



An Assessment of the Extent of Inter-Ethnic Cohesion Among the Border Communities of Kisumu and Nandi Counties, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the extent of inter-ethnic cohesion among the border communities of Kisumu and Nandi counties, Kenya. The border communities have been experiencing sporadic and recurring ethnic conflicts and tensions for many years. Since 2013-2023, several peace-building strategies have been initiated by several actors to enhance inter-ethnic cohesion among the border communities. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the extent of inter-ethnic cohesion. The theory of primordialism of ethnicity supports the study. The study adopted an explanatory design. The target population are the people who live and work within the Muhoroni and Tinderet Sub-counties. The study population comprised household heads, community leaders, state officers, and non-state actors. The sample size was 320 household heads, community heads, state actors, and non-state actors. The study employed purposive sampling technique to select four wards and eight villages from four wards and simple random to select households. The researcher used questionnaires and interview schedules to collect primary data. Secondary data was collected from journals, books, government and NGO reports, and theses. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (V.30.1) was used to analyze quantitative data, which provided frequencies and percentages and was presented in tables and figures. Thematic and content analysis methods were used to analyze the qualitative data. Findings on the extent of inter-ethnic cohesion show that despite the high extent of harmony (79%) in the study area, there is a high extent of intolerance (80%) and a low level of trust (57%). The high extent of intolerance and low level of trust are caused by stock theft (34.4%), national politics (27%), boundary dispute (22%), nepotism (9.3%), and youth unemployment (7.3%). However, these communities still interact through intermarriages (85%), shared institutions (62%), and trade (60%). The study concludes that despite the high extent of harmony among the border communities, the extent of trust and tolerance is very low. However, the border communities still interact through social cultural activities, border markets and common schooling. The study recommends that to enhance the ethnic cohesion among the border communities, there is a need for more sociocultural integration in the area.

Keywords: Border Communities, Cohesion, Inter-Ethnic Conflict, Peacebuilding

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Yang (2000), many scholars and researchers across the world have joined up the discourse on the ethnicity and ethnic relations. The rationale has been that most state-nations are made up of diverse ethnic groupings. Mulondo and Thomas (2018), argued that ethnicity can be understood as a group individuals with common cultural practices, beliefs and language. Similarly, Harris and Findley (2014), describe ethnicity as people who share same language, artefacts and geographical location. The heterogeneous of most states today is due migration or boundary demarcation of the countries. Some ethnic groups were divided by the international boundary during colonization and placed in two countries (Mulondo & Thomas, 2018). For instance, in East Africa some of the ethnic groups are found in all the three countries. But these ethnic groups can still be identified with specific culture, language and beliefs. The integration between these communities is apparently not possible despite the fact they belong to the same nation.

Nagy (2018) observed that the ethnic interactions among the heterogeneous societies may be positive or negative in nature. The positive inter-ethnic interactions are composed of harmonious living, peaceful co-existence, trust, tolerance, shared social functions, inter-communal trade and inter-marriages (Adamu, 2013). The positive intergroup cohesion is quite visible in terms of knowledge sharing, trade and marriage. But Moreover, Mckenna *et al.* (2018) negative ethnic interactions are characterized by conflicts, hatred, nepotism, intolerance, violence and destructions. Similarly, Pettigrew (2008) argues that when ethnic interactions become negative there is usually ethnic victimization,

bullying and hatred which in turn weakens the relations among the diverse ethnic groups. This, leverages the social evils in the society such as prejudice, cultural and political intolerances and revenges among the neighboring communities.

According to Mtukwa (2018), there have been many instances of negative interethnic interactions in Africa for instance, around Kivu Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda genocide of 1994 which saw over 800 000 people die and Sudan's war in Darfur amongst other cases. Similarly, many parts of Kenya have experienced increased number of negative inter-ethnic interactions since the end of cold war in the early 1990's which coincided with the introduction of Multi-Party system in the country (Rohweder, 2015). The border communities of Kisumu and Nandi counties, especially the between Tinderet and Muhoroni sub-counties, have witnessed several negative inter-ethnic interactions in 2012 following general elections in 2017 and 2022. The extent of inter-ethnic interactions has been negative due periodic and sporadic, caused by stock theft, and frequent attacks on community members as a way of scaring them to migrate from their current places of residence (Okoth & Magero, 2022).

Due to the negative inter-ethnic interactions experienced in the study area there has been a number of peace building strategies that have been employed by various actors to enhance inter-ethnic relations in the area from 2013 to 2023. These interventions aimed at reducing the challenges of negative ethnicity, strengthening the post-conflict reconstruction and also making sure conflict does not reoccur (Cravo, 2017). Therefore, this study assesses the extent of inter-ethnic cohesion among the border communities by examining the level of cultural tolerance, trust and harmony, and the causes of negative ethnicity, the effects of cross-border trade, inter-marriages and common schooling.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Kenya has over 45 ethnic groups living in neighborhood, sharing same geographical areas and resources but with distinct cultural practices and beliefs. Some of the ethnic communities co-exist harmoniously with their neighbors while others are in recurring inter-ethnic conflicts. But since, the introduction of the multi-party system in Kenya in 1992, the number of inter-ethnic conflicts have increased in number. They have been sporadic and periodic as others experience high intolerance and hatred relations while other communities co-exist peaceful at the border areas. Since 2013-2023, there have been sporadic inter-ethnic conflicts among the border communities of Kisumu and Nandi Counties. These inter-ethnic tensions have caused both social and economic disruptions such as destruction of properties, loss of lives and livelihoods leading poverty, and an increase of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in the region. As a result many peace building initiatives have been employed by both state and non-state actors to transform the inter-ethnic interactions among the border communities.

Besides, few studies have examined extent of inter-ethnic cohesion among border communities. For, instance role played by women in cross-border peace building between the Luo and Kipsigis of Kericho and Kisumu Counties was studied by Akinyi *et al.* (2017). Juma and Simiyu (2018) explored the nature and causes inter-ethnic conflicts in Western Kenya. The persistent inter-ethnic hostility and its impact on social-economic livelihood was examined by Abonyo (2020). However, the results were mainly indicating the roles of women in peace building, causes of inter-ethnic conflicts and impacts on the socio-economic livelihood, while the extent of inter-ethnic cohesion is not been well articulated. Therefore, this study on extent of inter-ethnic cohesion among the border communities would inform peace building actors on the level of trust, harmony and tolerance. It would also help in evaluating how the social institutions such as border markets, common schooling and inter-marriages could enhance inter-ethnic cohesion among the border communities of Kisumu and Nandi Counties which would also contribute to national unity in Kenya. Thus, the study assessed the extent of inter-ethnic cohesions and relations among the border communities of Kisumu and Nandi Counties, Kenya.

1.2 Research Objective

- i. To assess the extent of ethnic tolerance and trust among the border communities of Kisumu and Nandi Counties, Kenya.
- ii. To establish the extent of ethnic harmony among the border communities of Kisumu and Nandi Counties, Kenya.
- iii. To explore the influence of socio-economic activities on the ethnic cohesion and relations among the border communities of Kisumu and Nandi Counties, Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study on the extent of inter-ethnic cohesion among the border communities of Kisumu and Nandi Counties was on the Primordial theory of ethnicity. Scholars such as Claude Levi-Staus and Mircea Eliade formulated and developed the theory in the early 1970s. These scholars were trying to respond to difficult questions of ethnicity as a primordial (Yang, 2000). Ethnicity is ascribed to a person's status, which they inherit from their forefathers. One belongs to a particular ethnic group because they have inherited physical and cultural characteristics from their fore-bearers. Furthermore, ethnicity is static, not movable, fixed, and not mutable. The common ancestry determines the ethnicity (Yang, 2000). The people have primordial attachments to what is 'given' of social existence, be it an immediate kin connection of a particular religious or linguistic community (Kataria, 2018).

