dialogue systems that help and restore trust between communities. Kenya can achieve peace and stability through its mitigation mechanisms for political violence.

2.2 Empirical Review

A study by Matsunaga (2025) analyzed 18 European democracies and found out that right-wing populists rationalize political violence more than mainstream voters and non-voters. Left-wing populists also endorse violence, but to a lesser extent. Radicalization is influenced by populist ideologies rather than traditional left-right divides. The attitudes of right-wing populists are affected by city residence, gender, and immigration status, independent of nativism or anti-immigration views.

On the other hand, Westwood et al. (2022) conducted survey experiments involving 4,904 participants and found out that overestimated support for violence arises from disengaged respondents. The study's median estimate showed support for partisan violence at 2.9%, significantly lower than prior estimates of 18.5%. Additionally, support was inflated by disengagement and correlates of violence. Most respondents advocated for legal action against political violence.

Additionally, Piazza (2023) investigated the relationship between political violence and affective polarization in democratic societies. It posited that heightened affective partisan polarization dehumanizes opponents, creates a zero-sum perspective, and encourages group mobilization, making political violence more acceptable and frequent. An original survey of 1,899 US residents revealed that Democrats and Republicans expressing aversion towards the opposing party showed increased support for political violence. Cross-national analysis confirmed that more polarized democracies experienced 34% more frequent political violence.

Hofmann (2021) discusses the complexities of intervening in (post-)conflicts, noting that various actors face significant constraints, including limited military and civilian resources, extended commitment periods beyond initial expectations, and selective intervention based on political agendas that may not align with the conflict dynamics. Additionally, criticisms arise on the appropriateness of foreign interventions due to insufficient understanding of the conflicts. The author recommended that existing policies aimed at political violence prevention should resemble initiatives like peacebuilding or development.

Moreover, Randahl et al. (2026) employed thematic constituent models for machine learning to predict the risk of electoral violence worldwide using diverse data, including economic indicators and political instability. Predictions ranged from no to severe violence, with models combined into an ensemble via a genetic algorithm. The system accurately differentiated risk levels and validated forecasts for 2025 and 2026 elections to predict political violence.

Furthermore, Masaka (2024) assessed political violence in Africa and proposed an ideal democracy model to mitigate political violence. The author emphasized its deliberative nature, accommodating diverse views among parties. It was recommended that consensual democracy could reduce political violence by promoting tolerance and overcoming adversarial confrontation.

In Ghana, Bekoe and Burchard (2021) evaluated political violence prevention. The study concluded that effective prevention should address causes of electoral violence. Consequently, back channel negotiations, hotspot identification, early monitoring, and conflict resolution mechanisms can alleviate political tension. Thus, there's the need for engaging political actors in Africa's electoral violence prevention strategies.

A systematic review of 14 articles by Ruggeri et al. (2025) examined political violence in democracies. It was observed that existing electoral violence prevention efforts often overlook political actors' motivations for using violence. The authors recommended that effective prevention require addressing causes of political violence through strategies like back channel negotiations, monitoring, and conflict resolution. Engaging political actors directly is also important to mitigate political violence in Africa.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study employed an exploratory research design to examine political violence in Kenya (since 1992) and mitigation mechanisms. The design is applicable where there is paucity of research on a topic, there's no clarity of concepts, or where there is scanty empirical research on a thematic area of study.

3.2 Study Area

The research focused on studies conducted in Kenya. The country has a record of instances of political violence that have occurred since 1992. The research evaluated political violence studies which researchers conducted in the country's territory and pin pointed specific regions known for electoral violence, including the Rift Valley, Western Kenya and selected parts of Nairobi. Researchers use Kenya as their study country as it provides details on political violence patterns that result from the country's ethnic and political situation. The study investigated the different methods which the country used to reduce conflicts through constitutional changes, devolution, peacebuilding efforts and judicial actions. This study examines political violence in Kenya (since 1992) and mitigation mechanisms.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Empirical studies on examines political violence in Kenya (since 1992) and mitigation mechanisms were reviewed. The study included qualitative and quantitative studies. The study included studies written in English, accessible at no cost and peer-reviewed. Additionally, only studies in the last 6 years were included.

