

**CULTURAL FACTORS THAT ENHANCE INTER-ETHNIC CONFLICT  
RESOLUTION IN LAISAMIS SUB-COUNTY, MARSABIT COUNTY, KENYA**

**BURSUNA EJERE**

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Conferment of Master of Arts Degree in Sociology of Maasai Mara University**

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## DECLARATION AND APPROVAL

### Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for any award in any university.

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Bursuna Ejere

Registration Number: AM09/1014/2013

### Approval

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors.

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Dr Kennedy Karani Onyiko, PhD

Designation: Lecturer

Department of Social Studies

School of Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Creative Industries

Maasai Mara University, Kenya

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Dr Maurice Josphat Oduor Omollo, PhD

Designation: Lecturer

Department of Environmental Studies, Geography and Agriculture

School of Natural Resources, Animal Sciences, Hospitality and Leisure Studies

Maasai Mara University, Kenya

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my spouse Ahatho Ekalo EIA/EA Lead Expert, my son Derache Gayere Bursuna and my daughter Haloya Gayere Bursuna. I also extend my dedication to my lovely departed parents. Thank you and God bless you all.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Africa experiences significant levels of inter-ethnic conflict. These conflicts have caused loss of life and property, human displacement, cattle rustling and slow socio-economic growth. This study sought to investigate how cultural factors enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County in Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to; to determine the influence of rite of passage on inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya, to establish the extent to which traditional leadership structures enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya, to assess the role played by gender in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya and to assess the influence of community livelihood on inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya. The study used mixed research design. The target population constituted 292 leaders of Laisamis Sub-county. A sample of 123 respondents was selected using both purposive and simple random sampling methods. The study used a questionnaire, key informant interview schedule and focus group discussions guide to collect data. Response from key informant interviews and focus group discussions were organized into themes and analyzed qualitatively. The findings were presented using frequencies and percentages. The results indicated that cultural factors do indeed enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in the study area. Majority of the respondents indicated that the rite of passage, traditional leadership, gender and nomadic lifestyle have an influence on inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county of Marsabit County. The study concluded that most of the conflicts in Laisamis could be resolved through proper sensitization of the youth during the rites of passage ceremonies. Effective traditional leadership also plays a role in enhancing conflict resolution in the area. Gender and nomadic lifestyle also had an influence on the effectiveness of conflict resolution. There is therefore need to sensitize the communities on the most appropriate inter-ethnic conflict resolution strategies found in the local cultural attributes and activities. This study is expected to add value to the existing theories on conflict resolution and to existing knowledge in the field of inter-ethnic conflict resolution. Besides, it is expected to provide information to different organs of the government and stakeholders with interest on the inter-ethnic conflict resolution.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>AMISOM:</b>	African Union Mission in Somalia
<b>AU:</b>	African Union
<b>CG:</b>	County Government
<b>CSOs:</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>IDPs:</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>ISIS:</b>	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
<b>KHRC:</b>	Kenya Human Rights Commission
<b>MCA:</b>	Member of County Assembly
<b>MCG:</b>	Marsabit County Government
<b>MP:</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>NACOSTI:</b>	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
<b>NATO:</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NG:</b>	National Government
<b>NGOs:</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>NSS:</b>	National Stabilization Strategy
<b>SCG:</b>	Samburu County Government
<b>SGBV:</b>	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>SPSS:</b>	Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS)
<b>UNDP:</b>	United Nation Development Programme
<b>UNESCO:</b>	United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Conflicts are part of any human society, according to Shoup (2008), the most common conflicts that occur in various parts of the world are the cases of inter-state and intra-state conflicts. Research indicates that while inter-state conflicts have reduced since the end of the Cold War, intra-state conflicts have been increasing in various parts of the globe and have taken an ethnic dimension. The world has witnessed a considerable rise of conflicts in many states and a notable type of conflict that has widely spread is one caused between groups of ethnic communities. Inter-ethnic conflicts therefore, have begun to receive attention globally, regionally, nationally and locally (Shoup, 2008).

At the global arena, these conflicts may be due to internal and external factors. Druanna (2015), in his thesis cited factors such as name dispute and self-identity between Greece and Macedonia as being among the causes of ethnic conflict, and the external military intervention from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) increased the conflict, instead of curbing it due to failure to understand the issues at local level. This demonstrates the need to address conflicts by developing local mechanisms that are suitable and appropriate.

Africa has a high level of violent conflicts not just in situations where law and order have broken down entirely, but also where conditions are said to be relatively stable (Murithi, 2006). According to Suliman (1996), there is no single cause of conflict nor is there often any single precondition for sustainable peace. The vast majority of

groups engaged in contemporary armed conflicts define themselves based on their identity, whether of a national, ethnic or cultural character (Mulu, 2008). This sharpens ethnic identity and chauvinism promoting the doctrine that those specific regions of a country 'belong' to the groups who originally occupied them in what is termed as autochthonous claims. This is further complicated by perceived inequalities among cultural groups in economic well-being, access to power as for instance seen between Turkana and the Pokot of Kenya. The difference in ethnic groups in the society, inequalities and competition for resources and political positions has led to inter-ethnic conflicts.

In Marsabit County and Laisamis Sub-county in particular, several conflict resolution mechanisms such as combat operation, mediation, litigation, negotiation and arbitration have not been effective though they have been used before. This study therefore, looked at how cultural factors such as rite of passage, traditional leadership, gender and livelihood enhance conflict resolution among ethnic groups in the study area; since contemporary or conventional methods such as combat operation, litigation and mediation have been in use and are not offering long lasting solutions. Therefore, the study drives an interest on use of cultural, indigenous, homegrown solutions or methods to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts.

Since independence, many parts of Kenya have experienced perpetual inter-ethnic conflicts and insecurity. According to Cherutich (2016), there were three main waves of inter-ethnic conflicts in the Kenyan history. First, was in the Rift Valley Province in 1991-1994, second, was at Coast Province in 1997 as well as the Rift Valley Province in 1998, and the third, the Post-Election Violence (PEV) of 2007-2008 in

most parts of Kenya. The PEV led to over one thousand (1000) deaths and more than six hundred and fifty thousand (650,000) people displaced leading to what came to be known as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies are prone to conflicts due to differences in lifestyle and other factors like political competition, ethnocentrism, thus these conflicts need mechanisms or ways of resolving them (Mworia & Ndiku, 2012).

In Kenya, conflicts among communities have been witnessed. For instance, the Turkana and Pokot have had sporadic conflicts. Their conflicts arise due to scarcity and competition over pasture and water as well as border and boundary disputes. These disputes are compounded by minimum routine interaction and communication between the two communities (Adano, et al., 2012). A predominantly agricultural potential land combined with consolidation, adjudication and registration of land defined territorial concepts of ethnic living space within the country and county. These have combined in various degrees to make land in Kenya a volatile political issue as evidenced by the clashes in the Rift Valley in 1992, 1997 and 2007 (Mworia & Ndiku, 2012). The pastoral communities in Kenya clash over traditional grazing lands. The conflict is made worse by harsh climatic conditions, recurrent droughts and marginalization of pastoral communities from main stream development.

One region in Kenya that is prone to violent inter-ethnic conflicts is Northern Kenya, which is an area covered by the counties of Marsabit, Samburu, Isiolo, Turkana, Mandera and Wajir (Mwaniki, 2014). The area is largely remote, arid and semi-arid with isolated cases of high-altitude regions. Majority of the residents are pastoralists making it prone to conflicts caused by competition over scarce pasture and water and



the infamous cattle rustling which is severe and violent. This study aims at highlighting possible solution to this state of affairs by investigating how cultural factors and attributes could be useful in solving inter-ethnic conflicts.

According to past studies, the real causes of inter-ethnic violence in the region relate to cattle rustling, regional disparities, marginalization, resource scarcity, inadequacy of socio-economic investment in the region, political incitement, and availability of guns or gun-culture and ethnic animosity (Mwaniki, 2014). Too often conflict resolution is used as a cover-all term that fails to face up to the different processes involved in the reduction or elimination of violence. There seems to be very little evidence of local conflict-resolution to the situation, especially when scholars and practitioners alike refer to the handling of conflict in Africa (Mwaniki, 2014). There is little evidence of documented studies addressing how culture influences inter-community conflicts. The process of inter-ethnic conflict resolution deals with how indigenous structures and systems ensure action in bringing peace at the individual and community level relationships. In this respect, inter-ethnic conflict resolution procedures are generated from general cultural life and daily experiences of living in which the current study sought to assess how cultural factors enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution (Caleb & Danjuma, 2018).

There has emerged a clear *modus operandi* on the approach to inter-ethnic conflict resolution. The first discernible approach is that; communities seem to rejoice in jumping headlong into all manner of conflict whenever they arise (Mwaniki, 2014). This suggests there has been very little focus to study the conflict in question and its impact. Community seems to pursue inter-ethnic conflict resolution efforts in Africa

from a variety of purposes and interests and with policies that are often replete with ambiguities and contradictions (Halakhe & Agade, 2019). Marsabit County is a multi-ethnic County with about fourteen (14) of the forty-three Kenyan tribes having their heritage there and are indigenous to this County. Inter-ethnic conflicts have affected Laisamis Sub-county largely but there are limited studies that have sought to assess the causes and effects of these conflicts and how they can be resolved (Mwaniki, 2014).

From the global context, literature on inter-ethnic conflicts affirms that, throughout the world the common element of conflict is a zero-sum situation of desired items among competing drives for the possession or attainment of wealth. If ignored, inter-ethnic conflict cannot only turn into violence but also leads to loss of life and destruction property. It is therefore imperatively important to undertake inter-ethnic conflict resolution (Ngonela, Mwangi, & Osamba, 2017). There are several ways of resolving conflicts whether inter-state conflict, intra-state or inter-ethnic conflict. These can be through mediation, dialogue, use of force or combat operation and many other possible conflict resolution measures. This study was concerned with inter-ethnic conflict within the set-up of pastoral communities in Laisamis Sub-county and how this conflict can be resolved using the cultural means (Mwaniki, 2014).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Globally, conflicts among pastoral communities have continued to exist, thereby causing tension in their localities. Conflicts among the pastoral communities are largely caused by historical rivalry, land issues, political incitements, idleness amongst the youth and deep-seated cultural values (Huho, 2012). Over the years, perennial drought in northern Kenya has triggered inter-ethnic attacks, inter-clan

attacks and counter-attacks and lives have been lost (Bradley, 2017). Although there are community interventions used to resolve conflict among the inflicted ethnic groups, many of these interventions have failed while others have not been sustainable. There is no attempt that has been made to determine if cultural attributes such as rite of passage, traditional leadership structures, the role-played by gender, and nomadic lifestyle can play a part in conflict resolution among the warring parties. Despite various measures put forward by the National Government, Marsabit County Government and Non-governmental Organizations to enhance sustainable inter-ethnic conflict resolution, peace has still proven elusive. The pastoral community at Laisamis has repeatedly been affected by conflicts that emanates from competition for pasture. It is against this background that this study seeks to establish the role that cultural factors can play in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution among warring communities in Laisamis Sub-county of Marsabit County in Kenya.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to investigate the role that of cultural factors can play in enhancing conflict resolution among warring communities in Laisamis Sub-county of Marsabit County in Kenya.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives of the Study**

The study was guided by the following specific objectives.

- i) To determine the influence of rite of passage on inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya.
- ii) To establish the extent to which traditional leadership structures enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya.

- iii) To assess the role played by gender in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya.
- iv) To assess the influence of community livelihood on inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research questions for the study were as follows:

- i) How does rite of passage enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya?
- ii) To what extent do traditional leadership structures enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya?
- iii) What role does gender play in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya?
- iv) How does community livelihood enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The study findings shall be relevant to the authorities both at the county and national level. The study is expected to provide information that may be used by relevant institutions; religious organizations, county administration, community-based organizations and government in resolving problems associated with the social and cultural challenges that lead to ethnic animosity between local communities. The findings will help policy makers come up with appropriate policies that may provide lasting solutions to inter-ethnic conflicts particularly among the pastoralist communities. The study will provide a rationale with respect to addressing inherent research and knowledge gaps in conflict resolution unique to using culture to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts. To the researchers the study provides an avenue for further

research into the causes of inter-ethnic conflicts and possible solutions required to manage the underlying problems.

### **1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited to a few cultural factors including rite of passage, traditional leadership structure, and gender and community livelihood to determine their roles in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution in the study area. The study was also limited to Laisamis Sub-county where the researcher comes from and is conversant with the local culture, an area that has been experiencing inter-ethnic conflicts and there has been no clear solution to these conflicts. Only the leadership in the community were considered for the study yet more information could have been collected from the other community members. The researcher however, considered the results appropriate for use in the study.

Though the researcher had fear of the prevalent insecurity situation in the area, no incidences of security threat occurred during the study period as the researcher had requested for security personnel. The area has poor road and communication infrastructure, which was anticipated to limit the extent to which data was to be collected. This however, was managed by using a means of transport that aided the researcher access any parts of the study area, hence a motorcycle which has the ability to use footpaths and narrow roads in remote places addressed this challenge and the respondents were reached.

## 1.7 Operational Definition of Significant Terms and Concepts

- Conflict** - refers to a disagreement, rivalry or enmity between two or more ethnic groups due to their misunderstanding or indifferences in grazing areas, land boundaries, interest, cultural differences, socio-economic and political nature (Mutinda, 2019).
- Inter-ethnic conflicts** - refers to conflicts that occur between two or more rival ethnic groups due to socio-economic, political interests and cultural differences (Tache and Oba, 2009).
- Conflict resolution** - refers to ways, methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict through cultural means.
- Rite of passage** - refers to the act of admitting an individual to one of the cultural groups through a ceremony. It is practiced differently by different ethnic groups and cultures
- Nomadic lifestyle** - is a way of life that involves movement of homestead, property and livestock from one area to another.
- Pastoralism** - The movement of domestic animals or cattle from one location to another in pursuit of suitable grazing grounds, water, and verdant pastures.
- Traditional leadership** - is the capacity by the elders or village headmen to lead their local community or homesteads in order to achieve a common goal and guarantee socio-economic

and political stability, which mitigates or solves conflicts.

**Livelihood**

- It is a way the community is meeting their daily basic needs.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This section deals with a review of related literature based on the topic and the objectives of the study, which seeks to investigate on how cultural factors that enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution. The summary of literature and the gaps, theoretical framework and conceptual framework are also discussed.

#### **2.2 Cultural Norms and Practices**

Albiston, Edelman and Milligan (2014) investigated some of the important roles that beliefs may play in triggering or constraining conflict between groups. Based on the relevant literature reviewed, five belief domains stand out as especially noteworthy: Superiority, injustice, vulnerability, distrust and helplessness. A study by Lebamoff and Ilievski (2014) shows that there is a significant relationship between culture and inter-ethnic conflicts. These authors argue that inter-ethnic conflicts can occur due to clash of values, culture, difference in livelihood and competition for power and resources. In this case, two ethnic groups with cultural differences are prone to conflicts due to their differences in beliefs and cultural values. However, the presence of cultural diversity does not necessarily produce conflicts.

Economic factors have been identified as amongst the groups of major causes of conflict in Africa. Theorists believe that competition for scarce resources is a common factor in almost all ethnic conflicts in Africa (Reimers, 2016). In multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria and South Africa, ethnic communities violently compete for property, rights, jobs, education, language, social amenities and good health care facilities. According to Bayu and Gondar (2020), the working of economic forces



causes conflict between groups with competing interests. There are different kinds of conflicts that can occur in any part of the country but this study put its interest on inter-ethnic conflict in Laisamis Sub-county.

Conflict resolution comprises of a complex network of forces surrounding the parties in the conflict. It is a healing process, in which all stakeholders contribute positive energy. The task is to re-establish the energy flow within individuals, families and communities in order to re-build social harmony. In this context, reconciliation often requires symbolic gestures and associated rituals including exchange of gifts and slaughter of animals like chickens, goats, sheep and cows (Bayu & Gondar, 2020).

Adebayo and Oriola (2016) postulated that the first strategy of conflict resolution is commitment to management of productive conflict such that conflict does not become destructive. He advocates for these strategies by enjoining the leaders and management in all positions of authority to promote the rule of law, protect the fundamental human rights, promote human freedom, fair allocation of values and equity of justice. These values are very essential in order to reduce friction in organization. For this study, conflict resolution offers a more practical outcome to conflict by setting up a process in which both sides participate equally in finding solutions, which are mutually acceptable.

