

**IMPACT OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN
MERTI SUB-COUNTY, ISIOLO COUNTY, KENYA**

BORU ADHI JATTANI

110062431

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JULY, 2026

DECLARATION

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis research is my original work and that it has not been presented in any other university for academic credit

Signature:  Date: 28/06/2026

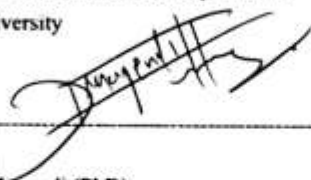
Name of student: Boru Adhi Jattani

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

This research thesis is submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor(s) Or I confirm that the work reported in this research proposal will be carried out by the candidate under my supervision

Signature:  Date: 29-06-2026

Dr. Gregory W. Nalinya (PhD),
Lecturer Development Studies Department
Daystar University

Signature:  Date: 30/06/2026

Dr. David Mugendi (PhD)
Department of Zoology, College of Physical and Applied Sciences,
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)

DEDICATION

To my lovely wife, Kabale Jillo Chana and my children Adhi Boru, Hawo Boru and Jattani Boru, thank you for being present and wishing me well in pursuing my masters' degree course.

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ABSTRACT

Ethnic conflict remains a significant impediment to human development in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands, with Merti Sub-County in Isiolo County experiencing recurrent inter-ethnic violence that has severely constrained progress across education, health, and economic dimensions. Despite numerous government interventions and policy frameworks, persistent conflicts among pastoralist communities have continued to disrupt livelihoods, displace populations, and undermine development initiatives. This study examined the impact of ethnic conflicts on human development in Merti Sub-County, guided by four specific objectives: to examine the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts; to determine their effects on human development indicators; to evaluate existing policy and legal frameworks; and to identify challenges in managing ethnic conflicts for enhanced human development. This study was anchored on conflict theory and human development theory. The study adopted a descriptive research design, targeting a population of 8,558 conventional household heads in Merti-Sub County, Isiolo County, Kenya. Using Yamane's formula, a sample size of 382 household heads was selected through stratified random sampling and 50 key informants to be selected purposively. The data was collected using structured questionnaires with Likert scale items and semi-structured interview guides. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 26 to generate descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and SDs, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically through content analysis. The findings informed evidence-based policy recommendations for improving conflict management and promoting sustainable human development in Merti Sub-County and similar pastoral contexts. The results indicated that cattle raiding (mean of 4.24) and competition over water and grazing land (mean of 4.16) were the main drivers of ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County. These conflicts negatively affected human development by destroying assets (85.8%), limiting healthcare (87.6%), displacing families (41.9%), and disrupting education (a mean of 3.15 and SD of 1.291). Existing formal and traditional policies to address conflicts were limited by low awareness (mean of 2.34), slow response (mean of 3.01), and enforcement challenges (mean of 4.11). Conflict management was hindered by weak law enforcement (92%), political interference (76.7%), and weapons proliferation (80.8%), with calls for stronger governance and improved infrastructure. The study concluded that ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County are highly prevalent and are mainly driven by competition over scarce resources, cattle raiding, and political influences, particularly among the Borana and Samburu communities. These conflicts had significant negative effects on human development, including loss of lives, increased poverty, disrupted healthcare services, and hindered economic growth, although the impact on education was localized. The study also found out that existing policy and legal frameworks were largely ineffective due to low public awareness, weak implementation, corruption, and political interference, despite the potential of traditional systems such as *Dedha*. The study therefore recommended strengthening early warning systems, promoting sustainable resource management, enhancing policy implementation and public awareness, integrating traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, and investing in disarmament, youth empowerment, and community cohesion initiatives to foster sustainable peace and improved human development. The findings provided empirical evidence to inform the design and implementation of more effective conflict management policies and human development interventions by government agencies and local communities' leadership in Merti Sub-County and similar pastoral contexts.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Development: Increasing an individual's freedom and opportunities to enhance their quality of life.

Ethnic: The ability of two or more individuals to have similar cultural backgrounds and origins that give them identity.

Ethnic Conflicts: Dispute that arises among community members in the society or with another society in competition for natural resources.

Human Development: The ability of an individual to experience growth that supports easier access to resources and the ability to make informed decisions.

Human Development Indicators: The methods used to measure personal and communal growth in a society

Policy Frameworks: The guidelines in place to support individual roles in the community, as they interact with each other and with the established institutions.

Legal Frameworks: Formal policies in place acknowledged by the law that defines the nature of interaction between people and natural resources.

Conflict: Ability of two or more people to disagree on specific areas that involved shared interests, resources, or beliefs.

Conflict Management: Localized and formal methods used to not only prevent but resolve disputes when they arise in the community.

Merti Sub-County: The main sub-counties in Isiolo County that have experienced pasture-related conflict in the past.

Pastoralist Communities: Local members who kept livestock on a large scale for domestic and commercial purposes.

ABBREVIATIONS/ ACRONYMS

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organization
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
ICG	International Crisis Group
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Ethnic conflict remains a persistent global challenge, often caused by cultural divisions and competition for limited resources. These conflicts have devastating consequences, including violence, displacement, and social fragmentation, significantly undermining human development. This chapter presents the study's background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and the conceptual framework guiding this study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Ethnic conflicts represented one of the most destructive forms of social conflict, characterized by antagonism between groups distinguished by cultural, linguistic, religious, or ancestral differences (Oucho, 2021). These conflicts typically emerged from deeply entrenched historical grievances, perceived inequalities in resource distribution, political marginalization, and competition over land, water, and other vital resources (Njoka *et al.*, 2022). The relationship between ethnic conflicts and human development was profoundly negative, as violent confrontations disrupt essential services, destroy infrastructure, displace populations, and divert resources away from development initiatives toward security and emergency responses (Kamais & Mosol, 2022). Beyond immediate physical destruction, ethnic conflicts eroded social capital, undermine trust between communities, and create cycles of poverty and underdevelopment that persisted across generations (Carlin *et al.*, 2022; Horowitz & Klaus, 2020). Understanding this intricate relationship was crucial for designing

effective interventions that promoted both peace and sustainable development in conflict-affected regions.

Globally, ethnic conflicts manifested across diverse geographical contexts, from the Balkans in Europe to the Middle East, South Asia, and Latin America, each presenting unique dynamics but sharing common patterns of violence and developmental setbacks. In regions such as Myanmar, ethnic tensions between the Rohingya minority and the majority Buddhist population resulted in mass displacement, humanitarian crises, and severe disruptions to education and healthcare systems (Iyer & Weeks, 2020). Similarly, in the Middle East, ethnic and sectarian divisions fueled prolonged conflicts that had decimated infrastructure, reduced life expectancy, and reversed decades of development gains in countries like Syria and Iraq (UNDP, 2023). The global experience demonstrated that ethnic conflicts disproportionately affected vulnerable populations, particularly women and children, who faced heightened risks of violence, exploitation, and denial of basic rights (Carlin *et al.*, 2022). International organizations and governments worldwide had increasingly recognized that sustainable peace and human development were inseparable, necessitating integrated approaches that addressed both the ethnic conflicts' underlying causes and the effects they have on development (Horowitz & Klaus, 2020).

Within the African continent, ethnic conflicts were a defining feature of the post-colonial era, often exacerbated by arbitrary colonial boundaries that grouped diverse ethnic communities together without consideration for historical relationships or resource-sharing arrangements. The Democratic Republic of Congo has experienced devastating ethnic violence, especially between the Hema and Lendu communities, resulting in millions of deaths, massive population displacements, and the collapse of health, education, and economic systems (Human Rights Watch, 2023). In the Horn of

Africa, Ethiopian pastoral communities like Afar and Somali have frequently engaged in violent confrontations over access to water and grazing lands, conflicts that have increased as a result of population expansion, climate change, and the deterioration of conventional dispute settlement techniques (UNDP, 2024). The developmental impact of these conflicts was particularly severe in ASALs, where communities previously had serious issues with food insecurity, poverty, and restricted access to essential services (International Crisis Group, 2023). African governments and regional bodies such as the African Union had increasingly prioritized conflict prevention and peacebuilding as essential components of development strategies, especially in Sudan, recognizing that lasting progress could not be achieved without addressing the underlying drivers of ethnic tensions (Mukanda, 2025).

In Kenya, ethnic conflicts have been a persistent challenge since independence, manifesting in various forms ranging from electoral violence to resource-based confrontations, particularly in pastoral regions where competition over land, water, and grazing areas fuels inter-community tensions. The country's ASALs constituted approximately 80% of Kenya's total landmass and experienced frequent episodes of ethnic violence among pastoralist communities, resulting in fatalities and property damage, displacement of populations, and disruption of livelihoods (Magero, 2024). Counties such as Laikipia, Baringo, Samburu, Marsabit, and Isiolo were identified as conflict hotspots where ethnic clashes had undermined efforts to improve health outcomes, expand educational access, and promote economic development (National Cohesion and Integration Commission, 2022). The situation was further aggravated by climate variability, which had intensified resource scarcity and heightened competition between ethnic groups, creating a vicious cycle of conflict and underdevelopment (Linke *et al.*, 2022). Despite the existence of various policy frameworks and

government interventions aimed at promoting peace and cohesion, ethnic conflicts continued to pose significant obstacles to the realization of Kenya's development agenda, particularly in marginalized regions where human development indicators remain persistently low (Otieno, 2023).

Merti Sub-County in Isiolo County represented a microcosm of the broader challenges facing pastoral communities in Kenya's ASALs, characterized by recurrent ethnic conflicts that profoundly affected human development outcomes. Pastoralist settlements made up the majority of the sub-county's population, including the Borana, Somali, Turkana, and Samburu ethnic groups, who had historically clashed over access to water points, grazing lands, and livestock, with conflicts often escalating into violent confrontations that resulted in casualties and displacement (Mkutu, 2021). These ethnic tensions were exacerbated by environmental stressors such as prolonged droughts, competition over diminishing natural resources, and the proliferation of small arms, creating an environment of insecurity that hampered service delivery and development interventions (Mutambo *et al.*, 2025). The impact on human development indicators in Merti Sub-County was severe, with disrupted education services, limited healthcare access, high rates of malnutrition, and constrained economic opportunities reflecting the developmental toll of persistent ethnic conflicts (County Government of Isiolo, 2024).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite numerous government initiatives, policy frameworks, and peacebuilding interventions, Merti Sub-County continues to experience persistent inter-ethnic violence that has severely constrained human development progress. The sub-county exhibited some of the lowest human development indicators in Isiolo County, with high rates of school dropout, limited healthcare access, elevated malnutrition levels, and

restricted economic opportunities directly linked to the insecurity and instability caused by ethnic conflicts (County Government of Isiolo, 2024; UNICEF Kenya, 2022).

The cyclical nature of these conflicts disrupts essential services, destroys livelihoods, displaces communities, and creates a climate of fear that prevents long-term investment in education, health, and economic infrastructure (Minority Rights Group, 2024). Furthermore, existing conflict management mechanisms, including both formal legal frameworks and traditional dispute resolution systems, appeared inadequate in addressing the evolving nature of ethnic tensions, which were increasingly complicated by climate change, political manipulation, and competition over emerging economic opportunities such as county resources and infrastructure projects (Mkutu, 2021; Gerlak *et al.*, 2025). The persistent disparity between the goals of policy and actual conditions on the ground raised critical questions about the effectiveness of current approaches to managing ethnic conflicts and their effect on human development outcomes in pastoral areas.

While considerable research examined ethnic conflicts in Kenya broadly, there was a significant gap in understanding the specific mechanisms through which these conflicts impacted human development indicators in Merti Sub-County. Previous research focused primarily on conflict dynamics, causes, and resolution mechanisms in other parts of Isiolo County and neighboring counties, with limited empirical investigation into how ethnic violence directly affected education access, health outcomes, economic opportunities, and overall well-being in Merti specifically (Limiri, 2022; Kiogora & Moi, 2024). Additionally, there was insufficient analysis of the challenges facing existing policy and legal frameworks in addressing ethnic conflicts in the distinct ecological and sociocultural setting of Merti Sub-County. This study therefore sought

to fill these gaps by providing a comprehensive examination of the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of ethnic conflicts on human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya, and to propose sustainable conflict management strategies that foster improved human development outcomes and promote peaceful coexistence among pastoralist communities in the region.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya.
- ii. Determine the effects of ethnic conflicts on human development indicators in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya.
- iii. Evaluate existing policy and legal frameworks addressing ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya.
- iv. Identify challenges in managing ethnic conflicts for enhanced human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya.

1.6 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya?
- ii. What are the effects of ethnic conflicts on human development indicators in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya?

- iii. What are the existing policy and legal frameworks addressing ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya?
- iv. What are the challenges in managing ethnic conflicts for enhanced human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research has substantial implications for several stakeholders engaged in peacebuilding, governance, and development in pastoral regions of Kenya. The findings may provide empirical evidence to assist in creating and implementing more efficient conflict management policies and human development interventions in Merti Sub-County and similar pastoral contexts. The study highlighted gaps in existing policy frameworks and offered recommendations for strengthening government responses to ethnic conflicts in ASALs.

The research may enhance understanding of how ethnic conflicts disrupt development initiatives, enabling NGOs, UN agencies, and humanitarian organizations to design conflict-sensitive initiatives that tackle both short-term and long-term development objectives in conflict-affected pastoral communities. The study may contribute to strengthening community-based conflict resolution mechanisms by documenting the challenges facing traditional systems and identifying opportunities for integrating indigenous knowledge with formal legal frameworks to promote sustainable peace and development.

This research may add to the growing body of knowledge on the nexus between ethnic conflicts and human development in pastoral regions, providing baseline data and theoretical insights that can inform future research on conflict dynamics, peacebuilding, and development in Kenya's ASALs. The findings may support national efforts to

promote social cohesion, ethnic harmony, and inclusive development by identifying specific interventions needed to promote harmonious cohabitation between various communities in Merti Sub-County to deal with the underlying causes of ethnic conflicts. Empirical data on how ethnic conflicts affect human development in Isiolo County's Merti Sub-County, as provided in the study, was the contribution of the study to new knowledge, especially within the pastoral context in Kenya. The new knowledge demonstrates how competing for pasture, water, and weak governance systems determine conflict dynamics. In relation to policy, strategies aligned with peacebuilding are indicated in this study. The Ministry of Interior and National Administration, Isiolo County governments, UNDP, and NGOs are the main implementers of the policies recommended in the study.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study examined the impact of ethnic conflicts on human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. The research focused on the frequency and nature of ethnic conflicts, their effects on human development indicators, the efficiency of current legal and policy frameworks, and challenges in managing these conflicts. Geographically, the study was confined to Merti Subcounty to allow for in-depth analysis of conflict dynamics and development challenges in this pastoral region. The range of time covered the period within 2025, with data collection conducted between October and November 2025.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to Merti Sub-County in Isiolo County, excluding other sub-counties to allow for focused analysis. The research concentrated on ethnic conflicts and their impact on human development indicators as outlined in the study objectives, excluding other conflict forms unless directly linked to ethnic tensions. The study

looked at the time frame from 2025 to 2026, focusing on the contemporary governance context. These delimitations ensured the study remained manageable while providing meaningful insights specific to Merti Sub-County.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

The data collection process faced insecurity that restricted access to conflict-affected areas and limited respondent willingness to share sensitive information. In order to overcome the restriction, the researcher made sure that during the process of data collection, there was adequate security from the security force, and there was also the involvement of research assistants that were well known in the areas to boost the willingness of the community members to share sensitive information.