3.4 Selection Criteria

Data from sources that did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded to ensure the reliability and quality of the studies for analysis. Reports not written in English were excluded for consistency in language used and for ease of interpretation. This study excluded presentations and posters as they have a limited scope and are not peer-reviewed. Additionally, this study excluded book chapters, as they have a broad scope.

3.5 Search Strategy

The search strategy refined research questions and inclusion criteria for relevant studies. Databases such as Mendeley, Cochrane Library, Google Scholar and EBSCOhost were searched for articles published from 2020 to 2026. Key words searched included: political violence, Kenya, mitigation mechanisms. The search strategy is summarised in Figure 1.

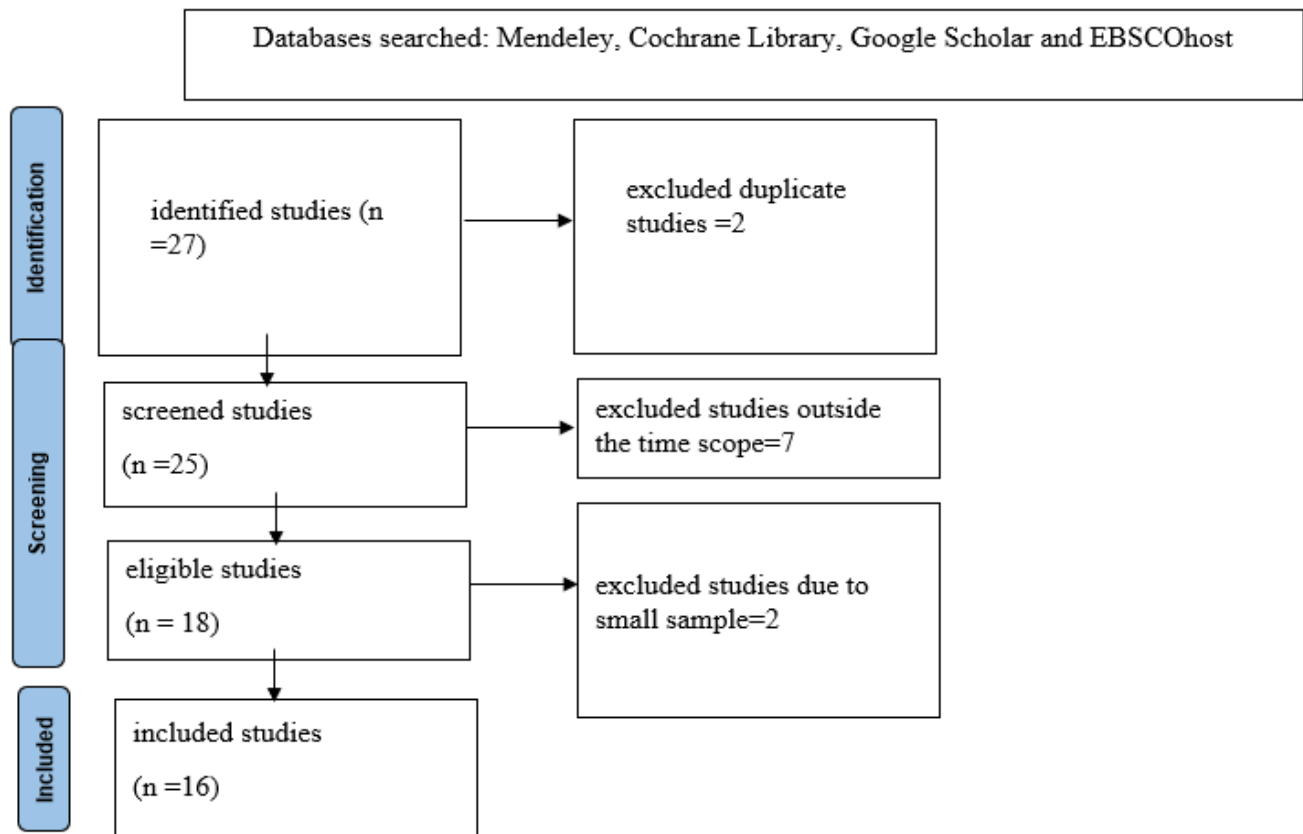


Figure 1
PRISMA Flowchart

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis for the study used Microsoft Excel to organize and interpret relevant data, including author names, publication years, locations, targeted populations, sampling techniques, findings and recommendations. This information was systematically entered into spreadsheets for consistency. Descriptive analysis categorized studies by methodology, geographical focus and themes, using publication years to examine political violence in Kenya (since 1992) and mitigation mechanisms. Research designs were classified as qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods. Population and sample size details were used to evaluate the study's representativeness. Thematic synthesis revealed patterns and gaps in political violence in Kenya (since 1992) and mitigation mechanisms.