According to Ondigi (2021), ethnicity are identities which occur naturally, and people of the same ethnic communities share common origin, ancestry, language, rites of passage and world view which contributes to belongingness. Moreover, members of an ethnic community attach themselves into groups because there are traditions of belief and actions toward primordial objects such as biological features and territorial location (Grosby, 1994). Despite the well-articulated ethnicity theory, critics argue that it has overgeneralized the issue of primordiality, which does not recognize the diversity of human experiences and cultures. It also points toward essentialism by saying that human cultures are fixed and inherited.

In the context of this study primordial theory explains the origin of the ethnicity which occurs naturally not made by man. The natural occurrence of ethnicity defines the extent of inter-ethnic relations which can be either negative or positive. The constructivist school of thought views ethnicity as made by man for their own benefit. The ethnicity boundaries are constructed, flexible and changeable.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 The Extent of Inter-ethnic Tolerance and Trust among the Neighboring Communities

Inter-ethnic cohesion is understood from both the vertical and horizontal interactions among societies which can be identified by attitudes and norms like trust, willingness to help others and a means of identifying with a specific group (Adil Mahmud & Widgren, 2013). Mckenna *et al.* (2018), inter-ethnic cohesion is the togetherness, social relations among the group, attachment or belonging and orientation towards the same objectives. According to Vergolini (2011), inter-ethnic cohesion is also a two-phased phenomenon manner of associations that reduces ostracism and, the state of multifaceted relations among the members. Hence, it encompasses social attitudes including similar goals, a sense of belonging, shared values, tolerance, respect for each other and cultures, civic cooperation, trust and law-abiding (Adil Mahmud & Widgren, 2013). In addition, the Council of Europe categorizes inter-ethnic cohesion into three classes; democratic, social and cultural (Jeannotte, 2000). Therefore, inter-ethnic cohesion refers to the people's feelings, actions and association with each other within their community and other communities represented by trust and tolerance.

Schmid *et al.* (2014), there is direct adverse effects of heterogeneity on the larger group but also established predictions that multiplicity was indirectly associated with high levels of trust through positive relations and lower threat. The relations may be peaceful or conflictual which may also be attributed to national and international politics. The extent of inter-ethnic cohesion among neighboring communities varies depending on the specific context. In China's Belt and Road initiative the country has cooperated with neighboring countries through its own promotion and investment, which has greatly improved development in surrounding regions. In addition, in pre-colonial Bendel State, water transportation served as a cultural bond that facilitated trade and social within Yoruba coastal communities for many years.

Gundelach and Manatschal (2016), argue in their study of ethnic distinctiveness, social trust and the moderating role of subnational incorporation policy in the United States that incorporation policies moderate the association but also propose that the impact of such policies differ considerable according to the specific guidelines aspect under consideration. Creag *et al.* (2017), in their paper on the pitfalls and pronounce of expanding racial multiplicity, threat associations, and race relations in the 21st century in America. They argue that non-blacks' reaction to anticipated racial demographic variation have been depressing for the promise of societal racial equity and positive interracial interactions. This is so, despite the consistent threats and anger directed by fear of a changing population, which could exacerbate the mistrust and intolerance among the neighborhood.

According to Pettigrew (2008), and Mulondo and Thomas, (2018), the negative interactions among the members a society are based on the mistrust, ethnic intolerance, hatred, revenges and counter-revenges. Mckenna *et al.* (2018), argued that negative relationship exists between diverse communities which affects the social cohesion within a country. Hate speech has dominated Kenyan politics for a long time that many ethnic communities do not trust each other (Juma & Simiyu, 2018). For instance in 1992 and 200/7 there were some devastating inter-ethnic conflict between the Kikuyu

and Kalenjin communities. The main cause has been hatred between the communities that live within the Rift Valley. In Tana River, the conflict between the Orma and the Pokomo has been over grazing land. The issues were not only about the grazing land but the intolerance between the two communities (Musembi & Iteyo, 2018). The above are some of the instances where the neighboring communities showed mistrust and intolerance with each other which had severe effects on their relations and cohesion hence attributed to ethnic conflicts and genocides.

2.2.2 The Extent of Inter-Ethnic harmony among the Neighboring Communities

According to Laurence and Bentley (2018), ethnic multiplicity has a negative consequences on the attitude towards other communities such as disharmony. The longitudinal scrutiny of the causal indicates that ethnic diverseness and social cohesion is debatable in some cases like in British households. The changes in community diversity may lead to changes in attitudes towards the other ethnic groups. Individuals who come from a diverse to a homogeneous community shows an improved attitudes towards others. For de Lima (2008), during the Britain post-war the minority groups were the British with origin from Africa, the Caribbean and the Asian sub-continent thus ethnic diversity was grounded on socio-cultural attributes which in most times lead to disharmony among the neighboring communities.

Horowitz (2019), state advantages and challenges in America's expanding racial and ethnic diverseness. A good number of Americans have a frequent interactions with people who are not of the same race or ethnicity, but a small number do have much interaction. They do not bother when people speak a language other than English. For whites and Hispanics, view about the racial variety in their neighborhood are conspicuously consistent notwithstanding of how diverse the society is. They live in harmony with their neighbors irrespective of race, color or language.

Furthermore, for a long time in the history of humanity, the interactions of diverse ethnic groups has been dominated with hatred, mistrust and intolerance have led to devastating armed conflict or genocides across the world. For instance, Mulondo and Thomas (2018) stated that in Europe, Jews and other minority ethnic groups whose appearance were different from the other country's population were physically put to death by Hitler's Nazi administration during the second world war. This is what has been known as one of the most serious acts of crime against humanity and a sign of disharmony. Furthermore, Hewstone (2015), state that ethnic diversity has consequences of on social cohesion and prejudice, the missing link of dimension within the intergroup contact. It has negative implications for trust, prejudice and other results have brought hotly contested debate; however, the productiveness of direct or face-to-face intergroup contact as a strategy of discouraging prejudice is omitted.

In addition, during the Balkan war of 1991, Yugoslavia had multiple ethnic groups such as Bosnians, Serbians and Croats. The Serbians, were the major ethnic group, aimed to create an ethnically pure Serbian area by exhaustively get rid of all other ethnic groups and more so the Muslim Bosnians, via genocide and ethnic clean up during the Balkan War (Mulondo & Thomas, 2018; Garfinkel & Skaperdas, 2012). Milosevic's government prohibited Albanians from accessing education facilities, outlawed the official use of Albanian language, banned the use of Albanian images and attempted to redress the demographic disparity between the Serbs and Albanians (Juma & Simiyu, 2018).

