

Research Article

Electoral Violence and Human Security in Ghana: A Case of Ododiodio Constituency of the Greater Accra Region

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Abstract: Elections have generally been recognized as the most democratic means of establishing governments. However, whereas Ghana has seen a remarkable increase in the occurrence of elections in the post-third wave period, this democratic gain has been battered by a corresponding proliferation in the incidence of electoral-related violence in certain parts of the country before, during and after elections. This study intends to contribute to the existing literature on the intersection between democracy, electoral violence and human security in Ghana and Africa at large by exploring the effect of such violence on human security in the Ododiodio constituency in the Greater Region of Ghana. Drawing mainly on qualitative data generated through group discussions and in-depth interviews, the study revealed seven key human security concerns that are undermined by electoral violence in the study location. The paper proposes interventions that could contribute significantly to avert the situation.

Keywords: conflict; democracy; elections; human security; violence

1. Introduction

“The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of governments as expressed in periodic and genuine elections [...]”. This proclamation of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Article, 21.3) resonates in Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to the effect that every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity to vote and be voted for in a genuine periodic election. The American and African human rights systems equally recognise the right to participate in government through elections as a fundamental right, with reinforcement from meetings such as the Arusha Conference on popular participation in Africa, in February 1990 [1]. The foregoing provides an impetus for recognising

political elections as critical because, as in the words of Linberg (2006) [2], elections represent the most feasible institutionalised approach for ensuring democracy. Elections are, therefore, one of the most important means through which the governed can partake in political decisions that affect their lives, and also hold their elected representatives accountable [3]. Hence, in liberal democratic theory, elections are upheld as viable mechanisms for the consummating representative government [4]. Zakaria (2007) [5] observes that over 119 countries, comprising some 62% of the world, practice democracy which was almost non-existent a little over a century ago. In the context of Africa, Adolfo et al. (2012) [6] assert that since the re-introduction of multiparty democracy in sub-Saharan Africa in the early 90s, electoral competition for state power has become the

norm and many states have since conducted several successive elections. Gyimah-Boadi (2009) [7] in this respect notes that democratization has increasingly spread across Africa since the early 1990s.

However, data from the Countries at Risk of Election Violence (CREV) estimate that over three-quarters of elections in countries considered to be at risk of violence experienced at least ten violent events within the last decades [8]. These are indicative that, despite the centrality of elections in ensuring democratic stability and longevity, they can also serve as catalysts for armed conflicts and democratic reversals [9]. Hence there have been growing worldwide concerns among politicians, governments and practitioners regarding electoral violence in especially developing countries such as those in Africa. As a result, researchers on various issues relating to electoral violence have increased over the past decades. Scholars like Flores (2012) [10] and Matanock (2017) [11] have examined elections as a trigger for civil wars and the potentially destabilizing consequences of elections after the end of the civil war. Others including Goldsmith (2015) [12] and Harish and Little (2017) [13] have also examined the relationship between patterns of political violence and the electoral cycle. Previous researchers have also advanced knowledge on factors that increase the risk of some actors employing violent tactics during political elections within and outside Ghana [8,14–16].

The consequences of electoral conflict are not limited to the political and economic institutions of a state but can also infiltrate numerous aspects of society. The concept of human security as a consequence extends traditional, state-centric notions of security to include the security and well-being of people that live within states. Drawing on the human security framework, this paper aims to explore the effect of violent conflict on the populations of Ghana by evaluating the relationship between electoral violence and human security, taking into account its relevant political, economic, food, health, environment, personal and community factors. Assessing the adverse effects of electoral violence on human security increases a new dimension to the study of electoral violence in Africa and Ghana. It moves the focus of analysis from the state level to the individual level as it ponders the effect of such violence on the well-being and welfare of individuals and communities. This study intends to contribute to existing literature on democracy and electoral related violence in Ghana and Africa at large by exploring how electoral violence affect human security, especially in the Odododiodio Constituency in the Greater region of Ghana. Studying the effect of electoral violence on human security, therefore, extends the idea of security from the security of states to the security of populations and fits well within the human security framework. The rest of the article is structured as follows: First, it discusses the conceptual perspectives of human security and a literature review on the dynamics that underpin election and election-related violence, unpacking how pre-election, election and post-election situations play out into violence in Ghana and elsewhere. Second, it presents the methodology employed

in the study, the results and discussion, and the conclusion and recommendation.

2. Human Security: A Conceptual Perspective

A large literature has emerged challenging, defending, or explaining the meaning and the added value of the concept. Gomez and Gasper (2013) [17] suggest the concept has become increasingly widely used since the mid-1990s. Hence, a number of varying and overlapping definitions of human security exist, and many scholars provide various dimensions of the concept. Scholars like McRae and Hubert (2001) [18] agree that the notion of human security is broad as it takes all the individual's freedom from threats as the unit of analysis fostering the dimensions of economic, political and social environment, and realising the freedom from fear. In their attempt to identify measurable factors of human security, King and Murray (2001) [19] describe human security as a person's expectation of life without being trapped in a state of poverty. von Feigenblatt (2009) [20] on his part points out that individuals are the foremost referent recipients of security. Influenced by the capabilities approach, Amartya Sen, the independent Commission on Human Security in its 2003 report defined human security in the following terms: *Human security is concerned with safeguarding and expanding people's vital freedoms. It requires both shielding people from acute threats and empowering people to take charge of their own lives [...] Human security complements state security, enhances human rights and strengthens human development [...] It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and institutions* ([21], p. 33).

