

Emerging Forms of Violence in Universities and Campus Safety Initiatives: A case of Kenya

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Abstract

Violence has become a global issue of concern whether it is in society, in general; or specifically in or against educational institutions. Recent observations show that learning institutions have become violent places where all types of weapons such as guns, sharp objects and equipment; liquid chemicals; oral communication forms; are used to inflict or activate violence. This worrying trend of violence in learning institutions has increased in scope overtime. The 21st century violence has emerged in different forms with technological advancements, knowledge growth and expansion, much social exposure, interactions and information exchange across regional and international borders. High levels of violence are precipitated by underlying political, economic and social challenges that include social inequality, poverty, and institutional shortcomings. There is a strong relationship between forms of violence and factors such as income and gender inequality, the harmful use of alcohol, and the absence of safe, stable, and nurturing relationships. Hence, these various causes of violence impacting on different personalities and environments within its scope of occurrence. In all its spheres, violence occurrences in universities and other institutions of higher learning is common. This paper aims at discussing the emerging forms of violence, their causes and possible campus safety initiatives that have been put in place to nurture and promote a peacebuilding environment that elicit respect and dignity in universities and other institutions of higher learning.

Keywords: Violence, Emerging Forms of Violence, Campus Safety, Universities, Peacebuilding

1. INTRODUCTION

All institutions of higher learning have put in place mechanisms, strategies, precautions, standards, rules and regulations that help the institutions to ensure that their learning environments are safe for everyone within their ecosystem. Yet issues of active violence in different forms which disrupt harmonious and peaceful co-existence seem to emerge or are reported from time to time. Emerging forms of violence in universities include social media violence, terrorism, intimate partner violence, dating and sexual violence, physical and emotional violence, stalking issues within and across campuses in universities. These forms of violence are different in nature, scope of operation and effects on the victims. University managements, professionals, staff/employees and students have found themselves at crossroads on how to deal with violence effectively in order to create a peaceful, safe and conducive environment where all coexist with dignity and respect.

Thus this paper discusses emerging forms of violence and campus safety initiatives with a spirit of peacebuilding. The paper goes beyond describing the nature and causes of violence to explain the initiatives undertaken by the universities to enhance campus safety. This paper is an eye opener to review, discuss and put in place mechanisms that can help university management to minimise forms of violence including terrorism, social media, stalking, goonism, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, among others. Universities have to go an extra mile in establishing active campus safety for all its members.

2. THE CONCEPT OF VIOLENCE

The term violence does not have a standard fixed definition. Different scholars have defined violence differently depending on the nature, type and scope of violence; social contexts, culture and belief systems. Generally, the noun violence refers to behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage or kill someone. However, World Health Organisation (WHO) defines violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation". This definition involves intentionality with the committing of the act itself, irrespective of the outcome it produces. Consequently, anything that is exerted in an injurious or damaging way may be described as violent even if not meant to be violence (by a person and against a person). This definition of WHO divides violence into types and categories.

3. TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Thus, violent acts can be divided into the following types;

Physical Violence; refers to intentional use of physical force, used with the potential for causing harm, injury, disability or death. This type of violence has psychological effects, mental health problems, and trauma. This may include slapping, hitting, pushing, punching, burning, use of a weapon.

Sexual violence; refers to sexual act being committed or attempted against a victim who has not freely given consent or who is not able to consent or refuse.

Psychological violence; refers to emotional or mental abuse. It includes verbal and non-verbal communication used with an intent to harm another person mentally or to exert control over another person. It leads to anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Examples include expressive aggression such as humiliating and degrading; coercive control such as limiting access to favourable things or people, excessive monitoring of a person's whereabouts or communications; threats of physical or sexual violence; and exploitation of a person's vulnerability or disability.

4. CATEGORIES OF VIOLENCE

According to WHO's definition, violence can be divided into three categories depending on who the perpetrators and victims of violence;

Self-directed violence refers to violent acts a person inflicts upon himself/herself and includes self-abuse which includes self-mutilation, suicidal thoughts and suicidal behaviour and acts.

