



THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG PASTORAL COMMUNITIES IN MARSABIT COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of community communication in conflict resolution among pastoral communities in Marsabit County. The study used descriptive and phenomenological study design to establish the influence of independent variables on the dependent variables as a community based strategy in conflict resolution among livestock keepers. The population of Gabras was 141,200 while Borana are 276,236 giving a total of 417,476 (KNBS, 2019). The researcher used both convenience and purposive sampling method to gather data from household members (residents, elders, women leaders and religious leaders) and key informants. The researcher adopted (Nasuirma, 2000) model to determine the study sample size of 100 community members. Semi structured questionnaires to collect data from the households' members and unstructured interview guides to gather data from the key informants were used. According to the findings, one of the main causes of conflict was natural resources including grazing land and water. This was indicated by 53.2% (50) of the respondents involved in the study. From the findings, it was evident that after conflicts it was not easy for the two communities to communicate and forge a way of resolving the conflicts. By implication therefore, the communities had unresolved issues and grudges; which precipitated more and more conflicts. This was indicated by 74.5% (70) of the respondents involved in the study, who indicated that there was no communication in resolving the conflicts. From the respondents, some of the challenges included unwillingness of one side to take part in the conversations, some of whom never even showed up for the conversation; difficulty in reaching a consensus especially when the matter involved loss of lives, as at times that called for revenge. It was recommended that National land commission is recommended to develop and update the negotiated land use and plan current grazing patterns to prevent sporadic conflicts, It was further recommended that institutions to ensure equitable distribution of resources in the county without bias to some communities.*

Key words: *Conflict resolution, Communication, community, pastoral communities*

1.1 Study background

Conflict has grown rapidly in African nations in the recent days and pastoral areas the most vulnerable. Like other developing nations, African societies have undergone crisis due to inter-ethnic conflicts since pre-colonial times a trend that even colonization could not break. As depicted by Emeka, (1999), the inception of colonization, the range and magnitude of these conflicts have escalated to different shapes and dimensions thus posing a serious conflict challenges in the world today.

In Kenya's arid and Semi-Arid lands (ASAL), conflicts over water and grazing areas have become wide spread. As seen by some scholars, resource scarcity is the major determinant of pastoralists' inter-tribe conflict (McGuire.R, 2008). Some, however, disagree with the argument that deprivation, disparities between communities, the availability of small arms and light weapons and political factors are major drivers of conflict outcomes than environmental changes (i.e. climate change) (Richards. P, 1996). Northern Kenya 's dry lands, like many ASALs in Africa, have habitat diversity attuned to a seasonal yet highly variable time and place. When one or more seasonally expected rains do not occur, prolonged dry spell may continue into drought and may place greater pressure on available water and pasture land. Nevertheless, droughts are expected to form part of the dry land ecosystem which has been described by ecologists as "non-equilibrium." As opined by Nyakuri (1997), Kenya has had numerous conflicts just like any other African state. Majority of Kenyan regions are being haunted by either political or ethnic conflicts. These because different ethnic communities continue to knowingly rely on their ethnicity to perpetuate their dominance. Idleness among the youths has also been blamed for atmosphere characterized by fear and prejudice.

In Northern Kenya, conflicts are always associated with competition among ethnic groups over various issues (Fisher, 1991). Violent conflicts are known to have caused more unhealthy conflicts whose effects may cause disruption of lives and means of the inhabitants (Adan, 2008). Hostile pastoralist groups are frequently drawn into political reveries by politicians seeking to gain votes and this worsens the violence in the Northern counties of Kenya including Marsabit county. Traditionally, all raids should first be approved by elders, but early ethnographers states that young men often decides to secretly take quick action without acknowledging the elders their intentions (Gulliver, 1991).

As a result, various government, nongovernmental organizations, sponsors and initiatives of the United Nations are concerned with conflict resolution, transition and prevention as well as experimenting with innovative approaches from good practices around the world. Some of these interventions have been effective in transforming conflict between warring groups, incidences and violence, but the frequency of ethnic pastoral conflict has often increased with catastrophic casualties as experienced in the 2019 Borana-Gabra conflict and the 2014 Kapendo police massacre.. Ethnic conflicts have become a major economic challenge, which perhaps explains why there are reduced economic activities, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, inaccessible health services, low food production, poor communication and transportation infrastructure, lack of markets for products, displacement of people, stalled development projects and an amplified number of children not going to school resulting into widespread poverty in the county (Conflict Assessment Report, 2005)

There is limited availability of community communication and conflict resolution among livestock keepers' data at the county level. In many inter-tribal conflicts, conflict resolution strategies are often politicized. This implies that statistics by NGOs and government agencies are open to manipulation in order to attract funding. With current Kenyan constitution, conflict

resolution among livestock keepers has been devolved. Therefore, pastoral groups have been provided with the tools and opportunities to achieve permanent peace that can facilitate effective strategies for conflict resolution. The aim of this study is therefore to investigate the role of Community communication in conflict resolution among livestock farmers; Case of Gabra and Borana tribes in Marsabit County, Kenya

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Gabra and Borana have engaged in regular conflicts in Marsabit County which have affected the entire part of Marsabit County for decades. The conflict between the two communities has claimed lives as the two communities continue to be hostile towards each other. This hostility tends to slow down social economic progress among the groups as no meaningful developments have been realized in this conflict prone environment. The impact of drought and livestock loss has been occasioned by massive influx of automatic weapons from neighboring countries. This has led to an increase in the number of raids and increased the level of Conflict between Gabra and Borana as well as other communities.

