

**THE ROLE OF DEVOLUTION IN THE RESOLUTION OF INTER-
COMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN KENYA: THE CASE OF MERU-
BORANA CONFLICT IN ISIOLO COUNTY 2012-2017**

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C50/83584/2015

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION,
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
AWARD OF MASTERS OF SECURITY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES**

2018

DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been presented in this or any other college/university for an award of diploma or degree.

Signature.....

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The project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor

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Signed-----

Date-----

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents Alice Makau and late Stanley Makau

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am greatly indebted to the management of the University of Nairobi for granting me admission to the institution to pursue a Master of Arts Degree in Strategic and Security Studies.

I am honoured to give thanks to the government of Kenya for granting me the scholarship to pursue this program. The academic exposure I have received is overwhelming and will be critical in my contribution professionally.

I am greatly honoured to give my heart deepest thanks to the following people: The advisor of my project Dr. George Katete for his excellent supervision, patience and advice throughout the process of completing this work. Special appreciation to the other lecturers during the program and my colleagues for their invaluable input.

Lastly, my gratitude goes to my family members for their prayers, assistance and encouragement to continue to press on.

To all those who have participated and supported me during the course of this study, thank you. May God Bless You All.

ABSTRACT

This study focused on the role of devolution in resolution of intercommunal conflicts between the Meru and Borana communities within Isiolo county. This conflict has been blamed on political competition, fight for resources, marginalization among other factors. All these negative factors have been attributed to years of poor accountability and transparency, unequal distribution of resources and low levels of community participation in development. The centralized system was characterized by the above factors and therefore devolution was adopted with the aim of improving governance and pacifying these factors that were responsible for conflict. Among the objects of devolution outlined in the Kenyan Constitution are the recognition of rights and interests of minorities, increased public participation and political representation. Therefore, it is envisioned that by operationalizing devolution, the above objects will lead to accountability, effectiveness, efficiency and recognition of diversity hence reduced conflicts. The study therefore focused on the above three mentioned objects of devolution and examined how they link to conflict resolution. The study covered four areas within Isiolo Town that are dominated mostly by the Meru and Borana. The research design adopted was longitudinal and it took a qualitative approach in data collection where interview guides were used to get data from key informants and locals. The key informants were purposively selected while stratified sampling was used to select the locals. The findings of the study were that the rights and interests of minorities are progressively being recognized but it is yet to meet the threshold that would reduce conflict. Secondly, that public participation is advanced but the minorities within the county are still facing some level of isolation and that political representation has improved but the majority carry the day. The study concludes that devolution has helped in curbing intercommunal conflicts between the Meru and Borana but it is still early to judge its success or failure. This study made several recommendations including rolling out of platforms and opportunities for citizen participation, civic education and information to sensitize citizens. Other conflict resolution mechanisms can also be combined with the efforts of devolution to realize an overall success in curbing such intercommunal conflicts.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CLMB-	County Land Management Board
CSOs-	Civil Society Organizations
IEBC-	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
ICCPR-	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICJ, Kenya-	International Commission of Jurists, Kenya
ICHRP-	International Council on Human Rights Policy
IDEA-	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IEA-	Institute of Economic Affairs
LAPSSET-	Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport
LATF-	Local Authority Transfer Fund
NLC -	National Land Commission
NPPP-	Northern People's Progressive Party
SALW-	Small Arms and Light Weapons
OCHA-	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UDHR-	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP-	United Nations Development Program

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Devolution is one of the tenets of good governance. In order to understand devolution, one has to delve into the concept of decentralization. Decentralization encompasses various aspects including but not limited to drawing governance closer to the people, transfer of authority to the local government from the central government and accountability. In the earliest writings on decentralization, Alexis de Tocqueville in '*Democracy in America*', stated that decentralization has a civic element in that it increases the prospects for locals to participate in public matters and also key in ensuring government delivers to its citizens thereby promoting stability (Schoburg & Ryan, 2016).

The existence of a certain amount of democratic space is perceived to be necessary for prosperity and peace in a state. The government of the day needs to involve its citizens on issues that affect them and ensure equitable distribution of resources and services.

Most of the inter-communal conflicts in developing countries have been blamed on poor governance. Subsequently, there have led to calls for political and administrative reforms advocating for the adoption of decentralized system of governance. The positive aspects of decentralization have led to calls for political and administrative reforms especially in developing countries.

In Africa, the implementation of decentralization has been seen as a means of engendering political participation and social inclusion which leads to stability. The move has led to change from the centralized system of governance which was described as a system that entailed poor governance including unequal distribution of resources, marginalization of some communities among other historical injustices (Ghai and Cottrel, 2014). According to International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP), about 80 percent of developing countries have adopted the system decentralization since attaining self-rule.

Kenya has experienced a number of inter-communal conflicts which are spread across the country and tend to intensify during the electioneering period. The centralized system of governance had created an environment in which social exclusion of some communities thrive as it did not promote political participation of all communities. From the time of independence, few individuals hailing from a few ethnic communities dominated key political positions and had control over economic resources to the exclusion of other communities. This led to heightened mistrust, tension amongst communities resulting in both intra-communal and inter-communal conflicts. Therefore, activists and other key stakeholders resorted to push for the adoption of devolution to reverse the problems arising out of a centralized political system.

