EFFECTS OF ARMS PROLIFERATION ON CO-EXISTENCE AMONG COMMUNITIES IN MARSABIT COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to study the effects of arms proliferation on co-existence among societies living in Marsabit County. The study was framed under the foundations of Social Conflict theory. The study used a descriptive survey design aimed at describing the problem without manipulation of the resultant data. The population comprised of 10,005 household heads, Deputy county commissioner, 4 Assistant County Commissioners, 11 chiefs in Saku Sub County and the members of security committee. Samples of 175 household heads were selected using Slovin's formula. All the DCC, 4ACCs, 11 chiefs and members of security committee were included in the sample since it was relatively small population. Semi-structured questionnaires were administered to all the participants. Descriptive analysis, in the form of mean, median, percentages, and standard deviation was used for quantitative data. Regression analysis and inferential statistics was conducted. Thematic analysis was used to analysis qualitative data emanating from open-ended questions. Permission and authorizations from Kenyatta University, NACOSTI, County Commissioner, County Director of Education in Marsabit County, including other relevant gate-keepers was sort. All ethical consideration in handling the respondents and the resultant data was adhered to. The study concluded that there existed a discernible negative association between arms proliferation and inter-ethnic co-existence in Marsabit County and there was need for dialogue to mitigate potential conflicts. The study firmly asserted that arms escalation intensified conflicts, necessitating comprehensive peace-building initiatives and fostering inter-community dialogue to ensure enduring stability. The study recommended that Marsabit County should collaborate with neighboring authorities to strengthen border security, aiming to curb the illicit influx of arms.

Key Word: Security, Inter-Community Conflict, Arms Proliferation, Marsabit County

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic conflicts, throughout history, have been an element of international politics. Interethnic conflicts are the result of the reality that conflicts have taken root and are now determining how the globe operates. Conflicts can be seen in countries like Yugoslavia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Iraq, China, Afghanistan, and Syria all over the world. Many African countries have experienced a wave of interethnic confrontations and bloodshed in the last two decades. Many of the victims of today's global interethnic conflicts come from Africa, without a doubt (Malik, 2014).

Inter-ethnic conflicts have also continued to wreak havoc in Africa, driving bloodshed in Rwanda, Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan, Liberia, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Sierra Leone, and Algeria, to name a few. Most of these wars were made worse by the way European colonialists divided Africa. They drew borders based on Europe's national disputes and interests, not on African ethnic groups. This forced ethnic groups that had always been at odds with each other to work together under one flag (Kapferer& Bjorn, 2009).

In Kenya, the severity of confrontations between different communities peaked in the 1990s, just as the country entered the multiparty era, which based the country on ethnicity. One of the most serious outcomes of conflicts has been the extinction of ethnic minority groups with roots in places that are not considered their natural habitat. Interethnic disputes also result in property destruction and robbery, as well as other acts of violence such as rape and massacres. Ethnic disputes in Kenya are most visible during political events such as general elections, referendums, and by-elections. It is also correct to claim that, whereas natural disasters and starvation were once the primary sources of human misery and displacement, interethnic conflicts now appear to be the dominant drivers of global crises (Amisi& Duffy, 2007).

Conflicts involving different ethnic group are responsible for economic challenges in Marsabit, that may explain why there has been a reduction in economic activity, environmental deprivation and biodiversity loss, unapproachable health services, low food production, inadequate or insufficient infrastructure to aid communication and transport, absence of markets for merchandises, forceful displacement of some communities, abandoned capital projects, and an upsurge in the amount of children leaving without completing school programs, resulting in widespread illiteracy. Inter-ethnic conflict has become the dominant topic in African studies as a result of the problem at hand (Bond, 2007). Therefore, this study's aim is to investigate into inter-ethnic conflicts and coexistence among communities in Marsabit County.