3.7 Protocol and Registration

The authors' concepts, results and interpretations were accurately presented. Transparency in the research methodology was maintained. The review process for the search strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, databases searched and data extraction procedures was presented. Additionally, only publicly available studies conducted with the highest ethical standards were included in this research. There were no changes or misinterpretations in the primary studies and conclusions were drawn from the synthesized studies. Authors of the studies were well acknowledged and cited.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

The study synthesised 16 articles, 11 for political violence in Kenya (since 1992) and 5 for mitigation mechanisms. Kenya's democratization over the last 30 years has seen advancements like multiparty politics, the 2010 constitution, and key governmental reforms, establishing a foundation for issue-based politics. However, political violence, primarily driven by ethnic tensions, impedes the shift from ethnic-centered to issue-based politics. Odidi and Imbali (2024) discuss triggers of political violence, including Kenya's multi-ethnic society, historical land injustices, socio-economic inequalities, and hate speech. Despite progress with national parties, ideologically led manifestos, and civic education promoting issue-based democracy, challenges like misinformation, corruption, governance issues, and lack of political goodwill hinder further advancements. Strengthening a culture of issue-based politics in Kenya could enhance its democratic framework, presenting a pathway to improved governance and societal cohesion.

A study by Ochieng et al. (2023) evaluated post-election violence in Kenya. It identifies several causes of such violence, using voting theory and employing a mixed-methods approach. Data was collected from political parties, analysts, IEBC members, legislators, and voters through stratified random sampling, through questionnaires, and through interviews. Findings highlight key causes of violence, including disputed election results, tribalism, ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms, the "winner-takes-it-all" system, perceived electoral bias, and voter incitement. Consequences include casualties, displacement, property damage, economic instability, and psychological suffering. The report suggests exploring alternative electoral models, such as mixed-member and proportional representation, to promote inclusivity and fair representation.

In yet another study, Ochieng et al. (2024) examined the link between Kenya's electoral management system and persistent post-election violence. It aimed to identify structural issues within electoral administration that lead to violence, analyzing components of the system and violence causes through consociationalism, voting, and rational choice theories. The study surveyed 450 participants, revealing that Kenya's FPTP electoral system worsens violence through a "winner-takes-all" approach, disputes, and political incitement. A strong correlation ($\beta = .685$, $t = 16.225$, $\text{Sig.} = .000$) links electoral management and violence. Challenges include self-interest, impunity, and ethnic divisions; thus, the need for alternative electoral systems for better representation.

On the other hand, Klaus (2020) examines the organization of electoral violence by elites and the participation of ordinary citizens, challenging existing theories focused on weak institutions and ethnic tensions. The author presents a new theory viewing violence as a mobilization process requiring elite-citizen coordination. Through extensive fieldwork in Kenya, Klaus (2020) finds that land-related issues, influenced by weak tenure systems, are central to this coordination. The study explains that land issues are key to political and violent dynamics. Dyzenhaus (2024) reviews Klaus's (2020) argument that electoral violence in Kenya, particularly from 2007 to 2008, requires analysis beyond broad institutional or ethnic frameworks. Instead, it emphasizes the collaboration between political elites and citizens, highlighting land-related narratives and weak tenure institutions as key drivers. The study reveals the influence of these factors on local variations in violence.

A study by Ndungú (2024) investigates ethnicized politics in Kenya, tracing its impact on elections and governance from independence to the present. The historical context reveals how political elites exploit ethnic affiliations to establish parties and gain leadership roles under the guise of advancing their groups' interests. This manipulation has marginalized smaller tribes, leading to significant conflicts, notably the 2007 post-election violence and tensions in 2017 and 2022. The resulting ethnicized politics have caused demonstrations, violence, and human rights abuses. Recommendations include reducing ethnic politics, enhancing national cohesion, and prioritizing merit-based job allocation.