Recent approaches to conflict resolution in Northern Kenya contribute in many ways to conflict resolution, especially in the prevention of prolonged conflicts of large scale such as those seen in Somali and Sierra Leone. Despite such efforts by community elders, government and non-governmental organizations, sporadic conflicts inform of cattle rustling and ethnic intolerance has persisted. Numerous conflict resolution and peace building initiatives have been going on in Marsabit County. These initiatives however provided little practical help in dealing with more immediate difficulties. It appears that the strategies employed have not been overly successful and it's not yet clear why solutions to the sources of conflict have never been found and why the hostility between the two communities has not been well established more so Gabra and Borana which has gone unheard even in the scholarly field, hence this study therefore was set out to investigate the role of community communication as a strategy of conflict resolution among livestock keepers; Case of Gabra and Borana tribes in Marsabit County, Kenya.

1.3 Study objectives

To examine the role of community communication in conflict resolution among pastoral communities in Marsabit County

1.4 Conceptual framework

Independent variable

Dependent variable

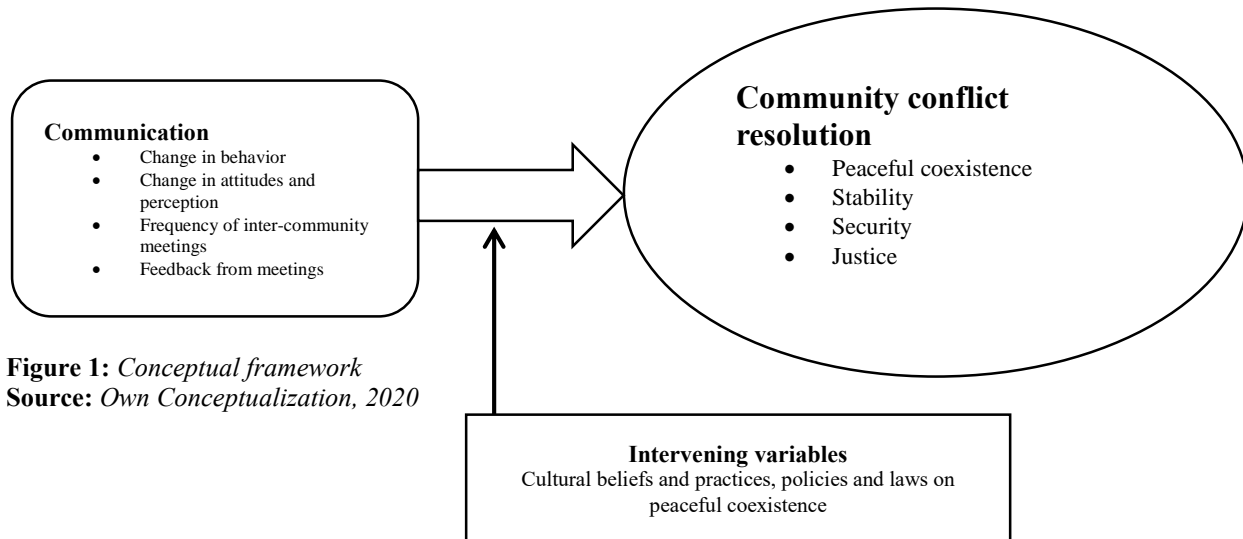


Figure 1: *Conceptual framework*
Source: *Own Conceptualization, 2020*

1.5 Literature review

This section presents the literature supporting this study on the role of community communication on conflict resolution among pastoral communities. Theoretical review is first presented and then empirical review.

Conflict Transformation Theory

This theory was proposed by Lederach & Michelle (2009), Galtung (1969) and Paffenholz (2009). Conflict transformation is a long term process that requires changes in personal, structural and cultural aspects of conflict over long term. Conflict Transformation not only seeks to re-establish the status quo but it is a long term outcome, process and structure oriented effort with a strong emphasis on justices and social change. The theory stresses the necessity of transforming cultural and asymmetric power imbalances between the conflicting parties in order to move to sustainable peace. In order to be successful, conflict transformation therefore has to happen on all levels of the society simultaneously and independently.

Zistel (2008) argues that conflict transformation builds on culturally appropriate models of conflict mediation aimed at empowerment of the people and recognition. Since many societies have their own mechanisms and techniques for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts, efforts for transforming conflicts need therefore to include, respect and promote resources from within the society and the peace building initiatives employed build on the society's existing cultural frameworks. This is because culture is a critical resource in the management of conflict. It provides the people with the means to own the process and solve their own problems, 'African renaissance.' Many governments and NGOs have promoted local and indigenous conflict mechanism projects.

Lederach (2009) provides a substantive and analytical framework that addresses need for comprehensive and strategic approach to transformation of deep-rooted conflicts, as well as, integrated frameworks for building peace and sustained reconciliation. He visualizes Peacebuilding as a structural process that allows conflict transformation to take place at three key

levels of leadership; top, middle level, and grassroots level. This provides a contextual understanding of the activities and approaches which support the participation and involvement of the population in conflict from “top to bottom and from bottom to top” in building peace in post conflict societies.

