

# Divided by Ethnic Ties: Is Their Hope for Perpetual Peace in Africa's Multi-Ethnic Nations?

**Stellamarie Kyuvi (Corresponding Author)**

University of Nairobi  
Department of Sociology  
Social Work and African Women Studies  
Po Box 30197-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

**Charles Nzioka**

University of Nairobi, Kenya  
Department of Sociology, Social work and African Women Studies  
Po Box 30197-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

**Elias Ayiamba**

University of Nairobi, Kenya  
Department of Geography, Population and Environmental Studies  
Po Box 30197-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

## Abstract

*Africa has over the past few decades experienced a surge in the number of internal conflicts culminating in civil wars. These conflicts have been linked to the inability of African populations to accommodate their rich ethno-cultural diversities and live cohesively. The experiences have had dire consequences on social-economic, development and governance; further attracting policy and academic debates on whether to promote ethnic-pluralism. This paper contributes to the ongoing research on ethnicity and ethnic conflict. With a keen focus on Kenya, the study attempts to examine causes of the apparent ethnic intolerance and fragmentation in the nation and whether there can be hope for peace. The study adopted interpretive study design that allowed use of mixed methods in the collection and analysis of data. The study concludes that; perpetual peace in multi-ethnic nations is possible if the central issues that lead to ethnic animosity are addressed.*

**Key words:** Ethnicity, Ethnic intolerance co-existence, Multi-ethnicity, Conflict, Ethnic diversity.

## 1.0 Introduction and Background

Africa presents an interesting variety of ethnicities, cultural beliefs and practices and dialects within her populations. These diversities have been presented by many scholars and researchers as both a blessing and a curse. Many African nations are embroiled in unending internal conflicts that are believed to be stemming from ethnic differences or simply the failure to cope with diversity and co-exist peacefully. Themnér and Wallensteen (2014) observes that half of the nations across the world experiencing intra-state conflict are from sub-Saharan Africa much of which have been related to ethnic differences. Some of these conflicts trace back to the colonial era and have continually threatened the quest for harmonious living and national unity among many African nations. For instance; In Nigeria the 'indigene-settler' narrative has been cited as the major cause of civil unrest and ethnic land related conflicts that has troubled the nation for decades (Ibeanu O. & Onu 2001; Uchendu, 2007; Sijuwade, 2011). In Rwanda, the 1994 genocide was as a result of ethnic rivalry between the three indigenous groups; Hutus, Tustis and Twa (Nowrojee, 1996). Sudan's civil war that has existed for more than two decades including the ethnic cleansing of the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa people in Darfur region in 2003, 2008 and the most recent 2023 conflict has its roots in ethnic rivalry between the Arabs and non-Arabs (Kempin, 2023). On the same case, South Africa, one of the most multi-cultural African nation has struggled with racism and negative ethnicity that dates back to the colonial times. South African ethnic conflict is linked to the uneven development and inequality among the Xhosas, Zulus and Afrikaners that has been said to create enmity and hostility among the groups (Irobi 2005).

Kenya has over the years experienced perennial ethnic conflicts, which include the 2007-2008 post-election violence across several regions in the nation (IRC 2008; UNHCHR 2008; KNCHR; 2017:5). The 2012-2013 conflict between Orma and Pokomo in Tana River in the Coastal region, the 1991-1992 conflict pitting Kalenjins against other non-Kalenjin ethnic groups in Rift Valley region; the 1991 and 2023 ethnic clashes between the Luo and Kalenjin communities at Sondu along the Kisumu-Kericho county border; the 1997-1999 and 2023 Maasai-Kalenjin conflict at the Transmara border. As a result, there has been a generalized view of ethnic diversity as a threat to national peace and stability and a tendency to view African nations as perpetually predisposed to ethnic