It is worthy to note that the concept of human security was almost entirely enmeshed and subsumed in the idealism of military protection of the nation-state, rather than the people who constitute the nation-state until the mid-1990s. At the time of the Cold War, realist notions of security dictated foreign policy, and state leaders remained unrelentingly occupied in the pursuit of military superiority [22]. The idea of security was thus generally synonymous with protecting the territory and national interests of a state from external aggression, and as a result compel the traditional approaches to the study of security to focus unnecessarily on the state-level impact of conflict. Hence, the traditional approaches to the study of security focus needless attention on the state-level impact of conflict [22].

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development report (1994) was the first international document that clearly and explicitly provided substantial clarity on human security, by articulating its five major defining characteristics of being people-centred, multi-sectoral, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented approach that focus on freedoms from (i) fear and (ii) want. These characteristics set human security clearly apart from state-centric security whose flagship vested interest is skewed toward "militaristic safeguarding of state borders". The change from state security to human secu-

rity has become necessary due to the salience and global nature of the issues that threaten the security of populations [22]. Hence a paradigm of security by taking into consideration threats to the well-being of individuals and communities that may not necessarily threaten state power [22]. The interpretation of security in this regard goes beyond the state-centric approach of traditional paradigms, which implies the inclusion of actors other than just the state. For example, in King and Murray's conceptualization of human security, they take into account health and economic factors rather than merely security from armed conflict, and by this focus on the expected number of years of future life a person is likely to spend without falling "below the threshold of any key domain of human well-being" ([19], p. 585). The concept of human security in this respect, among others, entails people's ability to maintain a quality of life that does not fall below the level at which they feel secure [22]. This viewpoint resonates with the former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan's statement:

[h]uman security, in its broadest sense, embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education, and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her potential [23].

Scholars, such as MacFarlane and FoongKhong, therefore, assert that:

the concept of human security must embrace all the aspects of society including economic, political, social dimensions and environmental dimensions in individuals, families, of the communities, local and the nation's life. The security of a nation must be based on the security of the life of the individual citizens to live in peace and satisfy basic needs while being able to participate fully in societal affairs and enjoying freedom and fundamental rights ([24], p. 156).

Burgess and Gräns (2012) [25], as a result, assert that human security can no longer be understood in purely military terms. Security has thus assumed a broader perspective since the end of the Cold War to include human rights, food, health, the environment and development as security issues [26,27]. The concept of human security in this context encompasses a multidimensional spectrum expressed in economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratization, disarmament, and respect for human rights and the rule of law [25]. Canada, on other hand, uses a more narrowed and condensed version of human security that involves freedom from forced threats to all people's lives and rights [28]. Canada's perspective of human security in this respect includes the achievement of a certain quality of life, fundamental human rights, good governance, rule of law, safeness from violence, social equity and sustainable development [28]. Thus, post 1994, the appreciation of human security had begun to look beyond the limited scope of national security, towards a more holistic sense of security well-rooted in the quality of life of the human *persona*. Human security, in this respect, promotes human rights because it focuses on situations that threaten human rights and supports the development of systems

that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and essential freedoms: freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one's own behalf [29].

The factors that engender insecurity among individuals living within states are not limited to the perpetuation of the state, hence the emerging notion of human security addresses the security of ordinary people [22]. This is based on the fact that the security of people is related to their quality of life and the threats to their security, which include a number of social and economic issues. In this respect, the occurrence of electoral violence can adversely affect any or all of these factors and amplify the insecurity of people in the affected state [22]. Hence an adequate understanding of whether people, and not merely states are secured calls for the need to address the various components of human security rather than assume that populations are secure when states are not involved in wars [22]. Human security from this perspective corresponds with the conception of "freedom from fear and freedom from want" [29], which includes community, economic, environmental, food, health, political and personal security of individuals [30,31]. Interestingly, a cursory look at the elements of the UNDP's (1994) [31] human security, as explained in Table 1, show that the elements seem to be interrelated and support one another and [that] impediment to one impedes others.

Based on the fact that various dimensions of human security are integral to the well-being of communities and individuals, exploring how they are affected by electoral violence should be seen as a contribution to understanding of the concept of human security. This paper therefore seeks to understand if and how electoral violence in general affects any of the elements of human security (as listed in Table 1) by exploring the perceptions of the residents of the Ododiodion constituency.