Those who advance the management approach argue that given the lack of a community of interest, the most that can be hoped for, is the suppression or perhaps the elimination of overt violence. Magoti (2019) suggested that enforced settlement is not resolution of conflict. He also favoured the resolution of a conflict above a

settlement, arguing that resolution is not a settlement imposed by a victor or a powerful third party, but rather a new set of relationships freely and knowledgeably arrived at by the parties themselves. The proposed study intends to look at some cultural factors that enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in the study area.

Indigenous conflict resolution strategies emphasize empathy, sharing, and cooperation in coping with common challenges, emphasizing the essence of humanity (Magoti, 2019). Cultural techniques to resolving and managing disagreements are critical in promoting community peace and social order. Cultural values and attitudes serve as the foundation for interaction as well as the conventions that individuals and communities live by. These also encourage sharing and equal resource distribution, so improving the climate for peace. African cultural values deal with the essence of being and being human, as well as how all humans are intrinsically linked. As a result, the values of reciprocity, inclusion, and a feeling of shared destiny between people underpin peace making or conflict resolution. It establishes a value structure for both providing and receiving forgiveness. This is due to society's increased emphasis on communal living. Developing and maintaining strong interpersonal relationships is a team effort that requires the participation of everyone. People are thought to be linked to one another, including disputants as offenders or victims (Yirenkyi-Boateng, 2016). In this regard, the purpose of this study was to look at cultural elements that aid in the resolution of inter-ethnic conflicts in Kenya's Laisamis Sub-county of Marsabit County.

### **2.3 Conflicts and Conflict Resolution in Africa**

In East Africa, the war in South Sudan, the collapse of the State in Somalia, and the conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi, the situation in Ethiopia as well as the wars in

former Zaire (now called Democratic Republic of Congo), are significant examples of protracted conflicts. These conflicts were only addressed superficially their intensity notwithstanding (Al-Marura, 2021). In spite of the urgency concerning the conflict in Burundi, the focus was mainly on diplomatic interventions by several agencies and actors (Murithi, 2013). These interventions ended up with the establishment of War Crimes Tribunals with none of the actors giving any consideration for the need to address the deep concerns of the parties in the conflict. The tribunals seem to have been intended to punishing individuals chosen for destruction by the powerful stakeholders rather than for unearthing the causes of conflict that remain deeply rooted in the respective societies. It is difficult to imagine how the War Crimes Tribunal in Rwanda helped to bring justice to the situation bred, for instance, by colonialism and the de-colonisation process in Burundi and Rwanda. The case was not different in Sierra Leone and Liberia (Devos, 2020).

In the case of the intractable fratricidal war in South Sudan, intervention was mainly intermittent from 1990 and undertaken by the Djibouti-based Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In spite of the colonial basis of this conflict, it was difficult for many years to state any willingness on the part of the agencies to seek a lasting solution by addressing the profound causes of the conflict. Cuhada and Dayton (2011) summed it all when he affirmed that East Africa in general was a sub-region where neither the African Union (AU) nor the international community had been able to advance conflict management significantly beyond humanitarian intervention. Hence, there is need to study social economic factors influencing conflict resolution among pastoral communities in the Northern part of Kenya, and this study directs itself towards this end.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has since 1990, been involved in peacekeeping operations. The conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone were two situations in which ECOWAS sent in troops with financial and material support from the international community, notably the United States (Berman, 2004). In spite of the huge cost of the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in terms of human lives and material, the peace-keeping interventions focused mainly on achieving what these actors termed ‘peace and stability’ (Bennett et al., 2012; Olonisakin et al., 2020 ).

In other parts of Africa, efforts undertaken in the 1990s included; negotiations between Angola’s factions coordinated by the Portuguese in 1990 to 1992, the mediation efforts of the Italians in the civil war in Mozambique during 1991 to 1993, and the efforts of the United States with regard to Ethiopia in 1990 to 1991 and Somalia in 1992 to 1993. The United States, within the framework of the African Conflict Resolution Act of 1994, engaged with the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) now known as African Union (AU), in an effort to get the Organisation’s conflict management mechanism off the ground. French intervention in post-colonial African conflicts came mainly under the umbrella of the European Union.

France and Britain also sponsored a number of conferences in 1994 and 1995 in some African capitals to facilitate dialogue on the development of consensus on conflict management policy along specific lines, including *inter alia* the development of conflict management approaches tailored to African circumstances under African leadership (Cuhadar & Dayton, 2011). France also provided funding through the Paris-based multilateral Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation (ACCT) for launching a West African ‘Observatory’ or watchdog based in Dakar, Senegal, to

focus on prevention and settlement of conflicts and democratic transition in West Africa. France has supported the development of an inventory of available military assets in West Africa for an eventual AU and or a sub-regional peacekeeping contingent (Cuhadar & Dayton, 2011).

Berman (2009) noted that France intervened militarily in some of her former colonies such as Côte d'Ivoire (2003 and 2010), Chad (2008), Mali (2013) and in the Central African Republic. The reason behind the intervention was to achieve 'peace and stability' by resolving the respective conflicts between the parties. This clearly indicates that many countries in Africa always resort to different ways of resolving conflict and especially using military and modern interventions.

#### **2.4 Culture and Conflict Resolution**

According to Meyer, et al., (2017) although culture and conflict are inextricably linked, cultural differences inevitably produce conflict. When problems surface between or within cultures, it is often a response to difficulties in dealing with the differences. It is also noted that culture is an observable, powerful force in human life as it creates significant influence on how humans act, think and communicate. Differences in these aspects can affect how negotiations take place and their outcomes (Moore & Woodrow, 2010). In addition, the main cause of the conflicts was noted to be fear and misunderstanding among the affected communities. Ugorji (2016) in their study established that cultural mismatch and misunderstanding are additional confounding factors that complicate communication and create misperceptions that sometimes hinder finding a mutually acceptable compromise.

This is especially true when an external third party, often from another cultural background is added to mediate between the conflicting parties. When all parties approach negotiations with a clear understanding of the impact of cross-cultural understanding and communication on the conflict resolution process, the parties might find negotiations are smoother and resolution comes easier.

According to Bennett et al. (2012) during conflict resolution, cultural differences is the most significant barrier to communication and hence to initiating any effective effort of the groups to come together for resolving problems. Isolating the influence of culture on conflict when negotiating conflict resolution as a whole may be necessary to help one group learn about the unfamiliar values and ways of thinking of another. That process of study, however, can create an impression that cultural characteristics are more fixed and resistant to change than they actually are.

Ugorji (2016) also noted that culture determines the language, behaviour and constraints as well as the content of values and needs that guide the participation of each side. Without the shared learning of how to communicate across cultural boundaries, reaching agreement about critical needs would hardly be possible, but that is one element among many. These studies do not bring out the cultural aspect to conflict resolution, which is fundamental in this study, it was therefore hoped that the findings of this study will assist to resolve ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county.

#### **2.4.1 Cultural Rites of Passage and Inter-ethnic Conflict Resolution**

According to Spencer (2012) there are customs associated with warfare. It is not so much that they are currently in use in the minds of the communities living in Marsabit including the Rendille. It is here assumed that a tribe that retains its indigenous

organization, any return to inter-tribal warfare would involve at least in the present, a return to these earlier customs. Initiation, one of the rites of passage, is among the practices undertaken by the community and can be used in conflict resolution.

According to Uluğand Cohrs (2017), the Rendille adopted a defensive policy in their relations with other tribes and generally preferred to attack only in retaliation. However, the fierceness of their fighting in attack or defence has earned them a considerable reputation among surrounding tribes. During initiation in Rendille community, men were taught when and how to attack or defend themselves in case of conflict and on how to solve conflict if it arises. They valued their camels highly, and would be prepared to go to almost any length to defend them against attack. A man who lost his camels in a raid could not hope to replace them easily. They prized their reputation as fierce fighters and it was seen to act as a deterrent to other raiders. When they raided in retaliation, it was both to regain their camels and to reassert their reputation (Spencer, 2012).

According to Spencer (2012), the tradition of defensive fighting was considered when enemy raiders were reported in the vicinity, all the camels would be confined to the settlement or camp. It would also be surrounded by a defensive ring of young men who comprised of older boys, youths and younger elders. Each would stand guard outside the gateway of his own family, with a bull-camel tethered between him and the gateway. As a sign of bravery, he was to fight in order stop the enemy or raider from coming into the homestead. During any of the rites of passage in African communities, the youth are taught various ways of defending their communities, for example during the initiation of young boys to manhood among communities in

Marsabit County, the use of locally assembled weapons such as spears, bows, shields, arrows and boomerangs are taught. As the youth grow up, they tend to misuse the training that was imparted into them through such vices as cattle rustling and raids (Wahome, 2020).

Artistic and cultural practices were used as effective albeit often implicit ways to help bridge the gaps between cultural perspectives by encouraging a degree of “cultural fluency.” Fluency among cultures alludes to a sense of psychological ease and adaptability towards different cultures. Non-standard forms of communication, such as visual art, poetry, music, theatre and dance, can help initiate this type of fluency in cross-cultural or intra-cultural experiences. This can be conducive to a wider dialogue and interaction (Mukoya, 2015).

The Kenya Human Rights Commission report (2011) indicated that in conflict areas, communication is often difficult initiating discussions but art can be a constructive way to interact, because it is often perceived as a non-threatening way to connect. During any rites of passage, the meanings, symbols, images, and stories produced and shared in an artistic production can transcend the challenges of more direct and possibly more confrontational types of discussions. The study focused on rites of passage as a cultural practice that could be used in understanding ethnic conflicts and how they enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution.

#### **2.4.2 Traditional Leadership and Inter-Ethnic Conflict Resolution**

Traditional conflict resolution processes are part of a well-structured, time-proven social system geared towards reconciliation, maintenance and improvement of social relationships. The methods, processes and regulations are deeply rooted in the



customs and traditions of peoples of Africa. The importance and utility of the processes lie in the fact that they strive “to restore a balance, to settle conflict and eliminate disputes” (Bar-Tal, 2013). Traditional processes are relatively informal and thus, less intimidating. Those who use them are also more at ease in a familiar environment. The role of chiefs, elders, family heads, and others is to not only resolve conflicts but also anticipate stopping or intercepting conflicts. Group relationships and rights anticipate also stopping or intercepting conflicts and are as important as individual ones as the emphasis is on restoring relationships and reconciling groups (Makwudo and Obij, 2020).

According to Kenya Human Rights Commission, report (2011) traditional leaders play an active role in the traditional conflict resolution in Africa. In rural set-ups, traditional leaders have responsibility in decision making and resolving minor conflicts. A study on the role of traditional leadership in Zimbabwe cited three main reasons as to why modern African states prefer traditional and informal justice. One is that, formal state justice is limited in the rural areas, secondly the formal justice offered by the state may not be suitable on conflict resolution in the rural areas and thirdly, the formal state system may have limited structure in most countries and therefore enough resources are not allocated to cater for the smaller criminal cases in the rural areas.

Tinashe (2018) established that traditional leaders play a pivotal role in settling community disputes across rural Zimbabwe. These leaders are regarded as custodians of traditional law and receive the bulk of the cases dealing with violence, which might be political, domestic or antisocial behavior. It is only when there are bigger cases

that elders seek help and forward the cases to state authorities. Yet it appears that they lack the power and knowledge to prevent and adequately respond to violence. The guiding objective of the traditional justice system presided over by traditional leaders in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular, is to restore peace and harmony within the community. This is done by ensuring that disputants and their respective supporters are reconciled. It has been observed that at the heart of the traditional African adjudication system lays the notion of reconciliation or the restoration of harmony.

According to Melil (2018) there are three key factors, which help explain why most Africans in general continue to look to traditional and informal justice forums to resolve disputes. First, is that the vast majority of Africans continue to live in rural villages where access to the formal state justice is extremely limited. Secondly, is the type of justice offered by the formal courts may be inappropriate for the resolution of disputes between people living in rural communities or even those in urban areas and can cause conflict within the community and affect economic co-operation on which the community depends. Third, the state justice systems in most African countries operate with an extremely limited infrastructure, which does not have the resources to deal with minor disputes in the villages.

According to Kenya Human Rights Commission (2011) traditional authorities play a pre-eminent role as mediators of violent conflict. The penalties, instituted usually focus on compensation or restitution in order to restore the status quo, rather than punishment. It was further noted that, in pre-colonial Africa, the traditional leaders' forum in a number of societies assumed a more adjudicatory role for the most serious

crimes such as murder and witchcraft, where in such cases capital punishment would be considered. Otherwise, their role as chiefs has been to bring disputing parties together and to create an atmosphere in which they can resolve their differences. Thus, the traditional leaders act as facilitators in conflict resolution. The gap exists in literature on how traditional leadership can be used in inter-ethnic conflict resolution and hence, the study seeks to investigate how traditional leadership enhances inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County.

### **2.4.3 Gender and Inter-Ethnic Conflict Resolution**

According to Paulson and Calla (2000) the term gender is described as a social and cultural construct, which differentiates women from men and defines how they interact with each other. In traditional African set-up, the role of men and women was clearly defined. In most societies, the role of men was paramount in the formulation of values and norms. Women were not considered in matters of conflicts and peace processes, hence creating inequalities in post-conflict resolutions. While men are generally considered as the main initiators of inter-ethnic conflicts, women are left to face consequences of the conflicts.

According to Amusan et al. (2017) men who were usually in the forefront of causing conflicts side-lined the role of women in peace building and resolving conflicts. Women are the most affected by conflicts yet they are given little chance to participate in the peace processes that address conflicts. In Rwanda, for example, the success of the peace process was largely because of the full participation and contribution of women. The role of women in conflict resolution is confined to two areas; their participation and representation in the highest political levels and in decision-making and involvement in the local peace-making processes (Warren & Troy, 2015).

According to Bilach (2018) women can participate well in the civil society as political representatives, in the negotiation teams as members of the mediation teams and as mediators. The capacity and the role of women in conflict resolutions has been tested and yielded positive results in African countries like Burundi, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Namibia, Somalia and Tanzania (UNESCO, 2015). Despite the call for women's active role in conflict resolution, there are still cultural related challenges that are encountered in respect to their participation in the leadership responsibility and in the decision-making processes.

Gender affects and indeed permeates, conflict dynamics at the societal and individual level. Understanding the role of gender in conflict resolution is best accomplished through an analysis of individual levels, interactional levels and the societal level. Gender may surface in conflicts in the ways that parties interpret and give meaning to the conflict. Prause and Mujtaba (2015) studied how gender affects the origins, processes and outcomes of disputes in the workplace. In this study it was found differences in the origins of disputes for men and women.

According to Elfverson (2019), gender also affects dispute-handling mechanisms. The processes used to resolve disputes for women were less effective than for men. For example, women were more often transferred laterally instead of resolving the dispute. While women felt more vulnerable, their vulnerability did not seem to interfere with their ability to actively handle their disputes. In this study it was observed that, women talked at length about feeling disempowered and disadvantaged in attempting to deal with their conflicts. There is however no documentation of any

study that links the role of women to the interethnic conflicts and how the same can be used as source of conflict resolution, hence the need for this study.

Elfverson (2019) studied women as peacemakers in organizations. The women she studied acted as informal peacemakers within their organizations. These women got involved in people's conflicts because co-workers sought them out. They provided a sympathetic ear to their co-workers. They also became involved because they were loyal to the organization and also cared how the organization treated people. They provided support for people to tell their story, they reframed people's understandings of the situation, they translated people's perceptions of each other, they orchestrated occasions for private conflicts to be made public. The important role they fill in the organization is not yet understood and appreciated. This study picks this attribute of women to assess how they could be a source of a conflict resolution to the persistent ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county of Marsabit County in Kenya.

#### **2.4.4 Nomadic Lifestyle and Inter-ethnic Conflict Resolution**

One of the key activities in the northern part of Kenya is nomadic lifestyle in which pastoralists move their homesteads from one place to the other in search of pastures and water. This mostly happens during the dry spell or periods of the year. Each community moves to areas where these natural resources are found. This movement leads these communities into encountering one another in the process. Due to lack of enough grazing land for pasture and water, and competition, that ensues thereafter, these communities engage in conflicts. Gleditsch, et al., (2017) and Bob, Bronkhorstand Sala (2014) argue that scarcity of natural resources such as water and land can easily lead to conflicts. Many authors have therefore attributed conflicts between different communities and more so to pastoralist due to the competition for

the access of limited resources (Boone, 2019). The conflicts often result in deaths, evictions and spurs hatred among the communities. In Laisamis, the animosity that grows among them does not allow peaceful coexistence and sharing of the resources that are found there. This then affects other sectors such as education, transport and communication. There has not been a single study however conducted in the area that links the nomadic lifestyle of these communities in conflict resolution hence the need for this study.