Ghai and Cottrell (2014) posit that adoption of devolution sought act a solution to historical injustices which had contributed significantly to the rising corruption, inequalities and patronage and instability which eventually resulted or culminated in the violence experienced after 2007 general elections. The promulgation of Kenya's Constitution 2010 therefore led to the implementation of a devolved system of governance

Article 174 of the Kenyan Constitution outlines the objects of devolution, these include: creation of democratic space; accountability, protection and fostering of minority rights; recognition of diversity of the people of Kenya; creation of platforms for citizen participation; improved service delivery; ensure cooperation between the two levels of government and equitable distribution of resources across the country.

The above elements of good governance characterizing devolution made it popular and Kenyans readily embraced it after the promulgation of the Constitution, In a report by the UNDP Devolution Support (2016) by IPSOS Synovate Survey, as at September 2016, 77% of Kenyans were in support of devolution. The reasons for their support included improved service delivery, opportunities for public participation and employment opportunities (UNDP, 2016).

To further understand the link between devolution in Kenya and intercommunal conflicts, it is critical to understand the background of inter-communal conflicts in Kenya.

The genesis of inter-communal conflicts can be traced back to historic times. According to Umar (1997) East Africa was mostly dominated by the pastoralists who were predominantly Cushite. However, this changed with the invasion of Bantu from the Congo Equatorial forest, who brought about cultivation technology which in turn altered land utilization process in the region. Thereafter, colonialists arrived and needed land to settle into. Subsequently, Kenyans including the pastoralists were forcefully evicted and lost their land to pave way for the white settlers.

Before Kenya attained her independence, the colonialist conducted review of the boundaries which led to border demarcations and creation of districts all over the country. This process disregarded settlements of the various communities prior to colonialism. This led to intra-communal and inter-communal conflicts as a result of some communities feeling shortchanged by the new settlements and border demarcations. The impact of colonialism in Africa is felt to date due to protracted conflicts amongst communities and states over boundaries.

Northern Kenya has experienced conflicts amongst the communities inhabiting the region since independence. A number of factors including colonialism have been blamed for the conflicts that have spun over the decades. For pastoral areas, boundary reviews were conducted without representation from the pastoral communities which at the time were still resistant hence they boycotted attending the Boundary Commission of 1962 (Bilali, 2010). As a result, pastoralist communities were left with no specific areas to occupy and settle in the country. Majority of the neighbouring communities capitalized on the absence and extended their boundaries thereby encroaching on the pastoral land (Schlee, 1989).

After independence, there were calls by irredentist Northern Kenya Communities to secede from Kenya to form Greater Somalia leading to the infamous Shifta War. This led to

wanton destruction and loss of lives and eventual abandonment of Northern Kenya by state agencies making it susceptible to insecurity and conflicts (Bilali, 2010).

The relationship between devolution and conflict has been an area of interest in studies related to conflict resolution (Green 2008). Devolution has been thought to be key in diffusing tensions and inter-communal conflicts. Devolving power from the center to local level, recognizing diversity and granting citizens power to make decisions and chart their own destiny. Has reduced incidences of instability and calls for self-determination and secession.

In Kenya, Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) states that devolution has been advocated as a political response to the problems afflicting states that lack cohesion amongst its nations or communities which may vary from inequality, corruption, poor economic growth and civil unrests. The instability is directly associated with the type or system of governance adopted (Kimenyi & Meagher, 2004 in IEA, 2010).

From the foregoing, the study looked into the role of devolution in resolving inter-communal conflicts while focusing on the Borana- Meru conflict in Isiolo County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Most inter-communal conflicts, especially in developing countries, have been attributed to many years of political, cultural, religious and ethnic marginalization. Some have largely been blamed on the existing governance system, particularly, the centralized system which was blamed for mistrust, tension and incidences of inter-communal conflicts. (Cheptile, 2014).

Kenya has experienced different kinds of conflicts and addressed the same with varying degrees of success. Majority of these intercommunal conflicts intensify during electioneering periods. According to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), inter communal conflicts were widespread in the counties of Isiolo, Turkana, Baringo, Samburu and Marsabit between 1 January and 30 June, 2015 where about 310 people were killed and 195 were injured while 216,294 people displaced. In Isiolo county, inter-communal conflict between the Meru and Borana communities has

been largely over resources and fight for political control. For instance, in 2017, there were about 16 incidents of inter-communal conflicts that led to the loss of about 40 people.

The occurrence of these conflicts has generally been attributed to years of political exclusion and disputes over control of resources and unhealthy political competition due to individuals from a few communities dominating the political scene to the exclusion of other communities. Muhula (2009) observed that the communities that control political power in Kenya also had control over the economic resources and could benefit themselves. This control of power by a few was reinforced by the existing centralized system of governance leading to unhealthy political competition and mistrust resulting to inter-communal conflicts that eventually cascaded down to the provincial and municipal levels within the county.

Various interventions have been initiated with the intention of resolving some of the conflicts with varying degrees of success. In recent times, the devolved system of governance has been advocated as a solution to the problems related with the centralized system of governance. Consequently, Kenya passed a new Constitution in 2010 with a view of curbing the long inter-communal conflicts through the adoption of devolution.

According to Schelnberger (2008) decentralization is considered to have a positive impact towards the management of conflicts. Devolution is expected to promote inclusivity in decision making, equal distribution of resources and enhance public participation and accountability. It also brings the government closer to the people thereby effectively addressing the diverse needs of its subjects at the local level. One of the overall expected outcomes is also the minimization of intractable inter-communal violent conflicts.