3. Dynamics of Electoral Violence in Ghana

Voter behaviour is a complex phenomenon due to its unpredictability. Hence, globally, the outcome of elections varies. While some are welcome by a segment of the electorate, others are not. Reilly and Reynolds (1999) [32] as a consequence provide that despite numerous efforts aimed at consolidating democratic governance, the electoral conflict remains an obstacle to the consolidation of democratic institutions for many parts of the world. This is confirmed by Biegon (2009) [33] that since the end of the cold war, conflicts in Africa have been largely intra-state with election issues at the causal core, which claimed thousands of lives, raising challenges for the African Union (AU) and the international community at large. Extant literature reveals that a lot of violent conflicts on the continent are related to inefficiency and disregard for democratic principles, and the absence of good governance, resulting in human rights abuses, corruption, clientelism, exclusions and the partisan posture of the state in distributing resources among competing constituencies [34].

Table 1. The key components of human security (Adopted from [1]).

	Types of Human Security:	Explanation
1	Economic	Assured basic income: access to employment and resources.
2	Food security	Physical and economic access to food for all people at all times.
3	Health security	Access to medical treatment and improved health conditions.
4	Personal security	Individual security from physical violence.
5	Community security	Most people derive their security from membership in a social group (family, community, organisation, political grouping, ethnic group, etc.). Tensions often arise between these groups due to competition over limited access to opportunities and resources.
6	Political security	Living in a society that guarantees basic human rights and freedom of expression.
7	Environmental security	Living in a healthy physical environment is spared from desertification, deforestation and other environmental threats that endanger people's survival.

It is worthy to note that electoral violence is not limited to a particular continent or country. Literature has indicated that the outcome of elections in some Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Philippines and Malaysia were characterised with violence leading to loss of human lives, property, injuries and chaos. In the Philippines 75 people were killed prior to the May 2007 elections, while 80 others were wounded in election violence ([35], see also [36]). Some countries on the African continent, namely Zimbabwe, Kenya (2007/ 2008), Uganda, Ethiopia, Chad, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo (2011) Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire (2011) have experienced election violence. In the case of Cote d'Ivoire, Peter and AbdulRahman (2018) [37] have shown that post-election violence after the 2010 polls led to more than 1,000 civilian deaths with one million internally displaced people and 100,000 refugees in neighbouring countries. The situation in Nigeria and Kenya is not different. At least one hundred people were reported to be killed and several were injured in the 2003 Nigerian Federal Elections. While almost six hundred people were reported killed in the December 2007 presidential election violence in Kenya following disputes over the results [38].

In the context of Ghana, in addition to the ratification of relevant international human rights instruments that provide the opportunity for all citizens to vote and be elected at genuine periodic elections, Article 42 of the 1992 Constitution provides that "every citizen of Ghana of eighteen years of age or above and of sound mind has the right to vote and is entitled to be registered as a voter for public elections and referenda". Both pre- and post-election complaints are dealt with within the framework of Ghana's electoral laws. While some disputes over voter registration are resolved through the Electoral Commission of Ghana (ECG)'s internal structures, disputes over results are adjudicated by the Courts. The Supreme Court in this respect is provided with exclusive jurisdiction over petitions related to presidential elections. Ghana has conducted eight (8) successful con-

secutive elections since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1992. This places Ghana on a higher pedestal by the international community, as well as regional and social commentators who recognize Ghana as a bastion of democracy and the beacon of hope for Africa's democracy.

Despite such remarkable democratic credentials, the country continues to face many threats of widespread violence due to the recurrent nature of micro-level election-related violence. As Debrah (2001) [39] documents, there is the existence of vulnerabilities such as political patronage, politics of exclusion, the winner-takes-all phenomenon and undertones of ethnic cleavages. General elections in the country since the beginning of the Fourth Republic have witnessed quite a number of politically motivated clashes, and political violence that culminated into destruction of properties and human lives. For example, there have also been occurrences of electoral violence and mob actions reported in "Pru District in the Brong Ahafo Region, Tamale Central, Tamale North, Saboba, Zabzugu/Tatale constituencies in the Northern region" [40]. Related cases of violence were also recorded in some areas of the Upper West Region leading to the burning of a motor bike and injury of people [40]. Similar incidence was reported during the 2008 and 2016 transition periods, which culminated in weakening security to some measurable degree [41]. For the past two decades, four Administrative Regions in particular, namely Northern, Brong-Ahafo, Ashanti and Greater Accra, have been the most commonly cited flashpoints for election-related violence in the country [7,42]. Gyimah-Boadi (2007) [7] has shown that Greater Accra is the region with the second highest incidence of electoral violence in Ghana's electoral history for the past one and half decades. Constituencies such as Ningo-Prampram, Tema Central, Okaikwei Central, Ablekuma West, Weija, and Gbawe, especially the Odododiodio Constituency record electoral violence in almost every General Election in Ghana [7].