Statement of the Problem

Literature that link evidence on interethnic conflict to co-existence among communities exists, yet persistence of the same particularly among frontier communities has become commonplace despite government efforts and interventions. In recent years, the importance of interethnic conflicts as a security concern for the international system has taken the centre stage. Previous research has focused on causes of armed conflict (Wangeci, Njoroge, &Manyasa, 2014), assessment of the effects of ethnic conflict (Nyang'au, 2019); the connection between ethnic conflict and insecurity (Ngului, 2021) and dynamics of relations involving different ethnic groups, harmonious living, violence conflicts, and mechanism for peace restoration (Tiruneh, 2019). However, this study didn't find any research that had directly interrogated the effects of arms proliferation on co-existence among communities within the setting of arid and semi-arid regions, such as Marsabit County. Thus, these findings provided a solid justification for this study.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this was to establish the effects of arms proliferation on co-existence among communities in Marsabit County. The study answered the questions below;
- What is the effect of arms proliferation on co-existence among communities in Marsabit County?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Illegal arms proliferation and inter-ethnic conflicts

According to a study by Jekada (2005) on spread of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and its effect on ethnic clashes in Nigeria, there exists a serious connection between the spread of SALW and the heightened ethnic clashes in country. Although evidence from the preceding study indicates that availability of SALW has posed as a defining threat to national security, persistence of such conflict demand a deeper scrutiny for appropriate policy action. This study therefore intends to ask further questions on containing the increase of SALWs among frontier communities.

Taber (2018) conducted an empirical study on cross border conflict, and focused on the spread of SALWs. He found that the phenomenon is widely regarded as a key security threat to persons, societies, and states around the world, fueling insurgency, human and drug trafficking, extremism, planned crime, internal insurgencies, and civil wars, and posing barriers to the maintenance of stable peace and security. Internal insurgencies frequently intensify into greater civil battles that can threaten a regional peace (Taber, 2018).

In his paper, Kemp (2004) avers that disruption of peaceful coexistence among communities in the frontiers is often driven by vested interests particularly among political actors. This study therefore aims to dig deeper into understanding the origins of SALWs, including those that profiteer from the trade. It sought to demystify the connection between illegal trades in SALW particularly among local political actors from genuine grievances that may exist within communities.

There are at least 875 million assault rifles in use worldwide, with a substantial number of SALW in both civilian and military hands (Small Arms Survey, 2007). At the same time, there are almost 1,200 businesses producing small arms in 90 different countries (Small Arms Survey, 2004). Between 500,000 and 750,000 individuals are reportedly killed annually by SALW, which also contribute to armed confrontation, organised crime, social disintegration, and terrorist attacks while weakening long-term social and economic growth (Geneva Declaration, 2011). In addition, it is too held responsible for terrorist attacks and anarchy by escalating international crime and bloody conflicts. Yemen, Kyrgyzstan, Ghana, Burundi, Sudan, Nepal, Pakistan, Somalia, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and other countries are among those affected (Malhotra, 2011).

According to reports, SALW has killed around 5,994,000 people in Africa alone in the last 50 years. Small gun proliferation is increasing in proportion throughout Africa. The expansion of offences and violent conflict has been significantly exacerbated by these small arms that are leftovers from wars in Mozambique, Angola, Somalia, Liberia, Sudan, and Sierra Leone as well as stolen or misplaced licensed assault rifles (Renner, 2006).