Most studies that have been carried out on devolution mainly focused on the effect of devolution on development in general. A study by Future Agricultures Consortium assessed the nature of pastoral conflicts in Isiolo County and found out that the nature of pastoral conflict seems to be changing due to new dynamics at play. While the drivers of conflicts and violence in Isiolo had for a very long time been over the competition for pasture and grazing land, there seems to be a shift and dominant political and economic interests have also been identified as causes of ethnic violence in the county (Sharamo, 2014).

Other studies have focused on devolution as means of engendering public participation, devolution and state of political inclusion in Kenya. Other studies have looked into the aspect of devolution and the effect of devolving financial aid and political power on service delivery in the county. Khobe (2012) and Boone (2016) focused on the implications of decentralization on management of land in Kenya. In addition, Cheptile (2014) examined the influence of devolution on inter-communal conflicts in Kenya. The study examined how the nature and levels of inter-communal conflicts have changed since the implementation of devolution. However, no study has focused on the role of devolution in resolving inter-communal conflicts and this study seeks to fill this looming gap.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. To what extent has devolved system of government promoted the interests and rights of minorities in Isiolo County?
- ii. To what extent has devolution promoted public participation in decision making on development in Isiolo County?
- iii. How has devolution promoted political representation at the local level in Isiolo County?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives are:

- i. To find out the extent devolved system of government promoted the interests and rights of minorities in Isiolo County.
- ii. To ascertain the extent devolution promoted public participation in decision making on development in Isiolo County.
- iii. To ascertain how devolution has promoted political representation at the local level in Isiolo County.

1.5 Justification of the Study

The study will contribute to knowledge on inter-communal conflicts in Kenya. It will focus the conflict between the Borana and Meru communities in Isiolo County and the role of devolution in combating the conflict. The paper will provide insights for policy makers and help in formulating strategies to mitigate inter-communal conflicts. It will also add onto the existing literature on inter-communal conflicts which academicians and future researchers can use. Although the focus of this study is on the conflict between the Borana and Meru communities in Isiolo County, the findings are relevant to many other counties in Kenya that are experiencing inter-communal conflicts as well as other countries where devolution has been implemented.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study focused on the role of devolution in resolving inter communal conflicts between the Borana and Meru communities in Isiolo County. It confined itself to the nature of the conflict while looking into the three key objects of devolution that contribute widely into conflict resolution which include public participation, recognition of rights and interests of minorities and political representation. Although intercommunal conflicts occur within the majority of the 47 devolved governments in Kenya, this study was only limited to Isiolo County. The study encountered a number of challenges. The first challenge was related to the distance from Nairobi where the researcher resides to the area of study within Isiolo town. This mean that the researcher incurred a lot of travelling expenses. The researcher also experienced some reluctance from a section of the respondents, especially the women, who due to cultural beliefs, are not open to contribute to matters of public interest.

1.7 Hypothesis

The study hypothesis is that devolution has promoted resolution efforts of inter-communal conflicts between the Meru and Borana communities within Isiolo county.

1.8 Definition of concepts

A number of definitions exists that conceptualize conflict. Conflict is a disagreement between two or more parties in which one or all perceive a denial of right or resources or the absence of capacity to obtain justice leading to anger, hurt, hate and violent actions and reactions (Persuard & Turner, 2007). Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1990) define conflict as a situation that exists when one or more groups are in opposition with one another as they are pursuing incompatible goals while Galtung (1969) defines conflict as a process in which structure, attitudes and behaviors are constantly changing and influencing each other. This study will adopt the definition by Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff.

Communal conflict is conceptualized as a clash between two groups that share an identity (Elfversson & Brosche, 2012). It may also embrace inter-religious conflicts be it communal, cultural or religious (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict , 2013). The groups involved are non-state groups and may not be formally organized rebel groups with standing capacities for violence, but are organized along a shared identity (Brosché, 2015).

Conflict resolution can be regarded as any process that resolves or ends conflict via methods which can include violence or warfare. Alternatively, it can also be viewed as a non-violent process that manages conflict through compromise, or through the assistance of a third party who either facilitates or imposes a settlement (Bouille, 1996). This study conceptualizes conflict resolution as a process of coming up with measures to resolve issues between conflicting parties.

Yuliani (2004) regards decentralization as the distribution of power from the central authority to other levels of authority either at the regional or district level. The study adopts the above definition.

The study adopts the conceptualization of the Constitution as an instrument or fundamental law, written or unwritten, that defines the basic principles to which the society must conform to and organizes governance and the exercises of power of the state power. This fundamental law cannot be altered by an ordinary legislative Act (Bulmer, 2017).

The study also takes up the definition of minority groups as defined in Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). It is a group which has ethnic, cultural or religious background that is different from the rest of the citizens of the state.

Marginalized community as defined in the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, is also adopted by the study. It is a community which is unable to participate in the social, political and economic aspects due to its small population.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section will review literature on devolution while focusing on its place in three key areas; rights of minorities, public participation and political representation. It will also include the conceptual framework for the study as well as the concept of intercommunal conflict.

2.2 Concept of devolution

In order to understand the concept of devolution and its place in conflict resolution, it is imperative to conceptualize decentralization. Decentralization is the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to local government or level. Several types of decentralization exist which include devolution, deconcentration and delegation (Schelnberger, 2005).

Deconcentration is a restricted form of decentralization that involves the transfer of authority by the central government to its units in the field. Here, the officials are usually appointed by the appointing authority at the central government and not elected by locals. Delegation is the transfer of the planning and management of a particular function to an entity separate from central government (Ellison 2004). Devolution is the most extensive form of decentralization. It involves the transfer of functions and power to local government which usually has a degree of autonomy from the national government. In this arrangement, local representatives are elected by the locals and the local government is allocated a budget by the central government (Juma, Rotich, & Mulongo, 2014).