In Africa, negative relations resulting from ethnic diversity has been reiterated by peace writers as the main cause of civil wars, conflicts and atrocities. For instance, the conflict between the two largest communities of South Sudan, Nuer and Dinka (Milner & Khawaja, 2010; Mulondo & Thomas, 2018). The other example of disharmony was evident during the genocide of Rwanda that took place in the year 1994 between the Hutus and Tutsi (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014). After the downing of the President's plane, Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) called for "final war" to "exterminate the cockroaches (Juma & Simiyu, 2018). In the South Africa, more disharmony was experienced during the apartheid period under colonial rulers when most black ethnic communities were moved from their geographical areas to other regions (Cocodia, 2008). Apartheid was a repressive and cruel method of racial discrimination imposed by the white racial group on the black people (Clark & Worger, 2016).

In Kenya, there have also been many inter-ethnic negative interactions just like other parts of world that have resulted from the negative cohesion between the neighboring communities such as hatred, mistrust and intolerance. Hate speech has dominated Kenyan politics for a long time that many ethnic communities do not trust each other (Juma & Simiyu, 2018). For instance in 1992 and 200/7 there were some devastating inter-ethnic conflict between the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities due to disharmony. The main causes were politics and hatred between the communities that live within the Rift Valley. In 2012-13 disharmony was experienced at the Tana River area between the Orma and the Pokomo over grazing land. The issues were not only about the grazing land but the intolerance between the two communities (Musembi & Iteyo, 2018).

2.2.3 The Influence of Socio-economic Activities on Inter-Ethnic Cohesion among the Neighboring Communities

The socio-economic activities occur in institutions or organizations such as markets, schools, hospitals, and churches. These activities promote interactions among the inter-group communities, especially those living in the border areas. Border markets are critical in enhancing ethnic cohesion and improving interethnic relations due to

interactions and changes in ideas, goods, and services. According to Badri *et al.* (2017), the border markets in Marivan are very effective in promoting socialization, building teamwork and social interaction, and building cohesion. According to Ombati (2014), the border markets are known as “peace Markets” and are set up at a central place between the warring communities. For instance, the Sotik/ Borabu common border market, for many years, has been for commerce, building relationships, bonding, and commodity exchange. The border markets do not only play trade and commerce but also where there is cultural exchange and civilization, sharing, networking, and conversation.

Juma and Simiyu (2018) argue that the Sondu market is where people from Nyamira, Kisii, Homa Bay, and Kisumu counties gather and do their business without any problem. The area faces land issues, with people from Nyakach looking for land to settle on the Sigowet side and vice versa. The Sondu market area is often a buzz with business activities until ethnic conflicts erupt. The market also plays a key role in building ethnic cohesion due to interaction between people of different ethnic communities.

Common schooling or cross-border schooling, where learners from different ethnic communities go to the same school, has been argued to promote cohesion and inter-ethnic relations by academicians and practitioners. According to Alan *et al.* (2020), ethnically mixed schools significantly lower peer violence and victimization on school grounds and social exclusion and increase inter-ethnic social ties in the classroom and even afterward. The intervention was applied in Turkish elementary schools affected by a large influx of Syrian refugee children, which showed a positive relation to ethnic harmony. Similarly, Lopes *et al.* (2024), studied cross-border schooling which their findings revealed that promoted intercultural understanding and cooperation, and also strengthens diplomatic relations among the bordering ethnic communities. Common schooling across borders plays a crucial role in building an inclusive society despite cultural differences. The people from diverse ethnic communities would live in peace and harmony with others. If there had been some disagreements among the community members, then it would never have reached the point of armed conflict, or the effects would not have been too devastating and catastrophic, like where hostile relations exist.

The contribution of inter-marriages to inter-ethnic cohesion in post-conflict societies is debatable worldwide. Inter-marriages' significance cannot be underestimated in building mixed racial cohesion (Furtado & Song, 2022). The number of inter-ethnic marriages determines the extent of ethnic cohesion, when the number high the higher the extent of the ethnic cohesion (Furtado & Song, 2022). According to Bandyopadhyay and Green (2021), in most African countries such as Malawi, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Kenya, inter-ethnic marriages have been practiced for a long time with the aim of creating kinship and political alliances. But in South Africa, during apartheid, intermarriages were discouraged, especially between whites and blacks (Bandyopadhyay & Green, 2021). This was to reduce the chances of having a mixed race who would be discriminated against. According to Gultekin (2012), inter-marriage is one of the oldest social institutions that provide kinship ties and also provides a platform for peacemaking between two ethnic communities. In the marriage, the two communities can exchange goods and culture for ethnic cohesion and positive relations (Gultekin, 2012). Thus, the integration of the two cultures is meant for social cohesion despite the long-term disagreements.

According to Kioko and Bolling (2015), there are many intermarriages between the Maasai and Kikuyu communities along the border of the Naivasha and Narok areas. Most of the young women who work at the flower farms in Naivasha usually get married to Maasai men around Narok. In addition, Okech and Onkware (2022) revealed that there are a number of inter-ethnic marriages at the border of Kisumu and Nandi Counties. However, they noted that the intermarriages have not adequately contributed to ethnic cohesion. From the literature above, inter-ethnic interactions may lead to positive cohesions when there is equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and friendship. These conditions are the prerequisites for inter-ethnic trade and inter-marriages, which could build stronger cohesion among community members. Although trade is quite relative and is based on individual needs and preferences at one point, it may be influenced by trust and friendship. Inter-marriages may also be personal but in some circumstances, it becomes a communal affair hence the perceived cooperation and friendship may influence those who may get into such a contract.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

The study was conducted at the border of Kisumu and Nandi Counties, specifically along the borderline of Tinderet and Muhoroni sub-Counties. The borderline has a stretch that encompasses the eight (8) villages of Soba, Chemase, Chemelil and Kapkitony in Tinderet sub-county- Nandi County and God Abuor, Kibigori, Soghor East and West in Muhoroni sub-Counties.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is a blueprint of research that guides the process of research from the formulation of the research questions and hypotheses to reporting the research findings (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). It is therefore significant for research because it provides the readers with a framework of how the researcher conducted the study, sample selection approach, data collection instruments and research procedures. The study adopted an explanatory design that enhanced adoption of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

3.3 Target Population and Sample Size Determination

The study population were made up of three categories; the household heads, community leaders and peace building actors living in both Tinderet and Muhoroni sub-Counties, especially the eight (8) villages of Soba, Chemase, Chemelil and Kapkitony in Tinderet sub-county- Nandi County and God Abuor, Kibigori, Soghor East and West in Muhoroni sub-Counties. The study employed purposive in the first place to select four (4) wards out the seven wards in the two sub-counties. The four wards selected were Chemelil and Muhoroni-Koru from Muhoroni sub-county and Chamase and Kapsimotwa wards from Tinderet sub-county. Purposive sampling strategy was further used to select eight (8) enumeration areas (villages) from the four wards (Soba, Chemase, Chemelil, Kapkitony, God Abuor, Kibigori, Soghor East and West which were very prone to the inter-ethnic conflicts. From there the study sampled 320 household heads to fill in the questionnaires.

3.4 Criteria for Inclusion in the Study

The study population were the total number of people living in both Tinderet and Muhoroni sub-Counties, especially the eight (8) villages of Soba, Chemase, Chemelil and Kapkitony in Tinderet sub-county- Nandi County and God Abuor, Kibigori, Soghor East and West in Muhoroni sub-Counties. This is because these areas were the most affected with armed inter- ethnic violence and cattle theft, subsequently number of peacebuilding activities been employed. The other category were the state peace building actors, non-state actors and grass roots groups.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The primary data was collected through questionnaire and interview schedule from the sampled population within the study area. Secondary data was collected through desk top review of secondary such as published and unpublished theses, journals, books and other virtual materials found online materials.

