

Challenges To Managing Ethnic Diversity in the Face of Horizontal Inequalities in Kenya: Case of Uasin-Gishu County

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Abstract

Violent disputes and ethnic clashes have been a common phenomenon in plural societies over the years. Globally, these incidents of ethnic division have been manifested in power politics and control of resources, hence posing a major challenge to unity and social cohesion in these societies. In Kenya threats to ethnic diversity are predominantly ascribed to political instigation, land disputes, ethnic divisions, demonstrations, subsequent clashes, and riots, which are common occurrences during each political campaign season. Uasin Gishu County boasts of a diverse population comprising various ethnic groups has been an epicenter of ethnic conflicts in Kenya for many years. This study sought to put into perspective challenges of ethnic diversity in the county in the face horizontal inequalities which has been a major factor for ethnic tensions in Kenya. The study adopted Interpretivist philosophy. The study applied descriptive and historical research designs. The study found out that there were a myriad challenges towards ethnic diversity amid horizontal inequalities which included high levels of Politicization of ethnicity, Corruption and Impunity of Public Officers, misuse of various media and technology platforms, Institutionalized discrimination, historical injustices and marginalization. The study concluded that there was a combination of factors that made it challenging to manage horizontal inequalities and ethnic conflicts in Uasin Gishu County. These factors created ethno-political competition among major ethnic groups in the county, thereby leading to an environment in which ethnic animosity thrived over national identity and Unity hence incessant ethnic tension and violence in the county. The study recommended a multi-pronged stakeholder approach to address the challenge of horizontal inequalities.

Keywords: Horizontal Inequalities, Ethnic Conflicts, Ethnic Diversity, Deprivation, Politicized Ethnicity, Marginalization

Introduction

Background

Violent disputes in countries with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds persist as a significant global challenge in contemporary times. Such clashes have been observed across various regions, including the former Soviet Union, former Yugoslavia, the Basque region of Spain, and Northern Ireland in Europe (Stewart & Brown, 2006). Several African nations, such as Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, and Nigeria, have also grappled with severe conflicts of this nature. Fiji and Indonesia have similarly experienced intense and lethal conflicts rooted in ethnic and religious divisions (Collier, *et al.*, 2003).

Apart from the immediate casualties and physical harm incurred during these conflicts, organized violence has detrimental effects on the overall development and economic well-being of affected regions. It hampers economic progress and investment, exacerbates challenges in delivering social services, and results in weaker human development indicators compared to nations unaffected by such conflicts (Stewart *et al.*, 2002).

According to Stewart (2005), a significant correlation exists between Horizontal Inequalities (HIs) and countries that have grappled with conflicts across different parts of the world. Each country, however, has confronted severe HIs in distinct manners. HIs can be categorized into four types: economic HIs, social HIs, political HIs, and Cultural HIs. Economic HIs encompass disparities in the access to and ownership of various assets—financial, human, natural resource-based, and social. Furthermore, they encompass inequalities in income levels and employment opportunities that hinge on these assets and the general economic conditions. Social HIs include disparities in access to a range of services, such as education, healthcare, housing, and overall health status. Political HIs cover inequalities in the allocation of political opportunities and power among groups, including control over the presidency, the cabinet, parliamentary assemblies, the bureaucracy, local and regional governments, the military, and the police. They also involve inequalities in people's capabilities to engage in politics and express their needs. Cultural status HIs encompass disparities in the recognition and status of languages, customs, norms, and practices among different groups.

Throughout Africa, multiple instances of ethnic conflicts have been documented, with horizontal inequalities serving as the core catalysts for these conflicts. Onwuzuruigbo (2011) suggests that in West Africa, violent conflicts resulting from Horizontal Inequalities have manifested between the Aguleri and Umuleri communities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Prolonged land disputes and perceived historical inequalities in accessing social, economic, and political resources have fostered a collective sense of difference between the two groups, erupting into sporadic and bloody conflicts.

McCoy (2008) contends that the Rwandan genocide stemmed from profound and systemic horizontal inequalities that permeated the political, economic, and military sectors of society. These disparities affected both ethnic "identities" and resulted in widespread violence against both Hutu and Tutsi populations. These inequalities, combined with power-seeking tendencies and a systemic sense of social and economic insecurity, gave rise to extremism, culminating in one of the most efficient and deadliest outbreaks of violence in modern history.

Kenya has long grappled with significant socio-economic horizontal inequalities between ethnic groups and regions, primarily rooted in colonial legacies and geographic factors, which have persisted for over 45 years since gaining independence (Stewart, 2010). Incidences of ethnic conflicts in Kenya are not a new phenomenon as they have historical roots spanning from pre-colonial Kenya (Oyugi, 2000). Persistent ethnic conflicts have been occasioned by varied and intrinsic patterns of socio-economic and cultural as well as systems of governance (Onyango et al., 2011). The incessant conflicts in the county have further exacerbated the situation of inequality in the county creating room for graft, ethnic politics and injustice which has led to rise in poverty levels as a result of skewed resource allocation and sharing.

According to Peters (2009), politics, land issues, and ethnicity are the major factors behind conflicts, especially during electoral periods. Stefan & Roxana (2012) further aver that these conflicts are made worse by institutional weaknesses. The shortcomings in these institutions are linked to the government's failure to uphold its social contract with the people. This failure has fueled heightened agitation at both individual and group levels, thereby creating a conducive environment for conflicts to arise.

Uasin Gishu County boasts a diverse population comprising various ethnic groups. The county is characterized by its ethnic diversity, with the majority of its inhabitants being of Kalenjin descent, primarily Nandi, alongside other communities such as Kikuyu, Luhya, Kisii, and Luo. The county was at the center of a series of violent confrontations and incidents following the 2007 general elections. Instances of election-related violence have become inherent to the region ever since the introduction of multiparty politics in 1991 (Van Den Broeck, 2011). During the 2007 turmoil, the most affected areas in Uasin Gishu included Kiambaa, Munyaka, Langas, Yamumbi, Burnt Forest, Eldoret Town, Cheptiret, and Turbo.