The study used self-reported data, which could have been influenced by respondents' social desirability or recollection biases. To mitigate this limitation, the researcher asked questions that required short recall periods of a maximum of 3 months to support quick reminiscence. Language barriers and cultural sensitivities posed challenges requiring careful navigation during data collection. The study used research assistants that were conversant with the language to minimize misinterpretation of the information gathered from the participants and encourage efficient communication.

1.11 Assumptions of the Study

This study assumed that respondents provided honest and accurate information about their experiences with ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County. It assumed the population was represented by the chosen sample, allowing for generalizable findings. The study also assumed that existing policy frameworks were accessible for evaluation and that key informants were willing to participate. Additionally, it assumed the data collection period provided sufficient time to capture current conflict dynamics without significant seasonal variations affecting the findings.

1.12 Theoretical Framework

This research was based on two complementary theories: Conflict theory and human development theory. These frameworks provided analytical lenses for examining how ethnic conflicts emerge, persist, and systematically undermine human development outcomes in Merti Sub-County, offering insights into the intricate interactions between social conflicts and developmental progress. The complementary nature of these theories addressed both the causes and consequences of ethnic conflicts, filling potential gaps that each theory alone might leave unaddressed. While conflict theory identified why ethnic tensions arose and persisted in Merti Sub-County, human development theory measured what was lost when conflicts occurred, providing concrete indicators such as school enrollment rates, malnutrition levels, healthcare access, and livelihood security. This dual-theoretical approach informed all four research objectives: understanding conflict prevalence through the lens of resource competition and structural inequality, evaluating developmental effects through capability deprivation, assessing policy frameworks by examining whether they addressed both conflict drivers and human development needs, and identifying management challenges that stem from both structural inequalities and inadequate attention to multidimensional well-being. The study went beyond descriptive descriptions of violence by utilizing these theories to analyze the systemic relationship between ethnic conflict and underdevelopment in pastoral contexts, especially in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya.

1.12.1 Conflict Theory

According to conflict theory, which was first developed by Karl Marx in the middle of the 19th century and later developed by academics like Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) and Lewis Coser (1956), society is marked by innate inequality and competition for limited

resources, which causes ongoing conflict between various groups (Oucho, 2021). The theory argues that social structures and institutions often perpetuate power imbalances, with dominant groups maintaining control over resources while marginalized groups struggle for access and recognition (Horowitz & Klaus, 2020). In the context of ethnic conflicts, this framework explains how historical grievances, perceived inequalities in resource distribution, and political marginalization create conditions for intergroup tensions and violence (Njoka *et al.*, 2022). The theory emphasizes that conflicts are not merely isolated incidents but have their roots in structural injustices that need to be addressed in order to bring about lasting peace.

The key tenets of conflict theory include the centrality of power struggles in social relations, the role of scarce resources in generating competition, and the impact of structural inequalities on group behavior. The strength of the idea is its capacity to clarify how systemic factors perpetuate conflict and why certain groups remain consistently disadvantaged, making it particularly useful for analyzing resource-based conflicts in pastoral regions (Kamais & Mosol, 2022). But the hypothesis has come under fire for placing too much emphasis on conflict while neglecting instances of cooperation and social cohesion, for adopting an overly deterministic view that underplays human agency in conflict resolution, and for potentially overlooking cultural and symbolic dimensions of ethnic tensions that extend beyond material resource competition (Carlin *et al.*, 2022). Conflict theory is nonetheless useful for comprehending the structural causes of ethnic violence in spite of these drawbacks.

Conflict theory is extremely pertinent to this research since it offers a framework for analyzing how competition over water, grazing lands, and emerging economic opportunities fuels ethnic tensions in Merti Sub-County. The theory helps explain why certain ethnic groups in the sub-county experience persistent marginalization and how

historical inequalities in resource access contribute to cyclical violence. By applying this theoretical lens in Merti Sub County, the study can examine the structural and systemic factors that perpetuate ethnic conflicts beyond individual or group-level motivations. Furthermore, the theory guides the investigation into how power dynamics between different ethnic communities and between communities and government institutions shape conflict patterns and impact human development outcomes.

Conflict theory explained the root causes and perpetuation of ethnic tensions in Merti Sub County by highlighting how rivalry for limited resources, like water, grazing lands, and county development projects, created structural inequalities that fueled violence between the Borana, Somali, Turkana, and Samburu communities. This theory guided the investigation into the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts, helping to uncover how historical grievances, political marginalization, and power imbalances between ethnic groups generate cyclical patterns of violence. The integration of conflict theory provided a comprehensive analytical framework for examining the impact of ethnic conflicts on Merti Sub-County's human development. However, the theory focuses too heavily on competition, domination, and inequality while neglecting social order, cooperation, and stability.

1.12.2 Human Development Theory

Human Development Theory, pioneered by economist Amartya Sen in the 1980s and operationalized through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) by Mahbub ul Haq in 1990, posits that the increase of human skills and freedoms that allow individuals to live fulfilling lives should be used to gauge development rather than just economic growth. Sen's capability approach argues that development is fundamentally about enhancing people's opportunities to achieve well-being through access to education, healthcare, economic resources, and political participation. The theory

emphasizes that true development occurs when individuals have the freedom to make choices and pursue meaningful lives, shifting focus from income-centered metrics to multidimensional indicators of human well-being. The UNDP's Human Development Index, which calculates wealth, education, and life expectancy, reflects this broader conceptualization of development that has become central to contemporary development discourse globally and within Kenya's development frameworks.

Human development theory provided the evaluative criteria for assessing the consequences of conflicts in Merti Sub County, directing attention to how violence disrupts education, healthcare, nutrition, and economic opportunities, thereby constraining the capabilities and freedoms of people in Merti Sub County. The core tenets of human development theory include the expansion of human capabilities and freedoms; the multidimensional nature of well-being, encompassing health, education, and economic security; and the importance of equity in ensuring all individuals can reach their full potential regardless of gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. The theory's comprehensive approach, which acknowledges development, is its strongest point in Merti Sub County, as more than economic indicators, its emphasis on human agency and dignity, and its practical application through measurable indices guide policy interventions. However, critics argue that the theory can be difficult to operationalize comprehensively due to the complexity of measuring capabilities and freedoms, that it may underemphasize the role of economic growth as a foundation for expanding capabilities, and that cultural variations in defining valued freedoms and well-being can complicate universal application. Additionally, some scholars contend that the theory does not sufficiently address power structures and systemic inequalities that constrain capability expansion.

Human development theory is directly relevant to this study, as it provides the framework for assessing how ethnic conflicts undermine multiple dimensions of human well-being in Merti Sub-County. The theory guides the examination of conflict impacts on education access, healthcare delivery, economic opportunities, and overall quality of life, moving beyond simple economic loss calculations to understand how violence restricts fundamental human capabilities and freedoms. By applying this lens, the study can systematically analyze how ethnic conflicts disrupt the conditions necessary for people to achieve valued functioning, such as being educated, healthy, and economically secure in Merti Sub County. The theory also informs the investigation of how conflict-induced displacement, service disruption, and insecurity prevent communities from exercising agency in their development trajectories.

1.13 Conceptual Framework

The study's framework demonstrates the relationship between ethnic conflicts as the independent variable and human development as the dependent variable.

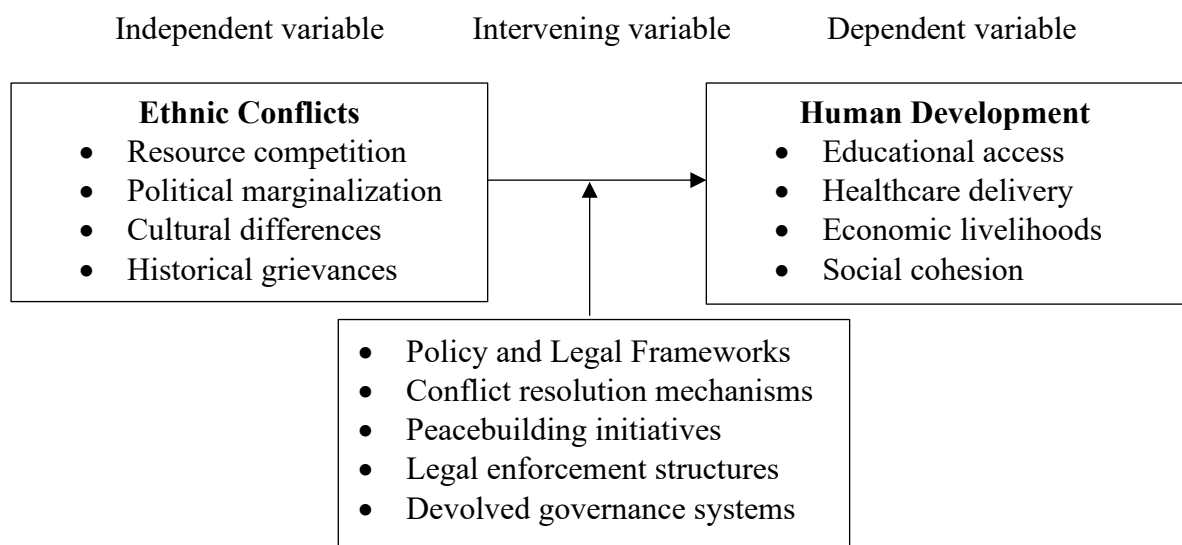


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship of Ethnic Conflicts on Human Development Moderated by Policy and Legal Frameworks

Source: Author 2026

The framework demonstrated that ethnic conflicts directly impacted human development outcomes through multiple pathways. Ethnic conflicts disrupt educational services by forcing school closures, displacing students and teachers, and creating unsafe learning environments. In the health sector, conflicts limit access to healthcare facilities, disrupt medical supply chains, and exacerbate malnutrition through food insecurity. Economically, conflicts destroy productive assets like livestock, disrupt trade networks, and force communities to abandon income-generating activities. Socially, conflicts erode trust between communities, weaken social cohesion, and undermine collective development efforts.

However, the efficiency of current legal and policy frameworks can either mitigate or exacerbate these impacts. Strong and well-implemented frameworks may reduce the negative effects of ethnic conflicts on human development through effective early warning systems, rapid conflict resolution mechanisms, and post-conflict recovery programs. Conversely, weak or poorly enforced policies may intensify developmental challenges by failing to address root causes of conflicts, providing inadequate protection for vulnerable populations, and allowing cycles of violence to persist. The interaction between these variables suggests that improving human development outcomes in conflict-affected areas requires not only addressing immediate conflict dynamics but also strengthening the policy and institutional frameworks that govern conflict prevention, management, and post-conflict recovery processes.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of literature relevant to understanding the impact of ethnic conflicts on human development in Merti Sub-County. The review of literature critically examines existing research on the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts, their effects on human development indicators, policy and legal frameworks addressing these conflicts, and challenges in conflict management. In order to identify research gaps that this study aims to fill, the chapter concludes by summarizing the evaluated literature.

2.2 Review of Literature

2.2.1 Prevalence and Nature of Ethnic Conflicts

Globally, Villa (2025) explored how the 1990's post-ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia was managed through democratic transition. The nature of this ethnic conflict was a result of different ethnic groups that sought to dominate each other, insecurity, ethnically instigated politics, and weak institutions. Therefore, in the process of developing lasting democracy, the nation ensured that there was ethnic mobilisation across different communities to encourage communalism rather than independent ethnic domination. Villa (2025) advocated for increased mediation among community leaders to support members' willingness to be accustomed to the democratisation.

Juon (2025) examined the impact of sharing power as an ethnic management approach for a long-term perspective. In the study, the main question that was being addressed was whether conflicting communities were able to share power and how that affected the ability of ethnic coexistence. From the results, it was noted that when the power-

sharing practices were prolonged, individual inequalities were weakened and led to improved healthy ethnic identities. The results were deduced from a survey conducted on 900,000 respondents originating from 132 global nations. Based on the outcome of the study, Juon (2025) discovered that self-identification and vote intentions were affected by power-sharing, leading to improved social cohesion.

Arbatli *et al.* (2022) addressed the diversity and conflict within the Russian context. According to the study, social differences rather than fractionalisation had led to the prevalence of internal conflicts in the societies. According to the study, differences in ethnic groups had increased the risk of civil conflicts for a long period of time. As per Arbatli *et al.* (2022), non-cohesiveness of ethnic groups in the communities was noted, whereby individual selfish needs superseded community goals, leading to mistrust and diverse sharp opinions on how resources should be shared and policies should be implemented.

Regionally, a report by OECD/SWAC (2025) documented on how conflicts in North and West Africa affected the road transport system. The study found out that whenever there were ethnic conflicts in North and West Africa, they mainly occurred near the roads. For instance, 70% of conflicts in North Africa were within a kilometre, while 65% of the conflict in West Africa occurred within the same distance from the roads. The interpretation provided was that there was an urban concentration of different ethnic groups near roads as compared to other regions, triggering consistent conflicts as they competed for resources such as water and land. The report, however, concentrated only on ethnic conflicts near road transport systems and not in other regions such as ASAL areas where the current study concentrated.

Liyew (2024). Explored how the security at the Horn of Africa was managed in the Sudan conflict. The approach adopted in the study was qualitative, whereby secondary

data from reports was consulted. Based on the results, it was noted that the political unrest witnessed in Sudan had spilt over to other neighbouring countries. Additionally, its prevalence as ethnic groups compete for natural resources such as oil, water and pasture has resulted in an upsurge of refugees in surrounding nations. A suggestion to implement the 'African solution to an African problem' memorandum of understanding was recommended.

Locally, ethnic conflicts in pastoral regions of Kenya have been documented extensively, revealing patterns of violence rooted in competition over natural resources, historical grievances, and political manipulation. Oucho (2021) characterised ethnic conflicts as antagonistic relationships between groups distinguished by cultural, linguistic, religious, or ancestral differences, often manifesting in violent confrontations over land and water resources. In Isiolo County specifically, Mkutu (2021) identified the politicised ethics that have transformed resource competition into systematic inter-ethnic violence, with conflicts increasingly tied to county-level resource allocation and political representation. The prevalence of these conflicts has been exacerbated by environmental stressors, with Linke *et al.* (2022) demonstrating how weather variability and climate change intensify resource scarcity, creating conditions for more frequent and severe ethnic clashes. ACLED (2024) data indicated that pastoralist militias remained significant actors in violence across northern Kenya, with Isiolo featuring prominently in conflict event tracking.

The nature of ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County reflected broader patterns observed across Kenya's ASALs characterised by cycles of cattle raiding, revenge attacks, and competition over diminishing resources. Limiri (2022) documents the natural resource conflicts between Meru and Borana communities in Isiolo County between 2008 and 2019, highlighting how disputes over grazing lands and water points escalated into

armed confrontations involving traditional weapons and increasingly sophisticated firearms. Mkutu (2020) examined security dynamics in conservancies, revealing how the introduction of new land use systems has generated tensions between ethnic groups with different livelihood strategies and resource access claims. The proliferation of small arms has transformed the scale and lethality of ethnic conflicts, with Mbijiwe (2021) analysing differing approaches to resolving military conflicts along the Meru-Isiolo border, demonstrating how militarisation has undermined traditional peacebuilding mechanisms. Gerlak *et al.* (2025) identified water-related conflicts as particularly prominent in Isiolo County, attributing violence to scarcity, structural governance failures, and the manipulation of ethnic divisions by political actors.