Literature has linked ethnic polarization, marginalization

of some ethnic groups from power, and parties representing particular ethnic or religious identities to greater incentives for electoral violence [43–45]. Scholars like Bekoe (2010) [46] have shown that the generally deplorable socio-economic conditions in many African countries make losing elections a major problem. Curtice (2002) [47] suggests that the ‘winner-takes-all’ political system being practiced by many African countries continues to produce a high incidence of electoral violence. Under such a system, there is a likelihood of some public elements feeling that their basic needs will be deprived once their party loses an election. This paper uses the Odododiodio Constituency as a principal reference point due to its perennial electoral violence [7]. More often than not, the electoral violence in the constituency is normally intense with a litany of repercussions. The violence at Odododiodio, which often starts from the registration process to the main elections, takes the form of physical assaults, exchange of insults, verbal intimidation and destruction of properties [48]. The Constituency was, for example, identified by the Police as having 50 hotspots susceptible to violence in the recent December 2020 run-up polls. The violence in this particular (December 2020) run-up poll led to two deaths, with 15 persons allegedly sustaining various degrees of injury with some hospitalized (see <https://www.myjoyonline.com>).

4. Methodological Approach

4.1. The Study Area

The Odododiodio Constituency, formerly known as ‘Ashiedu Keteke’ Constituency, is located in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana with seven major communities: James Town, Bukom, Arena, Palladium, Adedempo, Timber Market and Agbogbloshie. The constituency falls within Accra’s coastal traditional Ga community and stretches along the Gulf of Guinea with more than 180,000 population, and about 110,000 voter population. The Odododiodio constituency is dotted with a swarm of prominent market centres, such as Timber Market, Agbogbloshiemarket, Konkomba yam market and the Kantamanto used-clothing market, making it an engine and hub of economic activities in the city of Accra. This makes the constituency a quite diversified one with non-Ga speakers making up about two-thirds of the constituency’s population [49]. With over 180,000 population, the constituency hosts people from all walks of life in the Greater Accra Metropolis due to its socio-economic activities.

It is worth noting that, vibrant trading activities lead to congestion and street hawking in the area. Hence, communities like Jamestown, Old Fadama, Agbogbloshie market and “Sodom and Gomorrah” (so nicknamed because of its rather harsh living conditions and high crime rate) are

among typical slum and living areas for the urban poor within Accra. The level of education of a majority of people residing in these communities is relatively low with fishing, fish processing and trading as their prominent livelihood activities. Politically, the settlement represents the underprivileged class of society whose fortunes hang heavily on the success of good governance to transform their circumstances for the better. Since 1992, both the New NPP and the NDC, Ghana’s two main political parties in the fourth Republic, used to have close election results in the Odododiodio constituency [50]. The constituency, however, in recent elections shown a strong trend in favour of the NDC, culminating in pre- and post-election violence between sympathisers of the two parties [50]. Thus, the location, economic posturing and historicity of Odododiodio Constituency make it a significant choice for a study on human (in) security and electoral violence in Ghana.

4.2. Research instruments, Positionality and Fieldwork

Since 2006, we (myself and one of the co-authors of this paper) took a key interest in peace and human rights activities in Ghana, by involving in peace education campaigns in, especially the Greater Accra Region and visited several communities. However, our first official interaction with some of the members of the Odododiodio constituency in particular was in 2015 when we conducted a fieldwork for one of the political parties in the country to ascertain its chances of winning the parliamentary seat in the 2016 election. That particular study brought us closer to the current study, as it revealed a pocket of protractor electoral violence and its potential threats to human security in the area. Our earlier working relationships with the community members help us to built rapport among many of them and also served as a resource during the fieldwork for study.

For effective validation of data, and provision of the basis on which to judge the effect of electoral violence on human security in the study location, we made use of both primary and secondary data sources for this study. Secondary data from relevant academic articles, books, newspapers, and previous studies on electoral violence and human security were thoroughly reviewed and analysed.

This article draws on primary data collected from 15th December 2021 to 21st January 2022 through face-to-face interviews and group discussions with seventy-seven (77) participants. Since this study does not aim to generalise its results, a qualitative approach was employed to shed light, and also to provide a thick description of the situation of the participants’ views, experiences and comments regarding electoral violence and human security in the study area. Therefore, the data used for this article is based on one-to-one in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD).