Boone et al., (2021) indicated that the unequal distribution of land and economic resources in the County where certain ethnic groups enjoy while others were marginalized was a major conflict issue in the area. Political representation and decision-making processes in Uasin Gishu County had been marked by ethnic imbalances deepening the horizontal inequalities (Kahura, 2019). He asserted that specific ethnic communities had historically held more power and influence in local governance structures leaving other groups marginalized and disenfranchised. The horizontal inequalities in the County had been associated with ethnic conflicts. The current study therefore explores challenges in the management of the horizontal inequalities which have been associated with conflicts in Uasin Gishu County.

Statement of the Problem

Kenya has over 40 ethnic groups and thus a plural and diverse society. Like many similar countries with diverse ethnic groups Kenya still struggle with the issue of national cohesion and attempts to manage ethnic diversity which has over the years proved to be an effort in futility due to cases of historical injustices and horizontal inequalities. The Kenyan Constitution of 2010 has been hailed as a progressive document that can help yield the elusive unity that the county has yearned for since independence. The constitution which created devolution as through it 47 counties were born including Uasin Gishu County. The county has remained one of the tensest counties during election periods and also one of the most ethnically diverse in Kenya. Despite devolution and other benefits brought about by the constitution, the lived realities still show massive horizontal inequalities along ethnic lines. The interplay between ethnic identity marginalization, whether real or perceived has continued to heighten mistrust, competition, even violent confrontations

especially during electoral periods. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to find out the challenges that hamper the effective management of ethnic diversity in the face of horizontal inequalities in Uasin Gishu County.

Philosophical Underpinnings

The study was anchored on the philosophy of Interpretivism. This philosophy has its origins from the works of Immanuel Kant, Max Weber, Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz. According to Chowdhury (2014) Interpretivists looked for meanings and motives behind people's actions like behaviour and interactions with others in society and culture. His arguments are based on the exploration of cultural knowledge in the ways that humans develop shared beliefs and norms from personal experiences. Different people experience and understand the same 'objective reality' in very different ways. They have their own, often very different, reasons for acting in the world (Alharahsheh & Pius 2020). In this regard interpretivists argue that, in order to understand human action, we need to achieve '*Verstehen*' or empathetic understanding for instance, we need to see the world through the eyes of the actors doing the acting (Chowdhury 2014; Schwandt, 1994).

Based on the understanding that Horizontal Inequalities (HIs) emanate among groups of people that share a common identity *vis-à-vis* members of 'an out-group' who may also be sharing a common identity. The comparison that could occur between two or more culturally defined groups may in some cases portray inequalities based on economic, social, political and cultural status dimensions. These comparisons may lead to feelings of marginalization or disenfranchisement between these socially diverse groups and could be a major breeding ground for animosity and ethnic hatred.

The County was ranked by NCIC, (2022) among the most high-risk counties to electoral conflicts before the 2022 general elections based on the fact that this is an ethnically diverse county. The 'us-versus them' ideologies that are always set during political competitions along ethnic lines is a major concern for negative ethnicity. This is because affiliation to government is linked with once ethnic group taking power and as such, ethnic groups that 'miss a seat at state house' are 'seen as enemies of the government' or 'non-shareholders' which creates a sense of disenfranchisement as citizens from non-dominant ethnicities feel left out of governance. In this regard, ethnic conflicts could be interpreted from the perspective that ethnic groups equate economic, social and cultural inequalities to the benefits that they are 'denied' for 'wrong politically affiliation' which leads to ethnic polarization and political mobilization along ethnic lines thereby creating ethnic animosity, negative ethnicity and a rich environment for ethnic conflicts.

Research Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design and historical research designs. The descriptive design was used to obtain data on personal experiences, events and situation with respect to the variables of the study (Creswell, 2009). Descriptive research is directed at making careful observations and detailed documentation of a phenomenon of interest (Bhattacharjee *et al.*, 2019). In this study the researcher conducted surveys using household questionnaires and conducted in-depth interviews and Focus Group discussions to have a deeper understanding of the issues of horizontal inequalities and ethnic conflicts in Uasin Gishu County. Therefore, in this study, the descriptive design was useful in describing the challenges in the management of horizontal inequalities in Uasin Gishu County.

The study was conducted in Uasin Gishu County, the County is situated in the Rift Valley region of Kenya with its geographical boundaries spanning from approximately 34°50' east to 35°37' east longitude and 0°03' south to 0°55' north latitude (County Government of Uasin Gishu, 2018). Data collection was done in two of the six sub-counties, which represented 30% of the study. The two sub-counties were Kapsaret and Kesses.

The study targeted the following categories of study population in Uasin Gishu County. Household heads, County Commissioner, County Secretary, CDF Officials, local administration (Chiefs), Religious leaders, civil society organizations, local political leaders (MCAs), security personnel (senior Police officers) and opinion leaders. These categories of respondents were sampled from various sub-counties within the study area.

The study utilised both probability and non-probability Sampling techniques. Since the main Unit of analysis for this study was household heads, data from Kenya National Bureau of statistics show that Kapsaret had a total of 33,975 households and whereas Kessess has a total of 26,343 households. Hence, the total number of household heads is 60,318 (KNBS, 2019). The researcher, therefore, determined the sample size for the nine wards using Fisher's formula proposed in Mugenda & Mugenda, (1999) which states that for a target population greater than 10000, the desired sample size can be determined using Fisher's formula for sample size determination. The formula indicates that:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where n=desired sample size (the target population is greater than 10,000).

z=the standard normal deviate at the confidence level of 95% is 1.96.

p=the proportion of the target population estimated to have characteristics being measured is set at 50%

q=1-p (probability of non-success)

d=level of statistical significance set at 0.05

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 * 0.5 * (1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 384$$

Non-probability sampling techniques were used to sample key informants such as County Commissioner, County Secretary, CDF Officials, local administration (Chiefs), Religious leaders, civil society organizations, local political leaders (MCAs), security personnel (senior Police officers). The study had four FGDs made of 10 participants each.

Primary data was collected through questionnaires, interviews and FGDs. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS version 25 software to obtain descriptive statistics particularly frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic techniques to support quantitative data. Quantitative data was presented using tables, graphs and charts while qualitative data was presented in form of narrative reports and verbatim quotations.