Various forms of decentralization exist. Administrative decentralization is the transfer of some of the public functions from the central government to the lower levels of government which are usually semi-autonomous. Political decentralization entails the allocation of power from the center to the grassroots leading to the formation of local governments whereby locals elect their representatives. Fiscal decentralization is whereby the central

government transfers some of the financial resources such as taxation of goods and services to local government which is aimed at facilitating it in carrying out of its activities.

Decentralization has been getting a lot of attention in ethnically diverse countries with many pushing for its adoption to deal with ethnic conflicts. The various and different forms of decentralization are foreseen to be in a position to accommodate a number of political and administrative demands.

2.2.1 History of devolution in Kenya

Kenya first adopted devolved governance in the Majimbo constitution right after independence. The independent parties, Kenya African National Union (KANU) and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) were in opposition of the centralization of power and opted to have regional administrative units with legislative and executive powers. However, soon after independence, the Majimbo Constitution was amended for fear that it would bring about disunity and tribalism (Shikuku, 2001). This system of devolution in Kenya was also referred to as semi-federalism as it lacked political will and financial independence from centre (Wanjala, Akivaga, & Kibwana, 2002). The Constitution was therefore amended to pave way to a unitary system, creating a republic. the amendment also led to the adoption of a one party state with a unicameral legislature. After the amendments, the executive could not be effectively checked and the existing centralized system reinforced the status quo. Several attempts were made to amend the constitution to reduce the executive powers and also move away from the centralized system. This led to the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) draft in 2003, the National Constitution Conference draft (Bomas Draft) in 2004 and the Proposed New Constitution (PNC) Draft (Wako Draft) in 2005 (Kivuva, 2012). In 2010, a new Constitution was adopted leading to the restructuring of government to allow for devolution. Devolution was therefore envisioned to remedy the ills of centralization to ensure Kenya's diversity is recognized while improving service delivery.

2.2.2 Devolution and conflict resolution

Various studies have been done on the link between decentralized governance and conflict prevention. Some studies have suggested that decentralized governance can lead to resolution of conflicts. These studies have opined that decentralization generally mitigates conflict by defusing the causes of conflict. Literature on the benefits of decentralization can be traced as far back as Aristotle and other Greek philosophers who believed that a life of excellence requires that one take active part in the process of government (Bossuyt, 2013).

According to Schou and Haug (2005) decentralized governance may have a positive effect through encouraging equitable distribution of power. This is likely to reduce the intermediate causes for conflict thereby fostering political stability and national unity.

Katharina (2005) asserted that in development studies, the concepts of devolution and conflict management and interlinkages have been a point of focus for some time. The author indicated in her study that devolution is believed to be a key ingredient towards realizing economic development, public participation and democracy. Devolution's influence lead to a general expectation that the same would reflect in the management of conflict especially those related with poor economic growth or restrictions in exercise of political rights.

Bossuyt (2013) focused on the decentralization process in Latin America. decentralized system was adopted as a result of push for reforms aimed at generating new spaces for citizen participation. Other studies suggested that local governments are deemed to be well placed to address conflicts and promote peace.

Grasa & Gutierrez (2009) focused on states where decentralization has proceeded more gradually in South America such as Cambodia and Vietnam. The study revealed that not only had decentralization had improved service delivery and public participation at the local level, it had also positively contributed towards coming up with solutions to the longstanding Kurdish Conflict in Turkey (Cakin, 2017).

Maki (2006) examined the relationship between decentralization and political participation in Argentina and Chile. In Chile, decentralization came into force while it was still under military control while in Argentina, it occurred in a democratic environment. Therefore, the process was generally successful in Argentina unlike Chile. Their study therefore concluded that all actors are significant in the decentralization process and they need to agree for its success.

In Africa, Mali, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, and Uganda are some of the countries that have used devolution as a conflict management tool with varying outcomes and also as a strategy by the regimes to accommodate those pushing for federalism. Various works and studies have been undertaken within various African states on the aspect of decentralization.

Braathen and Hellevic (2008) found out that decentralization may be used as a strategy for integrating opposing parties in the national government hence preserving peace and national unity. They focused on Mali whereby the decentralization reforms were established in 1992 with the intention of resolving the conflict between the government and Tuareg rebels integrating the separatists into the political structures at the local level.

In his study of the decentralization process in Zimbabwe, Ndede (2013) stated that devolution was necessary to deal with political polarization and also the negative effects of the centralized government on the economy.

Schelnberger (2005) analyzed the prospects of the local government in Kibaale as a tool of conflict management. She suggested that decentralization enhances economic development and improves the prospects of good governance hence contribution positively towards management of conflict.

On the contrary, Katharina (2005) while looking into devolution in Uganda found that it had created conflict instead. The policy in Uganda had been insufficiently implemented as

the local units were not autonomous from the central government meaning there was still a good amount of control. Moreover, the local leaders elected were appointed after a level of approval from the central government.

Ahikire (2007) looked at the link between decentralization and the public sector reform. She focused on the devolved system as conceptualized and practiced in Uganda. Her study looked at the place of decentralization in advancing human rights. She also delved into how decentralization has provided a new political landscape into which women can have a chance at representation in local government decision making. She found out that women who participated in governance were stigmatized and had to rely on strong male sponsors in order to clinch elective positions. In addition, the political space was limited and challenging to navigate for the minorities which in this case were women and the youth.