Interpersonal violence refers to violence inflicted by another individual or by a small group of individuals which includes family and intimate partner violence, child abuse and elderly people abuse, tribal or community violence such as youth violence, rape or sexual assault by strangers, violence in institutions such as schools, workplaces and prisons.

Collective violence refers to instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group against another group or set of individuals in order to achieve political, or social objectives. Collective violence include crimes of hate committed by organized groups, terrorist acts and mob violence, war and related violent conflicts, and state violence, attacks by larger groups motivated by economic gain – such as attacks carried out with the purpose of disrupting economic activity, denying access to essential services, or creating economic division and fragmentation.

5. FORMS OF VIOLENCE IN UNIVERSITIES

Institutions of higher learning have not been exempted from acts of violence. Acts of violence are reported from one type or category to another. Therefore, universities have challenges in providing safer campuses to students to enable them pursue their academic endeavors. Universities are committed to maintaining an environment that is safe and free from violence and will not tolerate violent and threatening behavior. The university community members have a shared responsibility to maintain a climate of behavior that does not foster acts of violence, threats, and aggression.

Globally, institutions of higher learning provides a host of resources to address potential or actual acts of violence and aggression. For instance, most institutions are either having police departments in the institution or in areas within reach adjacent to the institution; and individuals are encouraged to seek assistance from the law enforcement; guidance and counselling services, peer group emergency reporting agencies; health centers, hotline telephone numbers and code of ethics or conduct; to guide discipline and behavior in the institution.

In spite of all these measures in place, violence has escalated and is reported or witnessed in different forms on daily basis, at the universities. Forms of violence range from social media data violence, terrorism, intimate partner violence, Dating and sexual violence, physical and emotional violence, stalking/goonism issues within and across campuses in universities. These forms of violence are discussed below;

Terrorism and Armed attacks

The claim and evidence of universities having become breeding and recruiting grounds of radicalisation and student extremism is overwhelming. How can the universities be de radicalised? Terrorism and armed attacks are targeted forms of violence and do not just happen but are planned for purposes of releasing pressure, tensions or revenge missions among other reasons.

For example; in north eastern Kenya, at least 147 people, mostly students were killed in an assault by al-Shabab militants. Heavily armed attackers stormed Garissa University killing two security guards then firing indiscriminately on students. More than 500 students managed to escape, 79 of whom were injured. One of the attackers was supposedly a university student who had been radicalized. There could be many such cases not revealed or exposed worldwide.

Universities have a role to play in the prevention of terrorism and violent extremism. For instance, under the Counter –Terrorism and Security Act 2015 in Britain, universities have a statutory duty to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism. Thus, universities should be supported to become spaces where there is freedom of speech and controversial ideas are discussed and solutions explored and debated.

There are many other cases of students arming themselves with harmful weapons including guns and shooting their colleagues and/or staff in educational institutions.

Social Media Data Violence

Social media data is found on sites such as instagram, facebook, twitter, whatsapp among others. The question is; is there any relationship between social media and violence? Do fights, heated arguments, and threatening messages online lead to real life violence? The commonest and most popular mode of communication currently is text messages through social media platforms. Painful and hurting experiences are shared through these platforms.

Consequently, the use of social media and digital technologies has greatly changed the way that information is captured, reported, analyzed and acted upon. People's use of social media play a significant role in political revolutions. Social media content is always the target of distortions, manipulations or censorship by a range of actors. These platforms are used to plan, develop, implement and evaluate social, economic, political and technological strategies.

With the fact that online messages can escalate to offline conflict; violence in social media is the reason for the establishment of mobile police technology and cyber intelligence departments on social media. The percentage of youth being involved in violent crime facilitated through social media is enormously high. Violence provoking videos and posts are placed on social media platforms and this has led to the destruction of the youth in schools and post school institutions, for example, the popular blue whale game, among others.