conflict. A fact that is usually ignored is that in most of the times, the conflicting groups live and interact harmoniously oblivious of their ethnic diversities. Furthermore, the diverse ethnic groups present high degrees of tolerance and bonding through inter-ethnic engagements such as marriages, joint economic ventures, social-cultural activities, and shared norms and values (Kyuvi 2017). This is more evident in multi-ethnic urban spaces where there are high degree of ethnic mixing and cultural exchanges. Aapengnuo (2010) warns against viewing ethnicity as a driving tool for conflict as there are times when the same conflicting groups co-exist peacefully and collaborate in socio-cultural and economic activities. Tong (2009) also cautions against viewing ethnicity as the major cause of conflict in multi-ethnic nations as there are a number of nations that have managed to overcome their ethnic differences fostering peace, tranquility and the spirit of nationhood. This paper is meant to contribute towards the ongoing research to demystify ethnicity and ethnic conflict and provide possible solutions towards promoting ethnic understanding and peaceful co-existence. Our data is drawn from rural-urban migrants in Mathare informal settlement of Nairobi city, Kenya, who migrated from largely mono ethnic rural regions, adjusted and learnt to live side by side with other outgroups in the city. The paper sought to answer the following three questions;

- i. What is the nexus between ethnicity and ethnic conflict?
- ii. What hinders ethnic cooperation and peaceful co-existence in multi-ethnic societies?
- iii. What solution can we offer to promote ethnic understanding and peaceful co-existence?

## 1.2 Methods

The study was conducted in three villages of Mathare informal settlement of Nairobi city, Kenya. Respondents were individuals who had migrated from mono-ethnic rural regions to the multi-ethnic urban spaces and had lived in the city for a period of not less than five years. The study adopted an interpretive study design that permitted the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in the collection and analyzation of data. In the first phase, the researcher made use of local village elders to select a total of eighty (80) participants for the survey with a key focus on ethnicity, age, gender, length of stay since migration and place of origin. Findings of the survey data were used to select the most appropriate participants for the in-depth interviews in consideration of the key variables of the study. Data collected was complimented by three focus group discussions conducted in each village.

## 2.0 Empirical and Theoretical Literature

### 2.1 Understanding ethnicity

Defining ethnicity or ethnic identity is quite a difficult task as there has never been one agreed upon definition for the concept. The term ethnicity loosely refers to a shared cultural identity that is grounded in similar cultural beliefs and practices, language, common historical territories, myths of common descent, common norms and values, among other traits (Opondo, 2004). Fearon and Laitin (2000) defines ethnicity as a socially constructed sense of collective belonging that provides a platform to differentiate groups and mobilize individuals for collective action. Karega, (2010) describes ethnic identities as negotiable, contestable, destructible and re-constructible non-fixed social categories. Abercrombie et. al (2000) views ethnicity as a social attribute of a community based on their cultural values, norms, customs, language or nationality where individuals derive their identity by undertaking a societal awareness. The term ethnicity can also be explained using two broad categories: One; individualistic, referring to individual orientations to cultural beliefs, values and practices and two; collective dimensions denoting a group of individuals sharing common origin, culture, historical background, among others. Ethnic tolerance can, therefore, be described as the ability of individuals and groups to respect and accommodate ethnic related diversity that in turn promotes peaceful co-existence. It is the capacity of diverse ethnic groups to put up with their variety in terms of cultures, histories, traditions, values and general way of life. Tolerance is the virtue that makes peace possible and contributes to the replacement of culture of war with culture of peace where the diverse groups co-exist harmoniously and appreciate their great variety. Ethnic intolerance, on the other hand is the inability to respect, accommodate or put up with views, cultures, beliefs, and behaviors that differ from one's own. Intolerance is often manifested by inter alia, open physical aggression, discrimination, exclusion and hatred.

### 2.2 Theoretical perspectives on ethnicity

Theoretically, scholars and researchers have explained ethnicity in four main divergent views namely; the Primordialists, the Instrumentalists, the Social constructivists and the Psycho-culturalist perspective. *The Primordial perspective* holds that ethnicity is biologically constructed and, therefore, fixed, and unalienable. Primordialists consequently hold that ethnicity is ascribed by birth and, therefore, bound by blood and kinship ties, language, common norms and values. Hammond et. al, (2006) allude to these views adding that ethnic groups are held together by innate characteristics that encourage hospitality and cooperation within them and hostility and conflict to other outgroups. Hammond views have been criticized for portraying inter-ethnic relationships as vehemently conflictual, which has not been the case.