Crawford and Hartman (2008) focused decentralization's impacts on conflict management in heterogeneous, multiracial societies of South Africa where it was more concerned with establishing durable political institutions that can regulate conflict.

Van Tilburg (2008) while studying post conflict Rwanda found that decentralization in a post-conflict setting can be a strategy for creating a stable political dispensation hence allowing economic growth and building of social capital. However, his study focuses on Rwanda and fails to address the same in the Kenyan jurisdiction.

Mkutu, Marani & Rutere (2014) found out that county governments play a role in inter-county conflict resolution in their study dealing with the potential for local governments in peace promotion. Their case study was Garissa County where the county government has supported peace initiatives and cooperated with other county governments to resolve long-running conflicts with neighbouring counties of Isiolo, Wajir, and Lamu.

It has also been suggested that devolution improves the prospects of democracy. It gives the people an opportunity to have a say in matters affecting them at the local level. It allows local authorities to exercise discretionary powers when making decisions on matters that

affect local communities. Compared to the other forms of decentralization, devolution provides better platforms to resolve issues as it takes into account the local dynamics and existing conditions (Ndede, 2013).

Mutui (2012) did a study on devolution in Kenya in which she analyzed the how the local authority transfer fund (LATF) in Nyeri County performs and how it addressed the aspect of inequalities. She identified the critical challenges facing the implementation of LATF that make it difficult in ensuring service delivery is more effective at the local level (Ndede, 2013).

Other scholars on decentralization have had contrary opinions from their counterparts advocating for its adoption.

Tambulasi (2009) examined the impact of poorly designed decentralization programs on institutional conflicts at the Malawian local government. He interrogated the extent to which decentralization has increased local level institutional conflict. He stated that poor implementation of decentralization was capable of exacerbating conflict between institutions pitting central government against local government.

While the above scholars generally have a positive outlook on devolution, others take the view that decentralization may intensify conflicts between two rival groups. Roeder and Rothchild (2005) argue that devolution is likely to give local leaders the resources necessary to mobilize the locals into demanding more power from the central government bringing about separatism or irredentism which may lead to tensions.

Grasa & Gutierrez (2009) pointed out that devolution efforts have failed to prevent conflict and also intensified the level of confrontation such as in Bolivia and Southern Philippines. Therefore, decentralization is no panacea but can yield substantial benefits. Other studies suggested that the success of decentralization as an effective conflict resolution mechanism is based on country specific conditions including historical backgrounds of the people to

whom it seeks to devolve power to. Its success is also based on its ability to pacify the triggers of the ethnic conflict.

2.3 Devolution and minority rights

Various scholars have looked into devolution and its impact on minority rights. Wekesa (2012) in his study on how devolution has led to the recognition of rights of marginalized minorities in Kenya and its ensuing challenges, stated that minorities are made according to the socio-political processes and therefore its meaning keeps on changing. He posits that minority groups are any disparate groupings that experience discrimination due to their political, social and economic position.

Before the promulgating of the Constitution in 2010, ethnic minorities in Kenya faced challenges in participation and secure representation in decision making processes. Poor inclusion of minority communities or groups from political structures and economic resources led to feelings of animosity and suspicion between the minorities and those perceived to be the majority. Therefore, minority groups remained in the backdrop while larger ethnic groups enjoyed dominance in political participation leading to a situation where the majority groups had representation at all levels of governance while minorities had none.

The centralized system of governance that had been long adopted after independence contributed significantly in maintaining the status quo leading to inter communal conflicts that seem to worsen during the electioneering period (Nyabira & Zemelak, 2016). The adoption of devolution therefore was considered to be a stepping stone onto which the inclusion of minority groups would be realized and end the longstanding ethnic conflicts.

Nyabira & Ayele (2016) posit that devolution has enhanced opportunities for the political inclusion of minority groups. They argue that with subsequent elections under the 2010 constitution, more previously excluded communities have got representation in the counties. The constitution recognizes the existence of diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. It provides for opportunities and institutions that will facilitate inclusion of

communities including minorities. The constitution requires all opportunities, both political and social, to have a national outlook.

Wekesa (2012) established that devolution has provided an opportunity to address some of the concerns raised by minorities who have suffered discrimination and exclusion under centralized government. It is a platform through which political participation and protection of socio-economic rights can be realized. However, he also posits that devolution provides only a partial answer to the problems affecting ethnic minorities.

It was also suggested that minority groups continue to be excluded despite the adoption of devolution. They argue that there are new minority groups within the counties who remain disadvantaged as the dominant communities within the county take both political and economic dockets at their expense. They however, observe that devolution has not in its entirety done away with the exclusion of some communities in their study; they realized that the communities forming the majority in a county were discriminating against those forming the minority (Nyabira & Ayele, 2016).

Other studies noted that decentralization is likely to lead to local leaders who engage in discrimination against minorities in their own local areas. Brancati (2009) pointed out that the adoption of sharia law in some parts of northern Nigeria has intensified rather than calming down tensions between Christians and Muslims. This is especially after the Christian who were the minority, were forced to observe sharia law.

2.4 Devolution and public participation

Participation is the process through which locals are involved in decision making and development initiatives. It is considered to be a legal prerequisite in government related projects in most countries. It promotes accountability as locals can own the decisions made and improve service delivery. It is also deemed a platform through which the public can perform checks and balance against their representatives while guarding against the abuse of office and political interference.

The right to participate in government is considered to be one of the features of good governance as it brings forth effectiveness, transparency and accountability in the discharge of public duties (Khobe, 2012). Public participation is a right that is guaranteed under the law and considered to be a tenet of good governance. Under Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and subsequent regional and constitutional provisions all over the world including Kenya, it is the right of every citizen to participate in decision making pertaining to public affairs.

