

# Psychosocial Effects Of Liberation War Among Freedom Fighters (MAU MAU) In Kenya: A Post-Colonization Review

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*Abstract: Liberations war in Kenya aimed at attaining freedom for the indigenous people from their colonizers (British) which led to the formation of MAU MAU Movement. Primarily, the movement wanted to reclaim land that had been taken by white settlers who had made the local people casual laborers and to eradicate social injustices which were deemed to be product of colonization. A solemn Oath was taken between the council of elders and the active freedom fighters outlining how the up-coming African Government would compensate the fighters together with their families and also repercussions that would befall on them should they betray the movement. However on attaining independence, the freedom fighters were overlooked and forgotten. Most of them were in prisons and detentions when the country got independence. The betrayal, frustrations and war calamities are perceived to have had far reaching effects on mental health of all war victims. This paper is informed by The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, a framework for evaluating the processes of coping with stressful events such as war. Although British Government intends to compensate living liberation war victims, the view of compensation awarded to them is narrow and inadequate on the psychosocial effects that emanated from this war. This paper is therefore guided by secondary data utilizing ex post facto approach established that psychological effects of war include fear, isolation, vulnerability, depression, anxiety disorders, suicide and murder. Such effects have caused harm not only to the surviving freedom fighters but also their families, who continue to suffer in silence while enduring poverty, isolation from significant others and lack of emotional well-being. A suggestion on the implementation of an appropriate intervention that may help victims of liberation war to attain psychological adjustments is provided.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Mau-Mau was formed around 1947, taking its name from the range of mountains (Mau ranges) bordering the Rift Valley at its western side, northeast of Lake Naivasha. The Mau-Mau was the political heir of several associations largely composed of Kikuyus and other tribes that thrived in the 1920's, when the land problem was unbearable. The Kikuyu traditions were patent in the initiation ceremonies that created that secret fighting movement. Their initial goals were to kill

all Europeans and the African collaborators commonly nicknamed (ngati). They were able to get supplies from a few sources through popular support of the people, forcing people to contribute even though they didn't support the cause. The freedom fighters did not have much in the way of weapons and little financial support but they were able to make their own weapons and stole others from their rivals.

The Mau Mau Uprising (also known as the Mau Mau Revolt, Mau Mau Rebellion movement) was a military movement formed to fight white settlers to resolve the social injustices that place in 1940s. The rebellion officially got pronounced in 1952 with a force numbering around 30,000

Kenyans causing a state of Emergency that took place in Kenya between 1952 and 1960. It involved Kikuyu-dominated anti-colonial groups summarily called Mau Mau and elements of the British Army, the local Kenya Regiment mostly consisting of the British, auxiliaries and anti-Mau Mau Kikuyu. The final defeat of Mau Mau beckoned upon the capture of their leader Dedan Kimathi on 21 October 1956 this also basically ended British military action.

Mau Mau failed to capture widespread public support partly due to the British policy of divide and rule, and the movement remained internally divided, despite attempts to unify its various strands. However, the uprising created a rift between the European colonial community in Kenya and the metropolis, but also resulted in violent divisions within the Kikuyu community. Mau Mau war costed the British colony £55 million.

Other views claim that Mau Mau, was an anagram of Uma Uma (which means "get out get out") and was a military code word based on a secret language-game Kikuyu boys during circumcision escapades. Majdalany (1963) goes on to state that the British simply used the name as a label for the Kikuyu ethnic community without assigning any specific definition.

As the movement progressed, a Swahili backronym was adopted: "*Mzungu Aende Ulaya, Mwafrika Apate Uhuru*" meaning "Let the foreigner go back abroad, let the African regain independence". Kariuki (1960), a member of Mau Mau who was detained during the conflict, postulates that the British preferred to use the term Mau Mau so as to distract international legitimacy of the Mau Mau. Kariuki also indicated the term Mau Mau was adopted so as to counter what the fighters regarded as colonial propaganda.