Furthermore, the fact that life events such as marriage and migration influence individuals to identify themselves with other outgroup that they do not share other blood relationships challenges the primordialists view of ethnicity as innate and unchangeable. The primordial views, therefore, do not sufficiently describe ethnicity.

*The Instrumentalists* on the other hand regard ethnicity as a subjective way of interpreting group identity where individuals rationally choose which group to identify with on the basis of the benefits accrued to it, be it economic, social, political or otherwise. Unlike the primordialists, instrumentalists, view ethnicity as a personal choice and not dependent on biological or cultural traits, where one chooses which group to belong to in terms of the accrued benefits. Consequently, instrumentalists opine that ethnic hostility does not emerge directly from ethnic identities or blood ties, but rather from other factors such as manipulation by the elite or people in power, competition over scarce resources, inequality in the distribution of groups' benefits, and or when politicians result to using ethnicity as a tool to win masses (Chandra, 2012; Collier, et.al, 2004). This view, however, seems to ignore some key features that play important role in determining one's ethnicity such as physical characteristics, blood relationships as well as historical backgrounds such as place of origin. Such factors cannot be termed as a matter of choice, but rather a mere luck within which an individual has little or no influence on them, hence fixed and unchangeable. Instrumentalist's view may, therefore, not be substantial enough to explain ethnicity. It, however, provides some insightful views on ethnicity that are not provided for by the Primordialists.

*The Social constructivists* on the other hand focus on the social nature of ethnicity. According to this view, ethnicity is not only an individual identification, but also human creations that individuals and groups use to make sense of the social world. Social constructivists hold that ethnic identities develop from social relationships and day-to-day practices between individuals and groups within the different institutions in the society (Yieke, 2007; Karega, 2010), and can be formed through various social means such as social conquest, colonization or migration. Hall (1996) allude to constructivist view as he signs that ethnicity is not ascribed, but rather prescribed by others. Hall further suggests that ethnicity should be examined through cultural, political, territorial and historical backgrounds (Hall 1997:339). From the social constructivist point of view, the Primordialists and Instrumentalist's explanations do not appreciate the fact that ethnic identities can and do often evolve and, therefore, do not satisfactorily explain how ethnicities are manufactured.

The last perspective, the *psycho-cultural view* is anchored on psycho-cultural interpretation theory and describes ethnic identity as a product of deeply-rooted shared worldviews that shape group members' relationships with others, their actions, and their motives. The psycho-culturalist view seems to suggest that ethnic identities are formed through cultural learning and once this happens, it becomes permanently ingrained and cannot be unlearned. According to this perspective, ethnic identities are unchangeable and, therefore, people should learn to tolerate and accommodate the ethnic unique characteristics. The view, however, seems to support cultural pluralism by encouraging people from diverse cultures to tolerate and learn to accommodate each other.

Drawing from the above divergent theoretical perspectives, it becomes quite clear that no single model that provides a robust explanation on what constitutes an ethnic group or ethnicity as a whole. It demonstrates the complexity of defining ethnicity and brings to the fore the complexity of understanding ethnic conflicts. Notwithstanding, the views strongly suggest that ethnicity cannot be described as explicitly socially, culturally or biologically constructed. It follows then that ethnic differences as presented are by their nature not harmful, and therefore, should not be viewed as major causes of antagonism and conflict among ethnic groups. So, what really causes ethnic hostility and conflict?