Ethnic conflicts have surged globally post-Cold War, particularly fueled by competition for scarce resources and political power. Onyango et al. (2024) analyzed political violence in Uasin Gishu County and found that the violence among ethnic communities originated from despair and fear linked to perceived economic and political challenges. The study employs primordialism, instrumentalism, and relative deprivation theories to explain colonialism's impact on ethnic relations. Through a historical method grounded on interpretivism and qualitative approaches, it argues that colonialist settlement exacerbated toxic ethnic relations in the Rift Valley, further aggravated post-independence, with political elites perpetuating the strife.

Moreover, Malik (2024) analyzes the link between short party lifespans and ethnic violence in multiparty Kenya, using national violence data and elite interviews. The study spans from the KANU era to the post-2010 constitution. Findings show voters reject violent politicians but struggle to hold them accountable due to high party turnover and shifting coalitions, allowing recurring political violence. On the other hand, Linke (2022) examines Kenya's 2007–08 post-election violence (PEV) by merging locational and relational theories on politics and context. It was revealed that subnational violence patterns are influenced by ethnic community experiences and regional demographics. Communities with prior presidential incumbents effectively leverage governmental resources. Larger Kikuyu and Kalenjin populations correlate with heightened PEV severity. In contrast, Trans Nzoia's diverse ethnic makeup mitigates violent incentives, demonstrating the importance of contextual factors in analyzing conflict geography.

Research by Muchiri et al. (2022) investigates the involvement of youth in the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya. It analyzes the definitions of youth and electoral violence and the extent of youth participation in this context. Despite acknowledging widespread electoral violence, there is limited understanding of the youth's specific role. The study posits that the youth, particularly the unemployed, were pivotal agents in the violence following the disputed December 2007 elections. Youth participation is classified into legitimate roles, such as candidates and campaigners and illegitimate roles, including bribery and violence. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources, such as academic journals and government documents, augmented by interviews with key informants. Recommendations include expanding the educational curriculum to promote unconventional learning and providing training on interethnic issues to educators to mitigate potential political violence.



A study by Mbogo et al. (2025) analyzed the political elite's manipulation of Turbo's sub-county's ethnic diversity, which led to balkanization and violence during the 1992, 1997, and 2007 elections. Using purposive and snowball sampling for qualitative analysis, data collected included questionnaires, interviews, and archival documents. Findings revealed that politicization of ethnicity exacerbated conflicts and created an 'outsider' versus 'indigenous' narrative. Although interventions aimed at addressing inter-ethnic conflicts showed partial success, the study discusses ethno-politics and recommends new policy directions to enhance national unity.

Kenya has adopted technology to conduct its elections. Despite technological adoption, electoral disputes and violence persist. Odote and Kanyinga (2021) assessed the role of technology in African elections, highlighting its intended benefits of efficiency and fraud deterrence. The authors assert that election technology does not ensure credible outcomes, instead becoming a 'black box' exploited by political parties. The study concludes that election technology can facilitate fraud, emphasizing the need to tackle its political implications along with technical aspects to mitigate electoral violence.

Furthermore, Mondoh and Musya (2024) investigated election-related violence in Kenya. The study focused on youth involvement since 1992 in Nairobi's Kawangware informal settlement. Using a mixed-method design, the study gathered data from local youth, police, NGOs, and community leaders through questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Stratified and purposive sampling identified respondents. Qualitative data was analyzed with CAQDAS and quantitative data with IBM SPSS 25. Findings reveal significant youth disenfranchisement, with politicians as key instigators of violence. The study recommended that youth advancement and political accountability can help reduce such incidents.

On the other hand, Höglund et al. (2026) examined maintenance of electoral security amid high violence risks; the focus was Kenya's 2022 elections. The study aimed to address limited research on police roles in preventing election violence, using interviews and focus groups to assess changes in police conduct. Their analysis included macro-level political factors influencing violence risk and national preventive measures and micro-level police strategies in Nakuru and Kisumu counties. Findings suggest that while political dynamics contributed to reduced violence, effective police collaboration and community engagement were crucial in preventing escalation.