Kenya's northern region has permeable and contested boundaries. The "Illemi Triangle" is a famous instance of a contested area that is under de facto Kenyan administration but is visited by five ethno-linguistic populations from Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Sudan: the Turkana, Didinga, Toposa, Nyangatom, and Dassanetch. Because these groups used to move to the triangle to graze, violence was unavoidable. The pirates of the Ilemi triangle employed conventional arms and firearms acquired from Ethiopian gun-runners and distant trading centers during pre-colonial wars (such as Maji). Firearms were widely available that it was used as a form of local money. As a result, boundaries that cut through traditional travelling pathways make it impossible to access grazing resources, resulting in conflict (Mburu, 2003). In the war between Gabra and Dassanetch, this has not been completely documented. Because of the easy availability of firearms that have advanced from traditional to present guns, the violence between pastoralist communities persists.
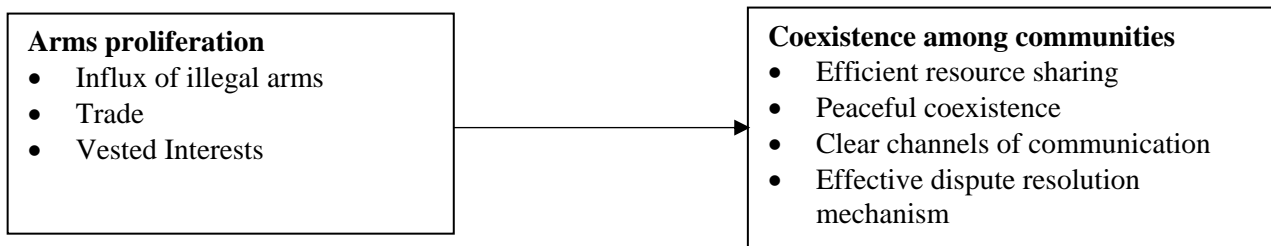
Theoretical Framework

Social Conflict theory

Galtung's (1996) social conflict theory examines the nonviolent and creative resolution of conflict in great detail. The social conflict theory entails a critical examination of the conflict's causes, structure, and dynamics, as well

as the conflict's participants and consequences. The historical backdrop and context of the conflict are examined in depth in order to comprehend the genesis and dimension of current events in the conflict, which depicts the conflict as it exists on the ground and provides many accounts of events. According to the theory, at this point, individuals' personalities and personal perspectives will emerge, and the ongoing conflict will be perpetuated by displays of interests, positions, feelings, and pressures on the parties. It claims that everybody involved in a conflict must gain a better awareness of the situation and obtain a factual report in order to be useful. The core reasons for the conflict, the parties involved in the conflict, and their roles and interests are studied in order to end or decrease the conflict. In order to understand the hindrances to peaceful co-existence among community members in Marsabit County, it is important to look into the root causes of the conflict, figure out who is involved and what their interests are, and learn about their values. Only then can the conflict be solved and long-term peace achieved.

Conceptual Framework

Arms proliferation	**Coexistence among communities**
• Influx of illegal arms	• Efficient resource sharing
• Trade	• Peaceful coexistence
• Vested Interests	• Clear channels of communication
	• Effective dispute resolution mechanism

Independent Variable   **Dependent Variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The research employed a descriptive survey design. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the study's design. The study employed two types of variables, namely independent and dependent variables. Variables were measured by recording information on the questionnaires. The research was conducted in Saku sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya. According to Kenya's population census (2019), there was a total of 10,005 households in Saku Sub County. Thus, 10,005 household heads from each of the household formed part of the targeted population. In addition, Deputy county commissioner, 4 Assistant County Commissioners, 11 chiefs in Saku Sub County and the members of security committee. These also formed as part of the target population.

Simple random sampling design was employed. This study employed Slovin's formula to establish a sample size of 175. In addition, all the 11 chiefs, the 4 Assistant County Commissioners, and Assistant County Commissioner were included in the sample. This is because the size of the population is relatively small.

A semi-structured questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The use of the questionnaire was preferred because it has an element of minimizing the occurrence of errors likely to affect the results, and ensures accuracy and precision in data analysis (Cohen et al., 2011). It is also good at collecting huge amounts of data that is free of bias from respondents at minimal cost (Kothari, 2004). In this study, the filling of the questionnaire was guided by the researcher. The researcher in this study, with the assistance of the research assistance collected information as per the approved timeline and the advice by the supervisor.

As guided by Govaert (2012), this study reviewed the survey data and made deductions and interpretations in the analysis. Quantitative data was first be coded into variables that made the analysis easier. Tables, charts, and tables with statistical features were employed to present the results. The purpose was to show how the predicted and predictor variables are related. The data was coded and entered in to the SPSS program for analysis.