### **2.3 The Nexus between ethnicity and ethnic conflict**

John Burton's (1979) links ethnic conflict to non-satisfaction of human needs. In his human needs theory, Burton explains that when individuals, groups or community are denied or are unable to meet their needs for survival, and development, they tend to result to violence. In view of African states, Irobi (2005) and Suberu (2003) opine that in most of multi-ethnic African states, stability is threatened by inter alia, failure of national institutions to recognize and accommodate ethnic differences and interests, failure by the government to provide for all the ethnic groups equally, unequal distribution of resources or unequal representation in the government or power structures. While affirming to the above views, Aapengnuo (2010) too, submits that ethnic conflicts tend to be more pronounced in societies where legal institutions are weak and justice cannot be obtained through public institutions, hence individuals and groups resort to violence in bid to resolving their grievances. Similarly, Quaker-Dokubo (2001) attributes African predicament to the negation of ethnic, regional and cultural diversities as building blocks in the construction of the modern civil societies. Other studies (Aapengnuo 2010; Wamwere, 2003; Karega, 2010) corroborate that ethnic conflicts arise when individuals and groups get mobilized on ethnic grounds to respond to issues that affect them or when political leaders result to ethnic mobilization in pursuit of power, wealth and resources. These views vindicate earlier findings by Zartman (1998) that ethnic conflicts are usually created by agents, who manipulate ethnic consciousness as a tool for mobilization of people and groups for their own gain.

This has been the case of several African nations (Rwanda 1994; Kenya 2007-2008; Burundi, 1993-2005) where ethnic conflict soured during national elections. Mann (2004) concedes to this view and further adds that modernity and democratization of African states have also played a key role in breeding ethnic violence. In his view, democracy in multi-ethnic nations carries the possibilities of the dominant groups domineering the minority groups which in turn breeds competition, hostility and at its worst loss of life through ethnic cleansing. Thomas-Wooley and Keller (1994: 413) too contend that in democratic states, due to the power in the convenient game of numbers, the minority groups tend to lose to the majority groups, especially in political bargains. Mann's views seem to suggest a close relationship between modernity, democracy and ethnic conflicts. However, this may not be the case as there are multi-cultural democratic nations that have managed to overcome negative ethnicity. Several other studies in Kenya (Miguel, 2014; Kioli, 2012; Wanyande, 2003; Wamwere 2003) have cited marginalization, scramble for or unequal distribution of national resources, famine and poverty as key catalysts of ethnic hostility in majority of African countries, including Kenya.

In this study, participants' feedbacks did not portray ethno-cultural diversity as directly correlated with conflict. Migrants seemed to appreciate and adore their cultural diversity demonstrating their ability to get along well. Seventy-eight out of the eighty participants in the survey described people from other outgroups as generally friendly and easy to relate with. All respondents agreed that it is possible to achieve national unity while still maintaining the different ethno-cultural identities and strongly disagreed with the view that the dissolution of ethnic identities is necessary to realizing national cohesion. All participants except two were of the view that the diverse groups within the nation can co-exist peacefully. Out of the eighty participants in the survey, only one disagreed that having different ethnic groups live and interact together promotes ethnic understanding and national unity. The rest, seventy-eight, strongly agreed that ethnic mixing promoted ethnic understanding. Asked if there was any form of friction living alongside people of different ethnicities Mary answered;

*"...We live alongside each other peacefully, we love each other and appreciate our cultural differences. If our diversity was the source of the conflicts, then we would experience conflict all year round. We would not have our children intermarrying, or even joining hands in business, which is very common around here."*

Only two felt that ethnic diversity was harmful to national peace. However, both of them reported to be enjoying the benefits of diversity in the city. The rest, seventy-eight, were of the opinion that social cohesion can be achieved even within multi-ethnic nations like Kenya. A village elder, who had lived in the informal settlement for more than forty-five years had this to say

*"Our cultural and ethnic diversity has never been the reason for the hate, hostility, and enmity among us. In fact, our cultural diversity contributes to our unity. We fight because of incitements, especially from politicians. They make us feel like we are in competition with each other either for leadership or resources. They make us believe when they lose in politics, it's like the whole community loses causing people to turn against each other."*

The study, therefore, did not find any direct relationship between ethnic diversity and conflict. Instead, participants seemed to appreciate their cultural diversities.