A study by Kasera (2025) examined the evolution of democracy in Kenya and noted that, despite progress, electoral integrity is still a concern. The study analyzes the peaceful electoral outcomes in Kisumu County during the 2022 elections, contrasting with its conflict-ridden past. It highlights the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in pre-election peacebuilding efforts in volatile "hotspot" areas. Through qualitative research, the paper identifies three CSO typologies and their strategies, emphasizing the influence of youth and collective memory in achieving peace. It advocates for a re-politicization of peacebuilding and a comprehensive approach to electoral conflict.

The 2007/8 post-election violence in Kenya threatened the country's democracy, highlighting the inadequacies of traditional election management amidst demographic growth, technological needs, and legal support (Barasa & Njagi, 2025). Since then, Kenya has made strides toward a vibrant democracy yet faces challenges, including three disputed presidential elections post-2010 and persistent allegations of voter fraud (Kawishe, 2025). Public trust in the electoral body remains low, exacerbated by the overwhelming number of elections and technological issues (Omole et al., 2025). This mistrust among political actors intensifies the volatility between voting and result announcements, leading to safety concerns following elections in 2013, 2017, and 2022 (Malik, 2024). Mutuku (2023) analyzes blockchain's potential to combat voter fraud in Kenya, reviewing historical injustices, real-world fraud examples, and global blockchain election applications and assessing implementation feasibility, considering scalability and costs. The study explains that integrating blockchain into election management could enhance election results verifiability, transparency, and trust. Table 1 summarizes the reviewed studies.

Table 1
Summary of Reviewed Studies

Author(s) (Year)	Research theme	Methodology	Findings	Recommendations
Höglund et al. (2026)	Electoral security during 2022 elections	Interviews & focus groups; micro & macro-level analysis	Effective police-community collaboration reduced violence; political factors influenced risk	Strengthen police strategies, community engagement and institutional preparedness
Mbogo et al. (2025)	Politicization of ethnicity in Turbo Sub-County	Purposive & snowball sampling; qualitative analysis	Elite manipulation of ethnic diversity led to conflicts	Develop policies promoting national unity and reduce ethno-politics
Odidi & Imbali (2024)	Examine triggers of political violence in Kenya	Literature review	Multi-ethnic society, historical land injustices, socio-economic inequalities, hate speech	Strengthen issue-based politics, civic education, reduce misinformation and corruption
Ochieng et al.	Link between	Survey of 450	FPTP system exacerbates	Implement alternative

(2024)	electoral management and post-election violence	participants; consociationalism, voting & rational choice theories	violence; strong correlation between electoral system flaws and violence	electoral systems to enhance representation
Dyzenhaus (2024)	Review Klaus (2020) on electoral violence	Literature review	Elite-citizen collaboration drives post-election violence; land narratives and weak tenure critical	Consider structural and relational interventions beyond ethnicity/institutional focus
Ndungú (2024)	Investigate ethnicized politics and electoral outcomes	Historical and political analysis	Political elites exploit ethnicity; smaller tribes marginalized; 2007, 2017, 2022 violence	Reduce ethnic politics, enhance national cohesion, merit-based job allocation
Onyango et al. (2024)	Analyze ethnic violence in Uasin Gishu county	Historical-interpretivist qualitative approach	Violence rooted in colonial-era settlements; ethnic tension exacerbated by elites	Address historical grievances, promote inter-ethnic dialogue
Malik (2024)	Link short-lived parties to ethnic violence	Data analysis + elite interviews	High party turnover reduces accountability, allowing recurring violence	Strengthen party stability, political accountability mechanisms
Mondoh & Musya (2024)	Youth involvement in electoral violence in Kawangware	Mixed-method; questionnaires, interviews, focus groups	Youth disenfranchisement; politicians instigate violence	Promote youth advancement, political accountability, community engagement
Ochieng et al. (2023)	Evaluate post-election violence in Kenya	Mixed-method; questionnaires and interviews with political actors and voters	Causes: disputed results, tribalism, ineffective conflict resolution, “winner-takes-all” system, voter incitement; consequences: casualties, displacement, economic instability	Explore alternative electoral models (mixed-member/proportional representation)
Linke (2022)	Analyze 2007–08 PEV patterns	Locational and relational analysis	Violence patterns shaped by ethnic community size, incumbency, and demographics	Context-sensitive conflict interventions; consider regional dynamics
Muchiri et al. (2022)	Youth participation in 2007 PEV	Mixed methods: interviews, primary & secondary sources	Youth pivotal in violence; illegitimate and legitimate roles identified	Education on inter-ethnic issues; non-conventional youth engagement strategies
Odote & Kanyinga (2021)	Role of election technology in African elections	Literature review	Technology improves efficiency but does not ensure credibility; can facilitate fraud	Address political misuse of technology; strengthen technical and institutional safeguards
Klaus (2020)	Examine elite organization of electoral violence	Fieldwork in Kenya	Violence as elite-citizen mobilization; land issues central to coordination	Address land tenure weaknesses and elite-driven violence dynamics