Findings and Discussions

Ethnic Composition of Household Heads in Uasin Gishu County

The study sought to establish the ethnic composition of household heads in Uasin Gishu County. The findings of the study revealed that 70 (18.7%) were Kikuyu; 121 (32.3%) were Kalenjin; 30 (8.0%) were Kisii; 52 (13.9%) were Luo; 67 (17.9%) were Luhya; 14 (3.7%) were Kamba; 1 (0.3) was Teso; 2 (0.5%) were Maasai; 1 (0.3) was Turkana; 5 (1.3%) were Meru; 1 (0.3%) was Mijikenda 1 (0.3%); 1 (0.3%) was Somali and 10 (2.7%) were from other ethnic groups in Kenya. The findings are as shown in Table 1

Table 1: Ethnic Composition of Household heads in Uasin Gishu County

Ethnic Group	Frequency	Percentage
Kikuyu	70	18.7
Kalenjin	121	32.3
Kisii	30	8.0
Luo	52	13.9
Luhya	67	17.9
Kamba	14	3.7
Teso	1	0.3
Maasai	2	0.5
Turkana	1	0.3
Meru	5	1.3
Mijikenda	1	0.3
Somali	1	0.3
Others	10	2.7
Total	375	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2022

The study, therefore, noted that Uasin Gishu County was multi-ethnic county with various ethnic groups from all parts of Kenya, an indicator of diversity within the county. It was also important to note that the ethnic composition of households in the county played a significant role in past incidences of ethnic violence as witnessed in 1992, 1993, 1997 and 2008 electoral related violence.

Globally, incidences of diversity and ethnic conflicts have been a major concern, with various parts of the world facing the challenge of increased incidences of conflicts. There has also been a concern that diversity can create conditions for ethnic conflicts. For instance, India's two states with the highest degree of ethnolinguistic diversity namely Nagaland and Himachal Pradesh, Eberle et al. (2020), reported that these two states are in the top 3% of diversity and in the top 6% of conflict incidence (1975–2015) across provinces worldwide.

Uasin Gishu County is one of the counties that are considered to be urban counties with its headquarters of Eldoret ranking fifth in terms of urban population in Kenya (KNBS, 2020). Therefore, establishing the ethnic composition was important in establishing how rural-urbanization influenced horizontal inequalities and ethnic conflicts in ethnically diverse areas. The study established that inequalities within the county were clear based on social and economic status. There existed social classes that were demarcated by the estates where people lived in the town. For example, Langas Estate, which is a major slum in Eldoret town,

was mainly made up of the urban poor whereas Elgon View estate was made up of the rich within the town. Interestingly, incidents of violence and ethnic conflict were more prominent within the poor neighborhoods like Langas as compared to the areas where the rich people lived like Elgon view. This was in indicator that poverty exacerbated the conflict situation within Uasin Gishu County with the urban poor from mobilizing within their ethnic groups and ganging up against rival ethnic groups. In this regard, perceptions of horizontal inequalities were more prominent among the poor as compared to the rich in the county.

The situation was always worsened by politics in the county. Local politicians often concentrated their campaigns in the slum areas and rural parts of the county where majority of the voters dwell. The study established that voter mobilization within the county was based on ethnic polarization with the political players contributing to voter threats and intimidation. For example, in the run up to the 2022 general elections several incidents were reported of voter threats and intimidation in various parts of the county with leaflets being distributed in some parts of the county targeted certain ethnic groups.

According to a police report, on 3rd January 2021, Mau Kipkaren village elder Tanui raised the alarm over threatening leaflets dropped at the village. The leaflets, with the message written in Kiswahili, warned "outsiders" from other ethnic communities to leave farms immediately. It went on to say, "*Kipkaren iko na wenyewe* (Kipkaren has its owners)." (Star News Paper, 3rd January 2021).

The leaflets further stated that:

Na yale mashamba yumeyaweka fence pia aguse aone moto. Hii ni 2021 hatutaki madoadoa Kipkaren (Even the farms that have been fenced - try touching them and you will see. This is 2021 and we don't want outsiders in Kipkaren) (Star News Paper, 3rd January 2021).

The issue of leaflets was confirmed by the Uasin Gishu NSC coordinator who indicated that it was common to hear about people waking up to cases of leaflets in the county especially when elections were nearing. She indicated that negative ethnicity has in some instances contributed to tension between ethnic groups in the area with some unscrupulous people taking advantage to make the situation worse by use of tactics like dropping of leaflets to threaten some ethnic groups.

In further support of these issues CJPC coordinator indicated that it is not only local politicians who were involved in creating ethnic tension in the area, he also indicated that property brokers were active participants in creating an environment filled by ethnic tension especially in areas where there was diversity of ethnic groups mainly within urban and sub-urban areas. He further stated that these property brokers would facilitate some rowdy youths from the dominant ethnic group to go around threatening the so called "non-locals" with the aim of forcing these people to sell properties at a throw away price so that they would buy and later sell the same property at high cost.

From the foregoing, therefore it's clear that there was a myriad of factors and players that influenced ethnic tension and conflict in the county with resources, politics and ethnicity being at the center of it. The fact that Eldoret town at the center of the county was a major town made the situation more complex because of the diversity it presented.

Challenges Faced in the Management of Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnic Conflicts

The study sought to establish the challenges associated with horizontal inequalities that have hindered the process of ethnic conflict management in Uasin Gishu County. The findings were as indicated in Table 2

Table 2: Challenges faced in the management of horizontal Inequalities and Ethnic Diversity

Challenges	Yes		No		Don't Know	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Politicization of Ethnicity	308	81.2	34	9.1	33	8.8
Corruption and Impunity by Public Officers	251	69.9	32	8.4	92	24.5
Use of Media and Technology to Stimulate Ethnic Tension and hostilities	309	82.4	36	9.6	30	8.0
Institutionalized discrimination	266	71	47	12.5	62	16.5
Historical injustices	169	45.1	130	34.7	76	20.3
Violation of human rights	259	69.1	77	20.5	39	10.4
Marginalization	220	58.7	75	20	80	21.4

Source: Field Data, 2022

Politicization of Ethnicity

The findings of the study revealed that Politicization of ethnicity was a major challenge for the management of Horizontal Inequalities in the County of Uasin Gishu. These findings as presented in Table 3.1 showed that 217 (57.9%) strongly agreed with this assertion and 91 (23.3%) agreed with Politicization of ethnicity as a challenge, however, 16 (4.3%) strongly disagreed and 18 (4.8%) disagreed, finally 33 (8.8%) stated that they did not know.