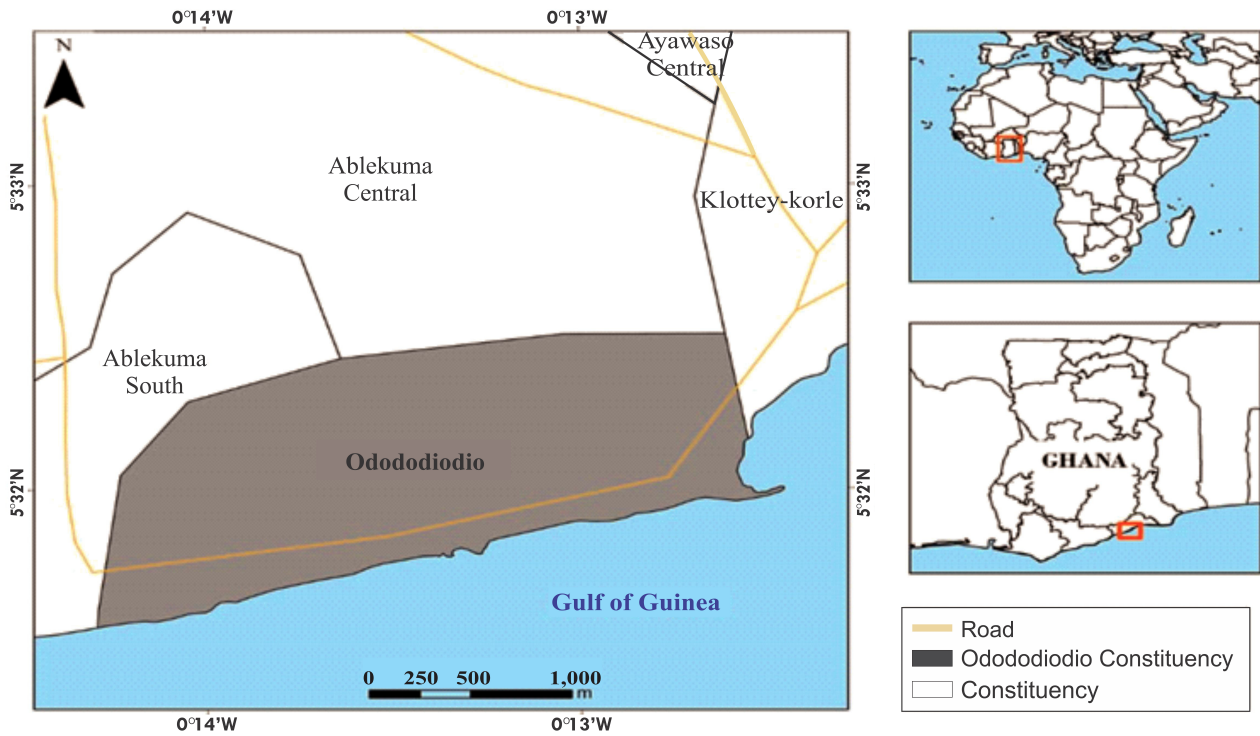


Figure 1. Map showing the study area (Source: Author, digitalized by GIS Department, University of Education, Winneba.)

To capture a sizable number of citizens' views and experiences on the phenomenon under study, one focus group discussion (with eight participants in each group = 56 participants) were held in each of the seven communities within the constituency, namely James Town, Bukom, Arena, Palladium, Adedempo, Agboghloshie and Timber Market. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic under study, the authors visited the various studied communities in order to interact with both key community leaders and some of the members prior to the fieldwork. Selection of the key informants, namely the Chief, Queen mother and the Assemblymen from the seven communities, totalling twenty-one (21) participants, in the Constituency for an in-depth interview was thus done purposively after extensive reconnaissance activities in all study communities. Guided by the prior recognisance activities in the area, the community members (56 in number) who participated in the focus group discussion in particular were recruited on the basis of having reported some experiences with election violence and /or have been present in the study community for more than twelve (12) years at the time of data collection, and their willingness to participate in the study.

The "funnel" interview technique was employed in the data collection. In this process, we asked preliminary wide questions to encourage the participants to make protracted reports about a topic, attend to whatever aspects they selected to focus on their inventiveness, and explained them in their own words. We followed this up by probing with follow-up questions, asking for clarification or elaboration

of the earlier statements. More specific questions were then asked finally to call the participants' attention to aspects of the topic that they did not address spontaneously. The approach enabled us to maximise the degree to which participant responses reflect not only their unique circumstances, and construction of knowledge about the topic, but also ensured that the participants address certain key aspects.

For ethical concerns, instances were provided during the interview to show that the best interests of participants were considered. Given this, we pre-informed participants about the main purpose of the study. Frantic effort was made to ensure that all the participants observed COVID-19 protocol by wearing face masks, and appreciable distance keeping during the interview and FGD sessions. We also sought informed consent from participants, with a clear explanation of the procedure. Additionally, we informed all participants that they had the liberty of not answering any question that could potentially cause emotional dissatisfaction in anyway. We were also very careful with our questioning in order not to provoke participants' sensibilities and/or emotions. As such, we tried to pose questions during the interview in a way that would not invade the participant's privacy. Two main local languages (Ga and Twi) were extensively used to enable interviewees to express themselves meaningfully.

All interviews lasted 20-30 minutes and were tape-recorded. The tapes were later transcribed, translated into the English language, and cross-checked for necessary corrections. Data then were developed by coding the cor-

rected transcripts. Analytic induction methods were used for coding schemes by identifying the core ideas of commonly occurring alternative responses to each question. In addition, content analysis was employed for the written documents. The goal was to establish the relationship between these documents and the subjective experiences of respondents by looking for concords, connections and differences. The next section presents an overview of the participant's responses.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. Food Security

At the heart of the discussion on electoral violence lies the issue of human security of people and communities. Data from this study revealed that electoral conflict in the study locations undermined all the seven (7) human security dimensions identified by UNDP (1994) [31] in Table 1. They are, personal, environmental, economic, political, health, and food securities. Almost all the participants experienced some form of food insecurity as a result of electoral violence in the study area. The participants noted that the devastating effects of electoral violence on both physical and economic access to food in the constituency. Many of them reported that the volatile situation always made it difficult for people to go out for their normal economic activities, and thus prevented many of them and their children from getting enough food to eat.