Devolved system of governance is therefore considered to be the most appropriate in promoting the right to participation through bringing the opportunities to get involved in decision making activities closer to the citizens. It is credited with increasing opportunities for locals to participate in decision making process in state affairs. It brings services and leadership closer to the people thereby strengthening and enabling accountability. According to Khobe (2012) devolution is a means through which the right to participate can be realized. This is based on the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and governance which requires member states to decentralize power and ensure democracy at grassroots level.

Devolution also improves representative democracy. Locals are able to not only air their opinions but also have their voice heard in an election process by voting in leaders of choice. This further extends the democratic space as citizens can hold the elected leaders accountable for their actions through recognized institutions.

Khobe (2012) focused on how devolution increases the prospects of public participation in Kenya and did a comparison of other jurisdictions including South Africa and Uganda. The study highlighted that legal and constitutional provisions were key in ensuring that public participation is actualized. However, it came to light that this still remains theoretical in Uganda and therefore this was a drawback towards implementation of decentralization in Uganda compared to its counterparts, Kenya and South Africa.

Muiru (2013) also studied the relationship between decentralization, public participation and its impact on service delivery. According to his study, there exists a link between citizen participation and effective or ineffective service delivery in local governments. The more the opportunities for public participation then the more efficient the local government was in service delivery.

Ndede (2013) identified of devolution as a panacea for inefficiency and poor public service delivery in Zimbabwe. According to his study, devolution creates opportunities for public participation being one of the pillars of democracy and good governance. Similarly, his study theorized that the more the public were involved in decision making process, the better the service delivery.

Citizen participation also ensures that local government is held accountable as it keeps the citizens in touch with the actions of the local government. Fiszbein (1997) found that in Colombia, local government had effectively met the demands of locals through sustained public participation. In addition, participation made the local government more accountable to the citizens and also resulted in change of personnel to make service delivery more effective. Putnam's (1993) study of Italian regional governments found out that it performed better as a result of pressure from the constituents.

While looking into the dynamics of devolution, a study by ActionAid Denmark highlighted the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in promoting effective citizen participation in local governance. CSOs can facilitate dialogue between authorities and citizens. This way local authorities can become responsive and accountable institutions for sustainable development (Actionaid, 2014). The role of CSOs is particularly relevant when it comes to the participation of women and youth in local governance. These groups are traditionally hard to engage and marginalized from local government decision making. Yet many local CSOs are working with these groups and could contribute to furthering the participation in local governance of all groups in society.

2.5 Devolution and political representation

Hanna Pitkin (1967) states that political representation as the process of making citizens' ideas and perceptions present in public policy making procedures. It occurs when political players act on the behalf of their locals or voters in the political arena. Devolution is considered to be a system that not only guarantees representation but improves the chances of representation of majority of the people in the county.

Kenny (2012) looked into relationship between decentralization and women's political representation. He found out that political parties are key in ensuring gender representation policy is implemented by ensuring increase in women's participation as per legal provisions.

ActionAid (2014) looked into the prospects of political representation in the devolved system of governance in Zimbabwe. The study found out that through their elected councillors, people are able to express their opinions and give inputs in governance issues as well as the public services to be given. However, there exists a challenge of politicization of civic issues whereby consultative and feedback meetings with communities tend to be structured along political parties and alienates those considered not to be inclined with the ideologies of the parties.

Donaghy (2004) on her study in Northern Ireland on the link between devolution and women's political representation found that devolution has created a political landscape that is more accommodating in placing of women into positions of influence as well as political power.

Lyon (2015) while looking into the prospects of decentralization in Macedonia, examined whether decentralization improved political participation at the local level. His study revealed that political decentralization has mitigated tribal conflict through fostering effective participation of the minorities and also fostered the recognition of diversity by improving their political representation in decision-making processes. However, the study found that as much as decentralization had expanded opportunities for participation, it has