3.6 Data Collection Process

After getting all the required research permits from the relevant authorities. The data collection tools were approved by the school and supervisors. The researcher with help of the local administrations identified the population of interest from those sampled four wards. The questionnaires were distributed by the research assistants to the household heads and was collected after one week. The researcher got a list of the civil society organizations working in the area, religious organizations, community leaders, NCIC officers' security teams and then prepared a list for in depth interviews.

3.7 Reliability and Validity of Instruments

The reliability of the research instruments was tested before the actual study. A test-retest method was used to test for the reliability of the instruments. A sample of 10% of 320, which was 32, was drawn from the target population which was not part of the sample size. They administered the questionnaires to the respondents, collected them back after one week, and then repeated the same process after two weeks. The reliability of the items was assessed by interrogating the internal consistency and loading the items on their corresponding consistency. During the analysis, a correlation of 0.7 was achieved which is considered reliable and sufficient.

The supervisors and other faculty members helped in determining whether the items in the questionnaires, focus group discussion schedules and interview guides adequately represent all the areas that were to be investigated. The researcher also ensured validity of the collected data by training research assistants before commencing data collection work.

3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation

Quantitative methods of data analysis were used to analyze the collected data. Quantitative information were analyzed through statistical procedures with help SPSS and Microsoft Excel (MS). In order to ensure that all the questionnaires are coded uniformly a master codebook designed for this purpose were used. The study employed thematic and content analysis methods to analyze qualitative data collected.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate and Study Variables

The researcher with help of research assistants administered 320 questionnaires to the households to fill, 302 were well responded to and returned which translated to 94.4% response rate. The current finding achieved the threshold as pointed out in the previous literature of Creswell (2013) that whenever a response rate of 80% is achieved then the data is adequate for analysis and making conclusions. The excellent return rate obtained in the current study was due to the sampling strategy employed by the researcher which was stratified random sampling strategy for selecting household heads among the border communities.

The variables of the study are demographic characteristics, perception on the tolerances, extent of trust and harmony, causes of ethnic intolerance, consequences of ethnic intolerance, perception on the border markets, perceptions on the shared learning institutions and perceptions on the inter-marriage. Conclusions and recommendations are given in the section as well.

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

In the section of demographic characteristics, the study presented age, gender, level of education, how long they have been in this area and the ethnic communities they belong to. Figure 1 household heads age.

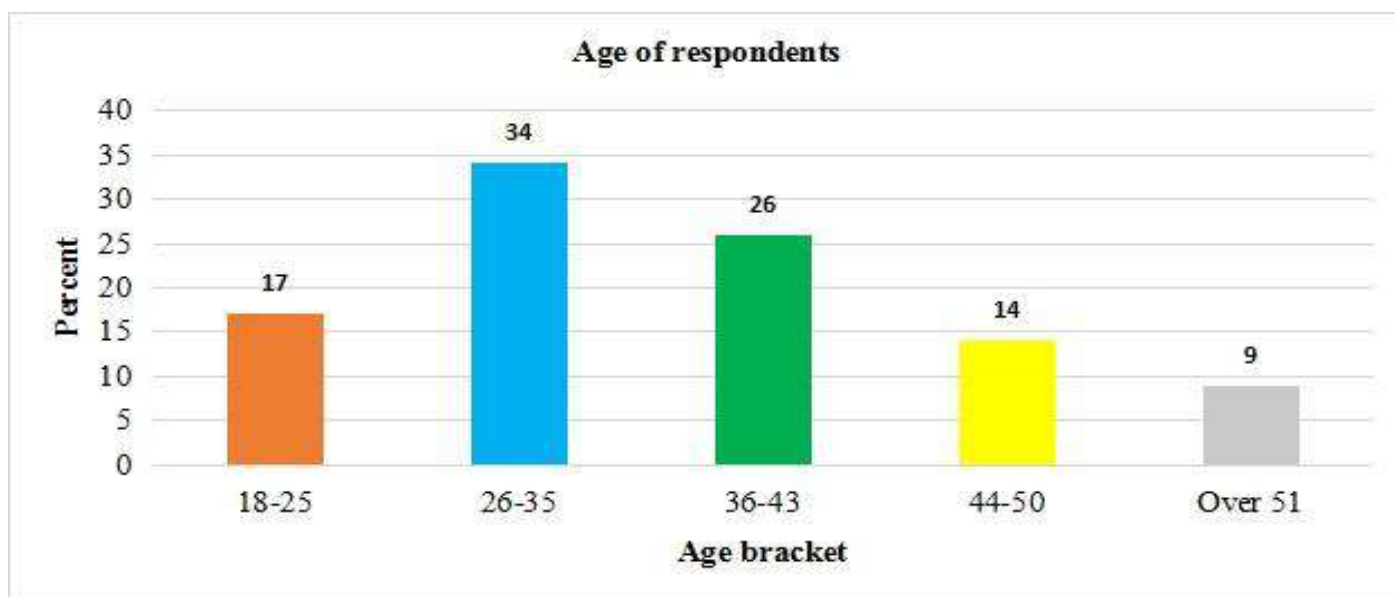


Figure 1

Age bracket of the Respondents (N=302)

Findings illustrated in the Figure 1 shows that a majority (103)34% of household heads were in the age (26-35), (79)26% were in the age (36-43), (51)17% were in the age (18-25), (42)14% in the age (44-50) and (27)9% were over 51 years old. This implies that majority (154)51% of household heads were young people or youth in the age bracket (18-35). In most cases young are used by politicians to cause chaos/ violence and also involved in the stock thefts, revenge missions and counter-revenge attacks. The finding of this study aligns with the previous literature of Oyoo *et al.* (2019) that youth are the majority of the population and can be manipulated easily by politicians through handouts to cause conflicts hence their inclusion in the study help in making a very crucial conclusion.