The theory provides a practical method of underpinning peace building activities that are based on insight into and the resources available to the society at large. It proposes a set of peace building activities through which leadership at all levels-top, middle, and grassroots-would coordinate their various efforts towards a reconciliatory, common process that will enable the building of relationships and trust, cooperation and societal cohesion

The study shall inform the study as it highlights the essence of mediation and community empowerment, noting the cultural differences and dynamics in conflict resolution. To create peace disruptive or negative forms of communication need to be changed or replaced with forms of constructive or positive interaction. As Lederach stresses the need to change the disputing parties by encouraging them to consider their own condition and needs, and to allow them to acknowledge their opponents' condition and needs.

Review of Empirical Studies

Role of community communication in conflict resolution among pastoral communities

Conflict is a consequence of systemic inequity, and of unequal power distribution. It is a condition in which at least two identifiable entities are deliberately opposed to each other when they follow contradictory goals. Conflicts are common phenomena in many parts of the world, especially in dry lands, which are endowed with frightening natural resources. Environmental change in the climate combined with population growth has led to unprecedented resource demand. The consequences were rivalry for power and access to the meager resources which triggered conflicts in turn. Among the main causes of the disputes were climate-related environmental changes (Sterzel et al., 2012).

Conflicts between pastoral communities are caused largely by competition over control and access to natural resources , particularly water and pasture. Other causes of conflict include historical rivalry, deep-seated cultural values, land issues , political incentives, youth idleness and, more recently, illicit arms proliferation (USAID, 2005). However, Mathew et al . (2010) observes that natural resource exploitation and other related environmental stresses are crucial in all phases of conflict, from the outbreak and perpetuation of violence to the undermining of prospects for peace. They noted that over the past sixty years at least 40 per cent of intrastate conflicts are correlated with natural resources. For example, conflicts have escalated in some parts of Sudan owing to declining natural resources triggered by extreme droughts (UNDP, 2010).

Globally ICRM have been used successfully in Afghanistan where majority of disputes resolved are by the traditional mechanisms outside formal justice system (Erica, 2014). In Sardinian Island, an island on Mediterranean Sea and part of the Italian nation ICRM including negotiations and mediation have been employed in resolving livestock disputes. Most African countries still hold onto customary laws under which ICRM is common. In Kenya, the concept of conflict resolution through indigenous processes has been in use in all sectors of the economy including security, finance, tourism, and agriculture, and is highly practiced among the communities in conflict zones especially among pastoralists. Use of Alternative Dispute Resolution is expressed in Article 189 (4) of the Constitution of Kenya (GoK, 2010). This includes negotiation, mediation and arbitration to settle intergovernmental disputes. Kariuki (2014) affirms that since time immemorial in Africa, traditions have emphasized harmony, togetherness over

individual interests and humanness expressed in terms of *ubuntu* in South Africa and *utu* in East Africa.

Communication has a big role to play in conflict management. It has been observed that poor communication always results in misunderstanding and eventually conflicts (Jerri, 2003). The mass media is the most important channel of communication that exists between sides in a conflict. Sometimes the media is used by one side to broadcast intimidating messages. But other times, the parties speak to each other through the media or through specific journalists (Howard, 2008).

Communication can be defined as diverse, from the simplest two-person conversation to the most sophisticated mass media (Wessler and Brinkman, 2012). In early theoretical communication models from the 60's, the contact method was simply seen as an exchange of messages from a sender to a receiver with significant importance given to the sender and the medium used for the transmission. Since the 1970s, this paradigm has undergone a 180-degree shift with greater focus on the contact mechanism itself, understood primarily as an exchange of meanings and social relationships resulting from these exchanges. Communication is generally viewed as a social mechanism designed to put participants together in a two-way process. The parties involved in a communication cycle, perceived in this way, are both senders and receivers of information and co-creators of knowledge (FAO and GTZ, 2006).

Therefore, creating a contact requires finding consensus between the sender and the recipient through negotiation and conversation, resulting in common information for the right action (Servaes and Malikhao, 2007). The decision taken after information sharing is always made on the basis of the desires, needs and intensity of the parties concerned and is often organized and sensitive either to the sender or receiver's interest and situation. Bi-way contact has been used to organize involvement in times of conflict situations according to Richardson (2003). Conflict parties are willing to compromise and make a consensus that is to be discussed further. Therefore, it is fair to point out that there is a need for stakeholders to consult, discuss and make a decision which can be communicated further.

Communication where possible conflict is absolutely absent is not real, therefore it does not fulfill the efficiency attributes (Pănișoara and Bocoș, 2018). Interpersonal contact is very helpful from conflicts that deter, stop, control or overcome perspectives; it can play several roles in any conflict (the first is that it can generate conflicts by itself). In the next part of this paper we will focus on the role communication can play in conflict resolution. To solve conflicts communication uses three functions, according to Pănișoara & Bocoș (2018). The first applies to the awareness and knowledge of ourselves and the people with whom we communicate, so we can know what to expect from them and how we can affect them and, on the other hand, make known our own position so that they can respond to it. The second function of communication is to establish a meaningful relationship with others, so that we can give meaning to our reality-the role of individual socialization. The third role relates to the impact and persuasion on the aspect of communication, further expanding the concept of mutual effort and cooperation.