Political factors significantly shape the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts in pastoral regions, with devolution introducing new dimensions of competition and mobilisation along ethnic lines. Moler (2022) explored how devolved governance had paradoxically intensified conflicts between ethnic groups in multicultural pastoral areas like Laikipia, as ethnic groups compete for control over county resources and political representation. Mkutu (2021) further argued that future visions of development in Isiolo County had become sites of present conflicts, with ethnic groups positioning themselves to benefit from infrastructure projects, tourism ventures, and county government expenditures. Horowitz and Klaus (2020) demonstrated experimentally that politicians can effectively exploit ethnic grievances related to land and resources, mobilising communities along ethnic lines for political gain. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (2022) identified Isiolo among conflict hotspots where ethnic tensions were manipulated during electoral periods, resulting in violence that disrupts livelihoods and development activities. These political dimensions interact

with resource scarcity to create complex conflict dynamics that transcend simple competition narratives.

The participation of a variety of actors and the evolution of conflict patterns characterise ethnic violence in Merti Sub-County and surrounding areas. Okwany and Owino (2024) examined the transformation of organised violence from a natural resource management perspective, comparing Samburu and Isiolo counties and revealing how violence had shifted from sporadic raids to more organised and sustained confrontations involving multiple ethnic militia groups. Maelo and Harris (2021) analysed conflict policing in pastoral communities in Isiolo County, documenting the challenges security agencies face in responding to ethnic violence across vast territories with limited infrastructure and weak state presence. The role of youth in perpetuating ethnic conflicts has been highlighted by Aga (2022), who examines women's deradicalisation efforts in Isiolo County, revealing how young men were recruited into ethnic militias and how gender dynamics influenced conflict perpetuation and resolution efforts. Additionally, the Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies and Isiolo Peace Link (2020) identified connections between ethnic conflicts and violent extremism, suggesting that prolonged insecurity and marginalisation created vulnerabilities that extremist groups exploit.

Environmental and socioeconomic changes had fundamentally altered the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts in pastoral areas. Kirui and Kimeu (2022) documented pastoral livelihood pathway transitions in northern Kenya under recurrent droughts, showing how environmental stress forced communities into greater competition over shrinking resources and drove some pastoralists into alternative livelihoods that generated new forms of inter-ethnic tension. Fox *et al.* (2025) captured pastoralists' perspectives on their future in Isiolo County, revealing deep concerns about climate

change, land use transformations, and diminishing grazing areas that fuel inter-ethnic competition. Osman (2024) offered local viewpoints from the North River Basin of Ewaso Ng'iro, demonstrating how multiple factors, including population growth, upstream water abstraction, and weak governance structures, interact to generate water conflicts that take on ethnic dimensions. The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (2023) identified how climate variability affects local resilience in Isiolo and Marsabit counties, with pastoral communities experiencing increased frequency of resource conflicts during drought periods. These environmental pressures ensured that ethnic conflicts remained prevalent despite peacebuilding interventions, as structural conditions for competition over resources continue to intensify.

2.2.2 Effects of Ethnic Conflicts on Human Development Indicators

Ethnic conflicts have profound negative effects on education access and outcomes in pastoral regions, disrupting schooling and limiting opportunities for human capital development. Globally, Ichev and Spruk (2025) explored how ethnic conflicts led to the Yemen state collapse. A database from 37 nations between 1990 and 2022 was considered as a source of data for the study. It was found out that as a result of ethnic conflicts in Yemen, investment, output levels, and trade integration declined, while the life expectancy reduced among community members. As far as the political administration of the nation was concerned, ethnic conflict had resulted in systematic institutional breakdown due to disregard of the law and increased corruption to protect guilty individuals propelling conflict in the community.

Ullah and Inayat (2023) assessed how conflict had transformed Balochistan in Pakistan and the agonistic dialogues in place to resolve it. The study discovered that as a result of consistent conflict, human life had been threatened, leading to increased internal displacement and refugees. Those internally displaced were faced with increased cases

of unhygienic living, poverty, and starvation. Therefore, agonistic dialogue was encouraged to support honest address of the problem causing conflicts.

Regionally, Galindo-Silva and Tchunte (2023) examined the effects of Cameroon's anglophone conflict and human capital accumulation. A difference-in-differences design was used in the study. The results pointed out that conflict-related deaths particularly within the Anglophone subsystem. Oluka *et al.* (2025) determined the causes and effects of conflict and war within an African context. The major causes for the conflict were noted to be weak communal cohesion and increased competition for natural resources like minerals, oil, water, land, and pasture. This had exposed the nations to full-blown civil wars that led to increased displacement of people, destruction of property, loss of lives, and reduced economic status of the society. Through collecting qualitative data from journals, books, and the internet, among other sources, the study revealed that self-imposed ethnic consciousness was a key contributor to conflicts.

Locally, the County Government of Isiolo (2024) documented persistently low education indicators in conflict-affected areas of Isiolo County, with school dropout rates significantly higher in sub-counties experiencing frequent ethnic violence compared to more stable regions. UNICEF Kenya (2022) highlighted how drought and conflict in arid and semi-arid lands created humanitarian crises that severely impacted children's education, with displacement, insecurity, and destruction of school infrastructure forcing thousands of children out of school.

Jerono (2021) investigated how ethnic conflicts affected secondary school administration in Baringo County's conflict-prone areas, finding that violence disrupted academic calendars, destroyed learning materials, displaced both students and teachers, and created psychological trauma that impaired learning outcomes. UNICEF Kenya

(2024) documented pathways to learning interventions aimed at bringing children back to school in ASAL counties, acknowledging that conflict-induced displacement and insecurity remained major barriers to educational access and retention. The intergenerational consequences were severe, as limited education perpetuated poverty cycles and reduced communities' capacity to engage in peaceful conflict resolution and sustainable development activities.

Healthcare delivery and health outcomes deteriorated significantly in environments characterized by ethnic conflicts, with violence disrupting medical services and exacerbating disease burdens. Mutambo *et al.* (2025) examined resilience to Rift Valley fever in Garbatulla and Merti sub-counties, revealing how conflict-related insecurity prevented timely veterinary and human health interventions, increased disease transmission risks, and limited communities' ability to adopt preventive measures. The County Government of Isiolo (2024) identified maternal and child health indicators as particularly poor in conflict-affected areas, with limited antenatal care coverage, high home delivery rates, and elevated infant mortality reflecting the impact of insecurity on healthcare access.

UNICEF Kenya (2022) documented how conflict exacerbated malnutrition in ASAL counties, with violence disrupting food supply chains, limiting humanitarian access, and forcing families to prioritize immediate survival over nutritional needs. Wako (2022) analyzed livelihood activities in Isiolo town's urban and peri-urban areas, finding that conflict-displaced populations faced heightened health vulnerabilities due to inadequate sanitation, overcrowding, and limited access to health facilities. The cumulative health impact of ethnic conflicts extended beyond immediate casualties to include reduced life expectancy, mental health issues, and chronic illnesses that undermined overall human development.

Economic opportunities and livelihoods suffered extensively from ethnic conflicts, with violence destroying productive assets, disrupting markets, and constraining investment in pastoral economies. Kamais and Mosol (2022) examined Laikipia County's low-intensity conflicts using the protracted social conflicts paradigm, revealing serious economic ramifications, such as livestock losses, destruction of infrastructure, displacement from productive lands, and collapsed trade networks that impoverish affected communities. Fox *et al.* (2025) captured pastoralists' perspectives in Isiolo County, revealing how conflict constrained livelihood diversification options, limited access to markets, and forced communities into unsustainable resource use patterns that further degraded environmental conditions.

Kirui and Kimeu (2022) documented how recurrent droughts combined with conflict pressures force pastoral households to adopt maladaptive livelihood strategies, including asset depletion, increased debt burdens, and migration to urban centers where opportunities remain limited. The County Government of Isiolo (2025) identified conflict as a major constraint to achieving development priorities outlined in annual development plans, with insecurity deterring private investment, limiting credit access, and preventing implementation of livelihood enhancement programs. Magero (2024) examined ethnic and political dynamics of poverty, employment, and wages in Kenya, demonstrating how ethnic conflicts contributed to persistent regional disparities and limited economic mobility for communities trapped in violence-affected areas.

Displacement and social disruption resulting from ethnic conflicts fundamentally undermined human development by severing communities from their resource bases and destroying social capital. Minority Rights Group (2024) provided conflict analysis for Isiolo and Marsabit counties, documenting widespread displacement patterns where entire communities were forced to abandon their settlements, grazing lands, and water

sources due to ethnic violence, resulting in protracted humanitarian needs and loss of traditional livelihoods. Nyumba *et al.* (2020) assessed impacts of human-wildlife conflict on human well-being in areas around Maasai Mara, revealing how conflict-induced displacement compounds environmental challenges and forced communities into marginal lands with limited development opportunities.

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (2023) identified how conflict disrupts local resilience mechanisms in Isiolo and Marsabit counties, with violence breaking down traditional cooperation systems, eroding trust between ethnic groups, and undermining collective natural resource management arrangements. Carlin *et al.* (2022) examined how ethnic conflict conditions intergroup trust, finding that violence created lasting psychological impacts and social fragmentation that prevented collaborative development initiatives. Hadi (2022) examined how public managers may promote harmony among pastoralist communities, acknowledging that displacement and social disruption from ethnic conflicts overwhelmed governance capacity and limited-service delivery to affected populations.

Gender dimensions and vulnerability factors amplified the human development impacts of ethnic conflicts, with women, children, and marginalized groups bearing disproportionate burdens. Paliwal *et al.* (2024) employed gendered participatory mapping approaches in Isiolo County, revealing how ethnic conflicts affected women differently than men, with women experiencing heightened risks of sexual violence, loss of productive assets, increased caregiving burdens, and limited participation in peacebuilding and recovery processes. Iyer and Weeks (2020) examined social interactions, ethnicity, religion, and fertility in Kenya, demonstrating how conflict environments affected women's reproductive choices, access to maternal healthcare, and children's survival prospects.

Aga (2022) focused specifically on women and deradicalization efforts in Isiolo County between 2011 and 2018, documenting how conflict created conditions for radicalization while simultaneously limiting women's agency in preventing violence and promoting peace. UNICEF Kenya (2022) emphasizes protection concerns for children in conflict-affected ASAL counties, including recruitment into armed groups, separation from families, educational disruption, and psychological trauma that impaired long-term development. The intersectionality of gender, age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status meant that ethnic conflicts did not impact communities uniformly, with the most vulnerable populations experiencing the severest developmental setbacks that persisted even after active violence subsides.

2.2.3 Policy and Legal Frameworks Addressing Ethnic Conflicts

Globally, Ahmed (2025) addressed how the nation of Myanmar was able to avert the conflict crisis of the 2021 military coup through humanitarian diplomacy. A qualitative, interpretive design and comparative analysis were done between the Oslo and Aceh peace treaties. Localised compacts, incremental confidence strategies, and official and informal conversations were the main models used in the country. Regionally, Jain (2024) explored the various resolutions and reconciliations on ethnic conflicts to establish lasting peace in Sub-Saharan Africa. There were constitutional reforms, negotiation, mediation and reconciliation commissions, welfare programmes, institutional reforms, and power-sharing agreements to support the restoration of peace in ethnic communities.

Further, from a regional perspective, Cheikh and Simplicie (2026) examined how 49 nations in Africa were able to govern intercommunal armed conflict between 1990 and 2020. The findings revealed that among other factors, the existence of the rule of law and regulatory quality reduced ethnic conflicts significantly. Additionally, the UN

(2024) addressed the measures in place to prevent ethnic genocide from the policy perspective. These policy frameworks included the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

Locally, Kenya has established multiple policy and legal frameworks aimed at preventing and managing ethnic conflicts, with varying degrees of effectiveness in addressing violence in pastoral regions. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (2022) provides legal mechanisms for promoting national unity, preventing ethnic discrimination, and facilitating reconciliation following conflicts. In their comprehensive analysis of Kenya's pastoral policy landscape, Ndiritu et al. (2025) identified a number of policies, such as the Sessional Paper No. 8 of 2012 on National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands, which explicitly addresses conflict prevention and peacebuilding as prerequisites for development in ASAL counties.

The County Government of Isiolo (2024) incorporated peacebuilding and conflict management strategies within the County Integrated Development Plan for 2023-2027, demonstrating devolved government efforts to contextualise national frameworks to local conflict dynamics. However, Kiogora and Moi (2024) observed that despite this extensive policy architecture, ethnic conflicts persist in Isiolo County, suggesting significant gaps between policy formulation and implementation.

Alternative justice systems and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have been recognised within Kenya's legal framework as complementary approaches to managing ethnic conflicts in pastoral communities. Kiogora (2025) examined the alternative justice system and resolution of disputes in Isiolo County, documenting how traditional

elders' councils, customary law, and indigenous peacebuilding practices operated alongside formal legal structures to address inter-ethnic tensions. Mbijiwe (2021) analysed armed conflict resolution techniques that clashed along the Meru-Isiolo border between 1990 and 2018, revealing tensions between traditional mechanisms that emphasised restorative justice and formal state responses that prioritised punitive measures.

Mkutu *et al.* (2025) explored water-related conflicts in northern Kenya, noting that customary water governance systems had historically regulated access and prevented conflicts but had been weakened by statutory laws that did not adequately recognise indigenous resource management frameworks. Oucho (2021) argued that colonial legacies embedded in Kenya's legal system often marginalise customary dispute resolution methods, creating parallel systems that sometimes contradict rather than complement each other. The challenge lies in harmonising traditional and formal frameworks to create integrated approaches that leverage the legitimacy of customary systems while ensuring accountability and human rights protections.

Devolution introduced through Kenya's 2010 Constitution has created new policy spaces for addressing ethnic conflicts at the county level but has also generated additional tensions over resource control. Moler (2022) investigated interethnic conflicts and decentralised government in cosmopolitan pastoral communities, finding that while devolution provides opportunities for localised conflict management, it also intensifies competition for county resources and political positions along ethnic lines. The County Government of Isiolo (2025) outlined development priorities in its Annual Development Plan, including peace and security initiatives, but implementation was constrained by limited fiscal resources, capacity challenges, and political dynamics that sometimes prioritised ethnic constituencies over inclusive development.

Ngoyoni (2021) examined how citizen involvement affected the provision of services in Isiolo County, revealing that conflict undermines meaningful community engagement in county governance, with insecurity limiting citizens' ability to participate in planning processes that could address conflict drivers. Hadi (2022) examined how public managers may promote harmony among pastoralist groups, acknowledging that county governments lacked sufficient capacity, resources, and coordination mechanisms to effectively implement conflict prevention policies across vast pastoral territories.

Security sector frameworks for managing ethnic conflicts in pastoral regions emphasised law enforcement and disarmament but faced significant operational and legitimacy challenges. Maelo and Harris (2021) analysed conflict policing in pastoral communities in Isiolo County, documenting how police responses often arrived after violence had already occurred, with limited preventive capacity due to inadequate personnel, poor infrastructure, and insufficient intelligence gathering. Mkutu (2020) examined security dynamics in conservancies, revealing how new security arrangements, including community policing and private security actors, have emerged to fill gaps left by formal law enforcement but sometimes exacerbate ethnic tensions through partisan protection of particular communities.

ACLED (2024) tracked violent incidents involving pastoralist militias across Kenya, highlighting the persistent challenge of small arms proliferation despite various disarmament initiatives, with security operations sometimes generating resentment and resistance from communities who view weapons as necessary for self-defence. The Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies and Isiolo Peace Link (2020) identified links between ethnic conflict management approaches and violent extremism risks in

Isiolo County, cautioning that heavy-handed security responses could alienate communities and create vulnerabilities that extremist groups exploit.