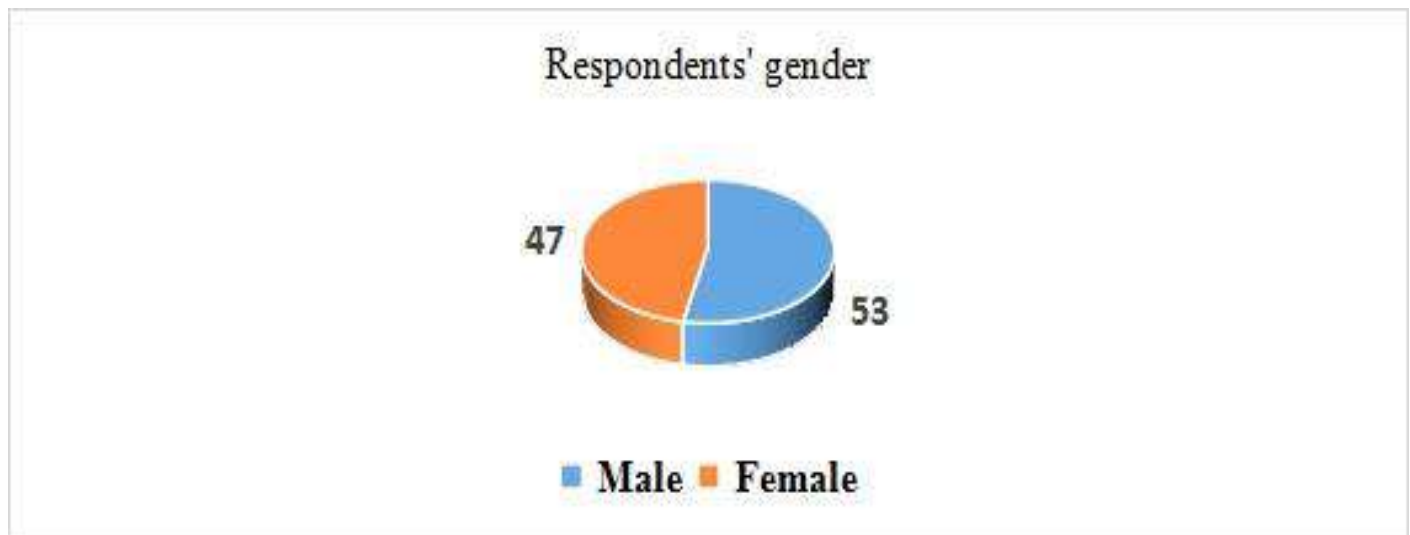


Figure 2
Gender of the Respondents (N=302)

As shown in Figure 2 majority of the households were headed by male (160) 53% while female (142) 47%. Even though there was a slight difference in gender representation, the difference was insignificant to a fair and equal representation. Therefore, having both genders fairly represented in the study means that all the opinions and perceptions captured cut across both genders. The current finding is supported by the previous literature of Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS), (2014) on gender representation, which states that in most African communities, men are the major decision-makers in critical issues affecting their communities. In addition, the current finding concurs with Kipuri and Ridgewell (2010) that men are more likely to respond to security and development matters in their areas than women in any given study.

Table 1
Educational Level (N=302)

Level of education	Frequency	Percent
No formal education	19	6.00%
Primary level	52	17.00%
Secondary level	99	33.00%
College level	72	24.00%
University level	60	20.00%
Total	302	100.00

According to the findings in the Table 1 majority (99) 33% of household heads had secondary certificate as their highest level education, (72) 24% college, (60) 20% university, (52) 17% primary and (19) 6% with no formal education. This shows that a majority of the household heads were people with a wider knowledge, broader views and exposed on different peace building mechanisms, conflict management strategies and importance of inter-ethnic cohesion.

Respondents were requested to state their respective ethnic group. Figure 3 presents the summary of the outcome. N=302

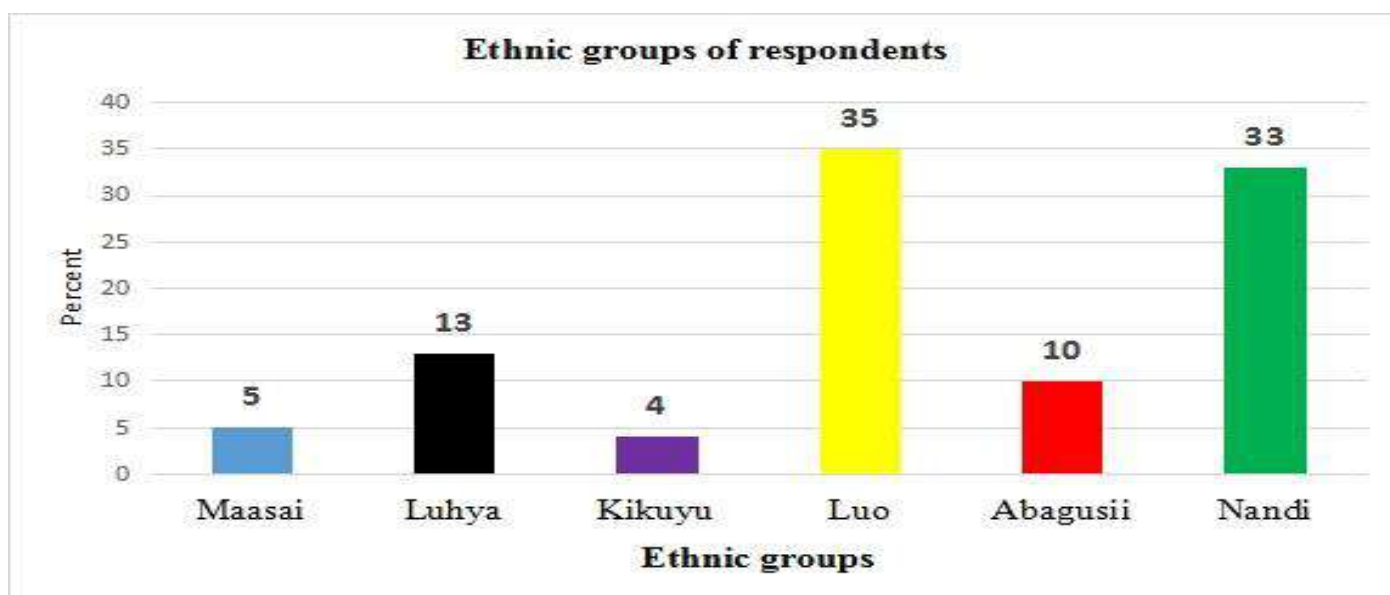


Figure 3
Ethnic Groups of Household Heads (N=302)

Based on the results shown in Figure 3, a majority of household heads 106(35%) were from Luo, 100(33%) Nandi; 39(13%) Luhya; 30(10%) Abagusii; 15 (5%) Maasai and 12(4%) from Kikuyu community. The study was conducted among the border communities of Kisumu and Nandi Counties where the majority of ethnic communities are the Luo and Nandi. Thus, the diverse ethnic communities represented in among the respondents. The current finding is confirmed by the literatures of Azarya (2010) that when handling conflict in postcolonial African communities, ethnic affiliation largely affects a person’s decisions and preferred outcomes in conflict management and peaceful coexistence processes in most parts of Africa.

The respondents were asked to expound their opinions on whether the border communities tolerate each other's cultural practices.

Table 2
The Extent of Tolerance among the Border Communities (N=302)

Extent of tolerance	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Sd
Very small extent	64	21.2	4.002	0.478
Small extent	108	35.8	5.025	0.564
Moderately	69	22.8	4.017	0.453
High extent	36	11.9	2.098	0.225
Very high extent	25	8.3	1.221	0.133
Total	302	100		

Using a 5-point Likert Scale, where 1 stood for very small extent, 2- Small extent, 3- Moderate, 4- High extent and 5- very high extent. The majority 108(35.8%) of respondent indicated that the level of tolerance among the border communities is to a small extent; 69(22.8%) moderately; 64(21.2%) very small extent; 36(11.9%) high extent and 25(8.3%) very high extent. Therefore, a total majority of 241(79.8%) of respondents indicated that level of tolerance among the border communities is to a small extent. This means that there is a very little level of tolerance among those living at the border due to frequent midnight attacks and violence experienced in the area.

The current finding on the inter-ethnic cohesion corroborates with the previous literature of Mulondo and Thomas (2018), that the diverse communities do not always tolerate each other’s cultural practices as it evident among the communities of South Africa. According to Garfinkel and Skaperdas (2012), the majority ethnic group, could not tolerate other smaller ethnic group’s cultures, therefore, Serbians the majority in the area decided to systematically eliminate all other ethnic groups through genocide and ethnic cleansing during the Balkan War.