Conflict has been one of the realities of our present human existence, as it is highly impossible for people to interact without any disagreement between one form or the other. Experience has shown a double-edged relationship between contact and conflict and its resolution. It is because most disputes are caused by misinformation or disinformation, and cannot be resolved without clear communication. The communication position in conflict resolution is therefore ideally to find ways to mitigate the negative aspects of conflict and maximize the benefits of the functional aspects in the transactional exchange of meaning between the parties involved in a conflict. Conflict functionality or dysfunctionality depends on the communication abilities and

their applicability by the concerned parties (Njoku, 2012).

Improper conflict resolution can result in loss of life, property and low productivity. Although proper handling can lead to freedom, less tension and stress; it is natural that people have to differ in their views and actions. Our main concern here is how we can use communication as they occur to resolve these conflicts. Today, the world is experiencing the amount of tension and anxious moments because a lot of people ignorantly believe that suppressing conflict is better than resolving it. Unfortunately, this has resulted in a lot of scheming on the part of the political leaders and others either denying or ignoring the opposing views. The rage and anger built up as a result of this, when it eventually explodes, does more harm than the initial conflict. There is no doubt that the parties to a dispute can initially seem incompatible but that the parties learn more about each other through the negotiation and negotiation process, which provides space for compatibility. In doing this, we must not forget the concept of dissonance reduction in communication. There will be conflicts and disagreements when persons, organizations and countries misperceive and misinterpret information from the other party because such information is not consistent with previously held ideas, hopes and beliefs (Njoku, 2012).

Regionally, Girard (2011) observes that radio remains the most important medium in Africa since low levels of literacy, distribution problems of newspapers and the cost of television leave it the most accessible medium; this therefore makes radio a driving force of change among the masses. Radio has played the role of a conciliator and a promoter of peace. For example, in Northern Uganda, radio has been used to promote peace; where Mega FM has had positive effects since 2002. Existing evidence shows that the station played a major part in encouraging LRA members to come out of the bush. Struges (2017) further noted that the LRA leadership and former rebel soldiers were encouraged to listen to the station and were invited to take part in radio phone-in talk shows to hold discussions with government and civil society representatives, a good step in peace building. Thus, mass media played a role in creating peace and giving the voiceless a voice and enabling the rule of justice.

Peace media at its heart is about developing and disseminating media with the aim of promoting peace and conflict resolution. However, as decades of research into media effects show, mass media are not working in a vacuum but are part of a larger ecosystem that includes interpersonal discussions and debates. Addressing conflict resolution and peacebuilding, Bratić (2016) argues that mass media should be one component of a systemic attempt to transition from a conflict to a situation of peace, noting that while research has consistently shown that perceptions and views in the media affect, media have less influence on behavioral changes. Becker (2014) argues that involving local media and getting those affected by the conflict to participate actively is critical to the success of a media-for-peace intervention.

Lind (2016) observes that donor agency activities revolve around conflict resolution and peace-building activities, especially in pastoral areas of Eastern Ethiopia, northern Kenya, southeast Sudan and northern Uganda. At local level, for example, the council of elders conducts conflicts over lost crops and access to water and pastoralist routes (UNDP, 2010). Different local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are involved in building peace at national level. This peace-building program includes: the Development Initiative Access Link (DIAL) Africa in Somalia (DIAL, 2012), the Greater Horn of Africa (GHAI) for the Greater Horn of Africa (GHA) (USAID / REDSO, 2003) and the Netherlands, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which initiated the Resource Based Conflicts project in Sudan in 2004.

1.6 Methodology

The population of Gabras was 141,200 while Borana are 276,236 giving a total of 417,476 (KNBS, 2019). The researcher used both convenience and purposive sampling method to gather data from household members (residents, elders, women leaders and religious leaders) and key informants. The researcher adopted (Nasuirma, 2000) model to determine the study sample size of 100 community members. Semi structured questionnaires to collect data from the households' members and unstructured interview guides to gather data from the key informants were used.

1.7 Findings

Response Rate

The study had targeted residents of Marsabit County from the tribes of Gabra and Borana, communities which have experienced conflicts for quite some time. The study was therefore to work with a total sample of 100 respondents. However, by the time the researcher had prepared for data analysis, a total of 94 respondents had returned their fully completed tools, ready for data analysis. The 6 tools were either missing or were found to be having incomplete information and hence could not be used in the process of data analysis. This therefore gave a response rate of 94%. Informed by Oso and Onem (2016), who posits that a response rate of 50% of the sample population is adequate for data analysis in a descriptive study, while 70% response rate is excellent for data analysis; the researcher therefore found 94% to be excellent enough for data analysis. The study therefore had a total questionnaire return rate of 94%.

Analysis by age brackets of the respondents

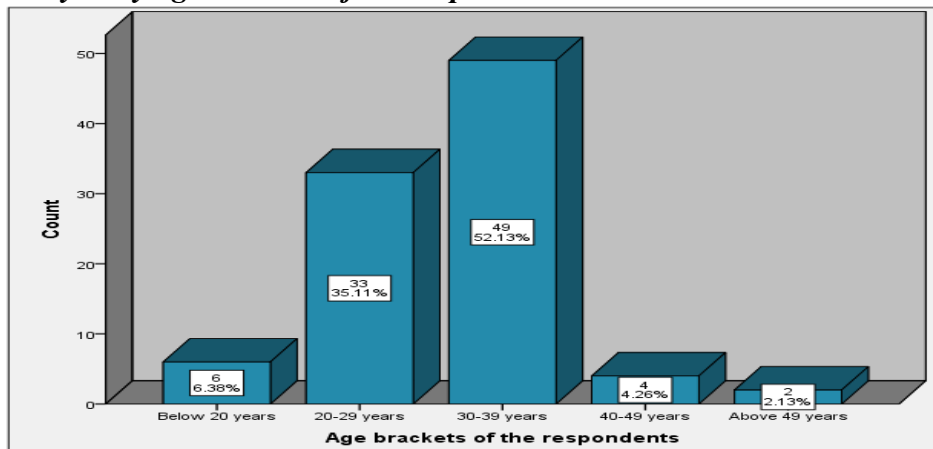


Figure 2: Age brackets of the respondents

Source: Field Data (2020)