Gender based violence

It is a traditional form of violence that has been reported in universities over a long time. Gender based violence is a consequence of gender power inequities at both societal and relationship level. It lies in the patriarchal nature of society and ideals of masculinity that are based on control of women while celebrating male strength and toughness.

Gender based violence in the universities is not only against women but also men who suffer women gang attacks. These ideals lead to risky sexual behaviours, practices and acts of violence against women and men, including rape. Rape is a potential source of HIV/AIDS

infection, venereal diseases, unwanted pregnancies and babies, among others. Gender based violence in universities has expanded to include intimate partner violence, Dating and sexual violence.

Intimate partner violence refers to behaviour in an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, intimidation, psychological abuse and controlling behaviour. Population-level surveys based on reports from victims provide the most accurate estimates of the prevalence of intimate partner violence and sexual violence in non-conflict settings.

A study conducted by WHO in ten developing countries found that, among women aged 15 to 49 years, between 15% (Japan) and 70% (Ethiopia and Peru) of women reported physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner.

Intimate partner and sexual violence have serious short and long term physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health problems for victims and for their children, and lead to high social and economic costs. These include both fatal and non-fatal injuries, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections.

Factors associated with the perpetration and experiences of intimate partner violence are low levels of education, history of violence as a perpetrator, a victim or a witness of parental violence, harmful use of alcohol, attitudes that accept violence, marital discord and dissatisfaction; having multiple partners, and antisocial personality disorder.

Dating and sexual violence: Dating and sexual violence is any relationship based sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced sex.

Population-level surveys based on reports from victims estimate that between 0.3–11.5 percent of women reported experiencing sexual violence. If perpetrated during childhood, sexual violence can lead to increased smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, and risky sexual behaviours in later life. It is also associated with perpetration of violence and being a victim of violence. Risk factors specific to sexual violence perpetration include beliefs in family honour and sexual purity, ideologies of male sexual entitlement and weak legal sanctions for sexual violence. To achieve lasting change in sexual violence, it is important to enact legislation and develop policies that protect both men and women; address discrimination

against women and promote gender equality; and help to move the culture away from violence.

Stalking / Goonism

A stalker is someone who pesters or harasses others. Stalking is unwanted or obsessive attention by an individual or group towards another person. Stalking behaviours are related to harassment and intimidation and may include following the victim in person or in monitoring. According to a report of the US National Center for Victims of Crime (2002) stalking directly or indirectly communicates a threat or places the victim in fear. The individual inflicts on another repeated unwanted intrusions and communications. Violence Against Women Act of 2005 defines stalking as “engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his/her safety or safety of others and suffer substantial emotional stress”.

The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (VAWA Amendments) was signed in 2013 into law in USA and covers domestic violence, dating violence and stalking cases in addition to sexual assault cases. Stalking is very common in universities where senior students form groups/gangs of power and authority and claim extra powers and use it to molest and bully others especially junior students of lower levels, making demands. This has led to demands of cohabiting through threats, sexual assaults, rape, and forced relationships; all which has led to fear, suicide and murder. The term that is used and known by most students for stalking in universities such as University of Nairobi; is a slang; “*goonism*”. *Goonism* is the art of exacting what you want from others by force while pretending to be under some kind of authoritative protection. Like a stalker, a goon intimidates, harasses and harms opponents. The effects of stalking and goonism include psychological stress, chronic anxiety, depression, post traumatic signs, stress disorder and substance abuse.

General forms of violence

Other forms of violence that are found in the universities physical fighting, thuggery, and oral hate speech; all infringing on each other’s well-being, relationships and all forms of interaction. Any form of violence disrupts learning and achievement of personal goals for joining institutions of higher learning.

Defenders, perpetrators, proponents and supporters of violence always seek justification. For example in the case of South African athlete Oscar Pistorius used self defense as a reason for

killing his intimate partner. In other cases political arguments are given, broken promises, hopelessness, drug and substance influence, among others.