The information from households was corroborated by Chairman of the Council of Elders in Uasin Gishu County who opined that:

“In Kenya our politics is ethnic in nature. In this County the role of ethnicity in politics is as clear as day and night. That is why you find that when election time comes, political leaders from various ethnic communities’ group themselves and form coalitions with other leaders from other communities. The unfortunate part of these collaborations is that it paints the people from the opposing ethnic groups enemies. In as much as ethnic coalitions can be used to unite communities that are feuding, they have also been used to create further divisions with those who are not part of the winning coalitions being sidelined by those in power.” (Interview with Council of Elders Chairman at Wagon Hotel, Eldoret Town on August 2nd, 2022).

The findings were further supported by FGD participants at the New Langas County Market who stated that electoral periods were the worst times to belong to the ‘unpopular ethnic groups’ because you would easily become a target of attack by the so-called dominant ethnic groups. They further added that the voting pattern was often used by the political class as a justification to deny development or opportunities to people who were perceived to have opposed those who win elections. One of the participants stated that it was possible for parts of the county to lack essential services such as water simply because they had not voted for a particular candidate or political party. This was one way in which political scores were settled, and it sometimes took ethnic dimensions especially if the competitor is from a different ethnic group.

The CJPC coordinator added that within the county politics was played along ethnic lines and that it was impossible to separate the two. He added that the county was dominated by the Nandi and Kikuyu communities who decided the trajectory of everything including resource allocation. He further indicated that whenever these two communities were on the opposing sides of politics then it was almost sure that conflicts would rock the county. He gave contrasting examples of 2007 elections and 2013 elections. In 2007, the two communities having been on opposing sides, the county saw massive blood shed yet the coalitions of 2013 and 2017 saw peace in the elections.

This point of view was greatly criticized by a Muslim cleric who faulted the mode through which politics was conducted in the county as one that aided Horizontal inequalities. The Imam stated that it was unfortunate that in Uasin Gishu there was a trend that for peace to prevail, only the Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities had to sit on the 'table'. The Imam posed the following questions: What about other 40+ communities in the county? Does it mean they are not important? Does it mean they do not exist? The Imam reiterated that the whole Kikuyu-Kalenjin Alliance in Uasin Gishu had made other ethnic groups in the county marginalized and that this had further propagated inequality in the area. He indicated that it was important that everybody in the county is treated as a Kenyan without looking at their 'second or third name'.

The findings agreed with Mworira & Ndiku (2012) who opined that Political competition has always caused sharp divisions and polarization on basis of political alliances in various parts of the world. These divisions, among various political groups and players, have in many cases divided groups in terms of their political affiliations which in many instances are often on the basis of ideology or various forms of identity including ethnic identity. Division normally occurs in political competitions because Political players tend to have vested interests (favoring a particular clique or ethnic group), with narrow perspectives and strong elements of rivalry. Odongo (2011) further affirmed that political polarization and ethnic politics were key in aggravating ethnic tension and grievances since they played a part in who gets what and thus exacerbating inequalities and Conflicts. In further support to this view Dida (2012) argued that politicians are characterized by caginess and biased attitudes in intervention of issues of conflicts between different ethnic groups. In this regard, political players would favour their own co-ethnics at the expense of other ethnicities hence making the playground 'unleveled' for 'unfavoared' ethnic groups.

The findings were also in tandem with Kilonzo & Onkware (2020) who signposted that the phrase "*ondoa madoadoa*", which translates to "remove or uproot the aliens" in Swahili, represented a political strategy that emerged with the introduction of multi-party politics. Its primary goal was to expel individuals who were deemed as not belonging to specific regions in the Rift Valley and Central Kenya. During this period, Kenya was home to approximately 42 distinct ethnic groups. The ruling party: Kenya African National Union (KANU), led by then-President Daniel arap Moi, who was a Kalenjin, employed this tactic to suppress any potential competition by encouraging political leaders and the public to expel those perceived as a threat to his continued leadership. The "*ondoa madoadoa*" politics were essentially aimed at ethnically cleansing certain regions and undermining any formidable ethnic groups that posed a challenge to the government's survival in elections. Additionally, this slogan was utilized as a means to instill fear in the opposition.

In this regard, Juma *et al.* (2018) reaffirmed that the politics of division meant to serve interest of politicians at the expense of peaceful co-existence between communities has often been used by political players to

keep communities divided on the basis of their ethnicized political identities thereby making it an uphill task to have a common point of view on how horizontal inequalities can be dealt with.

It is therefore evident from the foregoing that politicization of ethnicity is a major hindrance to ethnic diversity and a key factor for Horizontal inequalities in Uasin Gishu County. The fact that political leaders use the ethnic affiliation as a factor to mobilise voters is the same script used by these politicians to share resources such that only those perceived to have supported a particular political faction would benefit if that faction and those perceived to have been on the opposing side would remain marginalized when it comes to sharing of opportunities and even resources.

Corruption and Impunity by Public Officers

The findings of the study revealed that Corruption and Impunity of Public Officers was a major challenge in the management of Horizontal Inequalities in the county. The Findings in Table 3.1 indicated that 159 (42.4%) of the household heads strongly agreed with this point of view and 92 (24.5%) agreed with this view as well. However, 13 (3.5%) strongly disagreed and 19 (5.1%) disagreed, on the other hand, 92 (24.4%) stated that they did not know how Corruption and Impunity of Public Officers hindered the management of Horizontal Inequalities in the county.

In support of the findings from the household heads youths in an FGD stated that there was massive corruption in public offices both at County and National level. One of the Youth Indicated that:

We live in a society where for one to get services you may have to part with an amount of money or at least know someone in those high places. If you don't have any of these two things then its not easy to get anything to improve your life. Personally, I went through hell just to get a single business permit in this county. I remember I was once overcharged for the permit. How would I be empowered economically if we have people in public offices who are keen on literally killing our dreams? The corruption in this county is linked to ethnicity as well (Youth FGD at Catholic Diocese Compound on August 1, 2022).