The study generally focused on residents of Marsabit County with a major focus on adult members of the Gabra and Borana tribes. Therefore, study findings showed that most of the respondents were aged between 30 and 39 years of old. This was indicated by 52.13% (49) of the respondents involved in the study. A significant percentage of the respondents, that is, 35.11% (33) of the respondents involved in the study indicated to be aged between 20 and 29 years. These findings implied that most of the individuals who got involved in conflicts between the two tribes were in their middle ages of between 20 and 39 years old. They hence were energetic enough to tackle their rivals, and from the respondents, it emerged that the younger and stronger members were taken to embark on cattle rustling missions. It was survival for the fittest in such battles, which in

most cases occurred at night. This was as presented in figure 2 above.

Level of education of the respondents

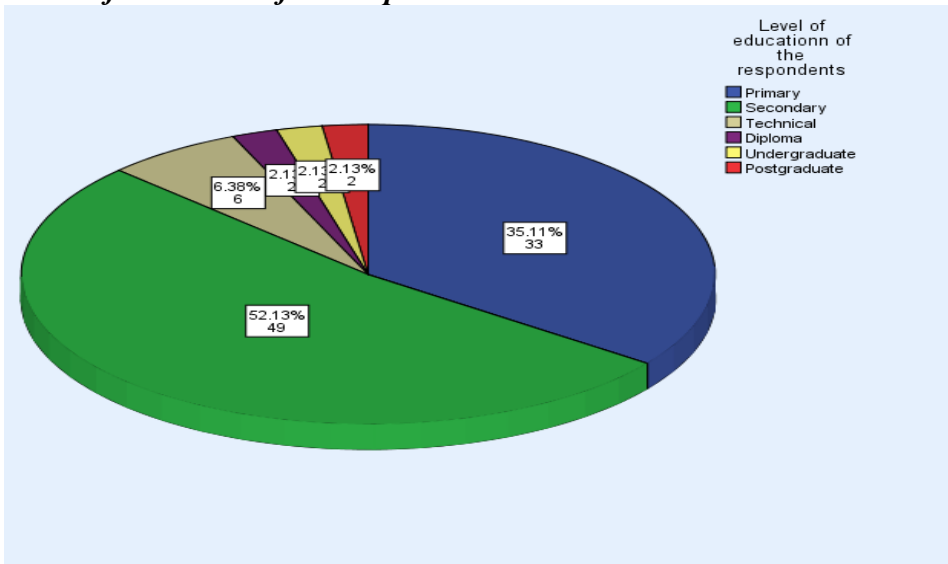


Figure 1 Level of education of the respondents

Source: Field Data (2020)

From the findings presented in figure 3 above, most of the respondents involved in the study had acquired secondary level education. This was indicated by 52.13% (49) of the respondents involved in the study. Some of the respondents pointed out that they had dropped out of secondary schools, while a few had completed secondary schools. Some women had dropped out of school in order to be married off for the girls, while some of the male indicated that they had responsibilities to take care of their families’ livestock. According the respondents, almost everyone could afford primary school education as it was free and compulsory, and hence parents strived to ensure that they took their children to secondary schools, which also was subsidized through free day secondary school education. However, still 35.11% (33) of the respondents involved in the study had acquired only primary level education, some of whom had dropped out and married off by their parents in exchange for bride wealth. At times, some of the girls would be married off to people who were old enough to be their parents. College and University education were not easily achievable by the residents due to ignorance and lack of school fees. The pastoral community valued their livestock to education. This influenced their ability to access reasonable income from formal employment. This therefore translated to a lower literacy level in the county as compared to other counties.

Occupation of the respondents**Table 1: Occupation of the respondents**

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Pastoralist	54	57.4
Agriculture	8	8.5
Agro-pastoralist	14	14.9
Business	10	10.6
None	4	4.3
Others	4	4.3
Total	94	100.0

Source: Field Data (2020)

The study investigated into what the respondents engaged in to earn a living. The study findings were as presented in table 1 above. From the findings and as targeted by the study, majority of the respondents were pastoralists, and only relied on their livestock to make ends meet. This was indicated by 57.4% (54) of the respondents involved in the study. They therefore exchanged their livestock with farmers with foodstuffs, while some sold some of their livestock to buy alternative foods in addition to meat and milk, which was almost a daily meal for them. For them, wealth was measured by the number of livestock owned by a person. However, 14.9% (14) of the respondents involved in the study indicated to have merged their pastoralism lifestyle with agriculture, hence they indicated to do agro-pastoralism, while 10.6% (10) of the respondents had ventured into business to supplement their pastoral lifestyle. The latter therefore were not mobile. They had settled in some particular areas and started retailing foodstuffs and other items to the community members.