Climate change adaptation and natural resource management policies increasingly recognised the interconnection between environmental governance and conflict prevention in pastoral regions. Climate and Development Knowledge Network *et al.* (2024) proposed public-good climate investments for water security and conflict risk reduction in Isiolo County, arguing that infrastructure development must be accompanied by governance frameworks that ensure equitable access and prevent elite capture that fuels ethnic grievances.

Gerlak *et al.* (2025) analysed water-related conflicts through the lens of scarcity, structures, and scoundrels, recommending policy reforms that addressed governance failures, strengthened accountability mechanisms, and ensured inclusive participation in water resource management. The International Crisis Group (2023) looked at mitigating violence in Kenya's Rift Valley and absorbing climate shocks, advocating for integrated approaches that combined climate adaptation investments with conflict-sensitive programming that addresses historical inequalities and builds inter-ethnic cooperation.

Osman (2024) offered firsthand accounts from the Ewaso Ng'iro North Basin, emphasising that top-down policies often failed because they did not adequately incorporate indigenous knowledge and community-driven solutions. UN Kenya (2024) acknowledged in its annual results report that addressing inequalities and improving human development outcomes in ASAL counties required policy frameworks that simultaneously tackled environmental vulnerabilities and social cohesion challenges, recognising that sustainable peace and development were interdependent.

2.2.4 Challenges in Managing Ethnic Conflicts for Enhanced Human Development

Resource scarcity intensified by climate change presents fundamental challenges to managing ethnic conflicts and promoting human development in pastoral regions. Khan *et al.* (2024) examined the implication of Pakistan's conflict and what the future holds for the modern Islamic State. The study noted that ethnic conflicts experienced in the country had affected its sovereignty. This was due to internationalizing intimidation of political groups and activists, dictatorship ruling from the politicians, and a malfunctioning election system that had resulted in increased tension in the nation. These challenges had resulted in increased conflicts whenever there was misunderstanding between the leaders and the community members, especially in relation to natural resources such as oil, water, and pasture.

Further supporting the results, Huma (2024) assessed the problems that have interfered with Pakistan's internal peace. Through desktop analysis, the study added that intolerance and violent extremism had led to increased marginalization of children, women, and people living with disabilities. Additionally, there were other challenges such as unequal power distribution, insecurity, radicalism, and geopolitical tensions due to increased population that demands equal access to natural resources such as pasture and water for livestock. This was, however, not provided due to increased environmental degradation leading to scarcity of natural resources, escalating the ethnic conflict further.

Regionally, Zigashane (2025) determined how Congo developed peace resolution strategies and the various conflict challenges affecting the multiethnic society. The study collected qualitative data through interviewing 20 local authority individuals, while 80 leaders in the community participated in the focus group discussion. The findings were that challenges that affected conflict within Congo revolved around

ethnic identity, leadership power, and ownership of land issues. These three aspects escalated conflict within different ethnic groups in the nation. However, Zigashane (2025) did not address the challenges that escalated ethnic conflicts across pastoralism communities.

Locally, Linke *et al.* (2022) demonstrated that weather variability created dynamic human-environment interactions in Kenya that significantly complicated conflict forecasting and prevention efforts, with unpredictable rainfall patterns and prolonged droughts increasing competition over water and pasture in ways that overwhelmed traditional resource-sharing arrangements.

Fox *et al.* (2025) captured pastoralists' pessimistic outlook about their future in Isiolo County unless interventions addressed environmental degradation, with communities expressing that diminishing resources make peaceful coexistence increasingly difficult regardless of conflict management initiatives. Kirui and Kimeu (2022) documented how recurrent droughts force pastoral livelihood pathway transitions that generate new forms of inter-ethnic tension, as communities adapt in ways that bring them into competition over resources they previously did not share.

International Crisis Group (2023) identified the challenge of absorbing climate shocks in Kenya's pastoral regions, noting that development interventions often failed because they did not adequately address the underlying environmental stressors that drove resource conflicts. Climate and Development Knowledge Network *et al.* (2024) argued that without significant investments in water infrastructure and climate adaptation, conflict management efforts remained reactive rather than preventive, unable to address the root causes of ethnic violence in resource-scarce environments.

Weak governance structures and institutional capacity constraints severely limited the effectiveness of conflict management and development interventions in Merti Sub-County and similar pastoral areas. Gerlak *et al.* (2025) identified structural governance failures as central to water-related conflicts in Isiolo County, with unclear jurisdictional boundaries, requirements that cross between the federal and local governments, corruption, and elite capture undermining equitable resource distribution and fueling ethnic grievances. Ngoyoni (2021) documents challenges in public participation and service delivery in Isiolo County, revealing that conflict-affected communities have limited voice in governance processes, with insecurity preventing meaningful engagement and marginalizing perspectives of vulnerable groups.

Hadi (2022) investigated how public officials might promote harmony among pastoralist groups, identifying significant capacity gaps, including insufficient training in conflict-sensitive programming, inadequate coordination between security and development agencies, and limited resources for implementing peacebuilding initiatives across vast territories. Otieno (2023) analyzed governance and regional development disparities in Kenya, demonstrating how marginalization of ASAL counties in national resource allocation perpetuates underdevelopment and creates conditions for conflict, with Isiolo receiving disproportionately low investment despite its conflict burden. The Minority Rights Group (2024) emphasized that governance challenges were compounded by historical marginalization of pastoral communities, whose needs and perspectives were often excluded from policy design processes dominated by agricultural and urban interests.

The proliferation and availability of small arms transform the lethality and complexity of ethnic conflicts, presenting persistent security challenges that undermined both peace and development efforts. Mkutu (2021) documented how the ethicized politics of Isiolo

County intersect with weapons availability, with armed groups increasingly sophisticated in their organization and capacity to inflict violence, making traditional conflict resolution approaches inadequate. ACLED (2024) tracked pastoralist militia activities across Kenya, revealing that despite numerous disarmament initiatives, weapons continued to flow into pastoral regions through porous borders, illicit markets, and sometimes through political actors who arm ethnic constituencies for electoral purposes.

Mbijiwe (2021) examined competing strategies for resolving armed conflicts near the Meru-Isiolo border, documenting how militarization had escalated violence and undermined trust in peace processes, with communities reluctant to disarm unilaterally for fear of vulnerability to armed neighbors. Maelo and Harris (2021) identified challenges in conflict policing, noting that security forces were often outgunned by pastoral militias, lack intelligence on weapons caches, and face community resistance to disarmament operations perceived as targeting specific ethnic groups. The Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies and Isiolo Peace Link (2020) warned that small arms proliferation not only intensifies ethnic conflicts but also creates vulnerabilities to violent extremism, as weapon availability facilitates the recruitment and operational capacity of extremist groups in conflict-affected areas.

Erosion of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and social capital undermined community-level peacebuilding capacity essential for sustainable conflict management. Kiogora (2025) examined alternative justice systems in Isiolo County, documenting how traditional elders' authority had weakened due to generational changes, external influences, and the emergence of new conflict dynamics that traditional mechanisms were not designed to address. Carlin *et al.* (2022) demonstrated that ethnic conflicts fundamentally eroded intergroup trust, creating psychological barriers to cooperation

that persisted even after active violence subsides and making reconciliation efforts challenging. Mkutu *et al.* (2025) observe that customary water governance systems that historically prevented conflicts had broken down in northern Kenya due to population pressures, environmental changes, and the introduction of statutory frameworks that do not adequately recognize indigenous institutions.

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (2023) identified diminishing local resilience in Isiolo and Marsabit counties, with conflict disrupting social networks, mutual aid systems, and collective action capacity that communities traditionally relied upon to manage resource scarcity. Osman (2024) provided local perspectives highlighting how those external interventions sometimes inadvertently undermined traditional mechanisms by bypassing local authorities, introducing parallel structures, or failing to understand the cultural contexts within which indigenous peacebuilding operated, thereby reducing rather than enhancing conflict management capacity.

Political manipulation of ethnic identities and the intersection of electoral politics with resource conflicts created cyclical patterns of violence that frustrated peacebuilding and development efforts. Horowitz and Klaus (2020) demonstrated experimentally that politicians can exploit ethnic grievances related to land and resources, mobilizing communities along ethnic lines in ways that intensified conflicts for political gain. Mkutu (2021) analyzed how future visions and development prospects in Isiolo County had become politicized, with ethnic groups positioning themselves competitively to capture county resources, infrastructure projects, and political positions, ensuring that conflicts persisted across electoral cycles.

The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (2022) identified Isiolo as a conflict hotspot where ethnic tensions were systematically manipulated during electoral

periods, with violence serving political objectives that had little to do with genuine resource disputes. Moler (2022) examined devolved governance and inter-ethnic conflicts, revealing that county-level politics have intensified ethnic competition rather than promoting inclusive development, with resources allocated along ethnic patronage networks that reinforced divisions. Mukanda (2025) explored challenges in the interplay between ethnic identity and economic development in Kenya, arguing that political systems that reward ethnic mobilization created incentives for conflict entrepreneurs who benefited from sustained tensions, making peacebuilding efforts contingent on addressing broader governance and political economy challenges that extend beyond local conflict dynamics.

2.3 Summary of Reviewed Literature and Research Gaps

2.3.1 Prevalence and Nature of Ethnic Conflicts

The reviewed literature demonstrated that ethnic conflicts in Kenya's pastoral regions, including Merti Sub-County, were driven by complex interactions between resource scarcity, historical grievances, political manipulation, and environmental stressors, with devastating consequences for human development across education, health, economic, and social dimensions. Scholars have documented the prevalence and nature of ethnic violence in Isiolo County, highlighting how competition over water and grazing lands escalated into armed confrontations that disrupted livelihoods and development initiatives (Mkutu, 2021; Gerlak *et al.*, 2025; Limiri, 2022).

2.3.2 Ethnic Conflicts and Human Development Indicators

The literature revealed significant negative impacts on human development indicators, with conflicts causing school dropouts, healthcare disruptions, malnutrition, displacement, and economic impoverishment that perpetuated cycles of

underdevelopment (County Government of Isiolo, 2024; UNICEF Kenya, 2022; Fox *et al.*, 2025). Research on policy and legal frameworks showed that despite extensive national and county-level policies, implementation challenges persisted due to weak governance structures, inadequate resources, and tensions between formal and traditional conflict resolution systems (Kiogora & Moi, 2024; Ndiritu *et al.*, 2025). The literature further identified multiple challenges in managing ethnic conflicts, including climate-induced resource scarcity, small arms proliferation, eroded traditional mechanisms, weak institutional capacity, and political manipulation of ethnic identities (Linke *et al.*, 2022; ACLED, 2024; Horowitz & Klaus, 2020).

2.3.3 Existing Policy and Legal Frameworks Addressing Ethnic Conflicts

Despite this substantial body of knowledge, significant research gaps remain that this study sought to address. First, while various scholars have examined ethnic conflicts in Isiolo County broadly, there is limited empirical research specifically focused on Merti Sub-County, which has unique conflict dynamics involving Borana, Somali, Turkana, and Samburu communities that warranted dedicated investigation. Second, existing literature tends to examine either conflict dynamics or human development outcomes separately, with insufficient analysis of the specific mechanisms and pathways through which ethnic violence directly impacts different human development indicators in Merti's pastoral context. There is inadequate evaluation of how existing policy and legal frameworks are functioning specifically within Merti Sub-County's socio-cultural and ecological context, including the effectiveness of both formal and traditional conflict management systems at the sub-county level.

2.3.4 Challenges in Managing Ethnic Conflicts for Enhanced Human Development

Finally, while challenges in conflict management are documented generally, there is limited research that systematically identifies context-specific obstacles to enhancing human development through improved conflict management in Merti Sub-County. This study, therefore, filled these critical gaps by providing focused empirical evidence on the conflict-development nexus in Merti Sub-County, offering insights that may inform targeted interventions for this marginalised pastoral region.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The research methodology used to investigate how ethnic conflicts affect human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya, is described in this chapter. The research design, study site, target population, sample processes, instruments, data collection methods, validity and reliability measures, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations guiding the investigation are all presented.

3.2 Research Design

In order to methodically investigate how ethnic conflicts affect human development in Merti Sub-County, this study used a descriptive research design. The descriptive design is suitable because it allows the researcher to gather comprehensive data regarding the frequency, type, and impact of ethnic conflicts on human development indicators, existing policy frameworks, and challenges in conflict management without manipulating variables. This design as used before by Siedlecki (2020) facilitated gathering both quantitative and qualitative data via questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis, providing comprehensive insights into conflict dynamics and developmental outcomes. The descriptive approach allowed for accurate portrayal of the current situation in Merti Subcounty, generating empirical evidence to inform policy recommendations for enhanced peacebuilding and human development interventions.

3.3 Research Site

3.3.1 Location and Rationale

The study was carried out at Isiolo County's Merti Sub-County in northern Kenya. Merti Sub-County covers approximately 12,612 square kilometers and comprises two

administrative wards: Chari and Cherab. The sub-county was selected purposively due to its history of recurrent ethnic conflicts among pastoralist communities, including the Borana, Somali, Turkana, and Samburu ethnic groups. These conflicts, primarily driven by competition over water, grazing lands, and livestock, have significantly impacted human development outcomes. The sub-county was a perfect case study for investigating the relationship between ethnic conflicts and human development in Kenya's arid and semi-arid regions because of its isolation, difficult ecological circumstances, and ongoing insecurity. The map of the study is indicated in appendix 7.

3.3.2 Population and Administrative Characteristics

The 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census indicates that Merti Sub-County has a population of approximately 47,206 people distributed across its two wards: Chari and Cherab. The population is predominantly pastoralist, with communities organized along ethnic lines. The sub-county is administered by a sub-county administrator appointed by the national government, working alongside elected ward representatives who form part of the Isiolo County Assembly. Traditional governance structures, including councils of elders, also play significant roles in community leadership and conflict resolution. The population is characterized by high mobility due to the nomadic pastoralist lifestyle, with communities moving seasonally seeking forage and water for their animals.

3.3.3 Socio-Economic and Ecological Features

Merti Sub-County is located in Kenya's ASALs, characterized by low and erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, and sparse vegetation. The area receives average annual rainfall of 200-400mm, making it suitable primarily for pastoralism rather than crop agriculture. The main economic activity is livestock rearing, with communities keeping

cattle, camels, goats, and sheep. Availability of social services, such as healthcare, education, and water infrastructure, remains limited due to the vast distances, insecurity, and historical marginalization. The ecological fragility of the area, combined with climate change impacts, intensifies resource scarcity and competition, contributing to frequent ethnic conflicts that disrupt livelihoods and undermine human development initiatives in the sub-county.

3.4 Target Population

The study's target population included all stakeholders involved in or affected by ethnic conflicts and human development initiatives in Merti Sub-County. According to KNBS (2019), Merti Sub-County has a total population of 47,206 people distributed across two wards, Chari and Cherab, covering an area of 12,612 square kilometers. Further, there were 8,558 conventional households in Merti-Sub County (KNBS, 2019). Therefore, this comprised the number of household heads. The other target population categories included community leaders such as traditional elders, religious leaders, and women group leaders involved in community mobilization and conflict resolution; government officials including the Sub-County Administrator, Ward Administrators, chiefs, assistant chiefs, security officers, education officers, and health officers; civil society organizations operating in the sub-county including NGOs, faith-based organizations, and community-based organizations involved in peacebuilding and development programs; and other parties involved in development such as County Assembly representatives, National Cohesion and Integration Commission officials, and development partners working on peace and human development interventions in Merti Sub-County.