In further support of this argument another FGD participant stated that.

In this county even getting scholarships is a problem. Those in position either want their own kin to benefit from such scholarships of bursaries or they would sell them to the highest bidder, this simply means that those from the poorest backgrounds who are genuinely needy and cannot afford to buy scholarships would miss out on opportunities that would have otherwise changed their lives. You can imagine how difficult it would be for the poor who are marginalized to get out of poverty with such attitudes in our society (Youth FGD at Catholic Diocese Compound on August 1, 2021)

The sentiments from the FGD were supported by one of the Muslim clerics in the County who stated that:

I know for sure that there is a lot of corruption, nepotism and favoritism in this county when it comes to things like employment, issuance of bursaries and other opportunities. The Public officers who should ensure fairness and non-discrimination are the ones who take advantage of their position to do the opposite of what is expected of them. The unfortunate thing is that even when some of these people are implicated in these corruption cases no action is taken against them in law. This kind of impunity has emboldened many public officers to keep doing bad things that keep harming the ordinary and marginalized people. We

literally live in a vicious cycle of corruption not only in Uasin Gishu but also in Kenya (Interview with Muslim Cleric at Asis Hotel in Eldoret Town on July 31, 2021).

These arguments were supported by a priest who reiterated that it was impossible to remove corruption from the way public officers worked and this not only done on the basis of ethnicity but also on the basis of nepotism and favoritism. He indicated that:

“We say devolution was brought to ensure that those who were marginalized get what could not be provided through a centralized system. It is however important to know that this system actually came to benefit a few people. If you look at the way public resources are plundered by individuals in counties, you would wonder whether devolution is actually helping. Infact in our counties the issue of 30% of locals has been abused by those in power. You get a situation where a person holds office in a County like this one of Uasin Gishu then he/she talks to a friend of his/hers in Bungoma, Kakamega or even Kisumu County to swap employment opportunities with another person there. This means that if for example there is a Luhya/Luo who deserved that Job in Uasin Gishu, his or her chance would have been corruptly given to another person who should have been otherwise working in another county. The corruption here is more on who knows who. There is a lot of inequality propagated through corruption. Acts like this are what makes the society so unequal.” (Interview with a Priest at RCEA Ushirika, July 31, 2021).

The findings agreed with a study by Zúñiga (2017) in which he noted that the negative impact of corruption on income inequality included lower economic growth, a biased tax system, and lower levels and effectiveness of public spending. Zúñiga added that income distribution's connection to sustainable development and social welfare is well-documented. Aidt (2011) conducted a study on 110 countries from 1996 to 2007, revealing that high levels of perceived and experienced corruption across nations significantly hinder the growth of genuine wealth per capita, indicating corruption's adverse impact on sustainable development. Other studies such as Gyimah-Brempong (2002) in Africa and Dincer & Gunalp (2008) in the US, demonstrate that corruption leads to an increase in income inequality, measured by the Gini coefficient. This is primarily because corruption tends to benefit the well-connected with higher incomes, thereby undermining government efforts to achieve a more equitable distribution of resources.

The role of corruption in shaping an unequal distribution of wealth extends to biased tax systems that favor the wealthy and are well-connected, as highlighted by Gupta *et al.* (2002). Corruption facilitates tax evasion, which hampers a government's ability to collect taxes and distribute wealth fairly. Consequently, this can create pressure on the system, leading to potential future implementation of progressive taxation to address the inequalities caused by corruption. However, these compensatory measures may incentivize the elites to intensify corrupt practices, such as evading tax increases through political corruption and influencing officials, perpetuating a vicious cycle of corruption. As a result, such dynamics leave the economically disadvantaged more vulnerable to corruption and hinder their ability to demand accountability (Chêne, 2014).

As Zúñiga (2017) further asserts, the impact of corruption on income inequality is a subject of debate, with some arguing that corruption exacerbates inequality by reducing resources available for social spending, thereby disadvantaging the poorest members of society. Additionally, corruption can have detrimental effects on the quality and quantity of public services, including education and health services. For instance, a study conducted in the Philippines reveals that corruption negatively affects education outcomes by

lowering test scores, school rankings, and satisfaction ratings, similarly, in public health services, corruption leads to delays in treatment provision, longer waiting times for patients, and discouragement in clinic utilization (Azfar & Gurgur, 2008). Additionally, 'Corruption' works to undermine the UHC goals of achieving equity, quality, and responsiveness including financial protection, especially while delivering frontline health care services (Naher *et. al.*, 2020). Addressing corruption becomes crucial as research suggests that investing more funds in social programs may not yield desired outcomes without tackling corruption (Suryadarma, 2012). In reference to Africa, a study by Gyimah-Brempong (2002) emphasizes the potential enhancement of citizens' well-being by utilizing domestic resources without resorting to external aid, if corruption can be curbed. Therefore, corruption's role in increasing income inequality is evident in various cases, impacting social spending, education, and health services apart from exacerbating inequality, corruption and impunity it leads to increased ethnic tension and potential for conflicts. According to a study by Rohwerder (2015), Citizens believe police corruption, impunity, and judicial tractability are sustaining violence in Kenya, he added that citizens generally blame local and national political leaders, their business partners and shady criminal connections for ethnic violence. The failure of the central government to 'resolve small wars, in the minds of the citizens, is seen as a form of approval', where people see political leaders being rewarded for their belligerence. According to Scott-Villers *et al.*, (2014), people feel like they are offered little choice but to line up behind political leaders who encourage violence as a result of their economic vulnerability. In the absence of justice, people's ways of coping with the intermittent violence, such as through revenge attacks, often fuel the fire, reinforcing the likelihood of further violence. Ombaka (2015) adds that Kenya's weakness as a state is a result of longstanding inequitable policies and endemic corruption which has 'severely compromised the institutions of security of the state including the police and the armed forces. Recently, internal violent events such as inter-ethnic clashes, livestock theft, boundary clashes, and inter-clan rivalries have 'acquired an ominous character in that the combatants no longer break the interference of the state security apparatus in their activities.