Marital status of the respondents**Table 2: Marital status of the respondents**

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Single	6	6.4
Married	76	80.9
Divorced/ separated	8	8.5
Other	4	4.3
Total	94	100.0

Source: Field Data (2020)

Early marriage was a trend in most pastoralist communities. Despite the sensitization and legal actions that had been taken against perpetrators of such, it was still practiced, and community elders approved it. Although in the recent years it had declined, those who had been married earlier remained in their marriages, since they had borne children in those marriages, and going back would mean mystery for them. Therefore, the study results showed that most respondents were married. This was recorded by 80.9 per cent (76) of the study respondents. Some of these respondents indicated to have been married when in primary schools, secondary schools while some never even went to school. Their parents had married them off to people who were older to them by far. Furthermore, after some years in marriage, some indicated to have divorced/ separated with their spouses for they couldn't meet their demands. Some had lost their spouses and were

widowed while a few were still single. This was as presented in table 2 above.

Religious affiliation of the respondents

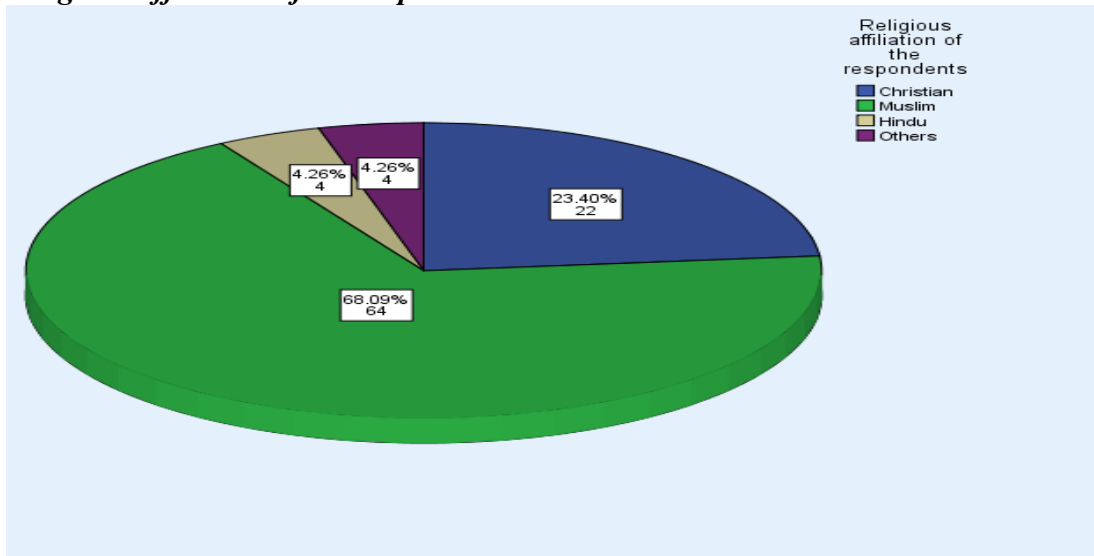


Figure 4. Religious affiliation of the respondents

Source: Field Data (2020)

Despite Kenya being a Christian nation, Marsabit County, just as other counties in the Northern and Coastal Kenya; is Muslim dominated. From the study, 68.09% (64) of the respondents indicated being affiliated to the Muslim faith. This could be attributed to the fact that they border the neighboring Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia, where the proportion of Muslim are higher. Some people would claim affiliation to a religion just because masses were affiliated to it, they were born in Muslim families for example or rather because they just needed a religious identity. They therefore did not adhere to the teachings of their religion. Moreover, 23.40% (22) of the respondents indicated to be affiliated to the Christian faith. This was as presented in figure 4.4 above.

Duration the respondents had lived in the community

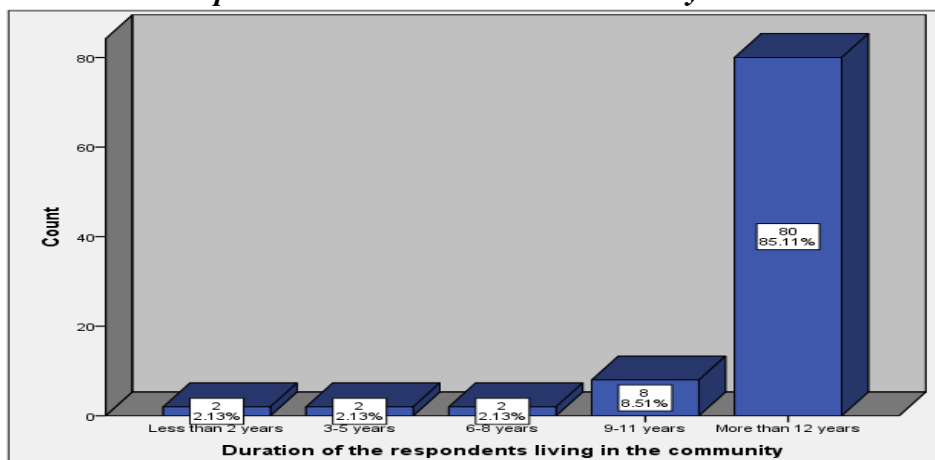


Figure 2 Duration the respondents had lied in the community

Source: Field Data (2020)

The study evaluated the duration that the respondents had lived in the community. This was meant to ascertain their viability in responding to the study, as the study assumed that the longer a person had been in the community, the more conversant they were with conflict resolution matters between the two communities. Findings from the study indicated that majority of the respondents had been born and raised in the communities and therefore had stayed there for more than 12 years. This was indicated by 85.11% (80) of the respondents involved in the study. Therefore, the respondents as targeted by the study, were residents of the Gabra and Borana communities and had lived in them for the entire time they had existed. This implied that they had experienced either directly or indirectly inter-community conflicts, and therefore had either heard of or participated in conflict resolution. This was as presented in figure 5 above.