#### **2.4 Hindrances to ethnic cooperation and peaceful co-existence**

African nations have taken bold constitutional and legislative measures to address inter-ethnic tensions and rivalry, however, the persistence of such conflicts put in to question the effectiveness of the strategies employed. Moreover, considerable number of African nations seems to have adopted similar approaches in pursuance of ethnic peace. Countries such as South Africa 1995,1996; Rwanda and Uganda in 1999; Nigeria 2002; South Sudan 2006; Kenya 2008; resulted to inter alia, constitutional changes and the establishment of National Reconciliation Commissions as means to address ethnic intolerance (Pillay & Scanlon,2007; Moya, 2021, Mwakikagile, 2013). However, these approaches seem not to have borne the desired outcomes in most of these countries as ethnic intolerance remains manifest threatening the stability of the nations. Wagoner, (2016) has cited conflict memory as a major impediment to ethnic reconciliation and peaceful co-existence. Whittaker (2012) on the other hand refers to the unique and complex characteristic of each individual ethnic group as a major obstacle to outgroup accommodation and a possible ground for resistance as each ethnic group tries to safeguard its cultural practices and beliefs. Chebunet et. al (2013) while studying ethnic conflicts among the Turkana and Pokot pastoralists of Kenya found cultural beliefs and cultural differences to be a source of conflict among the communities. Allport (1954) found evidence on how intergroup stereotypes, myths and misconceptions negatively affect outgroup relations leading to hostility and conflicts. Consistent with Allport's views, Haslam (2006) avers that once negative stereotypes become entrenched in people's lives, they influence intergroup relationships and may be used to explain, justify, or legitimize inter group violent behaviour. In this study, we investigated participants' views on the factors hampering ethnic peace and peaceful co-existence. Our findings pointed out to a number of factors as presented below.

#### 2.4.1 Ethno-cultural stereotypes / beliefs about the other

Consistent with Chebunet et. al (2013) our study findings suggested the existence of both negative and positive stereotypes among the diverse ethnic groups, which influenced migrants' outgroup first encounters either positively or negatively. Participants narrated how past stories that they had heard about other outgroups influenced their first perception of the other and choice of friends when they first migrated to the city. Some participants (10) shared some negative stereotypes that their own ethnic group held about particular outgroups. Six others participants also shared some positive stereotypes about other outgroups that they said made them feel comfortable even when interacting with them for the first time.

Asked what he thought was the major cause of ethnic intolerance among different ethnic groups, Phoebe had this to say;

*"You know, when you live with your tribes' men alone and you are told how bad other ethnic communities are - that they are thieves, or they kill their husbands or that they are all witches, you hold on to that negativity, you keep thinking negative about them... you never see or experience something good from them and so you think they are bad and you are good,"* said Phoebe, a 43-year-old who resides at Mashimoni village.

#### 2.4.2 Cultural beliefs and practices

Whereas in the urban spaces ethnic conflicts are widely associated with politics, rural ethnic conflicts have commonly been linked to social- cultural practices and beliefs, competition for resources, historical injustices and poverty (Mkutu & Ruteere, 2014). For instance, among the Kenyan pastoralists, ethnic groups such as Maasai, Pokot, Gabra, Turkana and Samburu ethnic conflicts related to grazing land and cattle raiding are quite rampant. Cultural beliefs such as, heroism, dowry payment, Moranism, prestige of cattle wealth, among others, continually act as a motivation to ethnic attacks and violence. Young boys aspiring to achieve a higher status by being recognized as warriors in their communities' result to cattle raiding, which contribute to ethnic tension and hostility. As a result, these acts of violence in these areas tend to be explained on cultural grounds rather than a criminal activity, hence attracting less attention from the state organs and other stakeholders.

One of the participants referred to the culture of young boys being trained as warriors not only to defend their community, but also carry out cattle raiding in order to bring more wealth to their community. Here is part of his story;

*"...When we are circumcised, we are encouraged to take up the task of defending our people and bringing more wealth in terms of cattle. The more raids we do and bring livestock, the more praise and honour we receive... so every young man wants to do it... to most of our people in the rural areas, it's just a normal cultural practice and there is nothing wrong with it..."* said Nura, 71-year-old.