3.5 Study Sample

3.5.1 Sampling Procedure

Both probability and non-probability sampling strategies were used in the investigation to select representative respondents. The main sample technique employed was simple random sampling to select household heads from the general community across Chari and Cherab wards, ensuring equal opportunity for participation and minimizing selection bias. To guarantee proportionate representation from various ethnic groups (Borana, Somali, Turkana, and Samburu) and geographical areas within the sub-county, stratified random sampling was used. Key informants were chosen using purposeful sampling, and they included government personnel, community leaders, civil society representatives, and development practitioners who possessed specialized knowledge and experience regarding human development and ethnic tensions in Merti Sub County. Snowball sampling was employed by including government officials who were later asked to identify additional key informants like community leaders, who later were used to identify civil society representatives and development practitioners, particularly those involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives.

3.5.2 Study Sample Size

The sample size for household respondents was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula: $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$, where n is the sample size, N is the target population (8,558 conventional households as according to KNBS, 2019), and e is the margin of error (0.05). Applying this formula:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= 8,558 / (1 + 8,558 (0.05)^2) \\ &= 8,558 / (1 + 21.395) \\ &= 8,558 / 21.396 \approx 382 \text{ household heads} \end{aligned}$$

Additionally, 50 key informants were purposively selected from various stakeholder categories. Table 3.1 presents the distribution of the sample size across different respondent categories.

Table 3.1: Sample Size Distribution

Respondent Category	Sampling Technique	Sample Size
Household heads	Simple random/Stratified	382
Government officials	Purposive	15
Community leaders	Purposive	15
Civil society representatives	Purposive	10
Development practitioners	Purposive	10
Total		432

Source: Researcher 2026

The total sample size of 432 respondents provided sufficient data for robust analysis and generalizable findings about ethnic conflicts and human development in Merti Sub-County.

3.6 Data Collection

To obtain thorough information on ethnic conflicts and human development in Merti Sub-County, the study used both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data was gathered through key informant interviews with government officials, community leaders, civil society representatives, and development practitioners, as well as surveys using standardized questionnaires given to household heads. Secondary data was obtained through document analysis of existing policy frameworks, reports, statistical records, and literature related to human development and ethnic conflicts in Isiolo County and Merti Sub-County. The combination of primary and secondary data

collection methods enabled triangulation, improving the reliability and validity of results while offering several viewpoints on the research issue.

3.6.1 Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaires

To gather quantitative information on ethnic conflicts and human development indicators, 400 home respondents were given structured questionnaires. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were included in the questionnaires, which were divided into five sections: respondents' demographics; the frequency and type of ethnic conflicts; the impact of ethnic conflicts on economic, health, and educational opportunities; awareness and efficacy of policy frameworks; and difficulties in managing conflicts. Respondents' opinions and attitudes were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, with Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5) being the response possibilities. The Likert scale enabled systematic measurement of subjective aspects such as the perceived impact of conflicts, satisfaction with conflict resolution mechanisms, and effectiveness of policy interventions. The questionnaires were translated into local languages, including Kiswahili and Borana, to ensure comprehension and facilitate accurate responses.

Interview Guides

Semi-structured interview guides were used to collect qualitative data from 50 key informants, including government officials, community leaders, civil society representatives, and development practitioners. The interview guides contained open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives, allowing respondents to provide detailed insights based on their experiences and expertise. Separate interview guides were developed for different respondent categories to capture role-specific

perspectives. Questions explored the causes and patterns of ethnic conflicts, specific impacts on human development sectors, implementation challenges of existing policies, and recommendations for improved conflict management. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility for probing and follow-up questions while maintaining focus on key research themes. Interviews were conducted in English, Kiswahili, or local languages depending on respondents' preferences and were recorded with permission for subsequent transcription and analysis.

3.6.2 Pre-Testing of Research Instruments

Pre-testing was conducted in Garbatulla Sub-County, which shared similar demographic, socio-economic, and conflict features with Merti Sub-County but is not included in the primary research region. The pre-testing involved administering questionnaires to 40 household respondents (10% of the main sample) and conducting interviews with 5 key informants. The pre-testing helped identify ambiguous questions, assessed the clarity and appropriateness of language used, determined the average time required to complete each instrument, and tested the feasibility of data collection procedures. Feedback from pre-test respondents was used to refine the research instruments, improve question wording, adjust the sequencing of items, and ensure cultural sensitivity. The pretest study results are in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Reliability Results

Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha
Prevalence and nature of ethnic conflict	0.863
Effects of ethnic conflicts	0.925
Policy and legal frameworks	0.782
Challenges in managing ethnic conflicts	0.841
Average	0.853

Source: Field Data, 2026

The data in Table 3.2 shows that Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for prevalence and nature of ethnic conflict is 0.863, effect of ethnic conflict is 0.925, policy and legal frameworks is 0.782, and challenges in managing ethnic conflicts is 0.841. As per the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient results, they had an average of 0.853, which was more than 0.7, indicating that the tools were reliable. Therefore, the internal consistency of the questionnaires and interviews, having obtained reliable coefficients, established that the questions asked on the four variables of the study (prevalence and nature of ethnic conflict; effect of ethnic conflict; policy and legal frameworks; and challenges in managing ethnic conflicts) were trustworthy enough to be employed in the primary investigation. According to Dorsah (2026), establishing a Cronbach alpha coefficient value of more than 0.7 indicated that the tools used in the study were related to the field and understandable to the respondents.

3.6.3 Instrument Reliability

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the questionnaires' reliability; a coefficient threshold of 0.853 indicated adequate internal consistency. Based on the

findings of the pilot test, items that decreased overall reliability were changed or eliminated. A small group of pilot respondents were given the questionnaire after a two-week period, and responses were compared for consistency in order to assess test-retest reliability. For qualitative instruments, reliability was enhanced through careful documentation of interview procedures, using standardized interview guides, maintaining detailed field notes, and ensuring consistent probing techniques across all key informant interviews. Multiple researchers independently coded a sample of interview transcripts to assess inter-rater reliability and ensure consistent interpretation of qualitative data.

3.6.4 Instrument Validity

Content validity was guaranteed by creating research instruments based on a thorough analysis of pertinent literature and ensuring that each item was in line with the study's goals and research questions. The interview guides and questionnaires were reviewed by experts to determine whether they adequately captured the targeted constructs and were relevant and clear. The instruments were improved and refined by using the feedback from these reviewers. Face validity was assessed during the pilot study by evaluating whether the questions were clear, understandable, and appropriate for the target respondents. This process helped identify ambiguous or misleading items, which were subsequently revised.

Construct validity was enhanced through methodological triangulation, whereby multiple data collection methods and sources were used to cross-verify findings. This approach ensured a more comprehensive and accurate representation of the research problem.

3.6.5 Data Collection Procedures

After receiving ethical approval from the Board of Postgraduate Studies and getting study permissions from the NACOSTI, data gathering got underway. Permission was requested from the administration of Merti sub-county and the Isiolo County government. The researcher recruited and trained four research assistants fluent in local languages to assist with questionnaire administration and conducting interviews. The training was done within a period of 2 days. Community entry was facilitated through meetings with local administrators and traditional leaders to explain the study purpose and seek community cooperation. Household surveys were conducted through door-to-door visits, with informed consent obtained before participation. Interviews with key informants were arranged at convenient times and places for the participants. Before departing each place, completed surveys were verified for accuracy and consistency.

3.7 Data Processing and Analysis

After being cleaned and coded, quantitative data from questionnaires were imported into SPSS version 26 for analysis. To summarize demographic features, descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were calculated; conflict prevalence patterns; human development indicators; and perceptions regarding policy effectiveness and conflict management challenges. Likert scale items, mean scores and SDs, were calculated to measure central tendency and variability in respondents' perceptions and attitudes. Results were presented using tables.

Qualitative data from key informant interviews and open-ended questions were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically using content analysis techniques. Themes and sub-themes were identified through systematic coding aligned with the four research objectives. Direct quotations were selected to illustrate key findings and

provide deeper insights into respondents' experiences and perspectives regarding ethnic conflicts and their developmental impacts.

3.8 Legal and Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical guidelines to safeguard each participant's welfare, rights, and dignity. The Board of Postgraduate Studies granted ethical approval, and the NACOSTI issued research permission. After outlining the goals, methods, possible dangers, and advantages of the study, each participant was asked for their informed permission. Respondents were able to discontinue participation at any moment without incurring any fees. Confidentiality and anonymity were tightly upheld by employing codes rather than names and securely storing data due to the delicate nature of ethnic disputes. Special care was taken when discussing traumatic experiences to avoid re-traumatizing participants, with referrals to counseling services available if needed. The researcher remained neutral and avoided taking sides in ethnic disputes. Community leaders and local authorities were engaged to ensure cultural sensitivity and respect for local customs.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the findings for the impact of ethnic conflicts on human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. The chapter provides the results and discussion based on the respondent's responses. The chapter includes the response rate, reliability results, background information, descriptive statistics, and interview results.

4.2 Characteristics of the Respondents

4.2.1 Response Rate

The study sampled 382 household heads, 15 government officials, 15 community leaders, 10 civil society representatives, and 10 development practitioners. Household heads were issued with a questionnaire while the key informants were interviewed. Table 4.1 provides the response rate.

Table 4.1: *Response Rate*

Respondents	Sampled	Response	Percentage
Questionnaire respondents	382	339	88.7%
Interview respondents	50	37	74%
Total	432	376	87%

Source: Researcher, 2026

Table 4.1 reveals that 339 (88.7%) of 382 questionnaires were returned, and 37 (74%) interviews were completed successfully. The response rate is an indication that the study had a huge number of respondents, who were interested in sharing their

experiences on ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. The 13 (26%) respondents that did not take part in the interviews were engaged in other responsibilities and thus not able to take part in their study. Their nonparticipation did not introduce bias.

According to Wu *et al.* (2022), a response rate of 70% is considered excellent since it is an indication that the respondents were attracted to the topic of discussion since it related to their professional or personal lives. Holton *et al.* (2022) revealed that a population that is above 80% indicated that the data collection process was scientific and clear to the target respondents. McKibben *et al.* (2025) posited that high response rates show that the respondents were well briefed and understood the nature of the study in relation to resolving the study's problem. Therefore, the current study had an average response rate of 87%, signifying that the study was successful.

4.2.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The study required the respondents to state their gender, age, ethnic group, ward, highest level of education, and their main occupation. Table 4.2 provides the results.

Table 4.2: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	261	77
Female	78	23
Total	339	100

Source: Field Data, 2026

Table 4.2 shows that 261 (77%) of the respondents were male, while 78 (23%) were female. The study therefore noted that more males took part in the study as compared to the females and were a mixture of the youths and mature individuals. This was an indication that heads of households were males, and it also implied that they were easily

accessible during the data collection process. The low representation of the females deprived the study of the chance to gain information on their experiences with ethnic clashes. Studies like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2023) and the United Nations (UN) Women (2023) also found out that the females hardly took part in surveys conducted in conflicted areas attributable to their unavailability attending to social cultural duties, restricted mobility during insecurity, and caregiving roles. Furthermore, they were also key actors in conflicting situations and hence mostly affected by ethnic clashes in the region, making them effective in underpinning the challenges and most suitable in seeking solutions for the clashes. Table 4.3 indicates the age of the respondents.

Table 4.3: Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
56 – above years	58	17
46-55 years	82	24
36- 45 years	78	23
25- 35 years	90	27
18-25 years	31	9
Total	339	100

Source: Field Data, 2026

Further, 58 (17%) of the respondents were more than 56 years old, 82 (24%) were between the ages of 46 and 55 years, 78 (23%) were between 36 and 45 years, 90 (27%) of the respondents were 25 to 35 years of age, and only 31 (9%) were between the ages of 18 and 25. The older respondents (46-55 years) who were significantly high provided the study with foundational and detailed information on the historical patterns, causes, and repercussions of various clashes facing the region. Agreeing with the results, ACLED (2023) found out that ethnic clashes portrayed a repeated pattern over time,

making older respondents' opinions vital in providing this information. UNDP (2024) established that active participation of the youths in ethnic clashes was mainly fueled by the older generation, who had a repeated history of such occurrences. Table 4.4 indicates the ethnic group of the respondents.

Table 4.4: *Ethnic Group*

Ethnic Group	Frequency	Percent
Borana	103	30
Somali	97	29
Turkana	61	18
Samburu	78	23
Total	339	100

Source: Field Data, 2026

Regarding ethnicity, the majority of the respondents, 103(30%), were Borana; 97(29%), Somali; 61(18%), Turkana; and 78% were from Sambutu. The results imply that the respondents were mainly from Borana, Somali, and Turkana, which are the main communities involved in ethnic clashes. Therefore, considering mostly Borana and Somali, being the larger groups of respondents, may be an indication of existing tensions that provides patterns of the genesis of ethnic clashes with each of them experiencing the clashes differently. Similarly, previous studies like the National Cohesion and Integration Commission. (2023) also noted that most ethnic clashes involved the Borana community more as compared to other communities in Isiolo County. Table 4.5 indicates the ward of the respondents.

Table 4.5: *Ward*

Ward	Frequency	Percent
Chari	211	62
Cherab	128	38
Total	339	100

Source: Field Data, 2026

Notably, the majority of the respondents, 211(62%), were from Chari Ward, and 128(38%) were from Cherab Ward. This was an indication that most of the respondents came from Chari Ward, establishing the foundation of the most populated ward within Meri-Sub County, an indication of possible areas of conflict. Table 4.6 indicates the highest level of education.

Table 4.6: *Highest Level of Education*

Highest Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
University/College	42	12
Secondary	73	22
Primary	119	35
No formal education	105	31
Total	339	100

Source: Field Data, 2026

In terms of their highest level of education, Table 4.6 indicates that 119 (35%) of the respondents had primary education, 105 (31%) had no formal education, and 42 (12%) had university/college education. This implies that most residents of the regions had very low education qualifications, which was primary-level education, and another significant portion had no formal education. It shows that respondents were mainly involved, had low access to modern information, and had awareness of how to resolve conflict. Furthermore, low education also meant that most community members had limited opportunities to access diverse economic benefits, relying mostly on pastoralism as an income-generating activity, hence escalating the ethnic clashes further. The International Crisis Group (2023) found out that overreliance of most community members on pasture to feed livestock due to limited work opportunities was majorly caused by low education. The low education across community members was

due to a lack of interest in embracing modern learning, with most members focusing on pastoralism as trained by the older generation. This disadvantaged community members, as stipulated by Fox *et al.* (2025), are trying newer methods of earning a living and training on how to resolve communal problems such as drought and pasture-related conflicts. Table 4.7 indicates the occupation of the respondents.

Table 4.7: Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Pastoralist	153	45
Trader	41	12
Farmer	87	26
Civil servant	58	17
Total	339	100

Source: Field Data, 2026

Regarding their occupation, 153 (45%) were pastoralists, 41 (12%) were traders, 87 (26%) were farmers, and 58 (17%) were civil servants. The results confirm that most community members earned their living mainly by pastoralism and farming, as compared to trading. Therefore, the respondents who were residents in Meri Sub-county were thus reliant on natural resources such as pasture, water, and land to earn a living. This connoted the foundation for ethnic clashes, as the natural resources were scarce, especially during dry spells due to climate changes. Safari and Wambua (2024) found out that communities living in ASAL regions are engaged in pastoralism as their main economic activity, hence leading to persistent conflicts whenever resources such as pasture and water are scarce.