The respondents were further asked to express their opinions and perceptions on whether the border communities live harmoniously.

Table 3

Level of Inter-ethnic Harmony among the Border Communities (N=302)

Extent of harmony	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD
Very small extent	29	9.6	1.079	0.132
Small extent	34	11.3	1.102	0.139
Moderately	58	19.2	2.134	0.217
High extent	112	37.1	5.068	0.439
Very high extent	69	22.8	4.079	0.346
Total	302	100		

Using a 5-point Likert Scale, where 1 stood for very small extent, 2- Small extent, 3- Moderate, 4- High extent and 5- very high extent. Table 3 shows that majority 112(37.1%) of the respondents indicated that extent of harmony among the border communities was very high followed by 69(22.8%) very high extent; 58(19.2%) moderately; 34(11.3%) small extent and 29(9.6%) very small extent. Therefore, a majority 239 (79.1%) indicated that the level of harmony is to a high extent.

The current finding is not in agreement with previous literature of Garfinkel and Skaperdas (2012), that the diverse ethnic communities could not live in harmony. According to Mulondo and Thomas (2018), two heterogeneous neighboring communities rarely live in harmony because of several issues such as boundary and shared resources. The is reflected by the case of the Serbians who were the majority ethnic group, gained power and decided to create an ethnically pure Serbian area by systematically eliminating all other ethnic groups through genocide and ethnic cleansing during the Balkan War.

Similarly, the current finding is also not in line with the previous literatures of Milner and Khawaja (2010), and Yanagizawa-Drott (2014) that negative relations resulting from the two ethnic groups lead to disharmony and mistrust. The disharmony is the end result of the negative interactions for instance, between the Nuer and Dinka ethnic communities of South Sudan. Their disharmony and disunity has caused a lot of havoc to the county and the region as well. The two communities do not see eye to eye with each other; therefore, there is no harmony.

The respondents were asked to expound their opinions on how they would rate the level of trust among the communities.

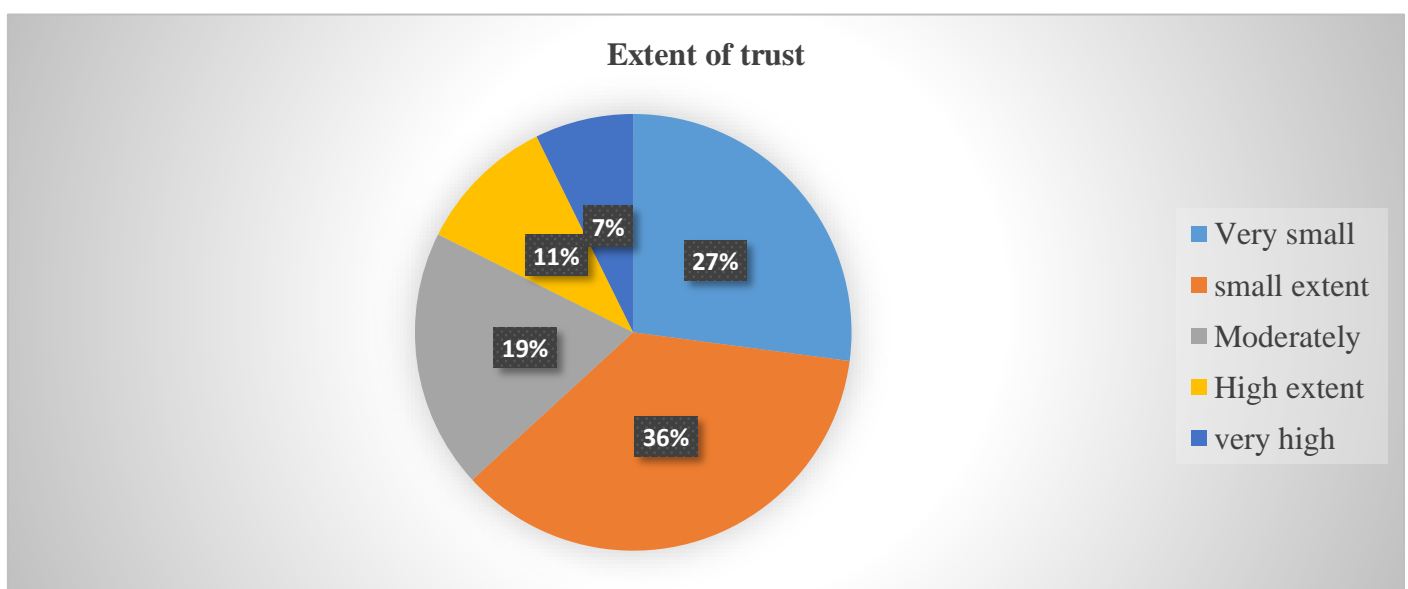


Figure 4

The Level Trust Among the Border Communities (N=302)

Using a 5-point Likert Scale, where 1 stood for very small extent, 2- Small extent, 3- Moderate, 4- High extent and 5- very high extent. Figure 4 shows that a majority 109(36.1%) indicated that the level of trust among the border communities was a small extent; 82(27.1%) very small extent; 58(19.2%) moderately; 31(10.3%) high extent and 22(7.3%) very high extent. Therefore, a majority of 191(56.6%) of respondents indicated that the extent of level of trust among the border communities was small. The low rating of the level of trust was due to regular attacks, stock theft deaths, and unsolved boundary issues.

The current finding the study concurs with the previous literature of Koopmans and Veit (2014) that the ethnic or religious heterogeneity of neighborhoods displayed significantly lower levels of trust in their neighbors than in the control group respondents. People of different ethnic groups usually do not have much trust in each other, especially when there are underlying issues such as land disputes and politics in this case.

The finding of this study further corroborates with the previous literature of Laurence *et al.* (2018), Neighborhood trust is lower in the diverse communities, but perceived threats and prejudice are not immediate to this relationship, although those factors moderate the effect of neighbor trust. The out group is usually threatened and a lot of prejudice is spoken. The perceived threat emerges from other societal processes like socio-economic precariousness. Individuals who already view out-groups as scary experience diverse neighborhoods where local cohesion declines.

4.2 Respondents Perception on the Causes of Ethnic Intolerance and Mistrust among the Border Communities.

The respondents were asked to expound their opinions on causes of the negative relations shown by intolerance and mistrust among the border communities. Table 4 gives the summary of the findings.

Table 4

Causes of Negative Cohesion among the Border Communities (N=302)

Causes of negative relations	Frequency	Percent	SD
Stock theft	104	34.4%	0.622
National politics	82	27%	0.616
Boundary / land dispute	66	22%	0.578
Nepotism	28	9.3%	0.432
Unemployment	22	7.3%	0.379
Total	302	100	0.525

According to the finding in the Table 4 a majority 104(34.4%) of respondents affirmed that stock theft/ cattle rustling was a cause of intolerance and mistrust followed by 82 (27%) national politics and politicians; 66(22%) boundary disputes; 28(9.3%) nepotism, and finally 22(7.3%) unemployment among the youth coupled with the high cost of living. Therefore, the negative relations are caused by the rampant stock thefts, national politics, boundary disputes, cultural differences, nepotism at workplaces, and unemployment- affects the inter-ethnic relations in this area. The stock theft leads to revenge and counter-revenge actions among the border communities.