Muchiri (2015) notes that, with their considerable military prowess, the nomadic peoples were able to exert their willpower on settled communities, altering beliefs, customs, and societal structures. At the same time, the relationship between the pastoralists and traders was more equitable, engaging disparate people in communication and trade for their mutual benefit. In the end, the implications of the nomadic interactions were momentous both economically and culturally, charting a course for the evolution of new social, political and religious identities throughout the world.

The evidence given in this section shows clearly that nomadic lifestyle of the communities in Laisamis has not been considered in any relevant study in understanding the influence it has on the interethnic conflict resolution in the areas. There is little evidence documented on how social cultural factors influence the interethnic conflict resolution in the study area.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

This study merges the relevant aspects from conflict theory as generally conceived and borrows widely from Marx's perspective but develops a resolution component that is eventually used in the conceptual framework that is adopted

### **2.5.1 Conflict Theory**

Conflict theory, was first advanced by Karl Marx, a 19th-century political philosopher who led the development of communism as a school of thought in economics and it states that the society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. The theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity. According to conflict theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals and groups within society will work to try to maximize their own wealth and power.

The theory has been widely used to explain a range of social phenomena including wars, revolutions, poverty, discrimination and domestic violence. It advocates for such fundamental developments in human history such as democracy and civil rights. The central characteristics of the theory are the concepts of social inequality, the division of resources, and the conflicts that exist between different socio-economic classes. Most of the social conflicts throughout history can be explained using the key characteristics of the theory because the societal conflict is the force that ultimately drives change and development in the society (Crossman, 2020).

The theory looks at the non-violent and creative handling of conflict in detail. The conflict theory involves a critical investigation into the causes of the conflict, structure and dynamics of the conflict, the actors in the conflict and the outcomes. It gives details of the historical background and context of the conflict. An understanding of the genesis and dimensions of the current events in the conflict, showing the conflict as it is on the ground and giving different versions of the events is analyzed. The theory holds that at this stage, the personalities and personal perspectives of the individuals emerge and the conflict-taking place maintained by show of interests, positions, feelings and outside pressures on the parties. It asserts that whoever is involved in the conflict needs a deeper understanding of the conflict and gets a factual account to be of value. The root causes of the conflict, the parties in the conflict and their roles and interests in order to bring to an end or reduce the conflict are investigated (Hipe et al., 2020)

Overall conflict management should aim to minimize affective conflicts at all level, attain and maintain a moderate amount of substantive conflict, and use the appropriate conflict management strategy to effectively match the status and concerns of the two parties (Ensari et al., 2015). They further noted that integration involves opening up, creating dialogue, and exploring differences to choose an effective solution for both conflicting groups. This style of conflict management is positively associated with individual and organization outcome.

Lenairoshi (2014) further identified different steps to managing conflict. They argued that a leader should take time to obtain information that can lead to conflict, develop strategies before the conflict occurs, move in to quickly managing it by reacting



without blame and learn it through dialogue. They should be non-confrontational, and they should still maintain control, utilizing non-verbal messages to achieve the outcome. Violent conflicts are based on values and interests in the community and they were thought that they could not be reconciled. Violence arises from existing institutions and historical relationships, as well as distribution of power. Resolving such conflicts is viewed as unrealistic. Conflict management advocates the use of pressure to effect settlement and institution building.

Gonzalez et al. (2011), argue that for any conflict to be solved, stakeholders need to be involved. Collective learning and organization should institutionalize the position of stakeholders in the community and a wise leader must behave ethically and doing so, the leader should be open to new information and be willing to change his or her mind. He further states that without understanding ethics, conflict cannot be handled. Conflict resolution theorists, in contrast, reject this power political view of conflict, arguing instead that in communal and identity conflicts, people cannot compromise on their fundamental needs (Ibrahim, & Dykeman (2011). However, they argue that it is possible to transcend conflicts if parties can be helped to explore, analyse, question and reframe their positions and interest. Conflict resolution therefore emphasizes intervention by skilled but powerless third parties working unofficially with the parties to foster new thinking and new relationships. They seek to explore what the roots of the conflicts really are and to identify creative solutions that the parties may have missed in their commitment to entrenched positions.

Conflict transformation theorists argue that contemporary conflicts require more than there framing of positions and identification of win-win outcomes. The very structure

of parties and relationships may be embedded in a pattern of conflict relationships that extend beyond the particular site of conflict. Conflict transformation is therefore a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interest, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict (Öberg et al., 2009; Schädel and Giessmann 2020). Constructive conflict is seen as a vital agent or catalyst for change. People within the conflict parties, within the society or region affected, and outsiders with relevant human and material resources all have complementary roles to play in the long-term process of peace building. This suggests a comprehensive and wide-ranging approach, emphasizing support for groups within the society in conflict rather than for the mediation of outsiders (Hussein & Grandi, 2017).

Mwamfupe (2015) also recognizes that conflicts are transformed gradually, through a series of smaller or larger changes as well as specific steps by means of which a variety of actors may play important roles; it incorporates the activity of processes such as conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Whereas conflict transformation involves transforming the relationships that support violence, conflict management approaches seek to merely manage and contain conflict, and conflict resolution approaches seek to move conflict parties away from zero-sum position and towards positive outcome.

There have been critics to the theory as it fails to capture the way in which economic interactions can be mutually beneficial to the different classes involved. The researcher chose the theory since it seeks moral ends: the emancipation of humanity from false claims of universality. Universality is when one group takes power and

seeks to justify it because it represents freedom for all. The reality is that it is freedom for them. Conflict theory and conflict management theory both unmask this notion.

### **2.5.2 Karl Marx conflict theory**

The proponent of this theory is Karl Marx (1818-1883), the great German Sociologist, theorist, and political activist. The Marxist conflict approach emphasizes a materialist interpretation of history, a dialectical method of analysis, a critical stance toward existing social arrangement and a political program of revolution or at least, reform. The materialist view of history commences from the premise that the most important determinant of social life is the work people are doing, especially, work that results in provision of the necessities of life like food, clothing and shelter. Marx had a view that the way work is socially organized and the technology used in production had a strong impact on every other aspect of society. He maintained that everything of value in society results from human labour. Thus, Marx saw working men and women as engaged in making society, in creating the conditions for their existence.

Marx summarized the key elements of this materialist view of history as follows: In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into defined relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existences that determines their consciousness (Marx, 1987).

Marx divided history into several stages, conforming to broad patterns in the economic structure of society. The most important stages for Karl Marx's writing is concerned with applying the materialist model of society to capitalism, the stage of economic and social development that Marx saw as dominant in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. For Marx, the central institution of a capitalist society is private property, the system by which capital; that is money, machines, tools, factories and other material objects used in production is controlled by a small minority of the population (Hendrickson et al., 1996). This arrangement leads to two opposed classes, the owners of capital known in Sociological term as bourgeoisies and the workers called proletariats whose only property is their own labour time which they have to sell to the capitalist.

This theory is applicable to this study as it helps to explain the normative aspects of social justice in regard to social problems. The theory also helps to describe how the normative aspects can be used as a basis for deciding appropriate calls for society to remedy the social problems. The theory is an appropriate explanation for addressing social problems in an epiphenomenal way rather than head on, the theory therefore underpinned the purpose of the study by guiding in the explanation of how cultural factors can be used to assist in solving interethnic conflicts in Laisamis area of Marsabit County.

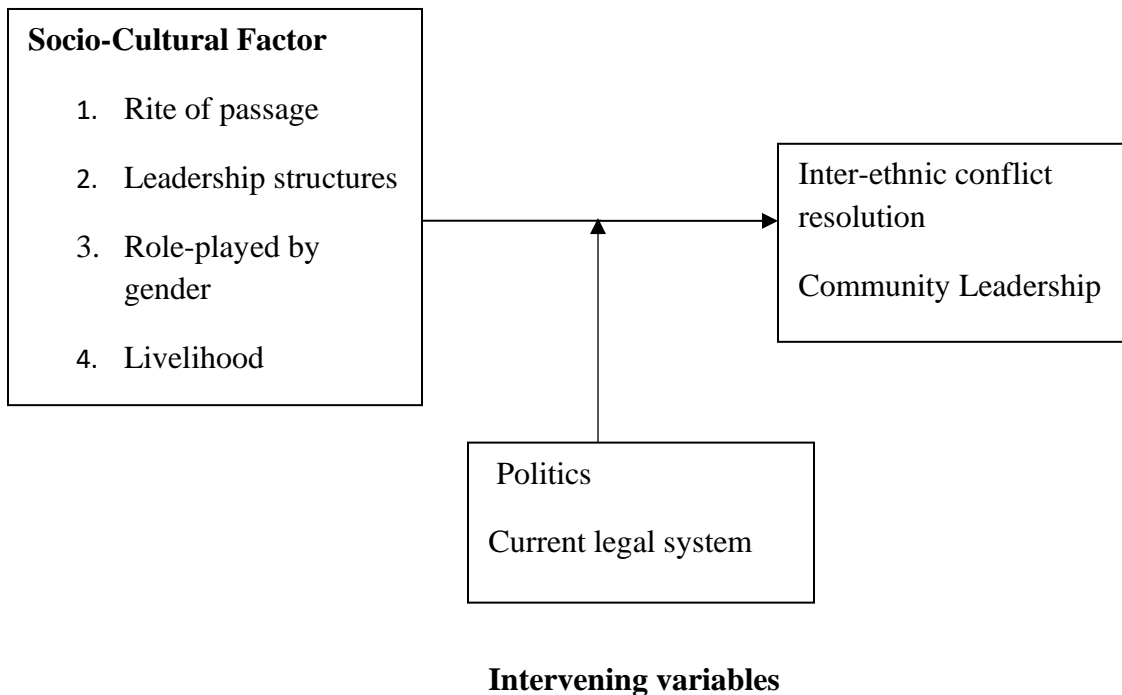
## **2.6 Conceptual framework of the Study**

The conceptual framework is developed by the researcher to show the relationship between the independent variables that is; rites of passage, leadership structures, role played by gender and livelihood. The dependent variable was conceptualized as inter-ethnic conflict resolution. Figure 2.1 shows this interrelationship and also presents the intervening variables which are politics and current legal system. Intervening

variable is a variable that affects the relationship between the dependent and independent variable.

**Independent variables**

**Dependent variable**



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

Source: Research 2019

The study conceptualized the independent variables defining cultural factors as rites of passage, role played by gender, leadership structure and the lifestyle of the communities. The dependent variable was inter-ethnic conflict resolution. In order to establish the relationship that exists between the variables the conceptual framework presented in figure 2.1 was developed.

The figure shows that there is a relationship between cultural factors and the effectiveness of the inter-ethnic conflict resolution among the communities living in Laisamis Sub-county. The relationship is a cause- effect one as the arrows clearly show. However, it is also observed that there are other factors that might influence

the effectiveness of the four cultural factors in achieving the desired objective. For this study, politics and current legal systems are considered factors that affect the efforts being put in to enhance the inter-ethnic conflict resolution among these communities.

Figure 2.1 presents the relationship between the rites of passage is considered to have a direct relationship with enhancing inter-ethnic conflict, since during this time the community elders can use the opportunity to enhance respect to other communities. In most of the ethnic conflicts the youth are the ones who are taken to war, and if they are sensitised at this stage during the rites of passage then it is expected that the inter-ethnic conflict will reduce and any efforts to resolve the conflicts when they occur will be more effective. The figure also shows that there is likely to be a direct relationship between the gender and the effectiveness of inter-ethnic conflict resolution process. The role of gender is very important in any conflict resolution process. In most communities, women are usually not directly involved in the conflict resolution process yet they are the ones who suffer most during conflicts. It is important therefore, to understand the role the women play in the inter-ethnic conflict resolution process.

Leadership plays a very critical role in the conflict resolution process in any society. If the leadership is not effectively organized on effective structure, then the process can never be effective. It is important to note that with effective leadership structure the rate of conflicts in the first place are supposed to be minimal because it is the leaders who need to call their people to calm and maintenance of peace at all times. The relationship between the nomadic lifestyle and the conflicts among the pastoralist

communities is very clear. Most conflicts in these areas results from competition among communities for the scarce resources in terms of pasture and water. This indicates that the effectiveness of the inter-ethnic conflict resolution process can only be effective if the communities can reconsider their lifestyle.

The relationship between the variables is influenced by the intervening variables. These variables are beyond the control of the researcher and if not well checked they will affect the relationship that exists between the four cultural factors in enhancing the inter-ethnic conflict resolution process among the communities in the study area.

## **2.7 Literature Gaps**

Conflicts among pastoral communities have existed for decades yet amicable solutions proposed haven't yielded proper model to reduce intrigues among communities especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Kenya's pastoral communities have continued to thrive along ethnic lines that frustrate peace proposed approaches.

Even with adequate resources to sustain pastoral community livelihoods, these resources have transitioned to resource curse affecting communities. Sharing of these resources is dimmed yet it could be a better solution towards peace and integration for these pastoral communities. Shared transformative leadership among pastoral communities has ceased to exist stemming from selfish community leaders refusing to relevant and accommodate each other. This obstructing factor is yet to be addressed by pastoral communities in Kenya.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter described the methods and procedures to be used to carry out the study, which includes the research design, study area, target population, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection instruments, pilot survey, reliability and validity, data collection procedure, data analysis, operationalization of the research variables and ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The study employed a mixed research design, which according to Creswell and Clark (2007), entails philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data; and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods in many phases in the research process. Mixed methods research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative research. According to Gay, Mills and Airsian (2009), this design involves collection of standardized quantifiable data from all members of a population or a selected sample. In qualitative research method, the researcher used the phenomenological design. Since this study sought to collect data based on individual's perceptions, feelings, and lived experiences. This helped the researcher to identify cultural factors that lead to inter-ethnic conflicts and hence establish the possible solutions available based on the views and opinions of the respondents. Quantitative research design was used to collect quantitative data for assessing the trends and magnitude of the problem. The choice of this design was informed by the fact that it could enable the researcher to collect data from a sample and generalize the findings to the entire population. The design also enhances conceptualization of the gaps between what people say and what they do.

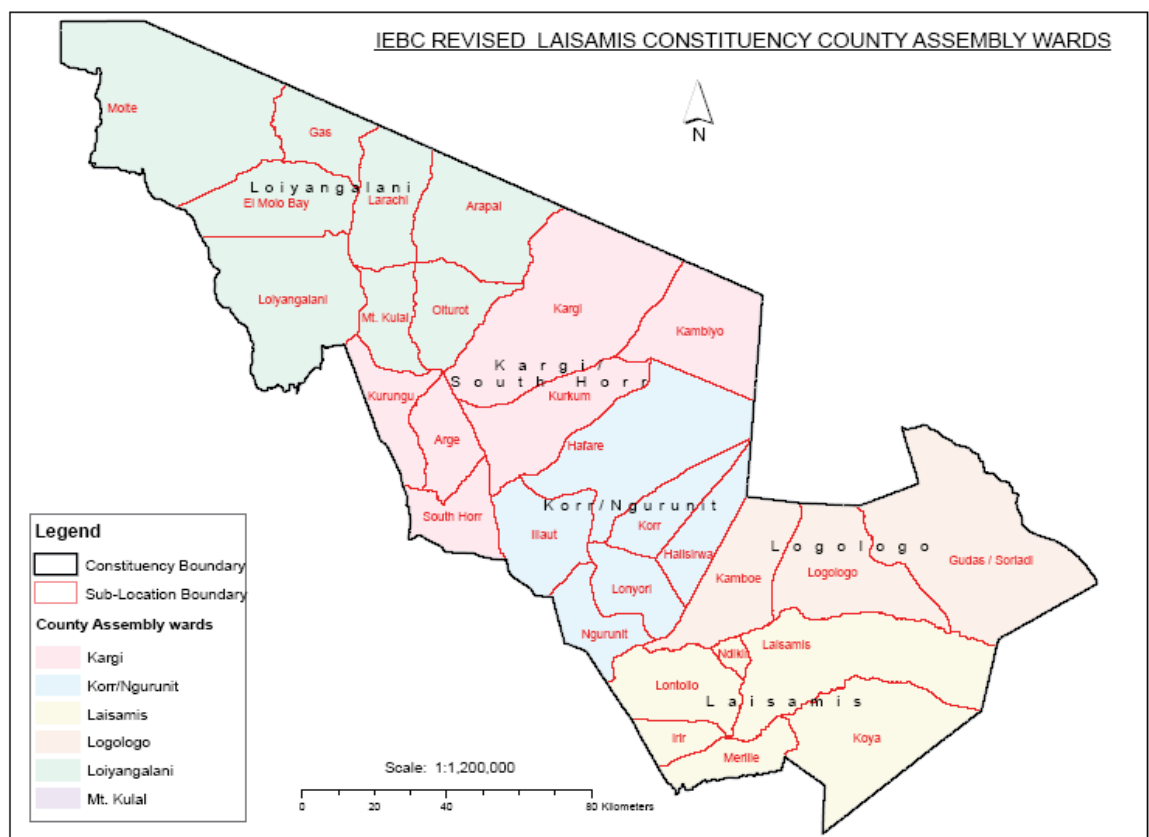


### **3.3 Study Area**

Marsabit County is the largest and most expansive county in Kenya in terms of land mass. The county borders Ethiopia to the North, Samburu County to the South and South West, Isiolo County to the South East, Turkana County to the West, South Sudan to the North West and Wajir County to the East. The county is made of extensive plains that lie between 300m- 900m above sea level. Key features of the county are the highlands and biosphere of; Mt Kulal, Mt Marsabit, Ndoto Mountains and Huri Hills, Lake Rudolf also known as Jade Sea or Lake Turkana and Lake Paradise which is a crater lake within Marsabit National Park.