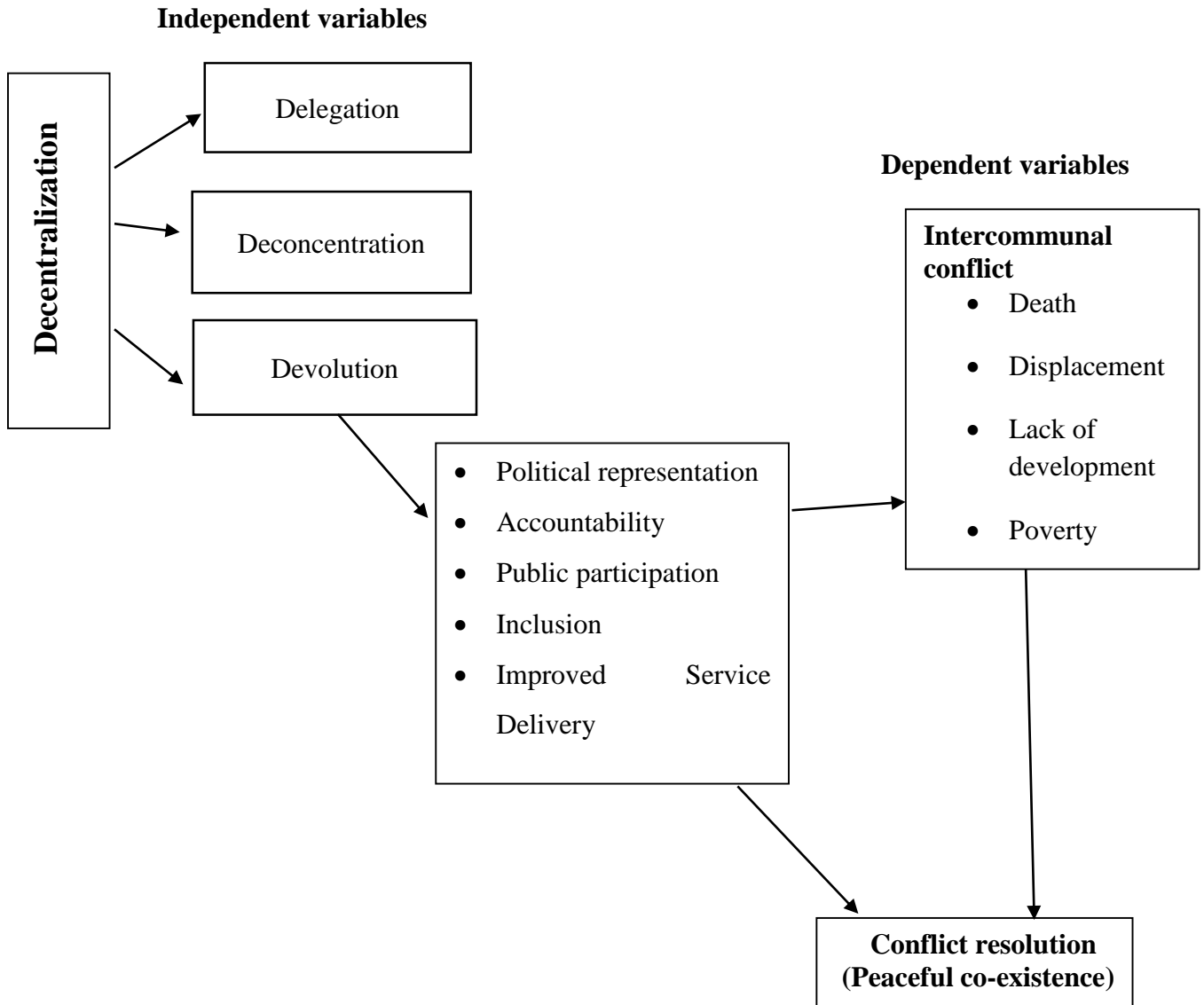
failed to guarantee the effective participation of all due to the dominance of some political outfits which lacked democracy within its ranks.

Other studies on political participation and devolution in Kenya have focused on the possible benefits for women after adoption of a devolved system of governance. Gichuhi & Njeri (2016) explored on how devolution has benefited women in key leadership positions in Kenya. The study revealed that about 80 percent of women in Kenya live in rural areas hence are left out in decision making as far as politics and economic development issues are concerned. Subsequently, the adoption of devolution has increased opportunities for women to participate and have political representation in local government. Most studies that have been undertaken have examined decentralization as a tool for ethnic diversity in general and how it has also engendered participation and representation of the people. (Yusoff, Sarjoon, & Hassan, 2016).

From the above review, it is clear that a lot has been done on decentralization and its various forms such as devolution. However, the studies have not focused on the role of devolution in conflict resolution of intercommunal conflict between the Meru and Borana communities.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1: The Conceptual Model



The conceptual framework that guides this study is captured in Figure 2.1. It represents the conceptualization of the relationship between devolution and inter-communal conflict between the Meru and Borana and how it contributes to conflict resolution. The common understanding of decentralization is that it is the transfer of power from central government to lower levels of government. Decentralization exists in various forms, devolution, deconcentration, delegation. Devolution is a legally recognized arrangement involving the

transfer of political, administrative, and fiscal power to subnational authorities that are independent. Under this system, the devolved units operate within legally recognized territories and its leaders and officials of devolved government are locally elected. Secondly, deconcentration is the transfer of authority to subnational branches of the central state which implement decisions made at the center while delegation is the whereby the authority for decision making is given to organizations partially owned by the government such as parastatals among others.

Devolution is likely to lead to better governance by public participation, protection of rights of minorities, recognition of diversity, improved political representation and improved service delivery. Consequently, this promotes harmony and cohesion among different communities within the county hence reducing the possibility of incidences of inter-communal conflicts.

2.7 The Meru-Borana intercommunal conflict

The Borana is one of the communities forming the larger Oromo who are said to have left the southern highlands of Ethiopia in the 1500's (Bilal,2010). The Borana live in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. The 2009 census report stated that about 161,000 Borana lived in Kenya whereby 44% of the Kenya Borana live in Marsabit County while others are spread across Tana River, Garissa and Isiolo counties (Bilal, 2010). On the other hand, the Meru are one of the communities from the larger Bantu of Central Africa (Ministry of Planning and National Development and Vision 2030. 2010). The Meru community lives along the Mount Kenya slopes in the upper Eastern part of Kenya in Meru and Tharaka-Nithi county.