Nura's views correspond with Chebunet et. al (2013) on the role of cultural beliefs and practices in promoting ethnic conflicts. While studying conflicts between the Pokot and Turkana communities in Kenya, Chebunet et. al, (2013) established that the social economic practices and cultural beliefs and competition over resources were the major causes of ethnic clashes among the two ethnic groups. This has not only been the case in Northern Kenya, but also in several other regions in Kenya. Our findings, however, suggested that migrants had been able to overcome much of the internal constraints to peaceful co-existence even without external intervention. This was well demonstrated by the level of integration and the inter-ethnic group activities happening in the informal settlement.

#### 2.4.3 Fear of Cultural Loss and Desire for Cultural Reinstitution

Our study established that some migrants had fears of losing their unique cultural identities such as ethnic dialects, mode of dressing and key social cultural practices due to the continued mixing or adoption of some elements of other ethnic groups. These sentiments were expressed by elder migrants from the seemingly minority ethnic groups. For instance, a 76-year-old migrant who had lived in the city for 56 years with diverse communities from different regions lamented that ethnic mixing in the city was a major cause of weakening traditional values and practices. She further feared that some of her grandchildren born in the city might never learn their ethnic, cultural beliefs and practices.

*"You see I don't deny that it's a good thing to learn to live well with others from other tribes. But I fear that some of the small tribes like mine would be swallowed up and be forgotten completely... My grandchildren cannot speak in my dialect; they are not conversant with what we do at the rural area. It's a big shame. Who will take up our mantle when we are gone?"* Leah, 76-year-old and a resident at 3C says.

The younger participants, however, did not register any fears of losing their ethnic identities

#### 2.4.4 Ethno-Political mobilization

Politicization of ethnicity in majority of Africa's democratic states has been cited by a number of scholars as major cause of ethnic conflicts and civil wars in the continent (Mann 2004).

Jinadu, notes that, Neoliberalism has conflated the problem of democracy in Africa with that of liberal democracy and its institutions, and turned competitive electoral politics into virtual warfare in which the objective is to annihilate one's political enemies (Jinadu 2002: 10). This is quite evident in Kenya during elections where political mobilizations solidify relationships between ethnic groups as a way of influencing people to vote in a certain direction (Hassan, 2017; Wamwere, 2003; KNHRC, 2018). Consistent with these scholars, our study findings suggested a general view that democracy and multipartisim were the main causes of ethno-political group mobilization and conflict.

All participants except one were of the view that multipartisim created opportunity for the formation of ethnic-based political parties, promoting ethno-political mobilization and hostility. Experiences shared by participants indicated that almost all the intermittent conflicts experienced in the informal settlement had some background in ethnic politics. Several references were made to ethnic based politics as constantly breeding hostility, hatred and violence among ethnic groups, especially in the informal settlement.

#### **2.4.5 Normalization of ethnic conflict**

Some participants, twelve out of the twenty-four in-depth interviews participants seemed to have normalized ethnic violence during national elections. Nine of them reported that they usually flee to the rural area or take their children to relatives living in safer estates within the city during election periods. This accentuates how the culture of ethno-electoral violence is deeply ingrained in the minds of the many migrants living in the area and subsequently vindicates ethnic mobilization and negative ethnicity. (See KNHCR 2018:52; Wamwere 2008:39).

#### **2.4.6 Poverty and ignorance**

Poverty, ignorance and conflict have widely been found to be closely interrelated (Marks, 2016; Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008). In this study, poverty, in regard to lack of employment or stable source of income was presented by more than half of the participants as a major factor hindering ethnic peace. There seemed to be a common view among the participants that due to joblessness, the youths were easily bought with small tokens by interested parties to turn against their outgroup members. A section of the participants (eight out of the twenty-four) commented on idleness among many youths in the informal settlement as a contributing factor to their participation in ethnic-based violence. The argument here was that since majority of the population live below the poverty threshold, this made them to easily slip in to ethnic incitement in exchange of small tokens.