Being largely an arid and semi-Arid area, the average temperature ranges from between 15°C -26°C with an annual rainfall between 200mm and 1000mm. The famous Koobi For is also located in this County as well as the famous Elephant that had the longest tusks which is currently domiciled after its death in late 1970s at Marsabit National Park. The populations according to the Kenya population census of 2019 stands at 459,785 of which 243,548 are male and 216,219 are female. There are 77,495 households with an average of 5.8 persons per household (Census report, 2019). The County has four Sub-counties: Moyale, North Horr, Marsabit Central and Laisamis. The study area was Laisamis Sub-county with 5 wards, 13 locations and 33 Sub-locations. It is the second largest Sub-county after North Horr Sub-county and the fourth in Kenya, covering an area of 20,290.5 Sq. Km. Has the only world's desert museum located on the shores of Lake Rudolf in Loiyangalani town on the eastern shores.

Historically, the sub-county is indigenous to the Rendille and Elmollo People which are both minority groups with populations of less than one hundred thousand people and an overtime immigration of the Turkana and the Samburu now with settlements in various parts of it; not forgetting other Kenyan communities who are also present on business, employment and other reasons. The County is majorly a pastoralist zone owing to its climatic nature and this is what creates a lot of animosity among the communities as they struggle to protect their territory from other communities. (This is shown in the map on figure 3.1)



**Figure 3.1: Map of Laisamis Sub-county**  
 Source: Marsabit County Strategic Plan 2019

### 3.4 Target Population

A target population is defined as a computed set of individuals, cases/objects with some common observable characteristics of a particular nature distinct from other

population. According to Ngechu (2004), a population is a well-defined, set of people, services, elements, and events, group of things or households that are being investigated. According to census of 2019, the total population of Laisamis sub-county is 116,000 people. The Sub- County has five Wards, namely; Laisamis/Merille Ward, Loglogo Ward, Korr/Ngurnit Ward, Kargi/South Horr Ward and Loiyangalani Ward. The study targeted the leaders from the five Wards in the Sub-county.

The choice of the leaders was informed by the fact they have vast information about the area and understand the conflicts and its effect on the communities at large. Therefore, the target population comprised of all the 5 Ward Administrators, 13 Chiefs, 33 Assistant Chiefs, 100 Village Elders, leaders from 50 Religious groups, 50 Youth groups and 41 active women groups in the Sub-county. These populations are also largely involved in the conflict resolution committees in the communities and have appropriate experiences and constant interaction with varied members of the community, public, religion, age and ethnic groups which puts them at an advantage of having and providing information.

### **3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

The study used mixed sampling design where both purposive and simple random sampling methods were used to select the sample. Purposive sampling was used to select all the Leadership of the area that is the 5 Ward Administrators, 13 Chiefs and the 33 Assistant Chiefs. Simple random sampling was used to select 30% of the 100 Village Elders, 30% of the 50 active Youth Groups, 30% of the 41 active Women Groups and 30% of the 50 Religious Leaders in Laisamis Sub-county. According to Kothari (2014), 30% of the population is most appropriate as the minimum sample size for a large population. This study therefore selected 30% from each category to

form the sample of the study. All the selected respondents are key players in conflict resolution in the study area. The actual distribution is given in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Sample Distribution**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Sampling Method</b>
Ward Administrators	5	5	Purposive
Chiefs	13	13	Purposive
Assistant Chiefs	33	33	Purposive
Religious Leaders	50	15	Simple Random
Village Elders	100	30	Simple Random
Youth groups	50	15	Simple Random
Women groups	41	12	Simple Random
<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>123</b>	

Source: Research, 2019

From the table above, the sample for the study was 123 respondents distributed as shown.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

Data was collected using questionnaires, key informant interview schedule and focus group discussion guide. The study used the three data collection tools to ensure that the results from one instrument can be justified by comparing with the results on the other instrument. For instance, the results on the questionnaire were justified effectively through key informant interview schedule and focus group discussion where the respondents were engaged and probed to give explanations where possible.

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaires**

According to Kothari (2017), a questionnaire is as set of questions which can either be structured or unstructured. It is most appropriate where large data is required from

a large population dispersed widely in an area. It gives results that are more dependable and reliable. It is for this reason that the study used a questionnaire, since the sample size is big, and for the fact that it would enable the researcher to collect data within a short duration (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). Questionnaires were used to collect data from Religious Leaders, Youth and Women Group Leaders since they can read and write. However, because of their schedules, constant follow-ups were made through phone calls to ensure that all the questionnaires are returned. The questionnaire was unstructured to allow the respondents give their views instead of following predetermined structured question statements.

### **3.6.2 Key Informant Interview Schedule**

Interviews were used because of the ease at which they allow the collection of data regarding facts, people's beliefs, feelings, motives, present and past behaviour as well as standards of behaviour (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). According to Gall, Borg and Gall (2007), interviewing allows the researcher to probe the respondent on desired issues. Unlike other methods of data collection, interviewing gives a chance to the researcher to make inferences from what the respondent says both verbally and non-verbally. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain qualitative data for this study. An interview guide, with a list of guiding questions was formulated with the intention to give the interviewee a wider scope within which to respond (Bryman, 2004). The interviews were carried out on the ward administrators, chiefs, assistant chiefs and the village elders as the researcher wanted to find out exactly what happens in times of conflicts and what role the leadership plays.

### **3.6.3 Focus Group Discussion Guide**

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide was used to elicit information from the community members. This is a form of group interview mostly triangulated with more

traditional forms of interviewing, questionnaires and observation schedule. The study developed a set of statements to be used in the focus group discussions with the youth and women group representatives. A focus group discussion according to Kothari (2017) helps the researcher to collect in-depth data from a group of respondents who are engaged in a discussion forum. Focus group discussions were organized as a means to obtain data where notes from the discussion were taken from the responses from the 3 groups that participated from among the youths and from the 12 women groups. Each focus group had at least 10 members, 5 from the youth groups and 5 from the women groups. The groups were selected from Laisamis/Merille Ward and Loglogo Ward in order to provide ample time for the discussions. Only three key officials were selected to participate in the discussions.

For sociological studies the use of only one instrument of data collection does not provide enough data to help in the conclusion of the study. The use of questionnaires helps to reduce the challenges of time and is very good in a widely dispersed sample. However, it is not easy to establish the accuracy of the responses and justify whether the respondent really attended to the questionnaire. The use of interview helped to ensure that the respondents provide the data expected as the researcher can make clarification where need be. When the researcher uses it together with the questionnaire then it is easier to make confirmation of certain responses from the questionnaire. The interview gives the researcher an opportunity to make observations and also evaluate the environment as a way of assessing the accuracy of the data.

A focus group discussion is open forums that can assist the researcher gather first hand data as the respondents are able to dig deeper into an issue before the conclusion is made. The use of the three methods therefore was aimed at making justifications of the responses that had been made on the questionnaire and also on the interview. This study sought to assess how cultural factors influence inter-ethnic conflict resolution. Triangulation also plays a critical role in facilitating validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. It tests the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments and increases the chance to control, or at least assess, some of the threats or multiple causes influencing our results. The focus group helped to bring assess the sociological aspects of the community and bring out clearly the views and opinions of the respondents.

### **3.7 Pilot Survey**

Data collection instruments were pre-tested on a small sample to judge their content, validity and consistency before applying the same in the field. A sample of ten percent which is 12 respondents of the study sample was used in the test. The pilot test was carried out in Narok North Sub- County and from it, the researcher was able to simplify the questions and frame others correctly before they were administered in the actual research.

### **3.8 Reliability and Validity**

This section discusses the reliability and validity of the instruments;

#### **3.8.1 Validity of the Study**

According to Bergand Gall (2009) validity is the degree by which the sample of test items represents the content the test is designed to measure. The study ensured that both face validity, which entails understanding the size and the structuring of the instrument and content validity that seeks to ensure that the type of questions used,

address what the study seeks to establish. It also ensures that the questions or statements used have a good flow. Validity helps to measure the degree to which data collected using a particular instrument represents a specific domain or content of a particular concept.

For this study, expert opinion was sought from two leaders who have participated in inter-ethnic conflict resolution process in the area and have been involved largely in research work in the area. In order to determine the coefficient of validity index, the researcher used the validity formula by Amin (2005) which states as follows;

Coefficient of Validity Index = Number of question items the experts agreed on

Total number of question items on the questionnaire

A coefficient value of 0.6 and above is considered appropriate for the study. For this study the coefficient of validity was computed as;

$$CVI = 23/30$$

$$= 0.77$$

Out of the 30 question items on the questionnaire, it was noted that the experts gave the same opinion on 23 of the questions resulting into a validity index of 0.77, which was considered appropriate for the study. The other 7 questions attracted varied response majorly because of the way they were framed, but were later refined to be more objective before the actual study was done.

### **3.8.2 Reliability of the Instrument**

Reliability is concerned with the accuracy by which the instrument is able to provide similar results if subjected to a similar sample. Cronbach's alpha was used to identify the internal consistency of each variable used in the study. According to Kothari (2014) it is noted that if the Cronbach's alpha is 0.3 than internal consistency is low



and hence not at the acceptable level. If the value is between 0.5 and 0.6 then its internal consistency is at the acceptable level. Hafeez (2012), on the other hand noted that when the value of reliability coefficient is 0.7 or greater than there is a strong reliability. For this study, the questionnaire yielded an internal alpha reliability coefficient of 0.721 as computed using SPSS Version 23. Hence, the questionnaire was considered appropriate for the study.

### **3.9 Data Collection Procedure**

After the proposal was approved by the panel of defence the researcher sought letter of authorisation from the Maasai Mara University Graduate School and/or from the Dean School of Arts and Social Sciences (has since changed name to School of Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Creative Industries). Using this letter, I then applied for the permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) this process took three months. Using the permit, the researcher visited the administrative office at Laisamis to seek clearance from the ward administrator and the chief. The researcher requested the chief for any security assistance in case of any hostility in the field. Contacts were also made with the religious leaders and other community leaders to prepare them for the study.

After which questionnaires were administered by the researcher to the respondents accompanied by a letter of introduction. The letter outlined the objectives of the study besides introducing the researcher. The instruments were collected for analysis, within a period of two (2) weeks. While the interview and focus group discussions took a period of three (3) weeks to allow majority of the respondents to participate. The interview took an average of 35 minutes while the focus group discussions took

almost an hour. The anonymity of the respondents was kept confidential although their participation in the research was voluntary.

### **3.10 Data Analysis**

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques since both approaches complement each other. After collecting research instruments from the respondents, it was screened, cleaned, coded and analysed through descriptive statistics using the SPSS software (Version 20), which assisted the researcher detect and minimize errors in calculations. The questionnaire was coded by each of them being given a number from number 1 to 112. The demographic part of the questionnaire was coded as A1-A4.

Qualitative data was analysed by first organizing the responses into common themes which were discussed by trying to obtain meaning from the given information by respondents and comparing it to previous related studies. The response from the questionnaire were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The researcher transcribed into written form the recordings from the focus group discussions guide, making sure that the transcript retained the information needed from the verbal account, and in a way that is true to its original nature.

### **3.11 Operationalization of the Research Variables**

The operationalization of the study variables shows how the four independent variables; rite of passage, leadership structure, gender involvement and livelihood of the respondents, and the dependent variable which is; enhanced inter-ethnic conflict resolution were measured, sources of the data and the methods used for analysis (see Table 3.2 below).

**Table 3.2: Operationalization of the Research Variables**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Sources of Data</b>	<b>Tools for Data Collection</b>	<b>Analysis Method</b>
Rite of passage enhances	Respondents (ALL leaders, women and youth representatives)	Questionnaire Interview guide FGD	Descriptive (frequency and percentages) -Content analysis
Leadership structures	Respondents (ALL leaders, women and youth representatives)	Questionnaire Interview guide FGD	-Descriptive (frequency and percentages) -Content analysis
Role-played by gender in enhancing	Respondents (ALL leaders, women and youth representatives)	Questionnaire Interview guide FGD	Descriptive (frequency and percentages) -Content analysis
Livelihood	Respondents (ALL leaders, women and youth representatives)	Questionnaire Interview guide FGD	Descriptive (frequency and percentages) -Content analysis
Enhanced Inter-ethnic conflict resolutions	Respondents (ALL leaders, women and youth representatives)	Questionnaire Interview guide FGD	-Descriptive (frequency and percentages) -Content analysis

Source: Research, 2019

The first column of Table 3.4 shows the research variables, while the second column shows the sources of data that was collected to enable the measurement of the variables. Columns 3 and 4 show the sources from which the data was collected and the instruments used to collect the data. The last column shows the methods used in analyzing the data.

### **3.12 Ethical Considerations**

Inter-ethnic conflict is a sensitive issue to the co-existence of different ethnic groups. Anonymity was observed in order to minimize chances of possible victimization of those giving out information that may undermine the views of others. The participants of the study were voluntary in both participation and giving information. The participants were made aware of the objectives of the research. All those who participated in the research study gave their consent for involvement. Due courtesy, respect was accorded to all the participants.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data analysis and interpretation of the findings in line with the objectives of the study. The chapter is sub-divided into sections that are related to the objectives of the study. Data obtained is presented in tabular form using percentages and frequencies. Descriptive and inferential statistics have been used to discuss the findings of the study. The chapter discusses every objective and gives interpretation of the research findings and relevant literature related to the assertions.

#### 4.2 Response Rate

All the selected respondents were key players in inter-ethnic conflict resolution in the study area. The sample was 123 respondents distributed as shown in table 4.1 below. The study employed the use of questionnaires to collect data from religious leaders and ward administrators since they can read and write. The researcher also used FGDs for collecting data from the youth and women group representatives. Three FGDs were conducted in all the Laisamis/Merille and Loglogo Wards.

**Table 4.1: Response Rate**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Expected Respondents</b>	<b>Actual Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage Response</b>
Ward Administrators	5	5	100
Chiefs	13	10	77
Assistant Chiefs	33	27	82
Religious Leaders	15	15	100
Village Elders	30	28	93
Youth groups	15	15	100
Women groups	12	12	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>91</b>

**Source: Research, 2019**

The results show that out of the 123 respondents expected to participate in the study only 112, which represents 91% participated in the study. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of more than 70% is very good for analysis. Babbie (2004) held a similar view. The response rate for this study was more than 70%, which was considered acceptable. This response rate was attributed to the fact that most of the respondents were in their villages as they did not have any other economic activity outside their home area during the day. On average the interview sessions took between 40-60 minutes and in a day at least 3 successful interviews were conducted.