The absence of economic activities in the constituency any time there was electoral violence always reduce access to food, triggering poor nutrition, especially among a large number of children, (male FGD, Agboghloshie). A common theme among the participants' stories was that the closure of various food markets and local food joints during electoral violence always resulted in scarcity and less access to food in most of the communities of the constituency. One of the participants summarized the situation thus:

There is always the destruction of structures and looting of foodstuffs and other things in the markets any time there is a fight among party supporters in the area. During the period of such violence, many traders do not open their shops [...]. We are all scared because we lost at least more than eight (8) people in the community here through such electoral violence in the past. The recent one was when a strange bullet killed a young girl who was going to buy 'kenkey' (a participant during the FGD).

Participants in all the seven communities in this study also linked their difficulty in accessing food to the indiscriminate and disrespectful treatment meted out to people on the street by the police any time there is electoral violence in the area.

The violence in the area does not allow us to go out for work or search of food [...] as soon as you go out, those police who are normally sent here to control the violent situation and arrest the party hooligans are on you straight away. They do not only arrest people involved in the vio-

lence, but everybody on the street [...] they would not even allow you to identify or explain yourself before arresting or beating you. [...] the general situation is such that even if you have the money, you're kept indoors with your family [...] you can't go out in search of food (A female participant).

A participant who said he was molested by the police during one of the electoral violence in the constituency noted, *[h]ow would they know whether I was part of the people involved in the violence? I was only out in search of food for my only child a day after the dispute over the election results in my area here when I was arrested and severely beaten. Many participants also reported scarcity of food, and increases in food prices in the constituency any time there was electoral violence. [...] food become scarce with high prices in the community any time party supporters started fighting over election results. A participant confirmed.*

The evidence in the current study is consistent with existing literature that is linked with food insecurity, due to disparity in food production and prices, with the incidence, duration and sustaining violent conflict at both micro- and macro-levels. For example, scholarship indicates that when communities are affected by violent conflicts, the food security of their citizens falls into jeopardy as sources of household income give command over the consumption of food and non-food items [51]. Moreover, literature on food security and violent conflict indicates that when food production, storage and distribution are imperilled, the supply of food to local markets will decrease while the demand for food increases [51]. Glauser (2008) [52] in a similar vein suggests that market centres are always closed, particularly those near the epicentre of the violence, causing food shortages and inflation. Further, Dupas and Robinson (2012) [53] have found in their empirical work in Bumala that the price of basic foods such as milk, sugar, cooking oil and other essentials increased by up to 30% in the weeks and after the electoral dispute in one of the severely affected districts by violence.

5.2. Economic security

The current study indicates that members of the constituency experience obstruction of economic activities resulting from electoral violence. All the participants in the study unanimously reported in both the in-depth interview and the FGD that perennial electoral violence in the constituency, especially after the election results were declared always hamper their economic activities as all stores and markets had to be closed during such occurrences. A large number of participants reiterated the issue of markets and stores closure in the focus group discussions, which according to them, led to economic inactivity in the constituency during such period. In-depth interview data also turned out a more revealing view on hindering economic activities due to election-related violence in the constituency as indicated by the following statements by participants from the Konkomba yam market and Kantamanto. "The

problem with the electoral violence here is that it always puts a stop to every economic activity due to restriction on movements in the entire constituency during such times” (An elderly male participant). *Hostilities in the constituency, especially during and after elections over the past election years, do not normally create a safe environment for economic activity, as everybody is scared of being attacked by party supporters or arrested by security men parading in the constituency* (A female participant). The participants most significantly intimated that electoral violence in the constituency drove away a huge number of traders to establish their business centres and companies in other parts of Accra, due to looting and destruction of properties that often characterized such violence in the area. This development, according to the participants, has created hardship and unemployment in the constituency. One of the participants lamented: *the continuous electoral violence in the area has rendered the teeming youth in the area jobless as businessmen and women are scared of establishing their companies here*(male FGD, Kantamanto). These findings are confirmed by existing literature. The above findings are in line with existing literature. In King and Murray’s (2001) [19] presentation of conceptualization of human security they take into account other factors, including economic rather than merely security from armed conflict. Rockmore, (2013) [54] and Deininger (2003) [55] also suggest that violent conflict may directly induce economic hardship; it may indirectly do so through generating political disadvantages and economic inactivity, which then individually, or in combination, contribute to economic hardship. Studies have suggested that at least 20,000 Kenyans employed in the tourism sector lost their jobs during the period and immediately after the 2007/2008 electoral violence over there.