The current finding concurs with the previous literature by Adamu (2013), Mckenna *et al.* (2018), Mulondo and Thomas (2018), and Nagy (2018), that inter-ethnic interactions of heterogeneous societies may be positive or negative. Mckenna *et al.* (2018), argue that a negative ethnic interaction is usually a conflicting situation made up of ethnic victimization, bullying, intolerance, mistrust, revenge and hatred, which, in turn, weakens the relations among the diverse ethnic groups.

The finding of the current study is in agreement with the previous literatures of Yamano (2013), and Shalom-SCCRR, (2020), which pointed out that cultural differences, boundary disputes, stock theft, nepotism, and national politics are the cause of negative relations among the out-groups. According to Wangechi (2014), in the study in Nakuru County, community leaders, and politicians were the main cause of negative ethnicity in many areas; they fuel the conflicts by turning community members against each other, planning and executing decisions related to the conflict. For instance, in 2007, some politicians and community leaders formed ethnic groups to fight, defend their community, and reject the final results of presidential elections which resulted into post-election violence, and pitting neighboring communities against each other.

The current study's finding concurred with Amolo *et al.* (2022), who pointed out that diverse ethnicities usually have strained relationships due to land disagreement, politics, and stock theft. Political incitement and hate speech contribute to negative ethnic relations which causes armed violence among the neighboring communities. Kiprop (2019) and Shalom-SCCRR (2020) argued that bad cultural practices and unemployment cause ethnic conflicts among the neighboring communities. According to Nyakuri (1997) findings' nepotism cause inter-ethnic conflict among the neighboring communities. The current study further concurred with the literature of Odanga *et al.* (2022) that interethnic strife has been caused by economic exploitation, exclusion and uneven access to resources and opportunities in the region.

The current finding is supported by the previous literature of Shalom-SCCRR (2020), that that the hostility among the ethnic groups living along the border of Kisumu and Nandi Counties has transformed into a very devastating phenomenon to both the people and their livelihood opportunities. The negative relationship is seen in the form of intolerance, which undermines inter-communal cooperation and leads to mistrust, hatred, and cynicism. This is the situation that exists mostly among the different ethnics who border each other in this country. Over the years negative

relations between two or more is caused by contestation over natural resources that makes each community to be aggressive towards each other to control the resources.

4.3 Consequences of Negative Inter-Ethnic Relations among the Border Communities.

The study sought to assess the consequences of negative inter-ethnic conflict amongst the border communities of Kisumu and Nandi Counties. Table 5 gives the summary of the finding.

Table 5

The Negative Consequences Inter-Ethnic Relations (N=302)

Consequences of Negative Ethnic Relations	Frequency	Percent
Loss of lives	62	21%
Destruction of property	71	24%
Food insecurity	36	12%
Loss of business opportunities	57	19%
Social amenities are closed	46	15%
Increased crime rate	30	10%
Total	302	100.00

Based on the results shown in Table 5 a majority 71(24%) of respondents affirmed that it has led to destructions of the properties, followed by 62 (21%) loss of lives; 57(19%) loss of business opportunities; 46(15%) closing down of social amenities; then 36(12%) lead to food insecurity; further 30(10%) lead to increased crime rates.

The current finding is in agreement with literature of Nyakuri, (1997); Halakhe, (2013); Kiprop (2019); Shalom-SCCRR, (2020) who pointed out that the effects of armed ethnic conflicts are many such as loss of lives and destruction of the properties. Moreover, the current finding is reflected by the previous findings of Buckland, (2005); O'Malley, (2010); Bruck *et al.* (2019), and Odero (2023), that armed conflict leads to the closing of social amenities such as schools and health facilities, food insecurity that usually arises due to reduced agricultural activities in the area and movement of the people which in turn affects the operation of market. Thus, according to Wangechi (2014), the post-election violence in Kenya, led to the closer of many schools in Nakuru County, teachers fled the area, some schools were burned down, looted or the area become too insecure for the other ethnic communities. Some schools were made IDP camps which interfered with learning and children's in the national examinations.

The current finding of the study agrees with studies of Odero (2023) that armed conflict leads to increment of crime rate in the area. Due to armed ethnic conflict a number of human rights violation do happen whether planned or unplanned such as rape, theft, murder and property destruction. According to Wangechi (2014) post elections violence of 2007/8 lead to a number of crime against humanity as people were tortured, women and young girls were raped, property destroyed and others also were killed by the armed ethnic communities.

4.4 Implications of socio-economic activities on Inter-Ethnic Cohesion among the Border Communities

The study sought to assess the extent to which shared facilities contribute to inter-ethnic relations among the diverse communities.

4.4.1 Perception of Respondents on the Border Markets in Enhancing Inter-Ethnic Cohesion among Diverse Communities

The study sought to know the extent to which trade in the cross-border markets contribute to positive interethnic cohesion among the border communities. Table 6 gives the summary of the findings.

Table 6

The Extent to which Border Markets Contribute to Ethnic Cohesion (N=302)

Inter-communal trade	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD
Very small extent	16	5.3	1.022	0.142
Small extent	35	11.6	2.023	0.156
Moderately	71	23.5	3.072	0.238
High extent	100	33.10	4.089	0.318
Very high extent	80	26.50	4.064	0.242
Total	302	100	2.854	0.219

Using a 5-point Likert Scale, where 1 stood for very small extent, 2- Small extent, 3- Moderate, 4- High extent and 5- very high extent. A majority 100(33.10%) of respondents affirmed that cross- border markets contribute to positive ethnic relations to a high extent followed by 80(26.50%) to a very high extent; 71(23.5%) moderately; 35(11.6%) to a small extent and finally; 16(5.3%) to a very small extent. This implies that a majority 59.60% respondents indicated that border markets influence positive ethnic relations to a high extent. But a majority affirmed that border markets enhances to social interactions, which helps in building ethnic relationships. Through trading, the other community can learn the culture and language of the other community or even get to appreciate what the other community is doing.

The finding of this study is confirmed by the previous literature of Candau *et al.* (2021), who stated that trade creates a stage of interaction. The whole process, from production to export or from border crossing to final consumption, can fuel tensions or, conversely, can soothe relations between the different ethnic groups of a country. Nevertheless, peaceful co-existence can be reversed if the trading situation is deemed unfair. In bigger markets with too much favoritism, unequal opportunities and lack of social mobility generate ethnic differences.

The current finding differs from the previous literature of Mulondo and Thomas (2018) that trade builds social networks across neighbors of diverse communities. Cross-border economic activity positively affects relations such as the sharing of resources and people developing some identity as a business community, which could prevent violence from breaking out as economic stability becomes the most important thing.

4.4.2 Perceptions on the effects of Shared Learning Institutions on the Inter-Ethnic Cohesion among the Diverse Communities.

The study sought to assess the extent to which shared learning institutions contribute to interethnic cohesion among the border communities. Table 7 gives the summary of the findings.