4.3 Presentation of Research Analysis, Findings and Interpretation

4.3.1 Prevalence and Nature of Ethnic Conflicts

The study's first objective was to examine the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. The table used an ordinal Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The descriptive results are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Descriptive Statistics of Prevalence and Nature of Ethnic Conflicts

Statements N=339	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std Dev
Ethnic conflicts are common in Merti Sub-County	61 (18.0%)	71 (20.9%)	69 (20.4%)	83 (24.5%)	55 (16.2%)	3.00	1.35
Competition over water resources causes ethnic conflicts in this area	12 (3.5%)	20 (5.9%)	37 (10.9%)	103 (30.4%)	167 (49.3%)	4.16	1.07
Competition over grazing lands triggers violence	27 (8.0%)	21 (6.2%)	20 (5.9%)	99 (29.2%)	172 (50.7%)	4.09	1.24
Cattle raiding is a major form of ethnic conflict	15 (4.4%)	14 (4.1%)	26 (7.7%)	103 (30.4%)	181 (53.4%)	4.24	1.06
Political leaders manipulate ethnic differences	12 (3.5%)	79 (23.3%)	92 (27.1%)	89 (26.3%)	67 (19.8%)	3.35	1.14
Small arms and weapons have increased the severity of ethnic conflicts	51 (15%)	48 (14.2%)	54 (15.9%)	93 (27.4%)	93 (27.4%)	3.38	1.41
Climate change and drought have intensified ethnic conflicts	30 (8.8%)	54 (15.9%)	67 (19.8%)	56 (16.5%)	132 (38.9%)	3.61	1.37

Source: Field Data, 2026

On the statement about ethnic conflicts being common in Merti Sub-County, 61 (18.0%) strongly disagreed, 71 (20.9%) disagreed, 69 (20.4%) were neutral, 83 (24.5%) agreed, and 55 (16.2%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.00, and the SD was 1.35.

On the statement about competition over water resources causing ethnic conflicts in this area, 12(3.5%) strongly disagreed; 20(5.9%) disagreed, 37(10.9%) were neutral; 103(30.4%) agreed and 167(49.3%) strongly agreed. The mean was 4.16, and the SD was 1.07.

On the statement about competition over grazing lands triggering violence, 27 (8.0%) strongly disagreed, 21 (6.2%) disagreed, 30 (5.9%) were neutral, 99 (29.2%) agreed, and 172 (50.7%) strongly agreed. The mean was 4.09, and the SD was 1.24.

On the statement about cattle raiding being a major form of ethnic conflict, 15 (4.4%) strongly disagreed, 14 (4.1%) disagreed, 26 (7.7%) were neutral, 103 (30.4%) agreed, and 181 (53.4%) strongly agreed. The mean was 4.24, and the SD was 1.06.

On the statement about political leaders manipulating ethnic differences, 12 (3.5%) strongly disagreed, 79 (23.3%) disagreed, 92 (27.1%) were neutral, 89 (26.3%) agreed, and 67 (19.8%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.35, and the SD was 1.14.

On the statement about small arms and weapons increasing the severity of ethnic conflicts, 51 (15%) strongly disagreed, 48 (14.2%) disagreed, 54 (15.9%) were neutral, 93 (27.4%) agreed, and 93 (27.4%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.38, and the SD was 1.41.

On the statement about climate change and drought having intensified ethnic conflicts, 30 (8.8%) strongly disagreed, 54 (15.9%) disagreed, 67 (19.8%) were neutral, 56 (16.5%) agreed, and 132 (38.9%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.61, and the SD was 1.37.

Based on Table 4.8, the majority of the respondents, 181 (53.4%), strongly agreed, and 103 (30.4%) agreed, with a mean of 4.24 and SD of 1.058, that cattle raiding was a major form of ethnic conflict in Merti Sub-County. In addition, 167 (49.3%) strongly agreed and 103 (39.4%) agreed on a mean of 4.16 and SD of 1.065 that competition over water resources caused ethnic conflicts in this area. Furthermore, with a mean of 3.00 and SD of 1.353, 69 (20.4%) of the respondents provided a neutral response that ethnic conflicts are common in Merti Sub-County. The results implied that the cattle raiding and competition over water resources were the major causes of ethnic conflict in Merti-Sub County. However, ethnic conflict was not evenly experienced in the entire area of Merti Sub-county but in specific areas, hence the neutral response from the respondents.

There were three questions asked in the examination of the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County. The first question required the respondents to indicate the main causes of ethnic conflicts in the sub-county. The respondents indicated the causes of ethnic conflicts to be cattle raiding, pasture and water for livestock, grazing land, influx from neighboring counties, and politics.

The second question was on the frequency of ethnic conflict occurrence and which communities were affected. On the frequency, they mentioned monthly, semi-annually, annually, dry seasons, and political campaign periods. Further, the communities affected were majorly Samburu and Borana (Gabra and Sakuye), with Turkana communities having minor occurrences. For instance, a respondent indicated that

“It happens occasionally during the dry seasons. The Borana community becomes most affected since, in most of these conflicting times, they are attacked by bandits from neighboring Samburu County.”

Another respondent noted that,

“Almost annually and can continue till rainy seasons. The Borana are centrally placed along the Waso Nyiro, where animals can survive during drought. Communities like Somali, Turkana, and Samburu have an approved influx in this area, so the locals (Borans) are mostly on the receiving end.”

A respondent indicated,

“Lately it has been so frequent; communities affected most include Boranas and Samburus.”

The third question was on the forms through which the conflicts took place. The respondents indicated that most conflicts took place in the form of cattle raiding, pasture and water point conflicts, boundary conflicts, theft, armed attacks on people, and destruction of property. A respondent noted that,

“The conflict involves raiding all kinds of livestock and theft, which is a great problem in our region.”

4.3.2 Ethnic Conflicts and Human Development

The second objective was to determine the effects of ethnic conflicts on human development indicators in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. There were questionnaires and interviews conducted to address the objective. Table 4.9 provides the descriptive results of the questionnaire responses.

Table 4.9: Descriptive Statistics of Effects of Ethnic Conflicts on Human Development

Statements N=339	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std Dev
Ethnic conflicts disrupt children's access to education	20 (5.9%)	31 (9.1%)	28 (8.3%)	99 (29.2%)	161 (47.5%)	4.03	1.21
Schools are often closed due to insecurity from ethnic conflicts	38 (11.2%)	83 (24.5%)	71 (20.9%)	84 (24.8%)	63 (18.6%)	3.15	1.29
Ethnic conflicts limit access to healthcare services	6 (1.8%)	13 (3.8%)	23 (6.8%)	146 (43.1%)	151 (44.5%)	4.25	0.88
Conflicts cause malnutrition due to disrupted food supplies	52 (15.3%)	59 (17.4%)	67 (19.8%)	93 (27.4%)	68 (20.1%)	3.19	1.35
Ethnic violence destroys livestock and other assets	6 (1.8%)	23 (6.8%)	19 (5.6%)	81 (23.9%)	210 (61.9%)	4.37	0.98
Conflicts force families to abandon their homes	23 (6.8%)	31 (9.1%)	143 (42.2%)	88 (26.0%)	54 (15.9%)	3.35	1.07
Ethnic conflicts create fear that prevents normal livelihood activities	17 (5.0%)	43 (12.7%)	161 (47.5%)	57 (16.8%)	61 (18.0%)	3.30	1.06

Source: Field Data, 2026

On the statement about ethnic conflicts disrupting children's access to education, 20 (5.9%) strongly disagreed, 31 (9.1%) disagreed, 28 (8.3%) were neutral, 99 (29.2%) agreed, and 161 (47.5%) strongly agreed. The mean was 4.03, and the SD was 1.21.

On the statement about schools often being closed due to insecurity from ethnic conflicts, 38 (11.2%) strongly disagreed, 83 (24.5%) disagreed, 71 (20.9%) were neutral, 84 (24.8%) agreed, and 63 (18.6%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.15, and the SD was 1.29.

On the statement about ethnic conflicts limiting access to healthcare services, 6 (1.8%) strongly disagreed, 13 (3.8%) disagreed, 23 (6.8%) were neutral, 146 (43.1%) agreed, and 151 (44.5%) strongly agreed. The mean was 4.25, and the SD was 0.88.

On the statement about conflicts causing malnutrition due to disrupted food supplies, 52 (15.3%) strongly disagreed, 59 (17.4%) disagreed, 67 (19.8%) were neutral, 93 (27.4%) agreed, and 68 (20.1%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.19, and the SD was 1.35.

On the statement about ethnic violence destroying livestock and other economic assets, 6 (1.8%) strongly disagreed, 23 (6.8%) disagreed, 19 (5.6%) were neutral, 81 (23.9%) agreed, and 210 (61.9%) strongly agreed. The mean was 4.37, and the SD was 0.98.

On the statement about conflicts forcing families to abandon their homes and settlements, 23 (6.8%) strongly disagreed, 31 (9.1%) disagreed, 143 (42.2%) were neutral, 88 (26.0%) agreed, and 54 (15.9%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.35, and the SD was 1.07.

On the statement about ethnic conflicts creating fear that prevents normal livelihood activities, 17 (5.0%) strongly disagreed, 43 (12.7%) disagreed, 161 (47.5%) were

neutral, 57 (16.8%) agreed, and 61 (18.0%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.30 and the SD was 1.06.

Therefore, according to Table 4.9, a majority of 210 (61.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 81 (23.9%) agreed on a mean of 4.37 and SD of 0.984 that ethnic violence destroyed livestock and other economic assets. An SD of 0.984 on the destruction of livestock suggested a moderate level of variation, meaning that although most respondents agreed, there were some differing opinions. Further, 151 (44.5%) strongly agreed and 146 (43.1%) agreed on a mean of 4.25 and SD of 0.786 that ethnic conflicts limited access to healthcare services in Merti Sub-County. The lower SD of 0.786 on limited access to healthcare shows a high level of agreement among respondents, with views closely aligned around the mean. Moreover, 71 (20.9%) of the respondents had a neutral opinion with a mean of 3.15 and SD of 1.291 on the statement that schools were often closed due to insecurity from ethnic conflicts. In contrast, the higher SD of 1.291 on school closures indicates greater variation in responses, suggesting that respondents had more diverse and less consistent opinions on this issue.

There were two questions asked about the determination of the effect that ethnic conflicts had on human development indicators in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. The first question required the respondents to explain how ethnic conflicts affected education, health, and economic activities in this area. The respondents indicated that some schools had closed, families were displaced, health centers were closed due to lack of drugs and personnel, and there was a high level of poverty due to cattle rustling. Additionally, the respondents indicated that communities were displaced and the conflict zone could not be easily accessed by either county or national government. Furthermore, non-locals sought transfers away from the conflicting regions.

A respondent noted that,

“Parents with children have to vacate their homes for security reasons. Such villages include Lakole, Yamicha, Koti Kore, Lafe, etc.”

A respondent indicated,

“Most learners have been left orphans, with reduced livelihoods, increased disability, and a general reduction in life expectancy.”

A respondent indicated,

“Schools in the affected areas are closed indefinitely, and people are completely displaced. A good example is HURURA mobile, which resumed this year after a long indefinite closure.”

A respondent indicated,

Economically, the community is such that places are worst hit. They lose their property and livelihoods to conflicts, and poverty sets in.”

The second question required the respondents to indicate the specific human development indicators that had been most impacted by conflicts. The responses included the youths', women's, and children's mortality; health development; education and economic growth; poor settlement; cattle grazing; business; settlement patterns; schools; and transport infrastructure.

A respondent indicated that,

“People have lost their only source of livelihood, livestock, through the conflict. Resources they have planned for over years are carried through a single raid. Poverty then sets in going forward.”

A respondent indicated that

“The teachers keep being relocated to other safer regions, affecting the learning process.”

A respondent indicated that

“People keep living in constant fear of losing their lives and livelihoods.”

4.3.3 Policy and Legal Frameworks

The third objective of the study evaluated existing policy and legal frameworks addressing ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. There were questionnaires and interviews conducted to address the objective. Table 4.10 provides the descriptive results of the questionnaire responses.

Table 4.10: Descriptive Statistics of Policy and Legal Frameworks

Statements N=339	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std Dev
I am aware of government policies	146 (43.1%)	163 (48.1%)	17 (5.0%)	4 (1.2%)	9 (2.7%)	2.34	1.79
Government policies prevent ethnic conflicts	32 (9.4%)	39 (11.5%)	47 (13.9%)	108 (31.9%)	113 (33.3%)	3.68	1.30
Security agencies respond quickly to ethnic violence	92 (27.1%)	71 (20.9%)	84 (24.8%)	67 (19.8%)	25 (7.4%)	3.01	1.01
Effective traditional conflict resolution mechanisms	23 (6.8%)	29 (8.6%)	58 (17.1%)	116 (34.2%)	113 (33.3%)	3.79	1.19
County government involves communities in peacebuilding	33 (9.7%)	76 (22.4%)	71 (20.9%)	88 (26.0%)	71 (20.9%)	3.26	1.28
Legal frameworks protect victims of ethnic conflicts	10 (2.9%)	44 (13.0%)	118 (34.8%)	89 (26.3%)	78 (23.0%)	3.53	1.07
Existing policies address the root causes	6 (1.8%)	10 (2.9%)	41 (12.1%)	167 (49.3%)	115 (33.9%)	4.11	0.85

Source: Field Data, 2026

On the statement about awareness of government policies addressing ethnic conflicts, 146 (43.1%) strongly disagreed, 163 (48.1%) disagreed, 17 (5.0%) were neutral, 4 (1.2%) agreed, and 9 (2.7%) strongly agreed. The mean was 2.34, and the SD was 1.79.

On the statement about government policies effectively preventing ethnic conflicts, 32 (9.4%) strongly disagreed, 39 (11.5%) disagreed, 47 (13.9%) were neutral, 108 (31.9%) agreed, and 113 (33.3%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.68, and the SD was 1.30.

On the statement about security agencies responding quickly to ethnic violence, 92 (27.1%) strongly disagreed, 71 (20.9%) disagreed, 84 (24.8%) were neutral, 67 (19.8%) agreed, and 25 (7.4%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.01, and the SD was 1.01.

On the statement about traditional conflict resolution mechanisms being effective, 23 (6.8%) strongly disagreed, 29 (8.6%) disagreed, 58 (17.1%) were neutral, 116 (34.2%) agreed, and 113 (33.3%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.79, and the SD was 1.19.

On the statement about county government involving communities in peacebuilding initiatives, 33 (9.7%) strongly disagreed, 76 (22.4%) disagreed, 71 (20.9%) were neutral, 88 (26.0%) agreed, and 71 (20.9%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.26, and the SD was 1.28.

On the statement about legal frameworks adequately protecting victims of ethnic conflicts, 10 (2.9%) strongly disagreed, 44 (13.0%) disagreed, 118 (34.8%) were neutral, 89 (26.3%) agreed, and 78 (23.0%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.53 and the SD was 1.07.

On the statement about existing policies addressing the root causes of ethnic conflicts, 6 (1.8%) strongly disagreed, 10 (2.9%) disagreed, 41 (12.1%) were neutral, 167

(49.3%) agreed, and 115 (33.9%) strongly agreed. The mean was 4.11 and the SD was 0.85.

Therefore, as per Table 4.10, the majority of the respondents, 115 (33.9%), strongly agreed, and 167 (49.3%) agreed on a mean of 4.11 and SD of 0.85 that existing policies addressed the root causes of ethnic conflicts. Notably, 92 (27.1%) strongly disagreed, 71 (20.9%) disagreed, and 84 (24.8%) of the respondents were neutral on a mean of 3.01 and SD of 1.01 that security agencies responded quickly to ethnic violence. However, the majority of the respondents, 146 (43.1%), strongly disagreed, and 163 (48.1%) disagreed, with a mean of 2.34 and SD of 1.79 that they were aware of government policies addressing ethnic conflicts.