FINDINGS

Arms proliferation and inter-ethnic co-existence

The study's objective focused on assessing arms proliferation and its impact on inter-ethnic co-existence in the region. The areas examined included possibilities of politicians representing various communities supply people with small arms and light weapons. Additionally, the study explored whether regions where the easy acquisition of guns is prevalent due to the perceived need for self-defense against attacks from neighboring communities. The presence of porous borders with neighboring countries as a leading factor to an influx of light weapons and small arms, was also investigated. Furthermore, the possibilities that people could have acquired arms due to a lack of perceived protection from attacks by the state, which contributes to inter-ethnic tension.

Table 1: Arms proliferation

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.
Politicians representing various communities supply people with small arms and light weapons in this area	125	1	5	3.31	3.47[a]	5	1.478
It is easy to acquire guns in this region	124	1	5	3.45	3.70[a]	4	1.340
People acquire arms and other small weapons to protect themselves from attacks from neighboring communities	119	1	5	3.68	4.03[a]	5	1.365
There is influx of light weapons and small arms due to porous borders with neighboring countries	123	1	5	3.50	3.79[a]	4	1.363
People acquire arms and small weapons due to lack of perceived protection from attacks by the state	124	1	5	3.55	3.77[a]	4	1.303
Existence of arms intensify inter-ethnic tension in this area	121	1	5	3.88	4.20[a]	5	1.292

The data suggested that on average participants surveyed remained neutral on the notion that politicians from different communities were involved in supplying small arms and light weapons in the region. The mean value of 3.31 indicates that the average response leans towards agreement, while the median of 3.47 and mode of 5 further support this observation. This raises concerns about the proliferation of weapons in the area, potentially affecting the security and stability of the community. The existence of politicians supplying people with small arms and light weapons suggests a scenario of potential misuse and unauthorized distribution of firearms, raising questions about the need for better regulation and oversight. This finding is consistent with Olamide and Emmanuel, (2018) who found politician supplied weapons to the civilians.

The data highlights that a considerable number of respondents expressed agreement or strong agreement with the ease of acquiring guns in the region. With a mean value of 3.45, a median of 3.70, and a mode of 4, it suggests that many individuals believe obtaining firearms was relatively simple. A finding which supports the work of Duquet and Van Alstein (2016). This perception could have implications for law enforcement efforts and public safety, warranting attention and potential policy interventions. The ease of acquiring guns in the region may indicate a lack of strict gun control measures or illicit arms trade, which could lead to increased security risks and criminal activities.

Further, the study found that most respondents acquired arms and small weapons for self-defense against attacks from neighboring communities. The average response of 3.68, a median of 4.03, and a mode of 5 indicate that a significant number of participants agreed that such actions are driven by security concerns. The findings support the work of Ibrahim Shire, (2022) who found out that in the events of war individuals acquires weapons to protect them. This finding underlines the importance of addressing inter-community tensions and fostering dialogue to reduce the reliance on arms for protection. The fact that people are acquiring arms to protect

themselves from neighboring communities suggests an underlying sense of insecurity or mistrust between communities, highlighting the need for conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence initiatives (Mbugua, 2016).

The findings also suggests a prevalent sentiment among respondents, leaning towards agreement that porous borders with neighboring countries contribute to an influx of light weapons and small arms into the area. The average response of 3.50, a median of 3.79, and a mode of 4 suggest a widespread belief in the connection between border security and the availability of weapons. The findings are consistent with Ehiane and Uwizeyimana (2018) who observed that porous borders contributed to influx of weapons. This indicates the need for cross-border cooperation and measures to prevent the illegal flow of arms. The presence of an influx of weapons due to porous borders with neighboring countries could pose a significant security challenge for the area, potentially fueling conflicts and violence, and necessitates enhanced border security measures and regional cooperation.