Use of Media and Technology to Stimulate Ethnic Tension and Violence

The findings of the study revealed that Ethnic Tension and hostilities were stimulated through the use of various media and technology platforms and hence this affected in the management of Horizontal Inequalities in Uasin Gishu County. The findings presented in Table 3.1 show that 211 (56.5%) strongly agreed with this assertion and 98 (26.1%) agreed. On the other hand, 17 (4.5%) strongly disagreed and 19 (5.1%) disagreed and finally, 30 (8%) indicated that they did not know.

The findings were further supported by FGDs and Interviews. In one of the youths FGDs held in the Catholic Diocese Compound, it emerged that one of the ways through which ethnic conflicts and inequality were propagated was through the use of social media. One of the participants indicated that:

"Bloggers have been known to create a lot of division in county. Digital media has become a tool for propagation of negative ethnicity and lies which on several occasions have led to increased risk of ethnic violence." (Youth FGD at Catholic Diocese Compound on August 1, 2021).

In support of these arguments from the FGD were supported by coordinator of the CJPC who noted that in the digital age there a lot of fake news and use of blogs as well as other social media cites including WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram to do things that impact the society negatively. He also indicated that in as much as the digital space has been abused and used to cause division, the ability of the digital

space to inform people and create some sort of ethnic consciousness cannot be underestimated. He indicated that in recent past digital space has been used to send messages that could easily be an indicator of some communities either feeling discriminated against or marginalized. In particular he indicated cases where #hashtags have been created to criticize the government of the day for making ethnic based appointments. He particularly referred to cases where such trending hashtags would be used to portray the Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto's government between 2013-2021 as ethnic based for mainly appointing Kikuyus and Kalenjins in major positions in their government. Some of these #hashtags have been one way in which people from other ethnic groups express their discontent with status of things as far as ethnic balance is concerned when it comes to sharing the national cake.

The findings were in tandem with Kabugi (2017) who opined that social media in Kenya operates as an unregulated platform, lacking a concrete and enforceable regulatory framework. Within this space, ethnic prejudice and negative profiling thrive, and hate speech, along with ethnic prejudice, spreads rapidly, essentially becoming an online 'underground' hub. The situation worsens due to tech-savvy Kenyans who repost hateful content even after the original uploader removes it. False information also circulates widely without restrictions. To ordinary Kenyans, such content is often unquestionably believed, stirring strong emotions. Those responsible for generating this ethnic profiling patiently wait for the right moment to translate their hatred into action.

Mukhongo (2020) further observed that the use of social media to influence the political process and control ethnic narratives in Kenya was common. According to the study he conducted about the 2013 and 2017 elections, he noted that there were several trending topics and hashtags by the so-called influencers in the country to marshall their supporters. In the 2017 and 2013 elections there were several #hashtags used to by various political sides some of the commonly used #hashtags included, #DigitalvsAnalogue #UhuRuto, #TanoTena, #Canaan, #Lastbullet among many others. In addition to the use of social media for political campaigns, some of the hashtags used were offensive and were meant to stir ethnic emotions and polarize ethnic relations in the country. For instance, Africa Digital Democracy Observatory (2022) reported that the rise of a widespread and polarizing strategy employed by prominent political figures and their supporters on platforms like Facebook and Twitter was evident.

This strategy involved targeting opposing political candidates. It's important to note that this approach utilized colloquial expressions like '*kihii*,' a Kikuyu term that is derogatory and aimed at individuals from the Luo community, often referring to them as 'uncircumcised.' The use of such disparaging language has been used to increase incitement which was viewed as contempt for cultural status of the Luo community. Furthermore, there has been a utilization of veiled language, such as '*madoadoa*,' a Swahili word meaning 'spots' or 'stains.' This term has a historical context of inciting violence against specific ethnic groups, dating back to 1992. '*Madoadoa*' has been employed to spark violence along ethnic lines, particularly targeting ethnic groups residing in regions where they are in the minority. The intention behind this usage has been to label these groups as undesirable or problematic. This labeling has resulted in the targeting and mistreatment of these ethnic groups, often leading to violence and their displacement from regions where they are not in the majority.

The Findings also agreed with Asego (2014) who indicated that the role of community based (vernacular radio stations) in the 2007 Post election violence was massive As Goldstein (n.d) indicated in his Blog. Ethnic hate messages were commonplace in the violence of 2007/2008 and SMS platforms enabled this for

example one message that was flagged as reported by Goldstein stated that “No more innocent Kikuyu blood will be shed. We will slaughter them right here in the capital city. For justice, compile a list of Luos you know”. All these discussions on ethnic profiling were facilitated by the media and created an environment where ethnic animosity thrived and the urge for violence was made stronger.

Media and technology have been used as a tool for enabling conflicts not only in Kenya but in different parts of the world. In Rwanda, the success of the 1994 genocide was attributed to the media, particularly Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) (Somerville, 2012). Buric (2000) further reaffirms that the use of media to trigger and sustain ethnic violence was witnessed largely in the Balkan war of 1992-1995 as various broadcasters used this powerful tool to justify violence through the use of content meant to polarize ethnic groups and legitimize violence. These acts of violence claimed the lives of more than 150,000 people from different ethnicities including the Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs (Vladimir & Schirch, 2007). It is therefore imperative to note that the media is a powerful tool that can create a lot of damage and facilitate ethnic violence if misused.

Institutionalized Discrimination

The findings of the study showed that institutionalized discrimination was another factor that was considered a threat to efforts of managing Horizontal Inequalities in the County. The findings in Table 3.1 showed that 175 (46.7%) strongly agreed with this point view and 91 (24.3%) also agreed with this assertion. In contrast however, 21 (5.6%) strongly disagreed and 26 (6.9%) disagreed and finally, 62 (16.5%) stated that they did not know whether institutionalized discrimination affected management of Horizontal Inequalities.

The findings from the household heads were supported by Focus Group Discussions. In the youth FGD it emerged that there was ethnicity within various institutions within the county which created a conducive environment for discrimination of the non-dominant ethnic groups. One of the FGD participants stated that:

“It is evident from the happenings in some institutions within the county that there is some level of mistreatment of non-dominant groups even in public institutions. I have seen this happening in Eldoret Polytechnic.” (Youth FGD at Catholic Diocese Compound on August 1, 2021).