The role of community communication in conflict resolution

Despite the fact that both the Gabra and the Borana were both pastoralists from Marsabit County, most of the respondents pointed out that differences existed between the two communities. The respondents indicated that the two communities had been at loggerheads over small issues like pasture and water for the livestock, and at times cattle rustling was a common practice. This was approved by the elders of each community, and that one of the communities would use all the possible tricks including physical fighting to get livestock from the rival community. The stronger community members would be sent to steal livestock from the other community, which was an oasis for their rivalry. They hence acted out of the desire to revenge the mistreatment they had received from their counterparts, and hence communication was key in slowing down such rivalry. This was according to the following respondents:

“Yes, differences exist.....we have been struggling over grazing land, water and other resources....cattle rustling is very common, even the elders approve of it.....strong men are sent to bring the livestock, and sometimes they engage in physical fights with the members of the Borana community...the Borana as well want to revenge and the cycle continues.”

Respondent 002

Source: Field Data (2020)

Table 3: Major sources of conflict between the Gabra and Borana Communities

Sources	Frequency	Percent
Political positions	4	4.3
Administrative boundaries for political power	4	4.3
Cattle rustling	4	4.3
Revenge killings	24	25.5
Natural resources like water and pasture	50	53.2
Environmental degradation	4	4.3
Others	4	4.3
Total	94	100.0

Source: Field Data (2020)

The study sought to understand from the respondents some of the major causes/ sources of conflicts between the Gabra and Borana Communities. It emerged from the study that a number of factors resulted to the conflicts witnessed between the two communities. One of the main causes of conflict was natural resources including grazing land and water. This was indicated by 53.2% (50) of the respondents involved in the study. Each of the communities wanted to be dominate the other and win as much grazing land and water for their livestock as possible. This was heightened by the fact that grazing land was communally owned. In the process of struggles, some of the fighters ended up losing their lives, which further made matters worse. As a result, the opponent community came in to revenge the killing of their member. This was indicated by 25.5% (24) of the respondents involved in the study. Furthermore, cattle rustling was common, as wealth was determined by the size of herds a person had. Other sources of conflicts included political positions, administrative boundaries and environmental degradation among others. This was as presented in table 3 above.

Table 4 Presence of communication in resolving the conflicts

There was communication	Frequency	Percent
Yes	24	25.5
No	70	74.5
Total	94	100.0

Source: Field Data (2020)

The respondents were asked to indicate whether or not communication was employed in resolving the conflicts. The study findings were as presented in table 4 above. From the findings, it was evident that after conflicts, it was not easy for the two communities to communicate and forge a way of resolving the conflicts. By implication therefore, the communities had unresolved issues and grudges; which precipitated more and more conflicts. This was indicated by 74.5% (70) of the respondents involved in the study, who indicated that there was no communication in resolving the conflicts. However, 25.5% (24) of the respondents affirmed that there was communication in addressing the conflicts. The later had probably participated in the communication, or rather had been sent to represent their community in conversing the way forward.

The study probed further into how the communication was conducted. From the respondents, it was clear that the elders were the ones who communicated with fellow elders from the other community. The respondents indicated that the elders shared traditional brews and meat while discussing the way forward about the conflicts that existed, their effects and hence their solutions. This was initially done by sending community representative who was old enough to talk to the fellow elders and inform them that there was need to iron out their differences and co-exist. The respondents indicated that the preference of messengers was due to the fact that mobile phones, which were apparently the fastest provided no room for expressing sincerity and verification of an honest appeal. Network coverage was poor and some of the elders were not even able to operate mobile phones, let alone being able to own one. This was based on the following verbatim:

“It is the elders who communicate on behalf of the community.....they eat and drink together with their fellow elders while discussing solutions....one community messenger who I old enough is sent to schedule an appointment with the other elders, since mobile phones are expensive, there is no network and the elders don't know how to operate.”

Respondent 046

Source: Field Data (2020)

On the effectiveness of the communication during conflict resolution, the respondents indicated that it was relative. Sometimes the communication would bear fruits and that the conflicts were successfully resolved, and in other cases, the elders failed to agree. The later occurred especially in cases where some community members had lost their lives and that the other community raged with anger for revenge. Such conversations ended up in physical fights, verbal exchange and misunderstandings. This was adapted from the following respondent:

“It depends with the type of conflict and the effects....some light cases are easily resolved while others prove very difficult to resolve with communication....for instance, if the conflict ended up in loss of lives of members from one of the communities, their opponents demanded for a revenge, and could even fight in the process.”