On average, the acquisition of arms due to a lack of perceived protection from attacks The average response of 3.55, a median of 3.77, and a mode of 4, it is evident that many individuals agree with this statement. A finding which is consistent with Stroebe, Leander and Kruglanski (2017). This highlights the importance of enhancing trust between citizens and the state institutions to address security concerns without resorting to private arms possession. The acquisition of arms due to a lack of perceived protection from attacks by the state indicates a possible breakdown of trust in law enforcement or security institutions, warranting improvements in state security measures and public safety initiatives (Tukur, Hamza & Rabiu, 2021).

The high average response of 3.88, a median of 4.20, and a mode of 5 indicate a prevalent belief among respondents that arms contribute significantly to heightened tensions. This finding is consistent with Oghuvbu, E. A. (2020) who found the proliferation significantly increased tension. This finding underscores the urgency of promoting peace-building initiatives and fostering dialogue between communities to reduce the risk of conflicts fueled by the presence of weapons. Further, Mwenda (2021) observed in his study that the existence of arms intensifying inter-ethnic tension highlights the potential role of arms proliferation in exacerbating existing ethnic conflicts, underscoring the importance of disarmament efforts and fostering dialogue and understanding between ethnic groups.

Using a qualitative approach, the study found that the proliferation of arms in the area had profound and detrimental effects on peaceful coexistence among communities. The easy availability of firearms fuelled conflicts resulted in a surge of violence and destruction of properties. Instances of burning houses, theft, and fear among the residents became alarmingly common. The misuse of arms led to the tragic deaths of innocent individuals, causing deep-seated animosity between different communities. The continuous cycle of revenge and retaliation resulted in an increasing death toll, as well as forced migration of affected populations seeking safety elsewhere. This findings support the work of Weeraratne, (2017) who observed a similar occurrences in Nigeria

The study highlighted that tribalism and ethnic divisions played a significant role in the escalating conflicts. Neighbouring communities, driven by mistrust and historical grievances, engaged in armed confrontations, leading to heightened tensions and animosity. The unchecked proliferation of arms only exacerbated these longstanding issues which supports Ajú, (2022). It was reported that the lack of proper knowledge and understanding among the communities living together further worsened the situation. Instead of using firearms responsibly for protection, many individuals resorted to violence, causing unnecessary loss of lives and destruction of property.

The report underscored the need for urgent action to address this pressing concern. The government needs to take comprehensive measures to control the proliferation of arms, including stricter licensing regulations and effective police patrolling to curb illegal acquisition and use of firearms which support the work of Braga and Cook (2023). Furthermore, promoting dialogue and fostering better understanding between communities could

help mitigate tribal conflicts and contribute to peaceful coexistence. Investing in education and awareness programs could also play a vital role in discouraging violence and promoting nonviolent conflict resolution.

Ultimately, the report emphasized that a coordinated and multifaceted approach was required to break the cycle of violence and restore lasting peace in the region. By curbing the proliferation of arms, addressing underlying social and political issues, and prioritizing community engagement, it was possible to foster a more harmonious and secure environment for all residents as observed by Aeby, (2019).

Suggestions to contain/limit flow of arms in this area

Tightening border security: To contain and limit the flow of arms in the area, a comprehensive approach is needed. Tightening border security should be a priority, with a focus on the Kenyan-Ethiopia border, to prevent the illegal transportation of arms. This can be achieved by deploying more police officers in the region and establishing police stations near the communities (Jeandesboz, 2016). Regular patrols and swift responses to security threats will be crucial in maintaining peace.

Diplomatic negotiations: Engaging in diplomatic negotiations between communities and stakeholders is also essential. Through such dialogue, the encouragement of arms limitation and peaceful coexistence can take place. It is crucial to educate the public, especially the illiterate and youth, about the devastating effects of war and the impact of arms on their own region (Inyang, 2018). Raising awareness can help reduce the demand for arms and foster a culture of peace.

International cooperation is vital in this endeavour: Advocating for and adhering to international arms control treaties can restrict the transfer of arms into the region, bolstering efforts to contain their flow. Additionally, the government needs to take a proactive role in addressing the issue. Conducting thorough investigations into the source and suppliers of arms is essential, along with imposing fines on residents who own illegal arms. A concerted effort to collect all arms from communities is paramount to reducing their availability (Ene, 2020).