#### 4.2.1 Focused Group Discussion(FGD) Guide

**Table 4.2 Focus Group Discussion**

Size and location of the group	Time		Remarks
	From:	To:	
10-Members -Laisamis 14 <sup>th</sup> August 2019	9.00am	11.00 am	Very Participative Members
10 -Members- Merille 14 <sup>th</sup> August 2019	1.00pm	3.00 pm	Members very informed
10-Members-Loglogo 15 <sup>th</sup> August 2019	2.00pm	4.00 pm	Participative and informed Members

Source: Researcher 2019

The results shown in Table 4.2 above indicate that three focus group discussions were done and each group had 10 participants were both participative and informed on the topic of discussion. The first discussions held at Laisamis from 9.00 am to 11 am, the second discussion was held between 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm at Merille and the last discussion group was held between 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm at Loglogo. Laisamis and Merille are both towns located in Laisamis/Merille Ward, where Laisamis town is headquarter for Laisamis/Merille Ward, while Loglogo is the town and headquarter

of Loglogo Ward. All the towns above have villages surrounding them in their outskirts.

### 4.3 Demographic Data

This section discusses the demographic composition of the respondents to the study.

This section has a sociological aspect in the sense that it helps to understand the social structure of the community and how different groups participate in the activities of the community. The results are presented in Table 4.3 below.

#### 4.3.1 Gender of the Respondents

**Table 4.3: Gender Distribution of the Respondents**

	Ward Administrator	Chief	Assist Chiefs	Religious Leaders	Village elders	Youth group leaders	Women group leaders	Average
Male	67%	100%	93%	100%	100%	67%	0	80%
Female	33%	0	7%	0	0	33%	100%	20%

Source: Research, 2019

The results show that on the average majority (80%) of the respondents who participated in the study were male, while only 20% of the respondents were female.

It is further noted that, apart from assistant chiefs and youth group leaders, all the ward administrators, religious leaders and village elders were male (100%). Among the assistant chiefs, 93% were male while among the youth leaders 67% were female.

This shows high level of disparity among the leadership of the community. It is further noted that only 7% of the assistant chiefs' were female, 33% of the youth leaders were female and all the women group leaders were 100% female. This could be attributed to the fact that the community is patriarchal with male being dominant in the leadership positions in Laisamis Sub-county. In most pastoralist communities,

women are given very little chance to participate in decision making hence they are very few in the leadership position just as seen in the study. In the case of the Rendille for instance women are not allowed to participate in sacrifice ceremonies in the families.

#### 4.3.2 Marital Status of the Respondents

**Table 4.4: Distribution of Marital Status of the Respondents**

	Ward Administrator	Chiefs	Assistant Chiefs	Religious Leaders	Village elders	Youth group leaders	Women group leaders
Married	100%	100%	100%	73%	100%	53%	83%
Single	0	0	0	27%	0	47%	17%
Divorced	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Separated	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Research, 2019

The results on table 4.4 show that all the ward administrators who responded (100%) were married. A similar case can be seen among the chiefs, the assistant chiefs and the village elders where none of them was single, divorced, or separated. Among the religious leaders 73% proved to be married while only 27% were single. The results revealed that 53% were married while 47% were single and lastly among the women group leaders 83% proved to be married compared to only 17% who were still single. This implies that majority of the respondents in the community leadership are family people and therefore are responsible. Marriage is considered a permanent system that one gets into and culturally is not supposed to come out. Like in the Rendille, a saying goes that “marriage is like a grave, once entered, one cannot come out of it.”



### 4.3.3 Duration of Stay in the Area

**Table 4.5: Period of Stay in the Area by the Respondents**

	Ward Administrators	Chiefs	Assistant Chiefs	Religious Leaders	Village elders	Youth group leaders	Women group leaders
Below 15 years	0	0	0	7%	0	0	8%
15-20 years	0	0	0	33%	11%	27%	25%
Over 20 years	100%	100%	100%	60%	89%	73%	67%

Source: Research, 2019

The results shown in table 4.5 indicate that majority of the respondents from the seven categories of respondents have stayed in the community for over 20 years as shown by 100% response from ward administrators, chiefs and assistant chiefs. It is noted that 60% of religious leaders had stayed in the area for over 20 years, 33 % had been in the area for between 15-20 years and 7% had stayed for 15 years and below. Among the village elders, 89% had stayed for over 20 years while 11% had stayed for between 15-20 years. For the youth the results showed that 73% had stayed for over 20 years while 27% had stayed for between 15-20 years. For the women group leaders 67% had stayed in the area for over 20 years while 25% had stayed for 15-20 years and 8% had stayed for below 15 years, which indicates that they have a clear understanding of the subject matter, and they could effectively provide appropriate data to support the findings of the study.

#### 4.3.4 Educational Level of the Respondents and Key Information

**Table 4.6: Education Level of the Respondents**

	Ward Admin	Chiefs	Assistant Chiefs	Religious Leaders	Village elders	Youth groups' leaders	Women group leaders	Mean
Non formal	0	0	0	10%	25%	0	0	5%
KCPE	0	20%	26%	6%	36%	6%	42%	19%
KCSE	0	40%	48%	7%	28%	27%	25%	25%
Certificate	40%	40%	19%	10%	11%	27%	25%	25%
Diploma	40%	0	7%	47%	0	40%	8%	20%
Degree	20%	0	0	20%	0	0	0	6%

Source: Research, 2019

The results on table 4.6 show that only 10% of the religious leaders and 25% of the village elders had no formal education. The results further show that 36% of the village elders had attained KCPE qualifications, 26% of assistant chiefs, 20% of the chiefs, 42% of women leaders and 6% for both religious leaders and youth group leaders. On average 19% of the respondents indicated as having attained KCPE qualification. Among those who had attained KCSE the study showed that 40% of the chiefs, 48% of the assistant chiefs, 7% of religious leaders, 28% of village elders, 27% of youth leaders and 25% of women group leaders, show that by average most respondents. On average 25% of the respondents had attained KCSE level of education. In regard to certificate qualifications the study established that 40% of the ward administrators and chiefs both had attained Certificate qualification, this was followed by 19% of assistant chiefs, 10% of religious leaders, 27% of youth group leaders, 25% of women group leaders and 7% of religious leaders. On Diploma

qualification, most of the religious leaders (47%), 40% ward administrators, 40% youth group leaders and 8% women leaders had attained the qualifications. On average 20% of the respondents had attained Diploma qualifications. Lastly, only 6% on average of the respondents had Bachelor Degree qualifications. This constituted 20% ward administrators and 20% of religious leaders. This implies that most people in in Laisamis Sub-county leadership were literate with only 5% having no formal education.

The explanations for this according to the interview is that the girls are usually married off by their old and poor parents in exchange for livestock while the boys spend most of their time moving around with livestock in search for pasture and water. One of the respondents indicated that:

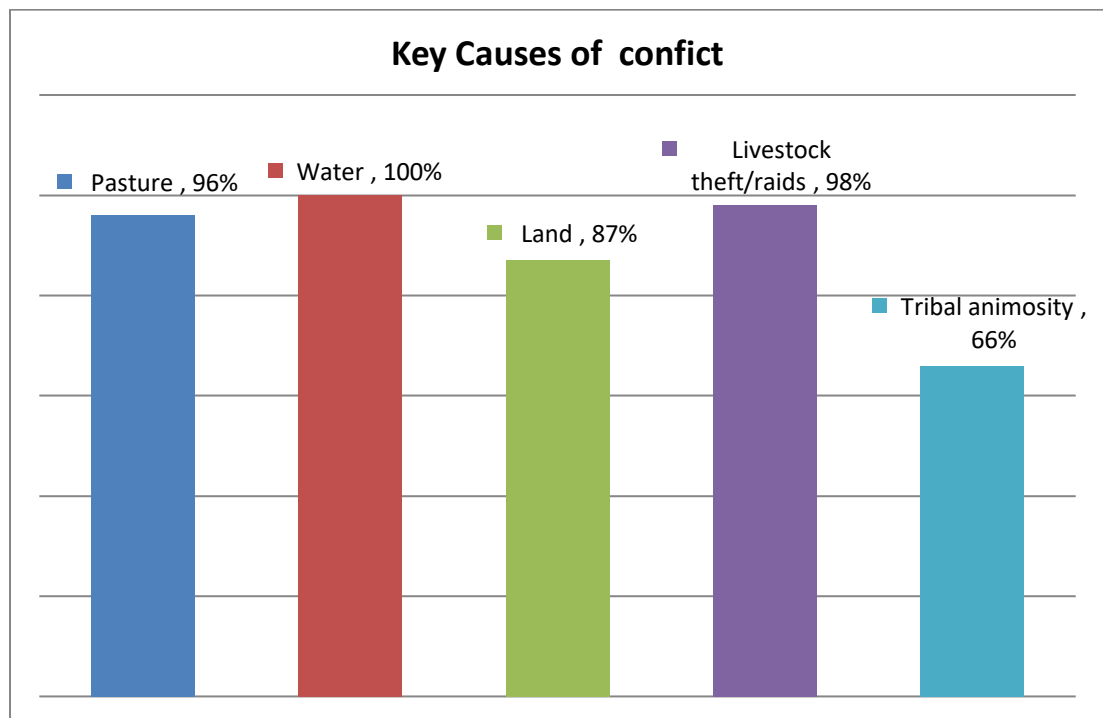
“In almost all nomadic communities the level of education is very low. Personally, I have never attended school but I have been an elder because of cultural ties for more than five years. It is a common feature in the community to find that boys never attend school, as they are made shepherds out in the fields in search for pasture and water for the livestock this denies them the chance to attain any educational levels. Girls are married off at very early ages in exchange for cattle and they are also held at home to assist in the home chores, this denies them the opportunity to get education.”

The study also sought to establish the dominant religious groups in the area. Religion has a special role to play in enhancing moral discipline and hence play a very critical role in peacekeeping and inter-ethnic conflict resolution. The study noted that religion was a multi-faceted attribute to the inter-ethnic conflicts in the sub-county. On one hand, religion is a cause of conflict, while on the other religion is used to create peace. The study found that there are mainly three different kinds of religious groups in Laisamis Sub-county, namely African Traditional Religion (ATR), Christianity and Islam. The proportional distribution of respondents drawn from the religious and

community leaders showed there were a higher proportion of ATR practicing leaders than Christians or any other religions in the study area.

#### 4.4 Respondents' Awareness of Conflicts and their Causes in the Area

It was important for the study to first establish whether the respondents were aware of the conflicts in their area and what the main causes of these conflicts were. All respondents who were actually leaders of the area were all fully aware of existence of inter-ethnic conflict in the area both in the present and even in the recent past. It was found that at any one time, any two or all the ethnic groups could clash with each other, and there is no specific tribe that can thus be labelled as an aggressor. They gave nearly similar reasons for the conflicts, although in different proportions. The responses are presented in figure 4.1.



**Figure 4.1: Causes of conflict**

Source: Research, 2019

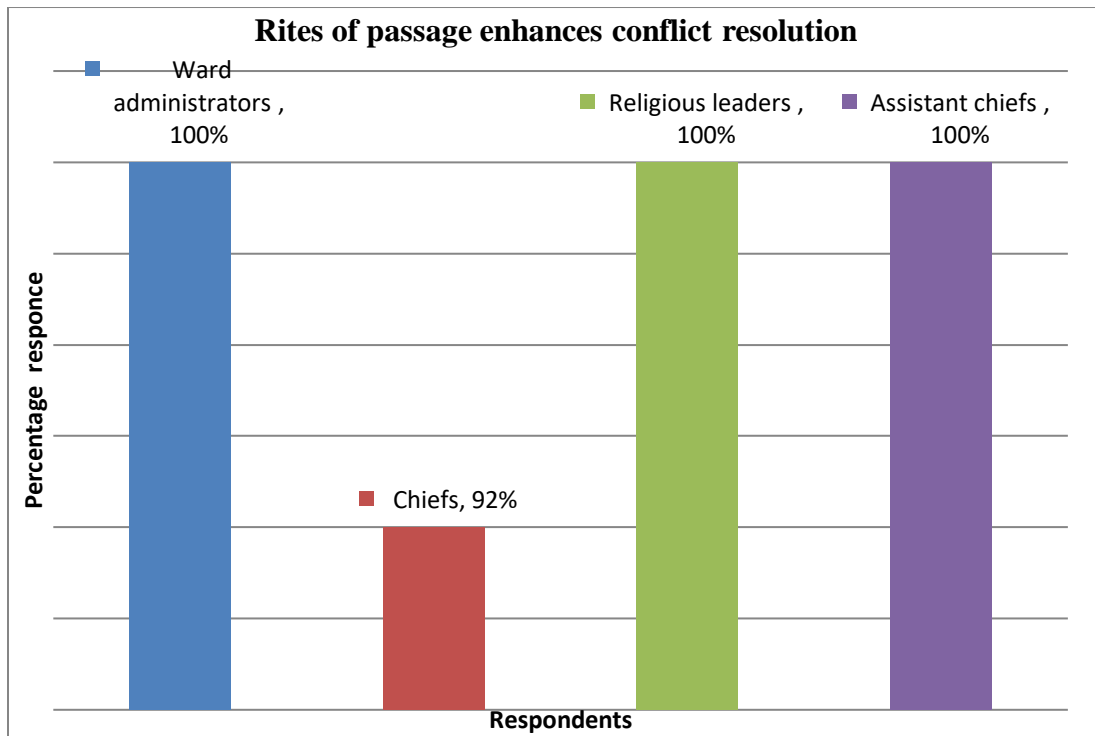
The results in figure 4.1 clearly show that majority of the respondents were aware of the conflicts and the causes of the conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county. All the

respondents (100%) indicated that water was a major cause of the inter-ethnic conflicts given the climatically harsh condition of the area. The conflicts frequently occurred at the animal watering points where two groups will always start a fight when they find out that other communities are invading their watering points. The second major cause of the conflicts was livestock raids and theft as identified by 98% of the respondents. This was followed by 96% who indicated pasture as being a major cause of the conflicts.

Clashing over the land and boundaries disputes accounted for 87% of the conflicts, while tribal animosity accounted for only 66% of the inter-ethnic conflicts. This implies that majority of the respondents were sure of the causes of the conflicts. Further probing through the interview with the village elders revealed a similar scenario. It was noted that most conflicts in the area among the ethnic communities arouse because of pasture and water points. These two were serious issues and they brought about the tribal enmity especially in cases where there were death occurring during the conflicts.

#### **4.5 Rite of Passage Enhances Conflict Resolution**

The first objective of the study was to assess the role that the rite of passage plays in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution. The researcher sought to establish whether the communities could use the rites of passage process to educate the youth and help them shun inter-ethnic conflict. This was an important aspect of the study because most of the people who are involved in the raids and in the conflicts are the young people. The results from the questionnaires were presented in figure 4.1 below.



**Figure 4.2: Response of Rite of Passage and Conflict Resolution**

Source: Research, 2019

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt that the rite of passage enhanced inter-ethnic conflict resolution in the community. Majority of the respondents who participated agreed as follows; 100% of the ward administrators, 92% of the chiefs, 100% of the religious leaders and 100% assistant chiefs. The result implies that rite of passage could be an appropriate avenue to educate the youth to avoid conflicts. This is because it is through the rite of passage the boys graduate into manhood and are required to show that they can protect their ethnic kinship. This demand puts pressure on them to become warriors and fight for the wellbeing their community.

In an interview at Laisamis, what came out clearly was cultural practices such as rites of passage play a very crucial role in conflict management in the community. As stated in the excerpt below;

“This inter-ethnic conflict can end if the communities can take it upon themselves to instill peaceful values among the young men during the rites of passage period. I can attest that it is through this period that young men are taught to be warriors and that means they have to take up the responsibilities of protecting the community – “*ni jeshi yetu*” (in Swahili to mean, they are our protectors just like the army). So when they leave the seclusion the young men know that they are ready for war and they have to go to war to prove or as prove that they are now men.”

In another interview held with respondent at Loglogo at 10.00 am to 11.00 am. It was noted that conflicts among communities in Laisamis is instigated by the cultural practices of the community. This was reflected in the excerpt below:

“When these young men are released from the initiation seclusion, we give them the first assignment to go and raid other villages and communities and this is how this enmity has never ended. I therefore believe that by sensitizing the young men and training them differently and also changing our expectations as a community of the young initiates the conflicts will end.”

The response from the focus group discussion was very interesting as I listened to the voice of the women in conflicts. The common issues that came out clearly during the discussions were that the rites of passage could play a very vital role in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution.