Another FGD participant stated that:

You only need to watch TV sometimes to realize how bad the situation of discrimination is within this County. It was not a long time ago when the leadership of this county with various members of parliament and the senator led a street protest to oppose the appointment of a vice-chancellor at Moi University simply because the professor was not from the Nandi/ Kalenjin community. If this can happen to a highly qualified individual like a professor, can you even begin to comprehend what happens to ordinary people like me and you? The situation is bad and it is deeply entrenched in various institutions within the County and even national government Institutions (Youth FGD at Catholic Diocese Compound on August 1, 2022).

These findings supported those of Mwamba et al. (2019) who found out that the Kenyan political elites have over time institutionalized ethnic politics and have used simmering ethnic grievances relating to land and exclusion to instigate ethnic-based violence. Kenya Human Rights Commission (2018) reported that when and where ethnicity and race are politicized and politicization is institutionalized in the party system, the political landscape becomes frozen along an ethnic dimension. A good number of scholars agree, and

empirical evidence suggests that such a situation is generally bad for democracy. Amongst other things, the politicization of ethnic identity significantly diminishes citizens' trust in and satisfaction with political processes and institutions.

Historical Injustices

The findings of the study revealed that historical injustices were a major underlying challenge in the management of Horizontal Inequalities in Uasin Gishu county supported by 169 (45.1%) of household heads. This assertion was, however, opposed by 130 (34.7%) of the household heads while 76 (20.3%) stated that they did not know.

The findings were corroborated by those from qualitative data. During an interview with one religious leader in the county, he stated that one particular issue that can be linked to historical injustice in Uasin Gishu is the issue of land. The fact that land was not given back to the native Nandi community after independence is one thing that has made the community feel like the independence government gave them a raw deal. The religious leader said that since the 1960s there have been attempts to reclaim the land through various initiatives such as *majimboism* and even the Nandi declaration. All these have been issues brought about by the feeling of many local leaders that their land was unfairly taken away by the high and mighty in the Kenyan government.

The findings were in tandem with the TJRC Report (2013) which indicated that the violations, abuses and historical injustices committed between 1895 to 1963; 1963 to 1978; 1978 to 2002; and 2002 to 2008 had been the major causes of ethnic tensions and conflicts that affected the country for decades. The report suggests that these trends give a picture of what happened between the colonial and Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel Moi and Mwai Kibaki regimes, respectively. TJRC further reported that there were thematic and regional-based violations, within the historical dimensions, which fluctuated between the colonial and post-colonial regimes. While the report clearly blamed the colonial government for entrenching the retrogressive systems, and for committing gross atrocities, it admonished the Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel Moi and Mwai Kibaki regimes, for maintaining the status quo. "President Kenyatta made no substantial changes to the structure of the State. Under President Moi, the status quo remained for a couple of years, before becoming notably worse, it was not long before autocratic tendencies and KANU-like practices began to emerge in the Kibaki administration". Key violations and atrocities committed from a historical perspective entailed affronts by security agencies and aggressions. Incidences of massacres, political assassinations, detentions, torture and ill-treatment were common characteristics of the government and acted to flare up ethnic tensions in the country. Land became a major conflict issue; economic marginalization and violation of socio-economic rights was common in post-colonial Kenya and grand corruption, and economic crimes became the order of the day. All these factors over the years have culminated in ethnic tensions and violence that has been experienced in various parts of the country since the 1990s.

Human Rights Violations

The findings of the study revealed that violation of human rights was a major underlying factor in intractable ethnic conflict in Uasin Gishu county as supported by 259 (69.1%) of household heads. This assertion was, however, opposed by 77 (20.5%) of the household heads while 39 (10.4%) stated that they did not know whether human rights violation caused ethnic conflicts.

During an interview with CJPC coordinator, it emerged that the subject of human rights abuses in Kenya was not new, he indicated that political leaders at various levels of government had often exercise their powers in a manner that at times went overboard and hurt the citizens. He particularly added that the powers that have often used the so-called enforcement of law and order to abuse the rights of citizens not only at national level but at local level. The coordinator added that it not surprising in Kenya for people to accuse the police of brutality and massive abuses because this had been a trend for a long time. He further added that those in government had often used the monopoly of violence that the government owned to frustrate their opponents. He added that in post-independence Kenya political detentions, arrests and disappearances were common during Kenyatta's presidency, Moi's presidency, Kibaki and even Uhuru Kenyatta's time as head of state.

One of the religious leaders further added that the kind of human rights abuses that were witnessed in Uasin Gishu County during the Post-election violence of 2007/2008 remains traumatic to many who went through it. He added that the abuses were not only perpetrated by the police but also by ordinary citizens. The clergy man went ahead to describe the horrors of human rights abuses in the county that not only made it to national and international news but also shocked the world.

The CJPC coordinator further added that the story of the so-called *Kanjo* (County enforcement officers) seemed to have taken cue from the police and politician and have been involved in abusing the rights of people in the streets of Uasin Gishu County and particularly in Eldoret town especially in those involved in trade and *boda boda* business (motorcycle riders) within the town. He added that the *Kanjo* could arbitrarily arrest these people in the markets and on the streets, beat them up and rough them up in some incidences without any mistake. Sometimes they were even accused of confiscating items being sold by individuals as a way of soliciting bribes. The coordinator further added that the *Kanjo* who were mostly from the Kalenjin or Nandi which is the dominant ethnic group in the county, often targeted people from other ethnic groups for these vices. These findings were further supported by Women's FGD held in Langas Market. The women agreed that there was a lot of unfair treatment and harrassment by some county *Askaris* (enforcement officers) who sought bribes.

Human rights violations in Kenya have been responsible for sustained ethnic tension in Post Colonial Kenya. Korwa G. Adar and Isaac Munyae in their article titled *Human Rights Abuse in Kenya under Daniel Arap Moi* published in 2001 indicated that under Kenyatta and Moi, human rights were violated as the leaders sought to consolidate power. These acts of human rights violations were often masterminded by those who belonged to the president's inner circle. For example, under Kenyatta, the so-called Kiambu Mafia, from Kenyatta's home district was seen as the President's henchmen. This group undermined President Kenyatta's nationalist and populist background, alienating other ethnic groups, as well as many non-conforming Kikuyus (Adar & Munaye, 2001). Adar (2000) added that the Period between 1978 and 2001 when President Moi was in power was characterized by massive human rights violations and ethnic discrimination that further divided Kenya along ethnic lines.