Community engagement plays a critical role in achieving lasting peace: By bringing together community leaders, elders, and members, discussions can be held to understand the root causes of conflict and promote peaceful coexistence. Moreover, encouraging people to surrender their arms voluntarily through disarmament exercises can help reduce the presence of weapons in the area. This was also observed by Bau, (2016).

Discounting need for over relying on arms: To create a sense of equal security without relying on arms, advising on the effect of conflict-reducing weapons can be beneficial. Such weapons can provide a safer environment for all residents. Furthermore, addressing underlying issues such as illiteracy, lack of education, and inter-ethnic tensions is essential. Promoting unity and understanding among communities will contribute to long-term stability (Morel, Ulbrich & Gail, 2017).

Association between Arms proliferation and inter-ethnic co-existence

This table provides valuable insights into the relationship between arms proliferation and inter-ethnic co-existence in the area under study.

Table 2: Association between Arms proliferation and inter-ethnic co-existence

Correlations		Co-Existence among Communities	Arms proliferation
Co-Existence among Communities	Pearson Correlation	1	-.115
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.209
	N	121	121
Arms proliferation	Pearson Correlation	-.115	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.209	
	N	121	125

The correlation coefficient for co-Existence among Communities and arms proliferation was shown as -.115, suggesting a weak negative correlation between the two variables. However, the correlation is not statistically significant (p > .05) with a significance level of .209. The findings were supported by Philip, & Ogwu (2020).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Arms proliferation was found to have negative association with inter-ethnic co-existence. Participants reported involvement of politicians from different communities in supply of small arms to communities. Further, firearm acquisition was considered relatively straightforward among many respondents suggests potential inadequacies in gun control measures or illicit trade. The acquisition of arms for self-defence against threats from neighboring communities had underscored security apprehensions, accentuating the value of resolving tensions through dialogue. The notion that porous borders contribute to the inflow of weapons has accentuated the need for collaborative cross-border efforts. Erosion of trust in state protection resulted in private arms possession, while the exacerbation of tensions by arms has underscored the significance of peace-building initiatives and inter-community dialogue.

A qualitative analysis revealed that the proliferation of arms in the area had severe negative consequences on peaceful coexistence among communities. Easy access to firearms escalated conflicts, resulting in increased violence, property destruction, and fear among residents. Misuse of arms led to tragic deaths, intensifying animosity between different communities prompting forced migration. Tribalism and ethnic divisions played a significant role in the conflicts, exacerbated by the availability of weapons.

Overall, these findings underscored the inherent risks of arms proliferation, emphasizing the on the tightening of border security on the Kenyan-Ethiopia border, engage in diplomatic negotiations for arms limitation, adhere to international treaties, investigation of sources, collection of illegal arms, and promotion of conflict-reducing weapons. Further, the authorities should encourage community discussions, voluntary disarmament, and address underlying issues like illiteracy and inter-ethnic tensions for lasting stability.

The study concluded that there exists a discernible negative association between arms proliferation and inter-ethnic co-existence in Marsabit County. The presence of small arms, often supplied by politicians from various communities, accentuates security concerns and underscores the need for dialogue to mitigate potential conflicts. The porous nature of borders further exacerbates the influx of weapons, underscoring the imperative for collaborative cross-border efforts. The study firmly asserts that arms escalation intensifies conflicts, necessitating comprehensive peace-building initiatives and fostering inter-community dialogue to ensure enduring stability.

From the findings the study recommended that Marsabit County should collaborate with neighboring authorities to strengthen border security, aiming to curb the illicit influx of arms. By jointly enhancing surveillance, interdiction, and information sharing, the region can effectively intercept arms smuggling.

Areas for further study

An action research should be conducted to implement and evaluate community-led conflict resolution models within specific Marsabit County communities. Collaborative engagement with local leaders, NGOs, and community members should be adopted to facilitate the designing of tailored strategies that combine traditional practices with modern approaches.

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