5.3. Health and Environmental Security

Good quality health is an extremely essential part of providing appropriate human security conditions. In the UNDP Human Development Report of 1994, the problem of the prioritisation of human security issues was solved as health crisis during conflicts as one of the three issues was highlighted [56]. In the current study, health insecurity was one of the most frequently raised topics among all the participants and was discussed in all the FDGs. Many comments related to the difficulty of access to health care and potable water, for example, as a result of restriction on movement any time there is election-related violence in the constituency. The frustrations of the constituency members were captured in this statement by a participant when she responded to a question regarding how electoral violence in the area affects their environment and health:

The effect of electoral violence both before and after the election over here does not only put individuals’ health in danger, but it also really makes life generally unbearable for all of us in this constituency, as it affects the entire environment. The saddest aspect is its negative effect on our

innocent children’s standard of living. From where I sit as one of the elders in the area, I can tell you that it is always very difficult for some people to even go out to seek medical attention during such times.

This statement is a manifestation of the extent to which violence associated with elections in the constituency affects both the environment and the health of members in the constituency. A large number of participants in this research further explicitly stated that the vacation of cleaners in all public lavatories and those in charge of garbage disposals for many days any time such violence erupted. This, according to him, resulted frequently in outbreaks of cholera and other infectious diseases. A participant in the focus group discussion lamented:

it is always an unbearable and pathetic situation, losing innocent lives, especially children through cholera outbreaks just because somebody wants to be a president at all cost [...] why should it be so all the time?

Many participants also raised issues concerning access to potable water, in particular those who do not have piped born water in their homes and have to depend on public sources. Some of the participants, especially women also complained about their inability to come out of their homes to dispose of garbage. The frustrations of the constituency members on these issues were captured in a statement from an Assemblyman in one of the communities within the constituency when he responded to a question on how households dispose of their garbage, and also how those without pipe bone water in their homes, suffer hindrances on access to potable water any time there is such electoral upheaval in the constituency.

[...] talking about access to potable water any time there is electoral violence in this constituency [...] you know, the large numbers of people over here are poor, they could not afford to connect pipe water to their homes. They depend on public ones. During the last violence, for example, a large number of communities within the constituency experienced a cholera outbreak, which I am sure was due to inadequate access to potable water for many days in the area (in-depth interview, Assemblyman in one of the study communities).

The challenge of going out for potable water, especially from public water pipes and disposal of garbage during electoral violence in the constituency as noted from the above statement is widely reported by the majority of participants in the entire constituency. Thus, confirming the statement of (Iqbal, 2006); violent conflict may affect public health through damage to the infrastructure of the society, interruptions in access to basic services such as water and transportation, and lack of availability of health care personnel. The UNDP report argues that there were two main aspects of human security – “safety from such chronic threats [such] as hunger, disease and repression [. . .] as well as protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in the pattern of daily life” ([56], p. 32). The current study has, however, shown that inadequate access to potable water, the vacation of cleaners in charge of public lavatories and

the inability to dispose of garbage during electoral violence in the constituency undermine health and environmental security in the area.

5.4. Personal and Community Security

Personal security as freedom from human-induced physical violence, including other crime has certainly long been a broadly accepted concept, and it is far from the only long-standing referent of security [17]. The 1994 HDR specified at least three types of threat to personal security, namely: (1) Threats from external or internal, regular or irregular (armed) conflict; (2) Threats internal to the polity, excluding armed conflict, including diverse kinds of crime, whether committed by the state or others; (3) Threats to the self, related to suicide and drug use ([56], p. 30). The second type corresponds fairly closely to the agenda of 'citizen security'. Results from this study revealed type 1 and 2 threats to personal security in the studied communities as the vast majority of participants were concerned about their personal security in the constituency, especially any time there is an election in the country. They noted in particular the proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons in the constituency. As observed by an Assemblyman in one of the communities:

Now it's like the majority of supporters of the two leading political parties we have in the country have armed themselves to the teeth, and you always see people firing guns indiscriminately at one another at the least provocation [...]. Unfortunately, it is the innocent ones that bear the brunt of being killed or injured by stray bullets any time such a situation occurs [...]. In fact, no one feels secure in this constituency as a result of this development.

The participants further linked the spread of illegal small arms and light weapons to increased armed robbery in the constituency. *All the rampant armed robberies in the constituency are manifestations of the proliferation of illegal light weapons among the youth over here*, a participant noted. Some of the participants confirmed the above allegations when we probed further, their veracity. They mentioned many armed robbers who they claimed were party hooligans that were either killed or arrested by the police. Twelve participants also recounted how the sympathisers of the two main political parties in the country engaged in a gun battle that killed four innocent youths through stray bullets in the recent election violence in the constituency. They stated that a cloud of fear has characterized interactions among people in the community, as a result, to an extent that some people for the past twelve years have started relocating outside the constituency. Given this development, a chief from one of the communities within the constituency noted:

As I am talking to you right now, quite many people are leaving the constituency for the fear of their lives." [...] even two innocent youth and a child were gunned down in the recent violence over here.

This statement is a manifestation of the extent to which electoral violence and its related developments have dete-

riorated personal security in the constituency. It is difficult to imagine how people leaving in the constituency could be free from fear in such an insecure environment. One of the participants stated that there would be no way people would be free from fear in their community because of the gun-wielding youth and the incessant killings and armed robbery. Thereby confirming Schubert (2018) [57] work on how community-based armed groups transform from political thugs to criminal actors in urban Kenya where politicians from ruling and opposition parties alike rely increasingly on vigilante groups for their security and for attacks on supporters of rival candidates.