Though the actual meaning of the term is not clearly established, it was an established rebellion war movement whose activities led to attainment of Kenya freedom from its colonizers (British government)

## B. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study was to investigate the Psychosocial Effects of Liberation war in Kenya on the native Freedom Fighters (MAU MAU) Victims. The specific objective of the study were to:

- ✓ To establish the psychological effects of liberalization war on the Mau Mau freedom fighters and their children.

## C. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The study is crucial in unearthing psychosocial effects faced by War Victims among Freedom Fighters (MAU MAU) Those experiences are of great interest to the researchers in order to unearth the perceived emotional, social and psychological effects instilled on war victims after post liberalization war. The need to identify and address psychosocial effects of post liberalization war on war victims would help in suggesting appropriate counseling interventions that may meet the perceived or actual needs of War Victims among Freedom Fighters (MAU MAU) and their children. Such finding are instrumental in advocating for emotional well-being of War Victims among Freedom Fighters (MAU

MAU) through recommendation of effective intervention strategies such as counseling and socio-economic support, psychosocial support and other remedies that may addresses their current and future needs.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

Different theoretical approaches have been used to explain psychological challenges experienced War Victims among Freedom Fighters (MAU MAU) affecting their psychological and emotional well-being. This study used Transactional Model of Stress to illuminate the psychosocial effects of War on War Victims among Freedom Fighters (MAU MAU)

The transactional model of stress and coping (Folkman, 1997, Lazarus & Folkman, 1984 and Hudson, 2003) is based on the theoretical premise that a person response to stress results from their cognitive appraisal of a situation as threatening to their well-being and their efforts to cope. The process is seen to be transactional as the person and the environment are in a continual dynamic and reciprocal relationship (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

This model is a stress-processing framework derived from the psychological cognitive processing, stressors and coping (Hauser & Kramer, 2004; P. Hudson, 2003; S. Payne & Rolls, 2009). The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping is a framework for evaluating the processes of coping with stressful events. Stressful experiences are construed as person-environment transactions. These transactions depend on the impact of the external stressor. This is mediated by firstly the person's appraisal of the stressor and secondly on the social and cultural resources at his or her disposal (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977; Antonovsky & Kats, 1967; Cohen 1984).

When a person is faced with a stressor, a person evaluates the potential threat (primary appraisal). Primary appraisal depends on a person's judgment about the significance of an event as stressful, positive, controllable, challenging or irrelevant. The second appraisal follows and it entails facing the problem. This is an assessment of a person's coping resources and options (Cohen, 1984). Secondary appraisals address what one can do about the situation. Actual coping efforts aim at regulating the problem giving outcomes to the coping process (Antonovsky & Kats, 1967).

Overall, the transactional model of stress and coping is advocated as a useful theoretical framework for understanding traumatic experiences encountered by war victims and designing therapeutic interventions. The model is generally considered to be the most applicable framework for understanding subjective stressful experiences encountered by war victims. This is important when investigating the psychosocial effects of encountered by war victims.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### B. ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION OF THE MAU MAU FIGHTERS

A feature of all settler societies during the colonial period was the ability of European settlers to obtain for themselves a disproportionate share in land ownership (Mosley 1983). Kenya was thus no exception, with the first white settlers arriving in 1902 as part of Governor Charles Eliot's plan to have a settler economy pay for the recently completed Uganda Railway (Anderson 2005). The success of this settler economy would depend heavily on the availability of land, labour and capital, (Kanogo 1993) and so, over the next three decades, the colonial government and settlers consolidated their control over Kenyan land, and 'encouraged' Africans to become wage labourers.

Kanogo (1993) asserts that through a series of expropriations, the colony's government seized about 7,000,000 acres (28,000 km<sup>2</sup>; 11,000 sq mi) of land, some of it in the especially fertile hilly regions of Central and Rift Valley Provinces, areas later known as the White Highlands due to the exclusively European farmland which existed there.