#### **4.6 Focus Group Discussion on Role of Rites of Passage in Conflict Resolution**

The discussions we held at Merille by a group of 10 members comprising of leaders from among the youth, women and elders of the community. The discussion was aimed at establishing the role of rites of passage in conflict resolution. The researcher sought to establish how the rites of passage leads to animosity among the different groups and assess the knowledge level of the respondents in relation to effective ways of resolving the conflicts.

The discussion was very lively and the participants were happy to discuss this topic as they gave their views. From the discussion the general view was that during the

rites of passage for the young men, the spirit of *moranism* bring about animosity among the various groups as they seek to prove to their opponents that they are much smarter and brave in terms of war. This is what triggers conflicts consistently among the communities. From the discussion the following excerpts were noted and presented in Box 1.

**Box 1: Excerpts from Focus Group Discussion held at Merille Village**

One of the woman participantsaid:

“In most pastoralist communities, we the women contribute to the inter-ethnic conflict even though we suffer a lot during these conflicts. For example we bless our young warriors when they go out to raid livestock. We praise them for the successful raids and we even give our girls to those men who led the raid successfully. We like livestock possession and hence we push the young men who have just been initiated so that they can go out fight and bring wealth to restock our herds. We organize so that the girls can sing praises to the young men to go for raids. These are things that have made our communities to be in conflict always.”

Another woman participant said:

“I concur with *mama* that as women, we play a very vital role in fueling inter-ethnic conflict despite the fact that we do suffer a lot from the conflicts, we lose our loved ones and even our animals in the process. It is my suggestion that we change our approach and that will bring these conflicts to an end.”

Another respondent, a youth leader said that :

“I also agree with what my mothers have said, we the young men are the ones under pressure to go out and raid, during the rites of passage we go through many sessions of cultural teaching and what comes out clearly is the warriorhood. Going out to fight and protect the community, fight for grazing lands, fight for water points and raid livestock for our community to be wealthy. I believe if this perception is changed then these conflicts will end.”

**Source: Research, 2019**

The study established that young men are usually under a lot of pressure after their rites of passage to meet certain standards of the community as they enter into adulthood. The pressure exerted on them fuel the inter-ethnic conflict as they are required to go fight and steal livestock to prove that they are ready to take up the leadership of the community in future. On whether the community values such a rite of passage as important in bringing communities together, there was a 100%



agreement from the respondents, indicating that the community really values the rite of passage for both boys and girls, as it prepares them to face life and get ready for marriage. The boys are prepared to take over leadership roles in the community and this includes protecting the community land.

In an interview with one of the elders, he supported the views of the other leaders as noted from the discussion forum held at Merille village. During the interview, many issues were discussed along inter-ethnic conflicts. The elder felt that, themselves as leaders have a hard task of trying to change the culture as it is which seems to be a fuelling factor to these conflicts. He categorically noted that;

“The war on the inter-ethnic conflicts between our ethnic communities can be managed through effective inter-ethnic conflict resolution. I fully agree with the statement that these conflicts can be solved through the cultural practice of rite of passage, because it is through these rites that we teach the young people to be warriors and this simply means they have to go out a fight to defend their communities. So, when these young men leave seclusion they have already made up their mind they are going out to fight to defend their community.”

In the first focus group, discussion held at Laisamis, the group constituted majority of leaders from women groups from the various villages. The discussion majored on the various causes of inter-ethnic conflicts in the sub-county. The major findings indicated that young men are taught about their rights to defend their community especially their water and grazing areas and hence when they come out of the seclusion their number one priority is how to defend these resources. In the process, they provoke the other communities who also react and hence conflicts arise.

In the focus group discussion held at Loglogo composing of 10 members; 5 were from the youth group and 5 from the women groups. The group members were engaged in various issues about the rites of passage and its influence on inter-ethnic conflict, the

role that women have to play in the leadership structure and in the management of the conflicts, the researcher probed the women to find out what they felt were the major reasons why the communities fight, steal from each other and what they can do as women leaders to help stop the practice. Some of the excerpts that were captured from the discussion are presented in Box 2.

**Box 2: Excerpts from the Focus Group Discussion at Loglogo Village**

One of the participant indicated that :

“I will agree that during the rites of passage we go through a lot of teachings about our community’s culture and sometimes they touch on deeper issues that are to remain secret because it is an oath we usually take. We have our minds set on revenge and the community expects a lot from us now that we have joined manhood and are ready to take up the leadership of the community. Personally when I came of seclusion after the rite of passage, I took part in a raid where some of my clansmen were killed and you see we were doing it to please our elders that we are ready for the task ahead. So I believe if these teachings are changed from the warriorhood mentality we are put into, to a negotiator for peace and coexistence, then these conflicts will automatically come to an end.”

Another participant said:

‘If we parents can stop putting too much pressure on the boys during the rite of passage, we can stop this inter-ethnic violence especially if we stop preaching violence to our boys. We make the boys so vulnerable and set their minds to see the other communities as enemies and this has continued to fuel violence amongst the communities. I appeal to the elders of our communities to change how they teach and train the boys during rites of passage so that they teach them peace and help them know that there are other ways of resolving conflicts apart from use of violence. The young men should also be taught more of respecting the sanctity of life and they need to consider human life as more precious than animals, because as it is right now the animals are considered more valuable than human beings.’

Source: Researcher, 2019

From the results it is noted that majority of the respondents believe that through the rites of passage the communities can end their ethnic conflicts because it is through these ceremonies that the young people are prepared to go out for war. It is believed that through these ceremonies the young men can be taught about values that help

them respect one another instead of the animosity they are meant to believe about each other. In most cases these teaching given to the youth in the name of culture create a stereotype among them which makes them undermine other communities.

It is also noted that the rites of passage can be a very effective vehicle to end inter-ethnic conflicts this however calls for the need of the community to change their perception about the rite of passage for the young men. A man is required to pay dowry for the bride and yet he does not have the required livestock, so traditionally the young man is forced to use his training and experience in acquiring the required livestock, which in this case some results into going for raids and rustling.

The results were confirmed by the response from one of the elders who participated in the interview at Laisamis. Response from other different interviews with separate elders was presented in Box 3.

**Box 3: Interview Experts with Elders at Laisamis.**

Response from one of the respondents who had this to say;

“It is true that we expect the young men to do a lot in the name of protecting our culture and our land. This includes raiding other communities for their cattle men are required to raid and go to war at any time the community feels that they have been angered by some acts of other communities. It is unfortunate that we lose very potential young men in this act but it is considered our culture and hence we have to adhere to it.”

In another interview, a village elder had this to add;

“Young people in most nomadic communities contribute to violence because they are rewarded if they lead very successful raids. Those young men who are considered successful are recognised in the community and are moved to the next stage. So I can say it is our cultural belief that has led to the constant inter-ethnic conflicts and the only reliable way to resolve these conflicts is by changing the mind set of our young men from war to peace.”

Another elder indicated that;

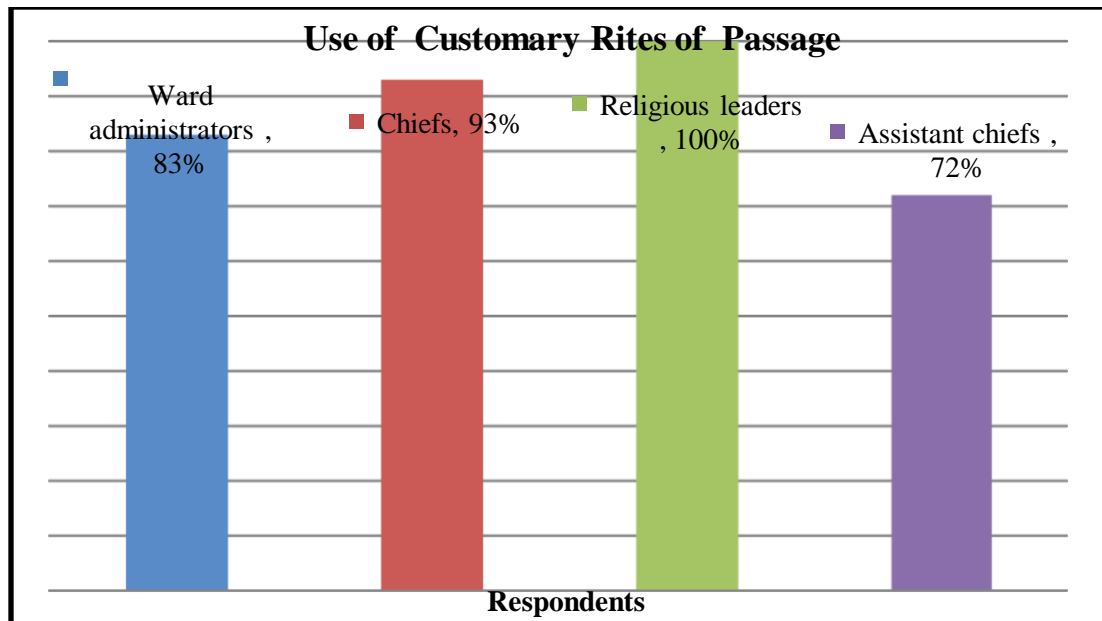
“Cattle raids and the violence of revenge that follow are culturally accepted among these communities. Any peace building initiative must be built on the premise where everybody is ready to participate in the initiative; otherwise, there shall be more cracks that will lead to more violence amongst the communities.”

Source: Research, 2019

From the excerpt collected during the interview it is noted that the community expects a lot from the young men after they have been initiated into adulthood. The village elders admitted to this view as seen from the three separate interview discussions. This indicates that the inter-ethnic conflicts in the area are all as a result of pressure from the community to the young boys. There is need for the communities in the study area to change their perception and initiate the young men to respect other communities. All these views point to one important cause of inter-ethnic conflict in the area that is cultural practices. The constant conflicts is therefore a cultural thing that can only be changed if the people are willing to change the doing of things in this culture, otherwise the concept of peace building among these communities cannot be possible.

The study therefore acknowledged that, with such cultural bindings and beliefs the state of communities in the Northern part of Kenya is still far from being peaceful until all the communities in the area agree to sensitise their young men of the importance of peace and respect for one another. This implies that ending these conflicts call for cultural measures not the military intervention.

On whether the custodians of traditional rites and rituals done during rite of passage should be allowed to use traditional methods for resolving inter-ethnic conflicts, the response from the questionnaire is presented in figure 4.3 below.



**Figure 4.3: Use of Customary Rites of Passage for Resolving Conflicts**

Source: Research, 2019

The results show that among the four categories of respondents 100% of the religious leaders indicated that customary rites of passage could be an appropriate avenue for solving inter-ethnic conflicts. Among the chiefs, 93% indicated the same with only 7% having a different opinion. For the ward administrators, 83% agreed that rite of passage would be appropriate to help in solving inter-ethnic conflicts. This shows that the conflicts in the area among the ethnic groups are more of customary issues. Among the assistant chiefs who responded, the results show that at 72 % agreed with the statement that customary rite of passage contributes to inter-ethnic conflicts. This implies that 28% did not believe so. From the foregoing discussion, it was noted that most respondents in the interview considered the conflicts as customary. This indicates that the only lasting solution to the conflicts could be having the leaders of the community reconsider their customary and rites of passage through which community morals are instilled and the young men and women are taught about their community.

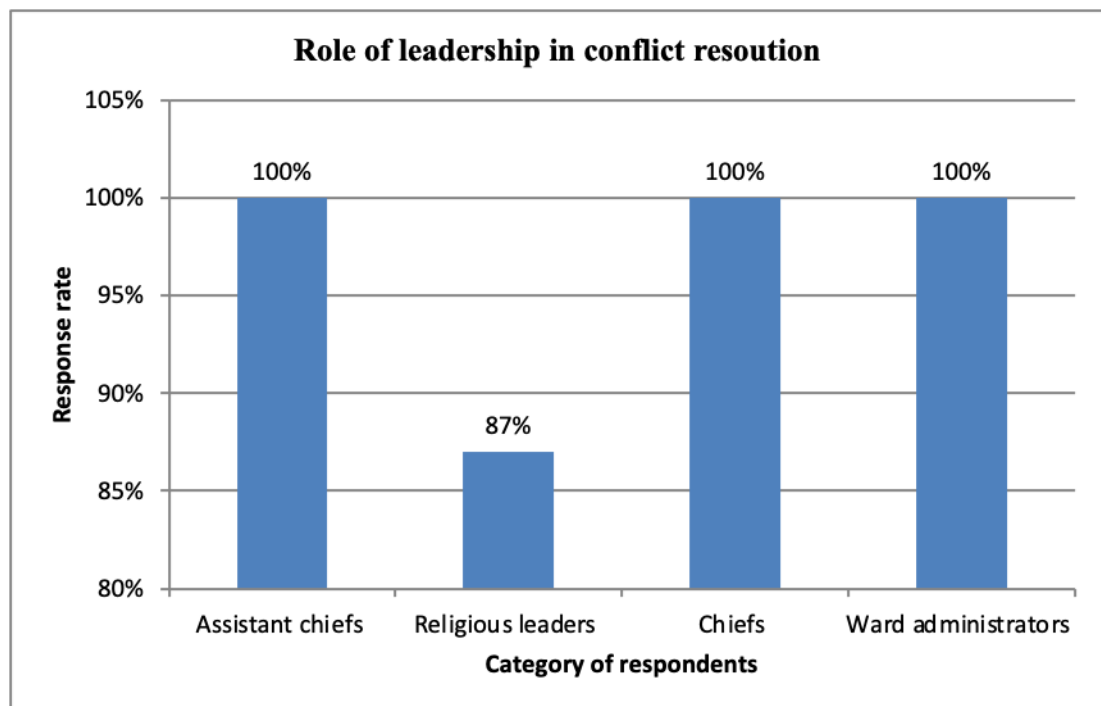
#### **4.7 Leadership Structures in Enhancing Conflict Resolution**

The second objective of the study sought to establish the influence of leadership structures in conflict among ethnic communities in Laisamis Sub-county. It is important to note that leadership in the pastoral communities is considered a reserve for the men and the young men are introduced to the community leadership through their age-sets which done in a rite of passage. This means that the leadership structure in Laisamis Sub-county is built based on the age sets and it is depended on the ability of the young men being able to protect their community and engage in successful raids that are able to bring more animals into the community.

Besides the traditional leaders, we also have religious and political leaders. The role of religious leaders can also not be over-emphasized. Many religious leaders pull large followings in the churches and the mosques and it is expected that religious teaching should have an influence on the mediation in inter-ethnic conflicts. This agrees with the findings of Hossain (2009), that there cannot be world peace without religious peace. Literature has it that, religion is a powerful constituent of cultural norms and values, and because it addresses the most profound existential issues of human life like; freedom and inevitability, fear and faith, security and insecurity, right and wrong, sacred and profane, religion is deeply implicated in individual and social conceptions of peace (Said & Nathan, 2001).

The respondents were asked to respond to various statements that sought to establish the role that leadership structures play in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution in the communities in Laisamis Sub-county. On whether the traditional leaders are able

recognise and respond to the conflict among the ethnic groups the responses were presented as shown in figure 4.4.



**Figure 4.4: Role of Leadership Structures in Enhancing Conflict Resolution**

Source: Research, 2019

The results shows that majority of the respondents agreed that the traditional leaders have the capacity to recognise the conflicts way before they erupt. This is because when the young men go and raid a community, the elders give them their full support while the women are there ready to bless the young men and praise them for a successful raid. This implies that the leaders in the community are usually aware of the happenings and they even know when the raids that bring about conflicts occur. This shows that if the leadership in Laisamis Sub-county among the various communities are willing, they can end the conflicts because they have the powers.

It was also noted that since the community leadership is involved in making all the decision of the community then they have the role of making the right decision that

will ensure that the ethnic conflicts are brought to an end. Through effective decision, making the community leaders can take the responsibility of ensuring that all decisions involving the community is done with the aim of protecting life and respecting their neighbours. Decision leading to any act of conflicts such as organized raids and any form of revenge is re-evaluated to ensure that the conflicts do not occur. In this picture, the women leaders drawn from different villages and different ethnic groups were invited and they participated and responded very well in trying to unearth some of the many leadership issues that could be the root cause of inter-ethnic conflicts. Most participants did agree that tradition leaders could never be put out of the equation in solving the ethnic conflict. It was notable that the traditional leaders hold the peace for the communities living in the pastoral set up such as in Laisamis Sub-county.

**Box 3: Experts Discussion with a Group of Women of Women Leaders from Different Villages**

One of the women indicted that;  
“... these leaders are responsible for all important decision that affects the communities, whether it is land, rite of passage, marriage and resources. I may add that, they actually hold the future of our communities and therefore if they can decide today that there are no more raids and conflicts among the communities, that will be the case.”