There were three questions asked to evaluate existing policy and legal frameworks addressing ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. The first question required the respondents to name the existing policies and legal frameworks to address ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County. The various policies and legal frameworks mentioned included a peacebuilding and conflict resolution framework, a local peace structure, policies related to disarming local communities, policies on strict bordering, national cohesion and integration, and the policy of community Dedha that guides grazing patterns and declarations. For instance, a respondent revealed that

“There are community Dedha, which are by-laws that guide warring communities on prudent use and management of resources.”

Additionally, there were other policies that support the anti-stock unit, which is mainly involved in retracking lost animals, controlled grazing policies, and punishment for livestock theft. There were also respondents who mentioned that they were not aware of such policies from the government. A respondent mentioned that.

“I'm not aware of government policies and legal frameworks in place because nothing has changed over the years, if at all there's such a policy to strictly address them.”

The study also inquired about the effectiveness of these frameworks in preventing and managing conflicts. They mentioned that these policies and frameworks were majorly ineffective, but a low margin of the respondents supported their effectiveness, especially in disarming community members, scaring livestock thieves, enhancing dialogue, and promoting peace and unity. The majority of the respondents that were against their effectiveness complained of protection of culprits, difficulties in tracing offenders, corruption, and bribery. For instance, a respondent indicated that

“Members of a community tend to defend or hide offenders from their own tribe, while others bribe officers to avoid being punished.”

A respondent indicated that,

“After committing an offense, some perpetrators flee to other areas, making it hard for security agencies to track and arrest them.”

The third question required the respondents to explain how the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms complemented formal systems. The various conflict resolution mechanisms implemented included compensating victims of cattle raiding; settling disputes and cattle rustling through elders' engagement (most cases are handled at home and the communal level, hence strengthening out-of-court case resolution); the Detha system and Sera, which guides everyone; elders working closely with local administration harmoniously; and community meetings, trust, and dialogues. A respondent indicated that,

“The recent KOM-TRIANGLE cross-community meeting brought together communities from Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit Counties to agree on rules and guidelines on resource sharing.”

4.3.4 Challenges in Conflict Management

The fourth objective of the study aimed to identify challenges in managing ethnic conflicts for enhanced human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. There were questionnaires and interviews conducted to address the objective. Table 4.11 provides the descriptive results of the questionnaire responses.

Table 4.11: Descriptive Statistics of Challenges in Conflict Management

Statements N=339	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std Dev
Lack of resources limits conflict management efforts	29 (8.6%)	10 (2.9%)	164 (48.4%)	103 (30.4%)	33 (9.7%)	3.30	0.99
Weak enforcement of laws contributes to continued ethnic conflicts	8 (2.4%)	7 (2.1%)	12 (3.5%)	93 (27.4%)	219 (64.6%)	4.50	0.85
Traditional conflict resolution systems have weakened over time	39 (11.5%)	19 (5.6%)	148 (43.7%)	101 (29.8%)	32 (9.4%)	3.20	1.08
Political interference undermines peace efforts	27 (8.0%)	24 (7.1%)	28 (8.3%)	84 (24.8%)	176 (51.9%)	4.05	0.95
Communities lack trust in government conflict resolution mechanisms	14 (4.1%)	22 (6.5%)	159 (46.9%)	101 (29.8%)	43 (12.7%)	3.40	0.94
Poor coordination between agencies hinders conflict management	16 (4.7%)	19 (5.6%)	149 (44.0%)	138 (40.7%)	17 (5.0%)	3.36	0.85
Availability of weapons makes conflict management difficult	10 (2.9%)	16 (4.7%)	39 (11.5%)	116 (34.2%)	158 (46.6%)	4.17	1.01

Source: Field Data, 2026

On the statement about lack of resources limiting conflict management efforts, 29 (8.6%) strongly disagreed, 10 (2.9%) disagreed, 164 (48.4%) were neutral, 103 (30.4%) agreed, and 33 (9.7%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.30, and the SD was 0.99.

On the statement about weak enforcement of laws contributing to continued ethnic conflicts, 8 (2.4%) strongly disagreed, 7 (2.1%) disagreed, 12 (3.5%) were neutral, 93 (27.4%) agreed, and 219 (64.6%) strongly agreed. The mean was 4.50, and the SD was 0.85.

On the statement about traditional conflict resolution systems having weakened over time, 39 (11.5%) strongly disagreed, 19 (5.6%) disagreed, 148 (43.7%) were neutral, 101 (29.8%) agreed, and 32 (9.4%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.20, and the SD was 1.08.

On the statement about political interference undermining peace efforts, 27 (8.0%) strongly disagreed, 24 (7.1%) disagreed, 28 (8.3%) were neutral, 84 (24.8%) agreed, and 176 (51.9%) strongly agreed. The mean was 4.05, and the SD was 0.95.

On the statement about communities lacking trust in government conflict resolution mechanisms, 14 (4.1%) strongly disagreed, 22 (6.5%) disagreed, 159 (46.9%) were neutral, 101 (29.8%) agreed, and 43 (12.7%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.40, and the SD was 0.94.

On the statement about poor coordination between agencies hindering conflict management, 16 (4.7%) strongly disagreed, 19 (5.6%) disagreed, 149 (44.0%) were neutral, 138 (40.7%) agreed, and 17 (5.0%) strongly agreed. The mean was 3.36, and the SD was 0.85.

On the statement about availability of weapons making conflict management difficult, 10 (2.9%) strongly disagreed, 16 (4.7%) disagreed, 39 (11.5%) were neutral, 116

(34.2%) agreed, and 158 (46.6%) strongly agreed. The mean was 4.17, and the SD was 1.01.

The data in Table 4.11 shows that more than half of the respondents, 219 (64.6%), strongly agreed, and 93 (27.4%) agreed on a mean of 4.50 and SD of 0.854 that weak enforcement of laws contributed to continued ethnic conflicts. Moreover, 158 (46.65%) strongly agreed and 116 (34.2%) agreed on a mean of 4.17 and SD of 1.005 that availability of weapons made conflict management difficult. Also, 148 (43.7%) of the respondents had a neutral opinion with a mean of 3.20 and SD of 1.075 that traditional conflict resolution systems had weakened over time.

There were two questions asked to evaluate existing policy and legal frameworks addressing ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. The first question required the respondents to indicate the main challenges in managing ethnic conflicts for improved human development.

political interference, scarcity of natural resources, weak governance and implementation of laws, remoteness, long dry spells, harmful cultural practices, increased revenge missions, bias by those disciplining the culprits, insecurity, poor transport networks, and lack of trust among communities. For instance, a respondent mentioned,

“There is mistrust due to failure to observe resolutions passed in meetings and not following grazing protocols.”

There were also other concerns related to corruption, availability of illegal weapons, poverty, displacement of people, destruction of infrastructure, drug and substance abuse, lack of motivation among community members, and strong ethnic loyalty among idle youths. A respondent indicated that

“Samburu and Turkana people follow their cultures; that is why all the time they kill people of Merti.”

On the second question, the study inquired about the recommendations that the respondents would suggest for more effective conflict management. The recommendations suggested by the respondents were enforcement of government policy that curbs cattle rustling; strengthening peace structure and improving law enforcement through establishing peace resolution committees; support from the government; digging of boreholes and dams for domestic and livestock use; and making security surveillance by patrol vehicle standby apart from the Kenya police reservist. A respondent mentioned that.

“Merti Sub-County needs more Kenyan police reservists to improve security.”

Further, the respondents suggested building a road network and good infrastructures. Fast response to the emergency; Ensure that there are strict boundaries between the borders of the grazing area; the community and legal framework that exist should be followed strictly.

A respondent mentioned that.

“Leaders from all the neighborhoods are to meet and come up with solutions to these issues of cattle raiding and pasture-using patterns as pertains to areas to be preserved to be used during dry seasons.”

Additionally, there were other recommendations such as leveling the playing ground for all warring communities. Disarming community members involved in cattle raiding; Shift from the traditional lifestyle and adoption of new economic activities; Return of stolen livestock; Community land registration to ensure everyone stays on his land.

A respondent mentioned that.

“Let people stay in their own land without moving to other people's regions and cause conflicts.”

Another respondent mentioned that,

“Communities in conflict zones to strengthen and respect the bylaws and agreement that guides resource use and management.”

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The study assessed the impact of ethnic conflicts on human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya, and proposed sustainable conflict management strategies that foster improved human development outcomes and promote peaceful coexistence among pastoralist communities in the region. Specifically, the study examined the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts, effects of ethnic conflicts on human development indicators, existing policy and legal frameworks addressing ethnic conflicts, and challenges in managing ethnic conflicts for enhanced human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. The study collected data from 339 household heads and 37 key informants.

5.2 Discussion

The section provides a discussion of the results as per each objective of the study.

5.2.1 What is the prevalence and nature of ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya?

The prevalence of cattle raiding was relatively high in specific areas of Merti Sub-County, triggering the community members into communal clashes and spreading fear in non-conflicting communities. Similarly, Osinde (2023) also found out that competition for natural resources in the ASAL region was a major cause for conflict, hence establishing the underlying reason to establish conflict management strategies. IOM (2023b) agreed that regions with consistent pastoralism activities were mainly affected by cattle raiding, leading to clashes as the owners protect their livestock.

Cattle raiding and competition for natural resources were similarly noted as challenges affecting pastoralist communities in Samburu County by a report of the County Government of Samburu (2023). The only difference remained that the resolution system applied differed on communal pacts to minimize interference of resources by external tribes. Mohamed (2025) complained that persistent climatic changes with extended periods of drought brought about increased tension across communities, especially on available resources such as water and pasture.

The interview responses affirmed that cattle raiding, pasture, and water were the major conflict causal factors that led to increased conflict in Meri Sub-County. These conflicts affected Borana and Samburu communities. The conflicts were also discovered to happen regularly within monthly, semi-annual, annual, and dry periods and during political campaigns. These timelines forced mostly the Borana and Samburu communities to undergo loss of lives, have their properties destroyed, and experience displacements. Limiri (2022) confirmed that in Isiolo County, the Borana communities were mainly affected by cattle rustling as a form of ethnic clashes. These findings are consistent with Keter *et al.* (2025), who established that the ethnic clashes were frequently affecting the ASAL regions such as Isiolo and Samburu Counties, at times fueled by dry periods and local politics of the regions.

5.2.2 What are the effects of ethnic conflicts on human development indicators in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya?

The results imply that as a result of ethnic clashes, there were various impacts related to destruction of property, loss of livestock, and limited access to healthcare services. The conflicting communities made it hard for the healthcare services to be dispensed as required by the healthcare officers. As per the results provided in Table 4.5, it was clear the negative consequences of ethnic conflicts led to economic stagnation at the

community level. This affected the income and livelihood capacity of the community, which are very important towards human development. The loss of livestock was also found out by Mauerman *et al.* (2023) as a major blow to the community members whose livelihood is reliant on their ability to keep livestock as not only a source of income but wealth.

Further, when the community engaged in ethnic clashes is unable to access health care, their general well-being is affected, leading to unproductivity. The inability of the injured members to access immediate healthcare as a result of ethnic clashes was discovered by Jerono (2021) to have increased casualties affecting the general progress of the community. Notably, the study also found out that the education system was moderately affected by the ethnic clashes. This was an indication that even though there was insecurity and disruption caused by the clashes, the experiences varied across various communities. The results are contrary to Osinde (2023), who noted a uniform disruption to the economy and education of the conflicting communities. This was when the schools were closed due to increased insecurity in the region. The current study's findings noted that this was different, as the disruption did not affect the entire sub-county but specific regions where ethnic conflicts took place.

The interview results reinforce the questionnaires by indicating that ethnic conflict majorly caused displacement across households, closure of schools, limited medical services in health centers leading to closure, and increased poverty rates once livestock are stolen. Further, the results have indicated loss of lives, poor economic growth, and poor road infrastructure as major human development factors affected by ethnic conflicts. These factors collectively demonstrate that ethnic conflicts have far-reaching and multidimensional effects on human development. While the questionnaires statistically demonstrate that ethnic conflicts significantly affect livelihoods and access

to healthcare, the interview findings provide contextual evidence by illustrating how displacement, livestock theft, and insecurity lead to increased poverty, closure of schools, and disruption of health services. Both sets of results consistently indicate that ethnic conflicts have widespread negative effects on human development.

5.2.3 What are existing policy and legal frameworks addressing ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya?

The results imply that the respondents were in agreement that there were various policies in place as established by both national and county governments to address the main cause for ethnic conflicts. Their development could have been informed through engaging government experts' knowledge on the ethnic clashes. The patterns of violence were identified, leading to the established security agencies managing the violence situations before they escalated to mass deaths and property destruction. Agreeing with the results, Otieno (2023) discovered that 'ethnic clash'-prone regions had been served with new police posts to improve response turnaround time. The only difference with the current study is that due to the vast region Merti-Sub-county was spaced in, it became could have been more challenging for the security agencies to respond quickly. This gave the community members an impression that the security agencies responded to incidences on average and not as effectively as they expected. In agreement, Gerlak *et al.* (2025) noted that the sparse spacing of pastoralists in ASAL regions like Isiolo County had resulted in increased response times by the agencies when ethnic clashes occurred.

It was, however, noted in the current study that the community members were not personally aware of various government policies addressing ethnic conflicts. This, therefore, may mean that as the government were developing various policies, their

communication system to community members on various stages of policy development was ineffective (Carlin *et al.*, 2022). Overall, these findings demonstrate that while existing policy and legal frameworks may address the root causes of ethnic conflicts, challenges in implementation, responsiveness, and public awareness hinder their effectiveness. Similar patterns were established by Ngoyoni (2021), who discovered that major policy-related issues pertained to their consistency in implementation and public awareness. Lack of involvement of the public in policy development made it extremely difficult for the community members to own its implementation guidelines. These findings are consistent with Otieno (2023), who found out that there was a positive influence between public awareness and policy implementation in addressing communal conflicts. This relates to the study by emphasising the effectiveness of policy implementation, supported by public awareness and stakeholder involvement, as critical for successful conflict resolution.

The interview results compliment the responses obtained from the questionnaires by revealing that there were both formal and informal frameworks present which included peacebuilding and conflict resolution frameworks, local peace structures, disarmament policies, strict border control measures, and national cohesion initiatives. There were also traditional systems such as the Dedha, compensation for cattle raiding, dispute resolution through elders, community dialogues, and inter-community agreements (such as cross-county peace meetings), which were highlighted as important community-based mechanisms. Both formal and informal frameworks/systems were faced with significant challenges such as corruption, bribery, protection of the offenders by community members, and tracking difficulties. The results align with the United Nations Development Programme. (2024b), who also suggested the need for both formal and informal conflict resolution mechanisms, spanning across policy

frameworks to traditional systems. These findings are consistent with Mutambo *et al.* (2025), who emphasised informal communal agreements between conflicting communities. These findings are consistent with Moler (2022), who found out that despite a mixture of various policies and local solutions, concerns related to selective punishments of offenders weakened the conflict resolution frameworks.

5.2.4 What are the challenges in managing ethnic conflicts for enhanced human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya?

The results point out that among the challenges experienced by community members in the management of conflict was weak enforcement of the law by the security agencies. This was whereby the culprits of the conflict were hardly punished even when arrested. This therefore diminished the trust levels among the pastoralism communities, resulting in self-protection through owning weapons. The weapons complicated the process of management of conflict more, as the conflict was escalated to dangerous thresholds of loss of lives. It is thus notable the relaxation by the security agencies in the enforcement of the law had pushed the community members into protecting themselves by owning crude and firearm weapons.