Due to increasing population of native Africans, land quickly became a source of serious contentions particularly among the Kikuyu, who lived in central part of Kenya particularly Kiambu, Murang'a and Nyeri districts in the then Central Province. This is the location where the largest ethnic group most affected by the colonial government's land expropriation and European settlement was most pronounced; by 1933, they had over 109.5 square miles (284 km<sup>2</sup>) of their potentially highly valuable land alienated (Edgerton 1989). However, in terms of lost acreage, the Masai and Nandi ethnic communities were the biggest losers of land (Emerson, 1980). Kikuyu ethnic community legally challenged land expropriation and indeed Kenya High Court decision of 1921 cemented its legality.

The colonial government and White farmers also wanted cheap labour (Anderson 2004) which, for a period, the government acquired from Africans through force. The act of land confiscation native Africans in a way facilitated the creation a pool of wage labourers for the settler farms, however the colony introduced methods that forced more Africans to succumb to wage labour, these included the introduction of the Hut and Poll Taxes in 1901 and 1910 respectively; Establishment of ethnic reserves served to isolate each ethnic group and intensified overcrowding (Shilaro, 2002); other strategies included the dissuasion of Africans' from growing cash crops through the Masters and Servants Ordinance of 1906 and the introduction of an identification pass commonly known as the *kipande* in 1918 to control the movement of labour and to restrict desertion. The other approach was the exemption of wage labourers from forced labour and other compulsory ostracized tasks such as conscription (Anderson, 2004).

### C. MAU MAU WARFARE

Contrary to British propaganda and western perceptions of the time, the Mau Mau attacks were mostly well organized and planned as noted by Anderson (2005) captioned below:

"...the insurgents' lack of heavy weaponry and the heavily entrenched police and Home Guard positions meant that Mau Mau attacks were restricted to nighttime and where loyalist positions were weak. When attacks did commence they were fast and brutal, as insurgents were easily able to identify loyalists because they were often local to those communities themselves. The Lari massacre was by comparison rather outstanding and in contrast to regular Mau Mau strikes which more often than not targeted only loyalists without such massive civilian casualties. "Even the attack upon Lari, in the view of the rebel commanders was strategic and specific."

Anderson (2005) argues that Mau Mau command nerve center were relatively educated to the belief held by the then Home Guards famously known as "the running dogs of British Imperialism". A case is that of general Gatunga previously respected and well-read Christian teacher of the then times in his local Kikuyu community. He was known to precisely record his assaults in a sequences of five notebooks, which when executed were often swift and strategic, targeting loyalist community leaders he had formerly known as a teacher.

Chappell (2011) argues that lack of accurate and timely intelligence led to haphazard bombing that however killed almost 900 insurgents through air attack by June 1954, this occurrence indeed caused forest gangs to disperse as well as lowered their morale and led to relocation from the forests to the reserves.

Contrary to what was claimed, Lancaster bombers were not used during the Emergency, though Lincolns was. According to Chappell (2011), British planes dropped leaflets showing graphic pictures of the Kikuyu women and children who had been hacked to death. Unlike the rather indiscriminate activities of British ground forces, the use of air power was more restrained and air attacks were initially permitted only in the forests.

The screening centers were staffed by settlers who had been appointed temporary district-officers by Baring (Elkins 2005). Elkins (2005) asserted that Thomas Askwith, the official tasked with designing the British 'detention and rehabilitation' programme during the summer and autumn of 1953, termed his system the *Pipeline*. The British did not initially conceive of rehabilitating Mau Mau suspects through brute force and other ill-treatment—Askwith's final plan, submitted to Baring in October 1953, was intended as "a complete blueprint for winning the war against Mau Mau using socioeconomic and civic reform." The Pipeline operated a white-grey-black classification system: 'whites' were cooperative detainees, and were repatriated back to the reserves; 'greys' had been oathed but were reasonably compliant, and were moved down the Pipeline to works in camps in their local districts before release; and 'blacks' were the so-called 'hard core' of Mau Mau. These were moved up the Pipeline to special detention camps. Cooperation was itself defined in terms of a detainee's readiness to confess their Mau

Mau oath. Detainees were screened and re-screened for confessions and intelligence, then re-classified accordingly.