5.5. Political Security

The UNDP report (1994) used the term, political security to mean "prevention of government's repression, systematic violation of human rights and threats from militarisation [56]. However, political insecurity as a result of the election-related violence in the area was one of the most frequently raised topics across all the in-depth interviews and group discussions and discussed in all but of the groups. Many comments related to the absence of freedom of expression on political issues, for example, as a result of intimidation or beating any time there is electoral violence in the constituency. In some cases, participants were also critical of party vigilantes' attitudes, especially towards members of the opposition party during the periods in question. A participant commented:

If I could just put it bluntly, this government and its vigilantes have forced us to seal our mouths on issues concerning our well-being and thereby encouraging the 'culture of silence' [...], you dare not campaign against this government, using its style of governance to the hearing of any of its party vigilantes [...] they will target you any time the election does not go in their favour and will always come after you amidst the violence to maltreat you. A popular and ardent critique of this government lost one of his eyes through a severe beating by three party vigilantes in the recent election violence in the neighbouring community.

The above quotation opposes Merkel's (2004) [58] assertion of political security. Political security, like democracy, demands an opportunity for citizens to partake in the governing processes of their state. McEldowney (2005) [59] argues that the fundamental freedoms enjoyed in democratic societies function as political security. Participants also noted embarrassment and intimidation of party opposition members found in the stronghold areas of their counterparts. As one woman said, *the hooting and intimidation of the opposition party members are so degrading and dehumanising*. Of course, out of fear and panic, people will not freely express their democratic rights as mandated by the constitution [60]. Access to, and the variability of fairness by the police personnel handling assault cases any time there is electoral violence was specifically raised in four focus group discussions, for example with suggestions that basic human rights of victims of such violence were too

often undermined.

Political security as a term refers to the defence of people's human rights to protect their well-being and dignity, including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, freedom of the press and expression [59]. On the contrary, several participants raised issues of indiscriminate arrest, detention, torture and inhumane treatment of individuals by security agents any time there is such violence in the area, in particular, concerns about long hours of detention in police cells without food or being allowed to contact relatives or granted bail. A statement from one of the victims of such treatments is a confirmation of other participants' claims:

You feel[...] as soon as they picked you [...] you feel like you are no more a human being with dignity[...] straight away you're locked up in a cell. Like, you're not allowed to contact your relatives, you're not allowed to be granted bail. The saddest aspect is that they will not provide you with food even when you complained of hunger [...]. It is [...] is [...] a terrible experience [...] I will never even wish such treatments for any of my enemies. There is [...] there is an issue with a number of us who belong to the opposition party in this community that have been arrested and left without food in police cells for more than two days during the recent pre-election violence.

The above findings undermine the UNDP's position on the relationship between political security and human security. The UNDP report establishes that the relationship between political security and human security is the proposition that "people should be able to live in a society that honours their human rights" ([56], p. 32).

6. Conclusion

Electoral violence is not limited to a particular continent or country. Recent trends suggest that apart from some African countries, outcome of elections in some Asian countries were characterised with violence resulting in loss of human lives, property, injuries and chaos. With a focus on Odododiodio Constituency in the Greater region of Ghana, this paper attempts to unpack the effect of electoral-related violence on the human security of individuals and communities as a whole, using in-depth interview and focus group

discussion, with a small sample of seventy-seven (77) participant that offered the opportunity to provide a dense report of what specifically pertained to individuals in the selected communities within the constituency regarding the effect of electoral violence on human security. By applying human security perspective to the seventy-seven participants' experiences in terms of electoral violence in the constituency, this study shows that all the UNDP's (1994) list human security dimensions (as listed in Table 1) have been threatening by electoral violence in the Odododiodio constituency, especially before, during and after elections. This study thus shows that electoral violence in the constituency does not only create fear and panic but also undermines human security and human rights of the residents of the constituency.

As part of the effort to curb electoral violence in, especially Odododiodio constituency and Ghana in general, the government and other stakeholders should aim at providing a lasting solution to the current 'winner-takes-all' political system, which encourages the ruling or winning party to control the country's resources and job opportunities at the expense of the opposition party members. In fact, any measure, aimed at providing a lasting solution to electoral violence should be implemented with thorough education, and with livelihood opportunities for all without discrimination based on 'party colours'. This is because it is the general economic deprivation and hardship that drives, especially the youth into such violence when they notice any act that will course their party to lose the election.

It must be noted that the current study is limited to only one constituency in Ghana. Indeed, an in-depth analysis on the modalities for the conduct of politics and elections in the country hold a critical key to better understanding the dynamics of electoral violence and its effect on human security. This study can thus serve as reference material and guidance for future research on the intersection between electoral violence and human security in Ghana. Further, although our analysis is purely based on qualitative data and therefore cannot be generalised to the larger population, the study can serve as a primary document for policymakers to help address the menace of electoral violence that undermine human security, human rights and democracy in especially Odododiodio, Ghana and Africa in general.

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