Another woman leader also indicated that;  
“It is a high time that our traditional leadership beliefs are changed since the world has become modern and we also need to move forward with it. The leaders must be in the forefront to lead the communities out of the cultural believes and practices that are making us lag behind in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Further, the liberty of our communities lies strictly in our hands as the leaders. We need to embrace education as one of the means of liberating our communities.”

Source: Research, 2019

The results indicate that, conflicts that are experienced in the area can be easily managed if the leadership is committed to it. This is because the respondents have shown that most of the conflicts arise from cultural practices and the only people who



can use their authority to control these cultural activities are the leaders. The results also indicated that education levels among the community members are low and this contributes to the many challenges facing the communities including inter-ethnic conflicts.

In a separate discussion with the youth leaders, held at Laisamis the study sought to get the voice of the youth regarding the issues of inter-ethnic conflicts. The researcher engaged the youth whom he met carrying their weapons, which forms part of their life. These young initiates have just come from circumcision having been released from seclusion after their rites of passage to manhood. This is the most dangerous group who go out to wage war against other ethnic groups in their constant raids. This group of young men is now part of the leadership structure of the community as they form their age-set. These young men will have to go out for raids and bring home cattle so that they can be qualified to move to the next stage in life. With this determination, they never turn back from war-like activities, which fuel inter-ethnic conflicts. In the discussion, this is what they had to say; Box 4 below;

#### **Box 4: Excerpts from Discussion Group with Youth Leaders from Different Age Sets**

One of the group members indicated that;

“.. It is our leaders who are fueling these conflicts and hence they are the ones to stop them, because there is no raid I have participated in that did not have the blessing of the community leaders, yet when the raid turns out to be unsuccessful, they say we the young people are weak and unable to defend the community. You are denied succession to the next stage of eldership later and other privileges like decision making in the community. For sure with this pressure from the traditional leaders, the war on inter-ethnic conflict can never be won through other means but by the decision made by the community leaders...”

Another participant said:

“.... I believe these conflicts will be outdated if the leaders of the community encourage the young people to look at alternative ways of livelihood and not just the animals. The leaders have that responsibility and power. I can attest here that, those of us from the poor families are the ones who are still bound by many of these traditions under these community leaders. If I look at the progress my classmates who had the opportunity to pursue further studies have done so far, I feel ashamed and note that community leaders do not go and force them to join us during the raids”.

In support of this, another youth leader indicated that;

“.....the community leaders should now make decisions that are aimed at helping the young people change their way of livelihood and that will bring an end to the constant conflicts are experiencing. It is through their guidance that, we the youth can cease from these activities”.

Source: Research, 2019

These sentiments imply that the inter-ethnic conflicts are something that the communities can decide and stop but it only requires the action by the elders. If they make the right decision and put their cultural beliefs aside, then conflict resolution process will be easy to manage. The youth leaders felt that if the leaders can give them proper direction on how to channel their energy and also device other alternative measures of a person’s maturity and leadership capability apart from war then the issue of conflict will be a thing of the past. This is a clear indication of the important role played by the community leaders in the whole saga of inter-ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county.

#### **4.8 Role Played by Gender in Enhancing Conflict Resolution**

The study also sought to establish the role of gender in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution. It was important to note that the communities that participated in the study were patriarchal in nature. These communities are characterized by male dominance in most leadership areas. Among these communities, women's role in leadership decisions is minimal. However, women have been noted to play a very significant role in peace making initiatives in the community. Women also have been known to suffer a lot in times of conflicts together with the children. Understanding the role played by women in conflict resolution as therefore important for this study.

In this section, the focus was directed to the focus group discussions because it was the only forum where women were highly represented. In Laisamis at Laisamis/Merille Ward, the discussion was very successful with very active participation from both the youth and the women representatives with a total of 5 members from the youth and 5 members from the women representatives the common issue was that yes women are actively involved in the conflicts and hence they should be involved in the resolution process.

One of the women indicated that;

“To me I believe we have a critical role as women to bring these conflicts to an end. This is because, we are the ones who praise our sons after the raids and we suffer most when we lose our sons and other property during the conflicts. We should through these groups organize to make peace with the other communities and encourage our children to take up alternative roles like attending higher education to bring about change of mind’ (*discussion held on August 2019*)

In their narration some of the women felt that it is time they took up the issue on a serious note to end these conflicts. They all agreed that even if the government sent troops to the area, it will not resolve the issues these communities suffer from. This

implies that the inter-ethnic conflicts are a cultural issue and this can be addressed if both men and women can sit and agree on what is to be done.

In another discussion held at Merillein, Laisamis/Merille Ward, with a total of 4 youth and 6 women group representatives, it also emerged that the young people who attended the discussion felt there was too much pressure from the culture for them to fulfill. Some of the aspects from the discussion as shown in box 4, show the frustration of the young men as they struggle to fulfill the requirements of their community.

Young men are in the front line in matters of conflict resolutions because they are the ones who go to war. In most of the communities, girls are not involved in many of the community issues instead they are nurtured by the women and taught matters of the family life. Some of the excerpts from the discussion were provided in box 5.

**Box 5: Excerpts from Discussion with the Youth Leaders**

One of the group members a young man said;

‘There is no other way to solving the social challenges facing our communities other than going to school. I say this because a few young people who have gone to school are much ahead of us in development and they do not have to join the raids to be praised. Families with educated young people are living much better life than those of us who have no proper education and still stick so much to our culture’

Another participant said ,

“...I agree with my colleague that if we the young people strive to get better education we will be able to defeat the challenges we are faced with and this culture that we are enslaved with will end and so will the inter-ethnic conflicts.”

Source: Research, 2019

The discussion in Loglogo in Loglogo Ward with a total of 5 youth and 5 members from the women groups indicated that gender plays an important role in inter-ethnic

conflict. They stressed that women mock men who are defeated in any of the raids and this stereotype makes them feel worthless in the community. Out of this anger the young men become even more fierce and are ready to cause even more damage for that recognition and praise from their mothers and the girls in their community. They also indicated that, education will help resolve the inter-ethnic conflicts in the area. One of them indicated that; “when the young men and women go to school and get education, they will not remember to ever go out on raid because they will have alternative sources of livelihood and will assist their old parents to live better lives.” In relation to the discussions, it is observed that gender is an important aspect of a community. Culture affects both male and female and any challenges relating to culture can only be solved if both men and women can sit together and agree on the most appropriate solutions to the challenges. The men need to approach the problems as the leaders of the community, while the women need to influence the decisions made as they have the power to do so.

#### **4.9 Discussion**

This section presents an in-depth investigation of cultural factors that enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county of Marsabit County in Kenya. From the discussion, it is clear that conflict between ethnic communities in the sub-county have a long history. It is worth noting that, most of the conflicts experienced in the study areas have a cultural aspect attached to them. This is because either the young men must prove their ability to defend the community or raid as many animals as possible or it is because the young men want to be promoted to another stage in life, and so they have to go out and raid other communities as proof that they are qualified.

The young men want to be recognized and praised by the women and the girls in the community and this is only possible if they can prove that they are men through raids. These findings concur with those of Leley (2015), who indicated that the pressure exerted on the boys to be able to succeed and move to the next level is determined by the level of success according to the clan elders of the raids the young men have made. This implies that culture plays a very critical role in the inter-ethnic conflicts among communities in Laisamis Sub-county.

The study established that rites of passage have a great influence on inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county. The study noted that cattle raids between the communities contributed to the increase in community animosity, which leads to conflicts as the communities try to recover their stolen animals. The results further indicated that most conflicts occurred when there was severe drought and the communities were moving from one place to the other in search of pasture and water for their livestock. This is the time when the communities were very alert and would attack any intruder to their reserved land. The results agree with the findings of Nzioka (2012) who noted that drought was a major cause of conflicts among the pastoralist communities in Northern parts of Kenya.

It was further noted that water and pasture accounted for the many causes of conflicts in the study area. Most communities have reserved watering points and pastures where they graze their animals during the drought. When they discover that another community has been grazing or watering their animals at the same point, it creates enmity between them and leads to inter-ethnic conflict. Conflicts involving land boundaries and intrusion among the pastoral communities were also noted among

communities in a study by United States Institute of Peace (2006), who noted that traditionally most wars have been fought over control of land and several wars over disputed border. This is also supported by the findings by Nzioka (2012) who noted that the local communities somehow knew the extent of their land, though there were no physical demarcations to mark the boundaries.

The study also established that, most communities were at great peace when there was plenty of pasture and water was available. However, conflicts were very rampant during the dry seasons, when most herdsmen and herdswomen were forced to move from one place to the other in search for water and pasture. During this time there is constant clashing and hence conflicts among the various groups and hence there is increased conflicts. This agreed with Mwaniki et al (2007), who noted that it is the responsibility of the leaders and the elders to look into the cultural believes that is fuelling conflicts among the communities and revise or even discards them completely.

It is noted that the solution of ending these conflicts does not even call for government intervention because the chiefs, assistant chiefs who are all locals and the village elders clearly understand that the constant conflicts are not as a result of the economic hardships but they are to a great extent fuelled by the believes and culture of the communities. This is in agreement with the discussions in the Marxs social theory which shows that conflicts are triggered by the inadequacy of the resources and the power in the community will do all their best to survive and sometimes they initiate conflicts as a way of survival. The conflict theory also stresses the fact that conflicts

arise in societies due to the limited resources for which people tend to compete for. The conflicts that are witnessed in Laisamis clearly reflect the aspects of the theory.

The results also noted that traditionally young men are required to go out and raid cattle from other neighbouring communities in order to be recognized by the elders and hence expect promotion to the next level in life. The study established that most of the inter-ethnic conflicts are attributed to the rite of passage, hence can be addressed by the clan elders removing the pressure on their young men and use other avenues other than the raids to gauge whether the youth are ready for initiation into the next rites group or not. This supports the findings of Leley (2015), who indicated that most communities train their boys to be warriors. According to Leley, most pastoralist communities train their boys to defend their communities during the initiation period. They are also trained on how to make and use locally assembled weapons and tools such as spears, bows, shields, arrows and boomerangs. To the youth, in Laisamis Sub-county this is like a ticket to use the skills in settling their rivalry and hence committing vices such as cattle rustling and raids.

The study also established that, inter-ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county arise because of the boys who have undergone initiation to warrior hood wanting to prove that they are ready to protect their community. If this perception that is given to the young people is changed and they are taught how to be peaceful and in harmony with their neighbours, these conflicts will end. Women should also change their tactics and encourage the boys to respect the rights of other community members and preserve their life. This supports the findings by the TJRC report of (2008) which established that different communities have a tendency of negative perceptions against each



other. This is referred to as ethnic stereotypes and it is very common among communities in Kenya. This stereotype is impacted to the young men during the initiation period and hence becomes a major cause of ethnic tension in the county. The study also noted that marriage, as a rite of passage is a life-long activity; raids on other communities will ever persist since the young men who intend to marry are required to pay bride price in terms of livestock, which they do not have until they inherit from their parents. In this instance then the youth organise for raids so that they can acquire these livestock for paying the bride price; hence paving way for unending ethnic conflicts. The results are in line with the findings of Leley (2015).

On the role of leadership in the inter-ethnic conflicts resolution, the study established that majority of the participants in the various focus groups indicated that community leaders are expected to play a critical role in the inter-ethnic conflict resolution, because they are the key decision makers in the community. They have the powers to command the young men who go out for raids and other attacks to stop doing so. They can also stop blessing the young men in their communities who are in readiness for any raid. The study noted that simply the concerned communities reconsidering their social cultural systems could solve the inter-ethnic conflicts. The results also noted that majority of the respondents felt that community leadership structures can influence inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county.

The study established that, majority of the respondents (100%); ward administrators, the chiefs and the assistant chiefs indicated that among the pastoralist communities, community leadership structure influences inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county. This implies that the way communities are organized play a significant

role in triggering or resolving inter-ethnic conflicts. The young men are grouped according to their age-sets and are given responsibility of not just protecting their communities grazing and watering points gives them the opportunity to even go and raid other communities. These young men initiate most of the conflicts as they seek to get approval from their elders for marriage and for fame in the community. All this comes with the requirement that they have to go out and raid other communities and have to get this approval from community leaders, hence fuelling inter-ethnic conflicts. This implies that the inter-ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county can be managed if the community leadership structures can be reorganized and the leaders take the initiative to control the conflicts.

The study also established that as much as women are not so much in the leadership of the community, they still play a key role during the initiation process and raid periods. They sing songs in praise of their young men after the initiation and they sing songs of praise to the young men after a successful raid. The traditional songs and poems sang during initiation are actually aimed at developing courage and confidence among the young men and this makes the young men just feel ready for war-like activities. Men who are able to go out for raids and bring home herds of livestock are praised and rewarded. Men are also supposed to go out for raids in preparation for marriage later in life, where they have to raid livestock that they use in paying the dowry or bride price. Such activities encourage men to engage in activities that cause conflict among the communities in Laisamis Sub-county. This agrees with other studies conducted across the continent such as Cheserek (2012), Tinashe (2015) and Kenya Human Rights Commission Report (2010) which indicated that traditional leaders play an active role in the traditional conflict resolution in Kenya. In rural set-

ups, traditional leaders have responsibility in decision making and resolving minor conflicts.

It is further noted that there are two key factors which help explain why most Africans in general continue to look to traditional and informal justice forums to resolve disputes. One is that the vast majority of Africans continue to live in rural villages where access to the formal state justice is extremely limited. Once, the communities are attacked, and they also fight back in revenge thus leading to inter-ethnic conflicts. This therefore implies that the communities should use their customary and rites of passage ceremonies to ensure that they bring about peace through effective negotiations.

It was also noted that religious leaders in Laisamis Sub-county were in the forefront in urging the communities to take up peaceful resolution of conflicts instead of taking the law in their hands. Most of the respondents indicated that the religious leaders have played a very important role in ensuring that the conflicts are controlled. This has been achieved through various consultative meetings with the leaders and elders of the various communities. However, some of the community leaders accused the religious leaders of instigating the conflicts by inciting their followers; the statement was not justifiable as only few leaders held that view. These allegations need to be probed further as they can be a venue for breeding conflicts in the community. These arguments also agree with the findings of Nzioka (2012), who noted that religious leaders have a key role to play in ensuring that the conflicts are ceased whether they are fought around issues of identity, nationality, religion, or ethnicity. In situations of

chaos and turmoil, they represent the forces that have the potential to unite and consolidate people.

All the respondents (100%) indicated that, women play active roles in the conflict resolution process. Women play an important role by rewarding and giving recognition to the young men who are actively involved in perpetuating successful conflicts such as cattle rustling. Mothers are supposed to bless their sons before they go out for any raid so that they come back safe and successful, the young women on the other hand are required to sing songs in praise of the young men who have successfully gone and raided cattle from other communities. This is evidence that the inter-ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county are not just a man's issue, but the women too who act behind the scenes to also play a very critical role in the initiation of the conflicts and therefore they have to be part of the conflict resolution debate.

The sociological contribution of this study can be seen clearly in the cultural factors that have been discussed. Cultural values play a significant role in instigating conflict and they can be used to enhance resolution of these conflicts. For instance, the study has established that the rites of passage can be used as an avenue to instil discipline and educate the young Morans on values of humanity and respect for others.

The traditional leadership is also a sociological aspect that is very important in conflict resolution. The study has established that the traditional leadership can be a significant avenue through which the elders can use to bring peace among the communities. Instead of having, the age-sets for the purpose of war they can be used as conflict resolution groups within the communities. Age and gender have also been

noted to have a very significant influence on the conflict resolution in the community. In this respect, the study establishes a sociological angle to inter-ethnic conflicts. This implies that the resolution process of the inter-ethnic conflict in Laisamis Sub-county can be addressed sociologically, if the key stakeholders can agree to work together as one team.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, conclusions from the findings, recommendations for enhancing inter-ethnic conflicts resolution in the region and suggestions for further research.

#### 5.2 Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate cultural factors that enhance the resolution of inter-ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county of Marsabit County in Kenya. The objectives of the study were; to determine which rite of passage influences inter-ethnic conflict resolution, to establish the how traditional leadership structures enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution, to assess the role-played by gender in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution and to assess whether community livelihood influences inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county, Marsabit County, Kenya.