During transit, there was frequently little or no food and water provided, and seldom any sanitation. Forced labour was performed by detainees on projects like the thirty-seven-mile-long South Yatta irrigation furrow. Family outside and other considerations led many detainees to confess (Elkins 2005). Camps and compounds were overcrowded, forced-labour systems were not yet perfected, screening teams were not fully coordinated, and the use of torture was not yet systematized. Assessing the situation in the summer of 1955, Alan Lennox-Boyd wrote of his "fear that the net figure of detainees may still be rising. If so the outlook is grim." Black markets flourished during this period, with the African guards helping to facilitate trading.

A well-known case of side-switching is that of Peter Muigai Kenyatta; who is Jomo Kenyatta's son that ultimately joined the screeners after confessions at Athi River Camp. He was deployed to travel throughout the Pipeline to help in interrogations. Suspected informers and spies within a camp were treated in the time-honored Mau Mau fashion: the preferred method of cold-blooded murder was strangulation then mutilation: "It was just like in the days before our detention", explained one Mau Mau member later. "We did not have our own jails to hold an informant in, so we would strangle him and then cut his tongue out." The end of 1955 also saw screeners being given a freer hand in interrogation, and harsher conditions than straightforward confession were imposed on detainees before they were deemed 'cooperative' and eligible for final release (Elkins 2005).

Elkins further argues that any new person who refused oath was harshly punished in fact detainees would strangle them with their blankets or using blades fashioned from the corrugated-iron roofs of some of the barracks that would be used to slit their throats. The in charge of camps preferred hanging as capital punishment.

Even as the Pipeline became more sophisticated, detainees still organized themselves within it, setting up committees and selecting leaders for their camps, as well as deciding on their own "rules to live by". Perhaps the most famous compound leader was Josiah Mwangi Kariuki. Punishments for violating the rules to live by was severe.

European missionaries and African Christians played their part by visiting camps to evangelize and encourage compliance with the colonial authorities, providing intelligence. Typhoid killed them as a result of poor sanitation. Medical records and information on the state of camps were not considered and the conditions being endured by detainees were lied about and denied. (Curtis 2003). A In 1954, British rehabilitation officer found detainees in Manyani detention in "shocking health" condition, many of them suffering from malnutrition, (Peterson 2008). Langata and Gilgil were eventually closed in April 1955 because they were unfit to hold Kikuyu, as alleged by colonial for medical epidemiological reasons".

#### D. VILLAGISATION PROGRAMME

Military operations in the forests and Operation Anvil were the first two phases of Mau Mau's defeat but Erskine

expressed the need and desire for a third and final phase: cut off all the militants' support in the reserves (French 2011). This was originally suggested by JC Carothers who was brought in by the colonial government to do an ethno psychiatric 'diagnosis' of the uprising; he advocated a Kenyan version of the villagisation programmes that the British were already using in places like Malaya (McCulloch 2006)

A decision to cut off supply of Mau Mau was taken in 1954; within eighteen months, 1,050,899 Kikuyu in the reserves were inside constituted 804 villages with 230,000 huts. The government called them "protected villages", purportedly to be built along "the same lines as the villages in the North of England", though the term was actually a "euphemism due to the fact that hundreds of thousands of civilians were corralled, often against their will, into settlements behind barbed-wire fences and watch towers" (French 2011).

Anderson (2005) asserts that while some of these villages were to protect loyalist Kikuyu, "most were little more than concentration camps to punish Mau Mau sympathizers." The villagisation programme was the *coup de grâce* for Mau Mau. By the end of the following summer, Lieutenant General Lathbury no longer needed Lincoln bombers for raids because of a lack of targets, (Chappell 2011) and, by late 1955, Lathbury felt so sure of final victory that he reduced army forces to almost pre-Mau Mau levels (Nissimi 2006). General Lathbury noted, however, that the British should have "no illusions about the future. Mau Mau has not been cured: it has been suppressed.

#### E. SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the literature reviewed, it is evident that the Mau Mau war veterans and their children suffered irrevocable psychosocial effects, the literature clearly indicated cross violation of their rights and untold humiliation that led to series of psychosocial effects on them. There is therefore the need to undertake a post-colonization review to determine Psychosocial Effects of Liberation War among Freedom Fighters (MAU MAU) in Kenya which is the central focus of this review.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The study is a critical review of secondary literature on the Mau Mau uprising in the precolonial Kenya. It is therefore based on ex post facto approach to determine Psychosocial Effects of Liberation War among Freedom Fighters (MAU MAU) in Kenya.