6. EXISTING CAMPUS SAFETY INITIATIVES (A CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI)

University of Nairobi is a collegiate research university which is the largest in Kenya has 5,525 administrative and technical staff, 2052 academic staff with over 450 professors serving a population of 84000 students (September 2016). It has ten colleges/ campuses and several extra mural centres. With such population, the university management has put in place disciplinary measures and regulations to gauge the behaviour and conduct of students. Some of these measures upon which safety of all university staff is build drawn from student joining instructions for academic year 2017/2018; include;

1. *Compulsory Clauses For All Joining Students In Rules And Regulations*

That I acknowledge and duly submit myself to the disciplinary authorities of the University as defined in the Rules and Regulations Governing the Organization and Conduct of students of the University. In particular:-

- a) All students shall conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, personal discipline and morality and in particular, shall:-***
 - Respect and adhere to the administrative and academic procedures and structures established by the University of Nairobi Act for the control, governance and operations of the University,***
 - Respect the rights and privileges of the members of the University community at all times.***
 - Refrain from any conduct that might bring the University or any section or programme thereof to disrepute or public odium,***
 - Carry themselves in all public places with such humility and dignity as befits their status as mature and responsible citizens.***
- b) Bind myself to refrain from engaging in any unlawful activities that may be deemed to be prejudicial to the interest of the University and other students and in particular;***

- i. *I will abstain from inciting, obstructing or in any manner stopping any other students from attending lectures or obstructing a member of the University from giving lectures or such other instructions;*
- ii. *Undertake not to convene or join any unauthorized and/or unlawful demonstrations, processions, gathering and activities or in any way to be a party to any activities deemed prejudicial to the good order and running of the University;*
- iii. *undertake at all times to conduct myself in such manner as to uphold the dignity of the University and not to permit anyone to influence me to commit any breach of rules, regulations or practices of the University;*
- iv. *undertake to conduct myself at all times, within and outside the precincts of the University, in a responsible and socially acceptable manner which upholds the dignity of and public confidence in the University*
- v. *Refrain from all acts of hooliganism, unruly or rowdy behavior (including fighting), emission of unreasonable or excessive noise, or conduct likely to cause annoyance or disturbance to others, within or outside University precincts,*
- vi. *Desist from misuse of wilful damage to or destruction of University property, in default of which such student or group of students shall bear full responsibility thereof,*
- vii. *Avoid such drunkenness or drunken behavior as would constitute a disturbance to other students and staff of the University,*
- viii. *Desist from abuse of drugs, and totally refrain from the use of drugs possession of which is prohibited by law. c) That I bind myself by the clauses above fully conscious that should I be found in breach of any of the above conditions, or should I in any way conduct myself in a manner prejudicial to the University, other students, members of University or members of the public, I shall be expelled from the University;*

Disciplinary measures against offences

- *All Disciplinary offences shall in the first instance, be reported to and dealt with by Committees constituted as follows:- At the College level (hereinafter the College Disciplinary Committee)*

- *All disciplinary offences committed within the Halls of Residence or all such offences as relate essentially to the proper conduct of residential affairs shall be reported to the Halls Disciplinary Committee for action*
- *Conviction in a court of law for commission of a criminal offence of such a nature as should, in the opinion of Council, warrant expulsion from the University.*

Penalties

- *A letter of warning or reprimand,*
- *The payment of damages commensurate with the nature and gravity of the offence committed,*
- *Suspension from the University for a specified period,*
- *Expulsion from the Halls of Residence*
- *Any other penalty which the committee in question may deem fit to impose or recommend to the Senate Student Disciplinary Committee*

2. Counselling Services

For the holistic development of students, the Office of the Dean of Students maintains through its staff of Chaplains, Counselling Psychologists and Assistant Deans of Students services to enhance students' emotional, behavioral and spiritual well-being. Students who want to build their strengths or are experiencing difficulties, or worries are encouraged to seek the necessary assistance through this office. Students seeking to make a positive adjustment in your life, our team of experienced staff will offer you the necessary professional support, guidance and counselling,

3. Advocacy and Liaison Services

The university is interested in the betterment of student's life. So if you feel that no one has heard your pleas for assistance, the office of the Dean of Students will be there to listen. The office of the Dean of Students is also responsible for safeguarding student's rights while also seeing to it that students adhere to the provided code of conduct. This task is no small one, as it requires the officers to represent student welfare interests in the various University committees, appeal and disciplinary hearings and in special meetings and task forces. The officers work closely with other University staff such as Faculty Deans and Directors, Wardens, Medical Staff, the Students Welfare Authority (SWA) Director, as well

as, with student representatives to address student's needs. Contact is also maintained with outside agencies.