*"When you don't have money in this city, you will do anything to have it. Most youths are usually lured away to ethnic fights with small amount of money, sometimes just cheap liquor, some illegal drugs or even empty promises. If they had some stable source of income, they would be working and would not have time to engage in such..."* Nyaboke, A 33-year-old who reside at 3C village said.

These stories shared by the migrants suggested that many youths were easily lured to ethnic fights with money. Our findings seemed to concur with Humphreys & Weinstein (2008) observations that low levels of education combined with unemployment and inequality increased vulnerability to recruitment to violent conflict.

Sixteen out of the twenty-four participants noted that serial perpetrators of ethnic incitements in the area had the tendency to buy police protection even before they carry out their attacks. Participants claimed that in most cases, those arrested for involvement in ethnic violence would buy their freedom with small amount of money even before arriving at the police station. This, according to the participants made reporting of perpetrators useless and instead, chose retaliation or counterattacks to get even. Asked why she mentioned corruption as an impediment to ethnic peace, Elizabeth made the following remarks;

*"There is no point of calling police because they are after money. Even when they show up at the scene, all they want is money - bribe... At the end of the day, we solve our problems in our own way...When your group is attacked, you plan for a counter attack to get even..."* Eliza, 54-year-old and a resident at Mashimoni village said.

The stories on corruption shed light on why most ethnic attacks were not reported or the real perpetrators punished. It exposed lack of morality and ethics among law enforcers portraying as sympathizers or promoters of criminality.

#### **2.4.8 Weak Policies**

Wasara (2002) argues that the currently witnessed ethnic fragmentation in eastern Africa is as a result of the weakening role of the state to guarantee protection and security to people. This in turn forces people to organize themselves in to ethnic identity groups in order to advance their interests. Some participants felt that the existing policies to govern ethnic relations and punish perpetrators were not strong enough to curb hostility among ethnic groups. One of the participants wondered how the Truth and Justice Commission would just develop a list of shame to restrain politicians from hate speech instead of imposing hefty fines or jailing perpetrators. One of the participants, Chesire, had witnessed conflict in Mathare several times and in 2008, his small shop at 3C village was raided.

According to him, this happened immediately after one of the politicians made inciting remarks against some tribes in the area. In his view, there was enough basis to prosecute the politician, but nothing serious happened even after clips circulated all over the media about the said incitement.

### **3.0 Possible solutions to addressing ethnic conflict in Africa.**

Drawing from the above scholarly literature and findings of this study, causes of ethnic violence are multi-diverse and therefore, there cannot be one way fits it all for African nation to adopt in their efforts to promote peaceful ethnic co-existence among the diverse ethnic groups. Further, the findings present a challenge to African nations to look into and address the root causes of ethnic related conflicts in their specific nations.

Our findings point out to a number of existing gaps that need to be addressed if efforts to strengthening positive inter-ethnic relations were to be realized.

#### **3.1 Strengthening grass root peace initiatives**

Odendaal (2012) notes that peacebuilding is not the preserve of the state, but rather a joint responsibility of the society. Ali and Pandey (2018) affirms the power of grass root peace initiative in reducing, preventing or stopping relapse of violence; improving relationships between people and communities; and improving relationships between conflicting parties. Mkutu et. al, (2014) also found locally-led peace initiatives to be more effective and rewarding, especially in information gathering. Our study pointed out to some existing gaps between the residents and the state agencies working towards promoting inter-ethnic peace. More than half of the respondents stated that they were unaware of any state project in the area on peace promotion. Similarly, none of the respondents reported to have participated in any sort of peace initiative spearheaded by the government. This may explain why the state interventions seemed to be far from meeting the migrants' expectations. There is need to build capacity at the grass root level and empower local people, who are usually the most affected whenever communities turn against each other. Grass root peace initiatives may be instrumental in community involvement that ensures sustainable solutions from within the affected communities.