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### A. MAU MAU FIGHTERS DEMOGRAPHY

Based on the reviewed materials, the study's discussion focuses on Psychosocial Effects of Liberation War among Freedom Fighters (MAU MAU) in Kenya. The discussion

illuminates effects of war on victims' psychological, social and physical wellbeing.

The Kikuyu community was largely involved in liberation; therefore this paper discusses psychosocial effects of liberation war among the Mau Mau in Kenya encountered by freedom fighters and their children as victims of war during the Kenyan "Emergency" between 1952 and 60, when fighters from the Mau Mau movement attacked British targets. The term children is used to refer to children who were 12 years and below and those born during emergency up to 1957. These so called children by that time are now between 55 - 72 years and at the stage of late adulthood.

The psychological effects of war manifest themselves in several ways across people who are directly or indirectly involved in war. These effects include post trauma stress disorder (PTSD), which leads to increase in suicides among the young people, insomnia among the elderly and drug abuse related death as cited by Flogel and Lauc (2003). The effects of war impact on the physical and mental health of people differently according to their gender, age and coping resources at a community disposal which is normally gained from past experience and psychological resources at its disposal.

It is important to note Kikuyu community was agriculturalist hence the need for land was paramount. They may not have had frequent wars previously like nomadic people who get into conflict with other communities as they search for water and pasture. Lack of such predisposition made effects of war more traumatizing for this community.

#### B. THE PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF MAU MAU WAR

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is one of the most common psychological conditions resulting from war. By definition, war is traumatic. For many, the shock of what they encounter and the constant threat on their lives leaves them stressed and anxious long after events have transpired. Often than not war victims may develop nervous breakdowns that are accompanied by delusions, frightening nightmares and burning rage; such require counseling and better still psychiatric treatment to manage and resolve. Some of the worst cases occur when people experience things which conflicts with their personalities and values. The internal conflict can be devastating to adults and even worse to children war victims.

The effects of war causes trauma in children that affects their personality development, identity formation, adaptive and coping mechanism necessary for modulating aggressive impulses as they observed their parents and older siblings being murdered and assaulted. The child sense of protection is far much destroyed. Children suffer various post war outcomes; they are more likely to suffer major depression that can be visible alongside panic and eating disorders, they may also resort to substance abuse.

#### C. PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF WAR ON MAU MAU WARRIORS

Before the war, there were many reasons why men wanted to participate. Majority of the freedom fighters felt

that it was their duty to fight for their country and for freedom. Others did it to fight social injustices brought about by foreigners (Mzungu) who had forcefully taken their land and reduced them to peasant labourers.

When the country gained independence, the Mau Mau warriors were long forgotten, unappreciated and discriminated against when the resources they fought for mainly land was subdivided; all because they were still in detention or in forest. Promises made under oath were not fulfilled. No one provided them with re-adjustment from soldiers to civilians programs nor did they receive the jubilant welcome they expected when they returned home. They had problems in establishing their identities in their communities because they lacked education and job skills. The then promises that had been made by leaders of Mau Mau were not fulfilled making the warriors experience frustrations and the greatest betrayal. All these impacted negatively on the liberations victims of war.

#### D. PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF WAR TRAUMA ON SOLDERS' LIFE

The war soldiers were exposed to traumatic events such as frequent enemy firefight, physical assaults, detention, death of colleagues and other dangers. These were likely to cause Anxiety disorders such as Generalized Anxiety Disorder (where one fears but does not have an apparent reason to fear). The researchers perceive that the Mau Mau fighters could have had these experiences even when the war was over.

The warriors had developed PTSD as a result of living in a state of danger. PTSD produces feelings of helplessness, worthlessness, dejection, anger, depression, insomnia and tendency to use survival tactics in normal situations. The authors therefore deduced that majority of mau mau survivors might have died due to depressive conditions that was not taken care of such as suicide.