4. Chaplaincy.

The University recognizes the need for services of a spiritual nature, over and above the other services we offer. Our Chaplaincy is staffed by religious leaders (Protestant, Catholic and Muslim) and offers general support and guidance while also drawing attention to the spiritual value within the various faiths. The services of the Chaplaincy are open to the entire University Community. Some of these services and activities include guidance, conducting religious ceremonies, for instance, weddings, baptisms, burials, conducting regular worship services, hosting seminars and workshops, and coordinating religious activities at the University. The University Chaplaincy is located in Gandhi Wing Main Campus

7. CRITICAL VIEWS ON CAMPUS VIOLENCE

In the midst of the above measures in place for so many years in universities, campus violence is still a worrying close- minded trend which does not acknowledge other point of views and insists on being the only voice that should be heard and heeded. When campus fraternity fails to persuade its audience, it uses violence. In case of campus violence, most explanations sound like they have been made up after the event leaving the audience not certain on whether to belief it or not. There is very little or no careful search of evidence for the course of violence. The infringement of the rights of others, state of human relationships, damage to personality, property are not taken seriously.

In spite of the fact that universities have institutional disciplinary proceedings, penalties for offences, physical security personnel, student management systems, counselling services; and telephone hotlines and infrastructure for emergency reporting in place, forms of violence have never ceased. Thus, what effective measures can be undertaken to ensure that there is campus safety and peacebuilding environments in the universities?

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the midst of emerging forms of violence in universities, the following recommendations may minimize violence in campuses leading to safety and peacebuilding in university environments;

1. Review of all rules, regulations and safety mechanisms should all be done in line with the current trends of violence. Some of these measures have been in place for centuries and are out dated to counter resolve the 21st century forms of violence.
2. Research, consultations and benchmarking for up to date information exchange across universities regionally and globally on forms of violence, safety measures and peacebuilding initiatives may lead to innovative ways of dealing with violence; and inform strategic planning and targeted interventions by education sector, and partners in preventing and responding to different forms of violence.
3. Universities should be supported to become spaces where there is freedom of speech and controversial ideas are discussed and solutions explored and debated.
4. There is need to integrate causes, effects and innovative solutions of emerging forms of violence into the curriculum at all levels of education. Such reforms in the curriculum should be informed by research and benchmarking initiatives. Sensitization programs should be put in place to create awareness on above curriculum reforms.
5. Education sector policies, government laws, and statutes in curbing forms of violence should be analysed, simplified for understanding and disseminated into the public arena to guide interventions for effective prevention and response through multi-sectoral approach

9. CONCLUSION

Violence has become a global issue of concern. This worrying trend of violence in learning institutions has increased in scope overtime. The 21st century violence has emerged in different forms with technological advancements, knowledge growth and expansion, much social exposure, interactions and information exchange across regional and international borders. Emerging forms of violence in universities include social media violence, terrorism, intimate partner violence, dating and sexual violence, physical and emotional violence, stalking issues within and across campuses in universities. These forms of violence are different in nature, scope of operation and effects on the victims. In spite of the fact that universities have institutional disciplinary proceedings, penalties for offences, physical security personnel, student management systems, counselling services; and telephone hotlines and infrastructure for emergency reporting in place, forms of violence have never ceased. However, with collaborative and partnership initiatives among various actors globally,

through research, consultations, benchmarking, targeted interventions; and curriculum reviews and reforms, it is possible to promote synergy for peace -building and enhance respect, safety and dignity for all in the universities.

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