The Moi government-controlled freedoms and rights in the Country with the legal channels being under state capture. For example, the executive arm of government always influenced political cases that were in court. Adar & Munyae (2001) stated that several British expatriate judges complained of government interference in cases.

Kagwanja (2003) further asserted that the Kenya Human Rights Commission estimated that state-sponsored or state-condoned violence in Kenya in the period 1991-2001 killed 4,000 people and displaced 600,000 others. The problem of state sponsored human rights violations were not unique to Kenya. Matanga & Nzau (2013) stated that many African regimes were accused of mass violations of human rights including rape, mutilation and mass murder, most of them have proved to be pure neo-benevolent despots.

The Kibaki regime was not spared from human rights violations either. The 2007/2008 post-election violence marked the Peak of Human rights violations under the Kibaki administration. The Violence that broke after the disputed 2007 elections were made worse by state actors namely the Police who brutalized and violated the rights of people perceived to be opposed to the Kibaki government. As Ruteere (2011) affirmed, a large number of those killed during the 2007/08 PEV were killed by the police, and they were overwhelmingly supporters of the opposition Orange Democratic (ODM) party. It is also incontestable that long before the December 2007 general elections, the Kenyan police had demonstrated their willingness to abuse their powers to advance the partisan interests of the incumbent government of President Mwai Kibaki. It was against this backdrop that Eldoret in Uasin Gishu County, Kisumu and Nairobi, which were opposition strongholds, experienced the worse incidences of human rights violations that were perpetuated by the Police, under the orders of the inspector general of police.

Okia (2011) also explained that during the 2007/2008 PEV, the police used lethal force to quell protests in Kisumu and Nairobi, and Eldoret. In other towns Like Nakuru and Naivasha people from the Kalenjin and Luo community were persecuted by pro-government militia, the Mungiki who committed atrocities including forced circumcision which targeted the members of the Luo community through killings, rape, torching of houses, some with people inside among other atrocities (Ahlberg & Njoroge, 2013). According to Human Rights Watch (2014), the official total killed as a result of the clashes in Naivasha was 41, Twenty-three were burned, including 13 children, seven were shot dead by police and the rest were killed with machetes. There were four victims of forced male circumcision treated at the hospital, all of whom survived.

The Uhuru Kenyatta government also had human rights lapses with the first attempt at legalizing human rights violations being made in December 2014 through the security laws amendment bill. According to Human Rights Watch (2014) the cumulative effect of the amendments could return Kenya to the police state of the 1980s and 90s and nullify recent progress in protecting human rights. The Poor human rights record of the security agencies was a cause for alarm because this amendment sought to give Police, National Intelligence Service and prosecutors' unchecked powers that would lead to massive human rights abuses. Indeed, the 2017 general election which was marred by incidences of violence mainly perpetuated by the Police in opposition strongholds proved that human rights abuses were still a big concern among the police despite the reforms that were made to the Police force following the promulgation of the 2010 constitution.

The violence of 2017 was an ethnic dimension since the majority of Killings were committed and other human rights violations were committed in Western Kenya. The Star Newspaper on December 20, 2017, reported that following August 8 and the repeat election held on October 26, 2017, the Police killed 92 people. Human Rights Watch (2017) reports revealed that since the Kenyan politics is characterized by inter-ethnic tensions. Political alliances are often formed along ethnic lines, and one's ethnicity is easily associated with support for a certain political party or candidate. Therefore, the 2017 political violence was

directed at women and girls because of their gender but also their ethnicity and was used to punish the individual women and their communities for the way they voted.

Marginalization

The findings of the study revealed that marginalization was a major underlying factor for intractable ethnic conflict in Uasin Gishu county as supported by 220 (58.7%) of household heads. This assertion was, however, opposed by 75 (20%) of the household heads while 80 (21.4%) stated that they did not know whether Marginalization caused ethnic conflicts.

The findings were in Tandem with Stiftung Friedrich Ebert (2012) report which indicated that Ethnic conflicts often emerge in multiethnic underdeveloped societies when the behavior of the state is perceived as dominated by a particular group or community within it, when communities feel threatened with marginalization or when no recourse for redressing grievances exists. Ethnic thinking and mobilization generally emerge from the resulting inequitable access to power and resources and not from an intrinsic hatred (Aapengnuo, 2010). Thus, ethnic mobilization is likely to thrive in situations of low interpersonal trust (fear of others), little to no interethnic dialogue when individuals feel marginalized, and it is in this sort of environment that nefarious politicians can fuel ethnic tensions that boil up into outright violence. This is likely to occur especially in the event that ethnic groups antagonized are different ethnic entities that were outside the power circle, producing marginalization, massive deprivation and inequalities that would trigger inter-ethnic conflicts as various groups struggled for scarce resources in the state.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The study concluded that there were several challenges in the management of horizontal inequalities and ethnic conflicts in Uasin Gishu County. The challenges which included politicization of ethnicity, impunity by perpetrators of ethnic conflicts, use of media and technology to perpetuate ethnic hatred and violence, corruption, human rights violation as well as institutionalized discrimination on the basis of ethnicity all created a hostile environment in which different ethnic group living in the county viewed one another in suspicion. This lack of trust which was reflected even in service provision and leadership in the county exacerbated horizontal inequalities in the county and created more ethno-political competition among major ethnic groups in the county, thereby creating an environment in which ethnic animosity thrived over national unity. These combinations of factors have been responsible for incessant ethnic tension and violence in the county, which have often come for light during electoral periods.

Recommendation

The study recommended a multi-pronged stakeholder approach to address the challenge of horizontal inequalities in Uasin Gishu County. The approach should involve a wide range of stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, community leaders, and citizens, in the implementation of these strategies to ensure their success in the process of managing HIs. The stakeholders involved should prioritize and invest in comprehensive conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms that focus on addressing the root causes of horizontal inequalities and ethnic conflicts in Uasin Gishu County. This should include education, reconciliation initiatives, law enforcement, and community engagement to create a sustainable environment for peace and harmony.

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