4.2 Discussion

Results reveal that post-election violence in Kenya develops through structural factors, institutional systems, ethnic groups, and economic conditions. Indeed, ethnic politics has caused electoral violence since the re-introduction of multiparty democracy in 1992. Mbogo et al. (2025) explain that Turbo Sub-County elites used ethnic diversity to create an ‘outsider versus indigenous’ narrative, which heightened tensions during the 1992, 1997, and 2007 elections. In the same way, Ndungú (2024) explains that political elites throughout history have used ethnic ties to maintain power; small tribes have been discriminated against, which has led to political violence since 1992. Indeed, ethnicized politics has been the main cause of political violence in Kenya since 1992.

Historical grievances and land disputes exacerbate political violence in Kenya. Dyzenhaus (2024) and Klaus (2020) demonstrate that elite groups and ordinary citizens cause electoral violence through their use of land-related narratives and weak land tenure systems. The study by Onyango et al. (2024) indicated that ethnic conflicts in Uasin Gishu County have their origins in colonial-era settlements that continue to affect electoral outcomes and social relations among communities. Political violence occurs through organized efforts that use historical injustices to

achieve political goals. The instrumentalist theory of ethnicity explains this view: political leaders use social divisions to advance their personal interests and party objectives.

The institutional frameworks determine political violence in the country. Ochieng et al. (2024) explain that Kenya's First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system creates violence through its winner-takes-all system. Ochieng et al. (2023) highlight that electoral system deficiencies arise from existing institutional biases and nonfunctional methods of handling conflicts, thus increasing the risk of political violence. Electoral administration requires structural changes through mixed-member or proportional representation systems to reduce the zero-sum competition that causes violence. Electoral management, institutional integrity, and political violence are interconnected; improvements in transparency and fairness aid in achieving long-term conflict resolution.

The youth are at the center of political violence in Kenya. Research by Muchiri et al. (2022) and Mondoh and Musya (2024) explain that unemployed youths are greatly involved in political violence. Political actors advance their personal interests or ethnic interests by causing the youth to participate in legitimate political activities and violent mobilization. The studies recommend educational interventions, interethnic dialogue programs, and expanded civic participation to redirect youth energy towards constructive political engagement. The relative deprivation theory explains the relationship between youth feelings of marginalization and exclusion and their unmet socio-economic expectations. Consequently, they are vulnerable to political exploitation by elites.

The use of technology during elections has advantages and disadvantages. Odote and Kanyinga (2021) prove that Kenya's electoral technology system creates better efficiency that reduces some procedural errors; however, the system still allows for potentially fraudulent activities. The Höglund et al. (2026) study on the 2022 elections found out that police-community collaboration was more effective at reducing violence. Indeed, technology assists electoral processes while human-centered methods (institutional readiness, civic participation, and law enforcement partnerships) are important for maintaining safety and preventing conflicts.

The intensity and patterns of post-election violence are determined by contextual factors and local-level dynamics. The study by Linke (2022) showed that ethnic community size, prior incumbency, and local demographics determined the subnational differentials of post-election violence of 2007 to 2008. Areas with higher populations of Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities had worse experiences. Effective peacebuilding requires context-specific solutions that consider local ethnic makeup and historical grievances.