In agreement with the findings, Koech (2025) found out that the national and county governments in West Pokot had resorted to an operation of disarming the local community members in the fight against cattle raiding. These findings are also consistent, as Mbijiwe (2021) identified that household ownership of weapons was a limiting factor towards addressing inter-tribal clashes, and Osman (2024) found out that the underlying reason was weak implementation of the law and weak traditional conflict resolution systems. The results align with the current study's findings that the systems established through the leadership of local elders were weakening, resulting in community members not following such guidelines. According to the findings by

Orimaye *et al.* (2025), traditional methods of resolving conflict may have been weakened by modernisation across different communities, with most members not following the localised guidelines.

The interview findings reveal that numerous interconnected challenges hindered effective management of ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, thereby directly addressing the fourth objective. Key challenges identified include political interference, scarcity of natural resources, weak governance and poor implementation of laws, insecurity, and lack of trust among communities. Additional factors such as corruption, proliferation of illegal weapons, poverty, harmful cultural practices, and strong ethnic loyalties among idle youth further exacerbate conflicts. Structural barriers like poor infrastructure, remoteness, and delayed emergency response also limit effective intervention (Kamais & Mosol, 2022).

Despite these challenges, respondents proposed practical solutions such as strengthening law enforcement, enhancing peace structures, increasing government support, improving infrastructure, promoting disarmament, and encouraging adherence to both formal policies and traditional by-laws. Collectively, these findings highlight a similar outcome to the International Crisis Group (2023): addressing both institutional weaknesses and socio-cultural factors is essential for improving conflict management and achieving better human development outcomes in the region.

5.3 Conclusions of the Study

The study noted that ethnic conflicts had a negative impact on human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. The conflicts disrupted access to essential social services such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, thereby lowering the overall quality of life among affected communities.

5.3.1 Prevalence and Nature of Ethnic Conflicts

The prevalence of the cattle raiding was concluded to be relatively high in specific areas of Merti Sub-County, triggering the community members into communal clashes and spreading fear in non-conflicting communities. This was due to increased cases of cattle raiding and competition for scarce water resources and pasture. The ethnic conflicts were witnessed monthly, semi-annually, annually, during dry periods, and during political campaigns. The prevalence of ethnic conflicts among Borana and Samburu communities was relatively higher than with Turkana. Among the Borana community, the tribes of Gabra and Sakuye were relatively engaged in ethnic conflicts with a high prevalence, with the nature of conflicts being theft of livestock, loss of lives, displacement of households, and destruction of properties.

5.3.2 Effects of Ethnic Conflicts on Human Development

The effects of ethnic conflicts on human development indicators in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya, were concluded to be harmful, with human indicators being loss of lives, poor economic growth, increased poverty rates due to loss of livestock, disrupted healthcare systems, and poor road infrastructure. Nevertheless, education was selectively affected as it related to the precise location where conflict was taking place and not the entire Merti-Sub County.

5.3.3 Policy and Legal Frameworks in Addressing Ethnic Conflicts

The policy and legal frameworks in addressing ethnic conflicts noted included both formal and informal frameworks such as peacebuilding and conflict resolution frameworks, local peace structures, disarmament policies, strict border control measures, and national cohesion initiatives. Nevertheless, despite their existence in addressing root causes of ethnic conflicts, the public had low awareness of their

existence and thus were ineffective in addressing ethnic conflicts. The traditional systems, such as Dedha, were recommended as the ultimate solution to minimize the conflict. However, corruption, protection of the offenders by community members, and tracking of culprits of conflicts affected the effectiveness of the policies.

5.3.4 Challenges in Managing Ethnic Conflicts for Enhanced Human Development

The challenges in managing ethnic conflicts for enhanced human development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya, included weak enforcement of laws, availability of weapons to community members, political interference, scarcity of natural resources, weak governance and poor implementation of laws, insecurity, lack of trust among communities, corruption, proliferation of illegal weapons, poverty, harmful cultural practices, and strong ethnic loyalties among idle youth that further exacerbate conflicts.

5.4 Recommendations of the Study

- i. The study recommends that there should be increased public awareness and civic education by national government on existing peacebuilding and conflict resolution policies to enhance their effectiveness.
- ii. The study recommends that the county government and relevant security agencies strengthen early warning and response systems to address the high prevalence of ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County, particularly during these seasons and political periods.
- iii. Sustainable management of scarce resources such as water and pasture should be prioritized to reduce competition among communities, especially the Borana and Samburu.
- iv. Additionally, community-based peacebuilding initiatives and dialogue forums should be enhanced to address cattle raiding, livestock theft, and retaliatory

attacks, with special attention given to conflict-prone groups such as the Gabra and Sakuye.

- v. To mitigate the negative effects of ethnic conflicts on human development, the study recommends the implementation of post-conflict recovery programs, including livelihood restoration through livestock restocking and economic empowerment initiatives.
- vi. Strengthening healthcare systems to ensure service continuity during conflicts is essential, alongside improving infrastructure such as roads to enhance access and security.
- vii. Education interventions, including mobile schooling and safe learning environments, should be introduced in conflict-prone areas to minimize disruption and ensure continuity of learning.
- viii. There is also a need to strengthen coordination between formal and informal institutions, including local peace committees.
- ix. Traditional systems such as the Dedha should be integrated into formal governance structures, while stricter measures must be taken to address corruption, political interference, and the protection of offenders, which undermine the effectiveness of these frameworks.
- x. To address the challenges in managing ethnic conflicts, the study recommends strengthening law enforcement and ensuring consistent implementation of laws to deter criminal activities.
- xi. Comprehensive disarmament initiatives should be carried out to curb the proliferation of illegal weapons.
- xii. Long-term solutions to resource scarcity, such as investment in water and climate adaptation projects, should be prioritized.

- xiii. Furthermore, youth empowerment programs, peace education, and initiatives that promote inter-community trust and cohesion are critical in reducing ethnic tensions and fostering sustainable human development in Merti Sub-County.

5.5 Suggestion for Future Studies

The study was conducted in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya; hence, future studies could extend to other sub-counties and counties in the assessment of the effect of ethnic conflicts on human development. Furthermore, the study collected data at one point in time; hence, future studies could consider longitudinal studies for an extensive period of time to determine the severity of ethnic conflicts. This could involve inclusion of focus group discussions with the community leaders and women who were few in the current study. Future studies could also include all household members and not just household heads to ensure that the women are involved in expressing their opinion on ethnic clashes.

Future studies should also explore the role of climate change, resource scarcity, and migration patterns in intensifying or mitigating ethnic conflicts among pastoralist communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Introduction Letter

To Whom It May Concern,

RE: REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

I am Boru Adhi Jattani, a Master of Science student in Governance, Peace and Security Studies at Africa Nazarene University, registration number 110062431. I am conducting research titled "Impact of Ethnic Conflicts on Human Development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya" as part of my degree requirements.

You have been selected to participate in this study. Your participation is voluntary and involves completing a questionnaire/participating in an interview that will take approximately 30-45 minutes. All information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

I kindly request your cooperation and honest responses. Your participation will contribute valuable insights toward understanding ethnic conflicts and informing policy interventions for enhanced human development in Merti Sub-County.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Boru Adhi Jattani

Researcher

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for Household Respondents

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire seeks to collect information on ethnic conflicts and human development in Merti Sub-County. Your responses will be treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes. Kindly answer all questions honestly.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Age: 18-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56 and above ☐
3. Ethnic Group: Borana ☐ Somali ☐ Turkana ☐ Samburu ☐ Other (specify)

4. Ward: Chari ☐ Cherab ☐
5. Highest Level of Education: No formal education ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐
College/University ☐
6. Main Occupation: Pastoralist ☐ Trader ☐ Farmer ☐ Civil servant ☐ Other
(specify) _____

SECTION B: PREVALENCE AND NATURE OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS

Using the scale below, indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Ethnic conflicts are common in Merti Sub-County					
2.	Competition over water resources causes ethnic					

	conflicts in this area					
3.	Competition over grazing lands triggers violence between ethnic groups					
4.	Cattle raiding is a major form of ethnic conflict in Merti Sub-County					
5.	Political leaders manipulate ethnic differences during elections					
6.	Small arms and weapons have increased the severity of ethnic conflicts					
7.	Climate change and drought have intensified ethnic conflicts					

SECTION C: EFFECTS OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Using the scale below, indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree:

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Ethnic conflicts disrupt children's access to education in our community					
2.	Schools are often closed due to insecurity from ethnic conflicts					
3.	Ethnic conflicts limit access to healthcare					

	services in Merti Sub-County					
4.	Conflicts cause malnutrition due to disrupted food supplies					
5.	Ethnic violence destroys livestock and other economic assets					
6.	Conflicts force families to abandon their homes and settlements					
7.	Ethnic conflicts create fear that prevents normal livelihood activities					

SECTION D: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Using the scale below, indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree:

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1.	I am aware of government policies addressing ethnic conflicts					
2.	Government policies effectively prevent					

	ethnic conflicts in our area					
3.	Security agencies respond quickly to ethnic violence					
4.	Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are effective					
5.	County government involves communities in peacebuilding initiatives					
6.	Legal frameworks adequately protect victims of ethnic conflicts					
7.	Existing policies address the root causes of ethnic conflicts					

SECTION E: CHALLENGES IN MANAGING ETHNIC CONFLICTS

Using the scale below, indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree:

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Lack of resources limits conflict management efforts					
2.	Weak enforcement of laws contributes to continued ethnic conflicts					
3.	Traditional conflict resolution systems have weakened over time					
4.	Political interference undermines peace efforts					
5.	Communities lack trust in government conflict resolution mechanisms					
6.	Poor coordination between agencies hinders conflict management					

7.	Availability of weapons makes conflict management difficult					
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Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Key Informants

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes. All responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

Section A: Prevalence and Nature of Ethnic Conflicts

1. What are the main causes of ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County?
2. How frequently do ethnic conflicts occur, and which communities are most affected?
3. What forms do these conflicts take (e.g., cattle raiding, land disputes)?

Section B: Effects on Human Development

4. How have ethnic conflicts affected education, health, and economic activities in this area?
5. What specific human development indicators have been most impacted by conflicts?

Section C: Policy and Legal Frameworks

6. What policies and legal frameworks exist to address ethnic conflicts in Merti Sub-County?
7. How effective are these frameworks in preventing and managing conflicts?
8. How do traditional conflict resolution mechanisms complement formal systems?

Section D: Challenges in Conflict Management

9. What are the main challenges in managing ethnic conflicts for improved human development?
10. What recommendations would you suggest for more effective conflict management?

Appendix 4: Introduction Letter from ANU



P.O.Box: 53067 – 00200
Nairobi, Kenya.
Tel: 020 252 7170/1 – 5
Email: vc@anu.ac.ke
www.anu.ac.ke

23rd February, 2026

Dr. David Ngigi
Ag. Director General /CEO
National Commission for Science & Technology
And Innovation (NACOSTI)
Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete
P. O. Box 30623 -00100
Nairobi, KENYA

Dear Sir,

RE: RESEARCH PERMIT: BORU ADHI JATTANI (Student ID# 110062431)

This is to confirm that Boru Adhi Jattani (Student ID# 110062431) is a bona fide Master of Arts student at Africa Nazarene University (ANU), School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS). He is pursuing Master of Arts in Governance, Peace and Security Studies, a program that entails both coursework and thesis.

Boru successfully completed his coursework and defended his thesis proposal entitled:

"Impact of Ethnic Conflicts on Human Development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya."

We kindly request that he be granted the necessary research permit to facilitate data collection and the successful completion of his thesis. Any assistance provided to him in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Faithfully,

Prof. Orpha K. Ongiti
Dean, Postgraduate Studies & Director, Institute of Research

Appendix 5: Authorization Letter from Isiolo County Government

Boru Adhi Jattani
Reg No: 110062431
Africa Nazarene University.

3/3/2026

County Secretary,
County Government of Isiolo,
P.O. Box 36 – 60300,
Isiolo, Kenya.



Dear Sir/Madam

RE: AUTHORIZATION REQUEST LETTER

I am a postgraduate student at Africa Nazarene University, Kenya pursuing Master of Science in Governance, Peace and Security studies degree. As part of course completion, I am required to conduct a study in my field and I am conducting a study on the Impact of Ethnic Conflicts on Human Development in Merti Sub-County, Isiolo County, Kenya. The study would like to collect data from government officials including the sub-county administrator, ward administrators, education officers, and health officers.

I humbly request that you grant authorization to data collection process. The findings will provide empirical evidence to inform the design and implementation of more effective conflict management policies on human development interventions in Merti Sub-County and similar pastoral contexts. The study will highlight gaps in existing policy frameworks and offer recommendations for strengthening government responses to ethnic conflicts in arid and semi-arid lands.

Thank you for your consideration

Yours faithfully

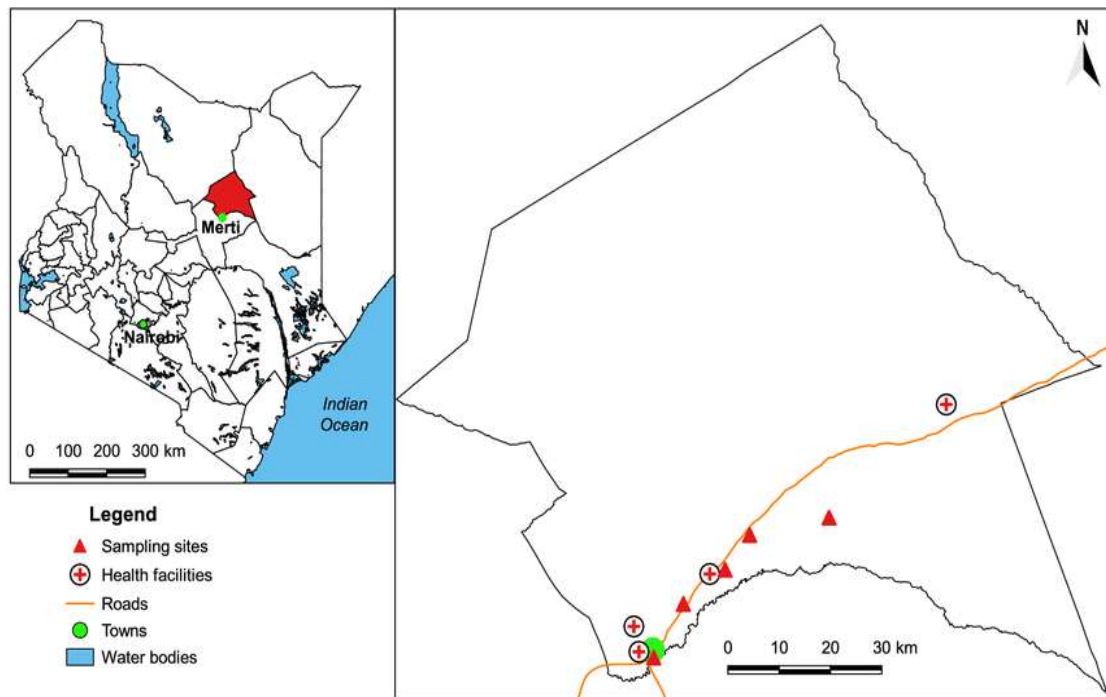
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Jattani', is written over a circular official stamp.

Boru Adhi Jattani
Reg No: 110062431

Appendix 6: NACOSTI Permit

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 806490	Date of Issue: 27/February/2026
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Mr., BORU ADHI JATTANI of Africa Nazarene University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Isiolo on the topic: IMPACT OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN MERTI SUB-COUNTY, ISIOLO COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending : 27/February/2027.	
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Appendix 7: Map of the Study



Source: QGIS from administrative boundaries, roads, and health facility data