Mau Mau warriors were physically assaulted, wounded and crippled. Loss of one's ability to work and provide for self and his family is humiliating. This situation was worsened by disintegration of families that would have provided moral support to the warriors, some of who did not find their families. The warriors were not assisted to get their families some of who might have fallen victim of war and died during their absence. Therefore, these fighters whose victory was expected to bring positive re-adjustments in their lives, experienced moment of great loss which resulted in grieving.

Unresolved grief can cause mental problems such as hallucinations, delusions, and mental deliriums. These effects can leads to mental illness and total incapacitation including death.

#### E. PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF WAR TRAUMA ON CHILDREN OF WARRIORS

Childhood trauma interferes with psychological development of the child, with the potential of forwarding these psychological symptoms into adulthood. The condition becomes chronic later in life as it is elevated to a state that is difficult to treat, setting these conditions firmly into the psyche of the individual. Feerick and Snow stated that according to research done by Raczekn (1992), children who

have been subjected to a prolonged trauma have high frequencies of forming mental disorders". Such disorder may include bipolar and schizophrenia which can be attributed to suicide and homicide. The newspapers have highlighted events committed by people from former central province that suggested problems with mental illness.

Individuals with a history of trauma, have a higher likelihood of developing personality disorders such as Borderline Personality Disorder, Paranoid Personality Disorder, Schizoid Personality Disorder, Antisocial personality disorder just to mention a few. These individuals have a high tendency to have much lower self esteem than their peers, and are at high risk of developing major phobias, sometimes debilitating anxiety levels (Bowers & O'Farrill-Swails, 2005). Again acts committed in former Central Province on the slightest provocation are symptoms of a person with borderline personality as publicized in the dailies. Cases mentioned are only those of magnitude nature that were published by daily papers, others might have died quietly.

## V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### A. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Mau Mau history gives a view of men and women who dedicated themselves to fight social injustice that led to attainment of freedom for the Republic of Kenya. People like Dedan Kimath were executed in prison. It was expected that freedom fighters and their children would be in their fore-front in receiving the fruits of freedom, a dream that majority might not have achieved. It is deduced from reviewed literature that these victims could be undergoing serious psychological problems due to effects of war and lack of proper integration after the war. Their children who might have witnessed brutality on their fathers and siblings also require therapeutic adjustments. The authors were aware of British good intentions to compensate victims of war, but literature reviewed indicates that they are far from providing adequate compensation that would cater of psychosocial effects inflicted upon them during the liberation war.

### B. CONCLUSION

It is therefore evidenced from the above discussion that freedom fighters and their children suffered immense psychosocial effects emanating from Mau Mau war and should be helped by current government to undertake therapeutic intervention, adjustment programs, socio-economic support programs and state recognition awards in order to helps them achieve psychosocial adjustments as a consideration for the sacrifice they made for this country.

### C. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PAPER

The authors therefore make the following recommendations for the war victims (Mau Mau fighters and their children who are now adults).

The government of the day should help the families of Mau Mau warriors economically by providing those that are landless land and assist them to settle. They should also support the families of the bereaved warriors as acknowledgement of good work done by their fathers/mothers.

The British government other than compensating the actual war victims should also compensate their families some of who are now bereaved and also meet cost of therapeutic interventions in order to help them achieve their psychological wellbeing.

The government should form forums for the freedom fighters where they should be accorded their over-due state recognition they deserved as country's heroes.

The war victims should be supported to form forums for social support and therapeutic groups that can help them to eradicate the negative war experiences they underwent.

### D. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDY DIRECTION

The study was basically informed by ex post facto studies and reports which were mainly descriptive rather than empirical. This study would benefit immensely from a comprehensive and extensive empirical effort through qualitative testing combined with quantitative assessments of survey. This can be done by collecting direct reports from respondents and comparing the results with the perceived psychosocial effects with the actual psychosocial effects of Mau Mau war on victims through self-reported data. This paper was intended to inspire further research on psychosocial effects on Mau Mau war victims.

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