#### **3.2 Cultivating a culture of peace**

William James' in (Cocodia 2008) asserts that men should focus on looking for the causes of peace instead of causes of war. Cultivating a culture of peace involves an active and conscious effort to create and maintain peaceful environments regardless of the existing factors. This includes developing personal virtues such as respect for life, appreciation of difference and promotion of non-violence ways to resolve conflicts in everyday life. Key to this is upholding national values and policies, which contribute to solidarity, respect of fundamental human rights, cultural diversity and rejection of violence. According to the 2019 Mérida World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates declaration, "The primary tool to promote a culture of peace is peace education, which must be taught in families, all levels of education, workplaces, and disseminated through the media, and encouraged at all levels of society. African nations need to embark on formal and informal education on the importance of peace, educating communities on constructive ways to manage differences and resolve conflict, promoting cultural mixing and cultural exchange, which can help recognize and appreciate experiences of shared humanity across the diverse groups.

#### **3.3 Promoting cultural mixing and embracing diversity**

African leaders and other peace promoters should create avenues for intentional ethnic mixing that allow people from diverse communities to learn from each other and to shift focus to proactive measures of promoting dealing with ethno-cultural diversity rather than reactive measures. Strategies to promote ethnic mixing can go miles in promoting ethnic understanding and embracing ethnicity as an asset rather than a challenge. It may help to nurture shared identities that go beyond ethnic configurations and promote nationalism.

#### **3.4 Addressing past injustices and resolving resource conflicts**

Lind, (2018) submits that, ensuring equal rights for all citizens, equal political representation and fair distribution of national resources can help address issues of marginalization and reduce inter-ethnic tensions. In our study, more than half of the participants cited past injustices that included unfair land distribution, unequal political representation, mistreatment by past regimes as some of the factors that contributed to hatred among the diverse groups. African leaders need to develop long lasting strategies on how to conclusively address past political and resource distribution grievances that continue to haunt and stand between reconciliation

#### **3.5 Addressing poverty and ignorance**

Poverty and ignorance engenders conflicts. African leaders need to focus on providing universal access to quality education for all. Education will not only place people in competitive positions of leadership and decision making, but also enable them participate in social-economic development of the nation, hence reducing the level of poverty and ignorance.

### 3.7 Countering ethno-political mobilization

There is need to strengthen political structures in multicultural African countries. Political mobilization should shift focus from ethnic-based mobilization to issue-based mobilization. This calls for a redefinition and strengthening of democratic institutions and a political good will where politicians will be driven by national interests rather than ethnic or community interest. Political leaders need to be held accountable for any breach of peace

### 3.8 Strengthening governance and rule of law

Much of the ethnic conflicts happening in African countries are aggravated by the absence of rule of law, weak policies, disregard of the existing polices and poor governance that does not guarantee protection and security for its people (Wasara 2002). African leaders need to devote themselves to promoting the rule of law and protecting the rights of all citizens without any form of discrimination whatsoever. Similarly, they should encourage citizens to seek legal means of settling disputes rather than resulting to conflicts. Measures to ensure that all citizens have equal access to justice should be put in place.

### Conclusions

Whereas there is widespread perception that many of the internal conflicts happening in African multi-ethnic nations are as a result of ethnic differences, evidence from this study indicates that ethnic conflicts do not emerge from simple ethnic differences, but have multiple underlying causes including; resource competition, poor governance, political influence, unhealed past injustices, poverty and retrogressive cultural practices and beliefs. Perpetual peace is possible if African states embark on addressing the fundamental issues harboring ethnic animosity, strengthening state structures that work to promote peace and cultivating a culture of peace among their ethnic diverse populations. More efforts should be directed towards promoting the acceptance of diversity and building cohesive multicultural societies rather than dealing with conflict. For these reasons, governments in Africa, including Kenya, should launch widespread community-based research actions to prioritize factors listed as a solution to ethnic intolerance in urban centers and rural areas because each community has a different ranking of the most important or effective solutions for ethnic-co existence,

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