The study first established the demographic attributes of the respondents. The study acknowledged that majority of the leaders of the communities in Laisamis Sub-county were men a fact that is explained by the patriarchal nature of the communities living in the pastoral setups. The study used the women group leaders to ensure that the women who play a role in the conflict resolution give their views. It was noted that most respondents had basic education and very few had advanced their education past primary level. Most of the village elders in the sub-county were not literate because they rose to the occasion based on their role in the community and after attaining a certain age-set they qualified to hold that position. The opinion of the youth

was also incorporated as an important aspect of the inter-ethnic conflict resolution process. Participation through focus group discussion where youth leaders from different groups were engaged in a very productive discussion, assisted in making the study a success. The study established that majority of the respondents were professing African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam in that order.

The study established that majority of the respondents were fully aware of the causes of inter-ethnic conflicts in the area. With pasture and water topping the list, land issues and enmity was also noted as very critical causes of these conflicts among the communities in Laisamis Sub-county. The first objective of the study was to determine the extent to which rite of passage enhances inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county of Marsabit County. The respondents were asked to explain the extent to which rite of passage can influence the outcome of the inter-ethnic conflict resolution initiative and it was noted that majority of the respondents did agree that if the initiative is done through the rite of passage ceremony then it is much more possible that the conflicts can be effectively resolved. This follows the claim from all the participants that the young men are taught to be hostile in the name of protecting the resources of the community through the rights of passage ceremony. It was also established that men are taught about war and being warriors during this time. It was also noted that young men are inducted into raiding other communities after which they are promoted from one age set to the next. This implies that it is through these cultural practices that the conflicts cannot end soon whether there is government intervention or not.

The second objective sought to establish the effect of leadership in Laisamis Sub-county on the outcome of the inter-ethnic conflict resolution among the pastoralist communities. Literature has indicated that leadership was very important in solving conflicts among the pastoral communities in northern Kenya. In this study, it was noted that pastoralists and other communities with scarce natural resources often come into agreement on how to effectively share those resources during the dry seasons. It was noted that, usually before the communities started moving their cattle in search of pasture, the elders from both communities negotiate on how the movement should take place and a general agreement on how to access water and pasture is reached. These negotiations have been of great help in preventing clashes between the members of the various communities living in Laisamis Sub-county. However, their success has depended fully on the leadership of the communities, which play the central role in the resolution process.

It was established that the leadership structure here is not the administrative leadership of the chief, assistant chiefs, village elders, parliamentarians and other administrators but it also involves the young people defined in leadership through their age set. The age set makes a very critical part of the community leadership structure and it has to always be involved in the negotiations because they are the ones who go to fight in order to fulfil their ego and to prove their strength and power among the people of the various communities in Laisamis Sub-county.

In regard to the role played by the gender in inter-ethnic conflict resolution, the study established that though the communities have a patriarchal structure where men dominate the leadership and decision making here, women were seen to have a very



significant role to play both in fuelling of the conflicts and also in the inter-ethnic conflict resolution process. Women have been found to fuel inter-ethnic conflicts through songs and poems, which are songs in praise of young men who successfully go out for raids and bring home large herds of cattle. The women in Laisamis Sub-county are also responsible for blessing their sons in preparation for the raids which are major causes of inter-ethnic conflicts. In preparation for marriage the women take the centre stage in preparing the young men to go out for raids so that they get enough cattle that will be used to pay dowry. This implies that issues of inter-ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county concerns every gender, as men are involved in making general decision of the communities the women are involved in making domestic decisions, preparing the young men for war and raids and thus can be of use to directly or indirectly aid in the conflict resolution process.

In regards to livelihoods of the communities and inter-ethnic conflict resolution, the study established that the community's way of life which is nomadic and pastoralism has a very significant influence on the inter-ethnic conflict resolution process. The results have indicated that the when communities move from one place to the next in search for pasture for their livestock they sometimes end up crossing into their neighbours' territory by mistake and this fuels inter-ethnic conflicts. This nomadic lifestyle is a social and cultural factor that fuels inter-ethnic conflicts and can also be used effectively in resolving inter-ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county.

### **5.3 Theoretical Conclusions**

Conflicts between the various ethnic groups in Laisamis Sub-county have been due to the scarce natural resources that is pasture and water. The driving forces behind these inter-ethnic conflicts are cultural beliefs of the communities and revenge

mentality. Since most of these communities believe and attach a lot of value to livestock, they do everything possible to protect them and the little resources that they have. This leads to inter-ethnic conflicts not only in Laisamis Sub-county but also in other counties dominated by the pastoralists.

The study also concludes that the rite of passage plays an important role in the culture of these communities. This practice has a very high level of attachment among the community members. The study concludes that the success of the inter-ethnic conflict negotiations can be enhanced if the communities are ready to use the rite of passage as an avenue to train the young men on how to respect other communities and use alternative means of resolving their conflicts other than through raids and war in Laisamis Sub-county.

The study also concludes that the leadership structures among the communities of Laisamis Sub-county in Marsabit County plays a role in addressing issues of inter-ethnic conflict. There is need to carry out negotiations that should end these conflicts. This calls for cooperation among all the community leaders in the area.

It is also concluded that gender plays vital role in the inter-ethnic conflict resolution. This was noted given the role both men and women play during the inter-ethnic conflicts. There is need to consider involving women at all level of conflicts since they have been noted to play a critical role in causing inter-ethnic conflicts and also in providing of solutions in the conflicts.

The study also concluded that community livelihood plays a very critical role in causing and resolving inter-ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county. The study therefore considers community livelihood as factor that should be addressed by all leadership of the community in order to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts. The leaders need to come up with strategies that will guide the use of the scarce resources such as grazing land and watering places.

The findings are also in line with the theory adopted for this study and hence it is concluded that cultural factors have a significant effect in inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

This study recommends the following;

The passage of rites ceremonies should be used as instruments through which the young men who are directly involved in these conflicts can be advised and taught on alternative conflict resolution methods to avoid inter-ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county.

Stakeholders in inter-ethnic conflict resolution should consider other strategies that can be used to strengthen the leadership structures so that the leadership can be in the forefront of accepting alternative methods of solving their disputes other than the use of current methods of retaliation and attacks in Laisamis Sub-county.

The role of women should be recognized in the leadership of the communities because it was established that women also play a role in fuelling inter-ethnic conflicts as they

are the ones who cheer and praise the young men when they go and come back from these raids in Laisamis Sub-county.

The role played by community livelihood must be given a lot of attention as a factor that influences inter-ethnic conflict resolution as it is a cause of the inter-ethnic conflict in Laisamis Sub-county.

A mediation and reconciliation team should be formed to assist in considering improving the existing policy on how to solve inter-ethnic conflicts not only in Marsabit but also among other communities in Kenya. This policy must lay down common strategies among the members from different communities who must be part and parcel of the efforts in regard to raising of awareness, training of the members of the communities in collection and dissemination of early warning information and reverting to peace building process using indigenous or home-grown resolutions to inter-ethnic conflicts, in Laisamis Sub-county.

### **5.5 Areas for Further Study**

The nature of specific intervention strategies which can be used to address the causes of these inter-ethnic conflicts either separately or in tandem, has not been exhaustively covered hence understood from the current study.

A study to address the extent to which these cultural factors affect the inter-ethnic conflicts resolution still requires further focus. The complexities of inter-cultural and inter-group conflict offer a rich field for investigation, in terms of both basic processes as well as the effectiveness of specific resolution strategies. There is therefore need for further study to address this concern.

The need to understand conflict resolution strategies as potentially involving the interaction of two distinct types of social processes need to be further considered by researchers and practitioners in order to add to the current and the existing research. There is also need to consider assessing the role of religious leaders in conflict resolution given that some respondents felt that these leaders might also be fuelling conflicts behind the scenes.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Introduction Letter

**Mr: Bursuna Ejere**

Maasai Mara University, Kenya

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### **Re: Request to Participate in the Research**

I am a student at Maasai Mara University pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Sociology. I am carrying out a study to explore the influence of cultural factors on inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county of Marsabit County. I wish to request for your participation in this study, as one of the respondents in the survey. Your answers will make great contributions in my findings based on the data collected. All information provided will be used only for academic purposes and will be treated confidentially.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Bursuna Ejere

## Appendix II: Questionnaire

This study is an investigation into cultural factors that enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution. You are requested to participate in the study by filling in the questionnaire. The information you will provide will be kept confidential. Kindly give as honest answers as much as possible.

### SECTION A: Personal Information (Tick where appropriate).

1) Gender of the respondent

Male ( ) Female ( )

2) What is your highest academic level?

Non Formal education ( ) Below KCPE ( ) KCPE ( ) Certificate ( ) Diploma ( ) Degree ( )

Other specify \_\_\_\_\_

3) How long have you stayed in this area?

Below 1 year ( ) 1-5 years ( ) 6-10 years ( ) 11- 15 years ( ) 16-20 years ( ) Over 20years ( )

4. What is your marital status?

Married ( ) Single ( ) Divorced ( ) Separated ( )

Others (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION B: To determine how rite of passage enhances inter-ethnic conflict resolution.

5. What are the major community attributes that you believe bring about conflicts among the communities in this area. List and explain.

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.....

6. How can the communities use these attributes to create lasting harmony? List and explain.

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7. In your opinion, comment on the role of cultural rite of passage as a vehicle to inter-ethnic conflict resolution.

Explain.

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8. Explain how custodians of traditional rites and rituals done during the rite of passage should be allowed to use traditional methods for resolving inter-ethnic conflict.

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10. Explain various ways in which rite of passage and ceremonies done help to reduce inter-ethnic conflicts in the area.

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**SECTION C: To establish the extent to which traditional leadership structures enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution.**

11. What is the current traditional leadership structure?

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12. Are traditional leaders able to recognize and respond to matters of conflicting ethnic groups?

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13. How best can traditional leaders recognize and respond to important matters of inter-ethnic conflicts?

Explain.

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14. Explain how traditional leadership can support inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county.

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15. In your opinion, who are key stakeholders in resource management in the area?

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16. Having an appropriate traditional leadership is key to settling inter-ethnic disputes using local communities.

Explain.

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17. Does modern leadership style conflict with the traditional leadership when resolving inter-ethnic conflicts in the area?

Explain.

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18. What are the role of leaders in ‘early warning’ system and potential sources of inter-ethnic conflicts?

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19. Suggest ways in which leaders can help to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts in the area.

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**SECTION D: To assess the role-played by gender in inter-ethnic conflict resolution.**

20. What role do women play in conflict resolution in the area?

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21. Explain how women are affected by inter-ethnic conflict in Laisamis Sub-county?

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22. Do women get involved in the process of resolving inter-ethnic conflict in the area?

Explain.

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23. Women belief that inter-ethnic conflict resolution can support the interests and needs of both parties.

Explain.

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24. In your own opinion, does gender influence inter-ethnic conflict dynamics at the societal and individual level.

Explain.....

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25. Who does gender help in inter-ethnic conflict resolution?

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26. Give suggestions on how women can be used to resolve inter-ethnic conflict in the area.

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**SECTION E: To assess how livelihood enhances inter-ethnic conflict resolution.**

26. Are inter-ethnic conflicts fuelled by the source of income for the communities living in Laisamis Sub-county?

Explain.....  
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27. Is nomadic lifestyle a vehicle to peaceful coexistence between ethnic groups?

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28. Explain how inter-ethnic conflicts are resolved easily because people share the same lifestyle.

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29. How does land use legislation help resolve inter-ethnic conflicts.

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30. Explain the role of livelihood in inter-ethnic conflict resolution in the area.

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*Thank You for Your Participation*

### **Appendix III Key Informant Interview Schedule**

This study is an investigation into cultural factors enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution. You are requested to participate in the study by responding to the interview. The information you will provide will be kept confidential. Kindly give as honest answers as possible.

1. Describe the most common types of conflicts you have experienced in this Sub-county in the last ten years.
2. What are the main causes of inter-ethnic conflicts in your Sub-county?

#### **Rite of Passage**

3. Explain what is involved when initiating people in the rite of passage and the expectations.
4. Can this rite of passage be used in resolving inter-ethnic animosity? Explain
5. What attributes in rite of passage enhance inter-ethnic conflict in Laisamis Sub-county?
6. Can the cultural rite of passage enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county?

#### **Traditional Leadership**

7. Explain the role of traditional leadership in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict in Laisamis Sub-county?
8. Can traditional leadership structure enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county?
9. What have been the results among those organizations that have participated in the process of inter-ethnic conflict resolution in the Sub-county?
10. Highlight some of the initiatives that the local leadership, NGOs and other stakeholders have taken to curb inter- ethnic conflict in the Sub-county.

#### **Role played by gender**

11. Describe the various ways in which the different gender in Laisamis Sub-County can be incorporated in order to ensure peaceful coexistence among the various ethnic groups in the Laisamis Sub-county.
12. Can gender be used in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county?

13. What are some of the ways in which gender enhances inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county?

**Nomadic Lifestyle**

14. Has nomadic lifestyle been a factor influencing inter-ethnic conflict resolution?
15. Can the nomadic lifestyle be used to enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county?
16. Explain ways in which nomadic lifestyle can be used in resolving inter-ethnic conflict?

*Thank You for Your Participation*

#### **Appendix IV: Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGD)**

1. What are the causes of inter-ethnic conflicts in Laisamis Sub-county?
2. What types of resources can you identify within the Sub-county that cause inter-ethnic conflict?
3. To what extent has rite of passage enhanced inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county?
4. Which ceremonies during rite of passage are associated to inter-ethnic conflicts?
5. How can rite of passage be used to resolve or reduce inter-ethnic conflicts?
6. What is the role of local traditional leadership in enhancing inter-ethnic conflict resolution?
7. What steps have traditional leaders taken as community members to control the rate of inter-ethnic conflict?
8. To what extent does traditional leadership help in resolving inter-ethnic conflict in the area?
9. Describe gender composition of Laisamis Sub-county.
10. How does the gender composition of the community help in inter-ethnic conflict resolution? What is the role of women in inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-county?
11. In your opinion, what do you think should be done towards inter-ethnic conflict resolution?
12. What measures have been put in place to resolve inter-ethnic conflict in Laisamis Sub-county?


## Appendix V: Research Permit

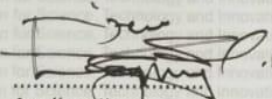
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:  
**MR. BURSUNA E EJERE**  
of **MAASAI MARA UNIVERSITY**, 0-20500  
Narok, has been permitted to conduct  
research in **Marsabit County**

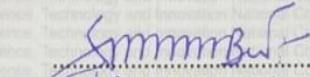
Permit No : NACOSTI/P/18/87302/25281  
Date Of Issue : 2nd October, 2018  
Fee Received :Ksh 1000

on the topic: **SELECTED CULTURAL  
FACTORS THAT ENHANCE INTER-ETHNIC  
CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN LAISAMIS  
SUB-COUNTY, MARSABIT COUNTY,  
KENYA**

for the period ending:  
2nd October, 2019



  
Applicant's  
Signature

  
Director General  
National Commission for Science,  
Technology & Innovation


THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND  
INNOVATION ACT, 2013

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Technology and Innovation (Research Licensing) Regulations, 2014.


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## Appendix VI: Research Authorization Letter from NACOSTI



**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,  
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,  
2241349,3310571,2219420  
Fax: +254-20-318245,318249  
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke  
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke  
When replying please quote

NACOSTI, Upper Kabete  
Off Waiyaki Way  
P.O. Box 30623-00100  
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No: **NACOSTI/P/18/87302/25281** Date: **2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2018**

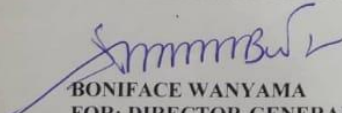
Bursuna E. Ejere  
Moi University  
P.O Box 3900-30100  
**ELDORET**

**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**

Following your application for authority to carry out research on *“Selected cultural factors that enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-County, Marsabit County, Kenya”* I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Marsabit County** for the period ending **2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2019**.

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Marsabit County** before embarking on the research project.

Kindly note that, as an applicant who has been licensed under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 to conduct research in Kenya, you shall deposit **a copy** of the final research report to the Commission within **one year** of completion. The soft copy of the same should be submitted through the Online Research Information System.

  
**BONIFACE WANYAMA**  
**FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO**

Copy to:

The County Commissioner  
Marsabit County.

The County Director of Education  
Marsabit County.

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation is ISO9001:2008 Certified

## Appendix VII: Authorization Letter from the University