Table 7

How Shared Institutions Promote Ethnic Cohesion (N=302)

Shared Institutions Promote Ethnic Relations	Frequency	Percent
Very high extent	119	39
High extent	70	23
Moderate	59	20
Small extent	31	10
Very small extent	24	8
Total	302	100

Using a 5-point Likert Scale, where 1 stood for very small extent, 2- Small extent, 3- Moderate, 4- High extent and 5- very high extent. The findings in the Table 7, shows that a majority 39% (119) affirmed that shared institutions promote interethnic relations to a very high extent; 23% (70) a high extent; 20% (59) moderate extent. Further, 10% (31) small extent and finally, 8% (24) a very small extent. This implies that a majority 62% (189) indicated that shared institutions such as common schooling, colleges and universities learning among the heterogeneous groups can promote interethnic relations. Learners and teachers from Nandi side go to the same institution with children from the Luo and other communities. The institutions shared are preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary colleges. Despite having children from both sides going to the same schools, sharing classrooms, and being taught by the same teachers. There are still some cases of inter-ethnic conflict disharmony, mistrust and intolerance.

The finding on the extent to common schooling contributes to social relations concurs with the previous literature of Alan *et al.* (2020), ethnically mixed schools significantly lower peer violence and victimization on school grounds and social exclusion and increase inter-ethnic social ties in the classroom and even afterward. The intervention was applied in Turkish elementary schools affected by a large influx of Syrian refugee children, which showed a positive relation to ethnic harmony. According to Lopes *et al.* (2024), studied cross-border schooling which their findings revealed that promoted intercultural understanding and cooperation, and also strengthens diplomatic relations among the bordering ethnic communities. Mulondo and Thomas (2018) argue that good friendship in learning or classmates by students from different black ethnic groups in South Africa is a sign of cohesion within the country. When communities come together and cooperate on many issues, the chances of them getting into civil strife or armed conflict are minimal.

The finding of the current study is in disagreement with Vitoroulis and Schneider (2009) that adverse ethnicity in the academic institution could lead to ethnic victimization, discrimination, and prejudice. Institutions with a power imbalance would show negative power relations and student interaction. The current finding further does not correspond with Fandrem *et al.* (2012), in a study conducted in Norway, which indicated that ethnic minorities were more likely to be victimized than ethnic majorities and more likely to be discriminated against compared to the rest of society. Unlike

South African Universities, where English is the language of instruction, in Ethiopian Universities, Amharic is the language of instruction, so students who could not speak Amharic would be discriminated against.

Common schooling across borders plays a crucial role in building an inclusive society despite cultural differences. Thus, learning institutions have been hailed as a point of social interaction that brings tolerance, trust, and harmony amongst diverse communities in the country. The people from diverse ethnic communities would live in peace and harmony with others and if there had been some disagreements among them, then it would never reach the point of armed conflict, or the effects would not have been too devastating and catastrophic, like where hostile relations exist. However, teachers and children do not intervene in conflict despite having networks across the ethnic communities. In the case of Kisumu and Nandi Counties, there are no reported ethnic victimization, discrimination, or prejudice among the students and pupils; the networks do not stop the midnights, stock theft, and boundary disputes that have been causing conflict for several days.

4.4.3 Perceptions of respondent's inter-marriages and cohesion among the border communities

The study sought to assess the extent to which intermarriages among the border communities contribute to positive ethnic cohesion. Table 8 gives the summary of the findings.

Table 8

The Extent to which Intermarriages Promote Inter-Ethnic Cohesion (N=302)

Extent of Promotion	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD
Very small extent	19	6.00	2.032	0.119
Small extent	27	9.00	2.036	0.124
Moderately	126	42.00	4.091	0.412
High extent	86	28.00	3.076	0.324
Very high extent	44	15.00	3.021	0.314
Total	302	100		

Using a 5-point Likert Scale, where 1 stood for very small extent, 2- Small extent, 3- Moderate, 4- High extent and 5- very high extent. The findings in the Table 8 shows that a majority (126) 42% indicated that inter-marriages promote positive relations moderately; (86) 28% a high extent; (44) 15% a very high extent; (27) 9% small extent and finally, (19) 6% a very small extent. The total majority (60%) respondents consider inter-marriages among the communities living at the border to build a positive to a high extent. A woman is not married to an individual but to the society. Similarly, a man does not marry from a family but a society. The two communities form a relationship with each other. Thus, they should have respect, trust, love, and tolerance towards a community from which their kin have married, regardless of their cultural background.

The finding of this study is in line with the previous literature of Bandyopadhyay and Green (2021), in most African countries such as Malawi, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Kenya, inter-ethnic marriages have been practiced for a long time with the aim of creating kinship and political alliances with only South Africa restricting it during apartheid. Kioko and Bolling (2015), argue there are many intermarriages between the Maasai and Kikuyu communities along the border of the Naivasha and Narok areas. Most of the young women who work at the flower farms in Naivasha usually get married to Maasai men around Narok. In addition, Okech and Onkware (2022) revealed that there are a number of inter-ethnic marriages at the border of Kisumu and Nandi Counties.

The finding is confirmed by the previous literature of Smits (2009), inter-marriage is critical in the explanation of inter-ethnic relationships. Whenever there are mixed marriages between the members of groups in a society, it is generally expected to reduce the probability of violent conflicts among those groups and to increase the social cohesion of that society. According to Damarest and Haer, (2021) mixed marriages are critical in connecting society. It links together not only two individuals but also the larger groups to which these individuals belong. Gultekin (2012), argue that inter-marriage is one of the oldest social institutions that provide kinship ties and also provides a platform for peacemaking between two ethnic communities.

Inter-ethnic marriages form a bridge between these ethnic groups across which family members and friends of the partners may get in touch with each other, and new group boundaries transcending personal contacts and collaborations may exist. It leads to the birth of a mixed race or half ethnic communities that is likely to enhance building a strong relations.

However, Okech and Onkware (2022) argue that there are a number of inter-ethnic marriages at the border of Kisumu and Nandi Counties but they have not adequately contributed to ethnic cohesion. The current finding of this study further do not correspond to the previous findings of Alnarahsheh *et al.* (2015) that inter-marriages are rising in India, Qatar, and the United States. The difference is probably because the current study was done in a smaller area with

not so many people; that is why it depicts only a few intermarriages compared to a bigger area such as a country where you sample over ten thousand people.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

To conclude, this particular study give an in-depth assessment of the inter-ethnic cohesion among the border communities of Kisumu and Nandi Counties, Kenya. The study adopted explanatory method. The study findings indicated that the level of inter-ethnic harmony is very high among the border communities despite having a small extent on tolerance which means there is a very low levels of inter-ethnic tolerance and a very low level of trust among the border communities due to frequent midnight attacks and violence experienced in the area.

The study further concludes that negative ethnic cohesion are caused by the rampant stock thefts, national politics, boundary disputes, cultural differences, nepotism at workplaces, and unemployment- affects the inter-ethnic relations in this area. The ethnic conflicts negatively affect many perspectives of human life for instance, loss of lives, and destruction of properties, food insecurity and loss of business opportunities. Finally, the study concludes that border markets, shared schools and institutions inter-ethnic marriages would build a positive interactions to a high extent.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study on the assessment of inter-ethnic cohesion among the border communities despite having a number of peace building strategies employed by various groups of actors to enhance cohesion. This study recommends the state and other actors to regularly fund and organize for activities that lead to social integration such as sports, drama and arts, cross-border youth and women groups, peace education in schools, merger of motor cycle (boda boda) welfare groups or saccos across the border, intermarriages and cross-border trade. All these activities would strengthen the relationships among the border communities hence increase the inter-ethnic cohesion.

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