Civic education, issue-based politics, and inclusive governance are effective methods for implementing disaster response systems. Odidi and Imbali (2024) explain that Kenya first established foundations for issue-based politics through its 2010 Constitution and multiparty system. However, the process is obstructed by ethnic-based political systems, false information, and weak governmental institutions. Malik (2024) describes the use of political parties as short-term special purpose vehicles for political power. These create instability that leads to reduced governmental responsibility and increased ethnic conflict. Institutions with stronger operational abilities, better civic knowledge, and increased accountability reduce political violence and help in the development of an issue-based democratic system.

Mitigation of political violence entails the use of multiple methods that require structural changes, community participation, and specific targeted strategies. Electoral management systems should undergo institutional reforms and create pathways for youth participation and empowerment and resolve historical and ethnic disputes, building civic education programs, national unity, and political accountability for elite members. Höglund et al. (2026) establish that law enforcement agencies should work with local communities to handle emergency situations. Additionally, Kasera (2025) demonstrates that civil society organizations function as critical in pre-election peacebuilding efforts in areas that have experienced historical political violence. Indeed, successful mitigation efforts require violence prevention methods to stop violent incidents and continuous efforts to address challenges in political systems, social structures, and institutional frameworks.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study concludes that violence in Kenya arises from structural and institutional frameworks and ethnic and socioeconomic conditions. Political elites use ethnicized politics to cause political violence, as they want to gain power through strong ties to specific community identities. Political parties use organized efforts to address historical grievances and land disputes to achieve political goals. The design of electoral systems that creates 'winner-takes-all' results leads to fierce competition that exacerbates political violence. The active involvement of the youth in political violence is due to marginalization and unemployment. Electoral efficiency improves through technology, yet it fails to stop electoral manipulation. This community engagement, law enforcement partnership, and institutional readiness are necessary for human-centered solutions. The regional distribution of political violence indicates different intensity patterns that depend on demographic factors, historical backgrounds, and social relationships.

Additionally, the study concludes that the political violence problem in Kenya requires active solutions that create multiple layers of protection to manage its basic and immediate conflict drivers. The implementation of electoral reforms through alternative voting systems and improved governance institutions decreases zero-sum competition and enhances electoral accountability. Civic education, issue-based political development, and inter-ethnic dialogue activities create social bonds and prevent people from using ethnic divisions for their own purposes. Youth empowerment programs would guide them towards peaceful political activities. Law enforcement resources and community partnerships create an election security framework that enables quick and effective election response. Civil society groups develop peacebuilding programs in regions with historical political unrest. Effective reconstruction requires continuous integrated activities that check institutional shortcomings, promote national unity, and advance political responsibility. The governance system, educational programs, community development initiatives, and institutional changes create a democratic framework that includes all people and focuses on important national matters.

5.2 Recommendations

This study recommends that the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) should develop better systems for electoral processes that'll enhance their transparency and credibility and hold electoral results accountable. Historical land injustices should be addressed through transparent land reforms; thus, the national land commission should implement reforms. Political parties should establish internal democracy systems to reduce ethnic-based voting and promote issue-based manifestos. Political elites should face consequences from the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission and oversight organizations to stop them from using ethnic divisions for their political advantage. The establishment of independent governance structures would reduce electoral fraud in elections and build public confidence in democratic processes.

The study recommends that youth, civil society organizations, community leaders, and security agencies should be trained to handle political violence in the community. The ministries of youth affairs, education, and labor should develop youth empowerment programs to create employment opportunities and provide skills training and civic engagement programs to empower the youth. Educational institutions and civil society organizations should establish stronger civic education programs and teach students about issue-based politics, national unity, and peaceful electoral participation. The local community should strengthen its inter-ethnic dialogue forums to involve community leaders, religious organizations, and local peace committees to build social unity and reduce distrust between different groups. Law enforcement agencies should develop their community policing methods and establish linkages with local residents to manage election-related issues. The role of civil society organizations in early warning systems and election monitoring and peacebuilding activities should continue, as it aids in areas with historical political violence. The introduction of governance reforms with community involvement and socio-economic development should be spearheaded through a cooperative process with multiple stakeholders to prevent political violence and establish a secure democratic framework for Kenya.

Declaration of Interest

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