Respondent 087

Source: Field Data (2020)

Various challenges were encountered during communication. From the respondents, some of the challenges included unwillingness of one side to take part in the conversations, some of whom never even showed up for the conversation; difficulty in reaching a consensus especially when the matter involved loss of lives, as at times that called for revenge; some of the key elders who are resourceful in community decision making could not be reached, for the dates fixed colluded with their daily schedule; some of the conversations ended up in disagreements, verbal exchange and eventually physical fights where some of the elders got hurt; and that the respondents felt that the elders did not always represent the views of community members. This was based on the following verbatim:

“A lot of challenges are encountered.....sometimes one of the sides is unwilling to take part in the conversations and don’t even show up....the elders may fail to agree especially when lives were lost...as you know people are busy. Some important decision-making icons may be missed due to their busy schedule...sometimes the elders quarrel and even fight.....the elders do not represent our voice.”

Respondent 006

Source: Field Data (2020)

The respondents were therefore divided on whether or not communication was a good conflict resolution mechanism. Some of the respondents pointed out that communication was good as it helped solve the disputes with just a few representatives involved while some highlighted that communication alone would not resolve conflicts. The later highlighted that for effective conflict resolution, there was need to incorporate mediators between the two communities, who were not affiliated to any of the communities. The respondents said that this would ensure that the actions taken or the resolutions arrived at were friendly to both the communities involved. This was as presented below:

“Communication helps solve conflicts between the two communities.....however, communication alone does not work....there is need for mediators, who should be from other communities for there to be fairness in the resolution.”

Respondent 78

Source: Field Data (2020)

From the reviewed literature, communication where potential conflict is entirely missing is unauthentic, so it doesn’t fulfill the attributes of efficiency (Pănișoara and Bocoș, 2018). From

conflicts preventing, avoiding, managing or solving perspective, interpersonal communication is very important; it can play multiple roles in any conflict (the first one being that it can create conflicts by itself). In the following part of the present paper we will focus on the role communication can play in solving conflicts. According to Pănișoara & Bocoș (2018), solving conflicts communication uses three functions. The first is referring to the understanding and knowing of ourselves and of the others we interact with, so we can know what to expect from them and how we can influence them and, on the other hand, to make our own position known so they can react to it. The second function of communication is about developing a consistent relationship with the others, so that we could give significance to our reality – the individual socializing function. The third function refers to the dimension of communication influence and persuasion, developing further the idea of common effort and collaboration.

Conflict has been one of the realities of our present human existence because it is highly impossible for people to interact without any disagreement of one form or the other. Experience has shown that the relationship between communication and conflict and its resolution is double-edged. This is so because most conflicts occur as a result of misinformation or disinformation and cannot be resolved without effective application of communication. Ideally therefore, the communication role in resolving conflict is to find out ways of minimizing the destructive aspects of conflict and maximizing the benefits of the functional aspects in the transactional sharing of meaning between the parties involved in a conflict. The functionality or dis-functionality of conflict depends on communication skills and its applicability by the parties involved (Njoku, 2012).

1.8 Conclusion

After carrying out this study, it was concluded that community strategies influences conflict resolution amongst livestock keepers.

Moreover, It was concluded that the conflict between the Borana and the Gabra was as a result of differences between the two communities. These conflicts were caused by issues like cattle rustling, natural resources like water and pasture; and territorial disputes among others. Communication emerged to be ineffective without the incorporation of mediators. Mediation had been widely practiced and seemed to bear fruits even though sometimes it could bear no fruits due to tussles between the two subject groups. Communication was facilitated by traditional leaders, NGO officials, government officials and religious leaders. Mediation was effective in conflict resolution and it enabled affected communities to take control over their issues. Negotiation as well was widely embraced and traditional leaders played a key role. Negotiations were hampered by the weakened traditional systems which to some extent promoted bias and nepotism. Reconciliation was considered very appropriate from the study and that it built peace between the Gabra and Borana communities. Reconciliation fostered forgiveness amongst conflicting communities that had offended the other community, hence as well bringing peace and cohesion. Apology was affirmed as integral part of reconciliation. However, the whole process of conflict resolution was seen to be affected by financial constrains which prevented facilitation of important logistics like transportation of key stakeholders in conflict resolution like elders, other factors was political factors whereby politicians interfered with the reconciliation process through speculating propagandas to the local residents to go back to the fight hence making the conflict resolution efforts useless.

1.9 Recommendations

After carrying out this study, the following was recommended to various stakeholders concerned with conflict resolution amongst livestock keepers:

- i) There is need for the local government and the Non-governmental organization sector to work collaboratively in ensuring that an amicable solution to the conflict between Gabra and Borana is found.
- ii) The community members should collaborate with conflict resolution agencies in ensuring that they address the differences between them.
- iii) The council of elders should come in handy in mediating, negotiating and conducting reconciliation between the Gabra and the Borana.
- iv) Security agencies should collaborate with the residents of Marsabit County to ensure that they curb cattle rustling, apparently which is one of the sources of conflict.
- v) The county government of Marsabit should invest in upgrading the socio-economic status of the community, so that they diversify their means of livelihood rather than overreliance on pastoralism.
- vi) The county government and National government should promote equity amongst all communities in Marsabit regardless of the community size through giving equal opportunities and not nepotism and tribalism which has been attracting bitter conflicts
- vii) There is need for community sensitization on the essence of keeping and maintaining peace, by both the government and the NGO sector.
- viii) National land commission is recommended to develop and update the negotiated land use and plan current grazing patterns to prevent sporadic conflicts

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