The inter- communal conflict between the Meru and Borana communities in Isiolo county is largely historical and is largely attributed to disagreements over border demarcation. According to the Borana community, the Meru occupied a lot of their land that was unfairly demarcated to them after the Borana, through the Northern People's Progressive Party (NPPP) boycotted the Boundary Commission of 1962 (Isiolo County Assembly, 2013) due to the secessionist movement and subsequent Shifta War. According to Oba (as cited in (Bilal, 2010), the Borana were not involved in the discussions over border demarcations and therefore the Meru people took advantage of this and grabbed land which was part of

Isiolo district. They further claim that due to the extended instability in the region, the Meru, through individuals occupying powerful seats in the national government, had further encroached into their land. For instance, they cited that in the 1960s-1970s, the then powerful Minister for Lands, Jackson Angaine took advantage of political instability and massive security operations in Isiolo and used his political position to extend boundaries of Meru into Isiolo and created the Buuri and Nyambene districts (Bilali, 2010). Conversely, the Meru community claimed that part of Isiolo Town falls within the original Meru District. They referred to the records of revenue collection in Isiolo Town that were carried out by colonial authorities in Meru which put Isiolo Town under Meru District administration (Roba & Randi, 2011).

The intercommunal conflict has also been exacerbated by the competition of resources between the pastoralists Borana community and the Meru farmers. Both communities have claimed River Meckenzie to be in their respective territories which they say is vital for their livelihood (Isiolo County Assembly, 2013). Other reasons for the conflict include, Cattle rustling activities by the Borana against the Meru and subsequent retaliatory attacks by the Meru; stereotypes between the two communities leading to increase in ethnic animosity and political competition. Further, poor peace and conflict resolution methods or strategies have intensified the conflicts as they have failed to address the issues at the grassroots level.

2.8 Interventions into the Meru-Borana conflict

A number of conflict mitigation measures have been rolled out by the national government and civil societies in a bid to contain the Meru-Borana intercommunal conflict. Most of the people involved are mainly the elders from both communities and ordinary members of the communities and their leaders, religious leaders and security personnel from the region.

Since most conflicts are related to fight over resources such as water, several initiatives have been rolled out by the government and non-governmental organizations to ensure equitable distribution. During the conflicts resolutions, the Government has also acted as a

mediator or facilitator of the peace meetings and ensuring they provide leadership and security. Other measures have also included peace building initiatives such as peace committees, traditional peace initiatives and development of national policy on peace building and conflict management. The government has also attempted to resolve the conflict through the Meru-Isiolo boundary dispute committee. However, the report by the committee is yet to be implemented.

However, conflict management and peace building in Kenya and by extension, Isiolo County, continues to face major challenges in the current national and regional environment (Adan, Pkalya, & Masinde, 2003). These include but are not limited to; instability in neighboring states resulting in increased cross border conflicts and proliferation of small arms, institutional challenges such as the capacity of security forces and other government agencies to prevent, mitigate and manage conflict which draws back efforts by government in being pro-active.

Mwagiru (as cited in Bilali (2010) also adds that despite intensified police operations leading to disarmament in areas afflicted by intercommunal conflicts, the response does not bring lasting results in curbing the conflict. The move to disarm the locals is criticized as the residents feel that the government has not provided adequate security therefore leaving the communities exposed and vulnerable to attacks from rival communities.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design, sampling design, study population, data collection and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

Longitudinal research design was adopted for the study. Longitudinal research is conducted to study the development and background of phenomena over time so as to allow for observation or identification of changes in the subject under study (Deschenes, 1990). Longitudinal research is beneficial in discovering relationships between variables that are not related to various background variables. This study may take place over a period of weeks, months or even years (Cherry, 2018).

The study looked into the patterns and trends of inter communal conflict between the Meru and Borana before the adoption of devolution and after the onset of devolution. This way the researcher was able to identify the variations or developments so as to ascertain the role of devolution in the resolution of the Meru-Borana conflict in Isiolo County.

3.3 Location of the Study

Isiolo County is situated in the upper Eastern region of Kenya. It borders various counties such as Wajir, Garissa, Marsabit, Samburu, Laikipia, Meru and Tana River Counties and has an estimated population of about 200,000 people. The study was conducted in Isiolo Town which is the northern part of the county and borders Meru, Laikipia and Samburu counties. The town is cosmopolitan and its main inhabitants are Borana and Meru communities. Isiolo town is also considered to be a resort town as it hosts Samburu and Shaba Game reserves and also has Isiolo Airport which has boosted the tourism industry in the county.

Historically, Isiolo has had continuous conflicts over resources especially between communities engaged in pastoralism and farming activities. The County has also

experienced regular politically motivated conflicts between the various ethnic groups, particularly during general elections that occasionally turns violent. The study was conducted in four selected areas in Isiolo Town namely: Kiwanjani, Ngaremara, Kambi garba and Tuluroba. The areas were selected as they are inhabited by the Meru and Borana communities who are the subjects of the study.

3.4 Target Population

Target population is the set of individuals, cases or objects with some common characteristics, from which a researcher wants to generalize the results of the study. The target population for the study were locals including businessmen and religious leaders from the aforementioned areas within Isiolo town. The researcher also involved key informants mainly from National and County government officials. They were chosen due to their knowledge and understanding of the nature of conflicts between the Borana and Meru communities and that the potential role of devolution as an intervention measure in the conflict.

3.5 Sampling Technique and Sample size

Sampling is the procedure in which a number of individuals are selected in such a way that they represent the large group under research (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The study used stratified random sampling to group residences into the sub locations within Isiolo town. The researcher then ensured that various areas of within the aforementioned areas within Isiolo town (strata) are represented in the study. The strata were divided into various groups including business men and religious leaders. The main considerations guiding this sampling was to get participants who can give relevant and qualified data to help answer the research questions. For the key informant interviews sample, the participants for this group was identified through purposive sampling and were selected from officials of both the National and County Government.

This information is presented in Table 3.1

Item		Population Size	Sample Size
National Government Officials- County Commissioner, Chiefs, National Police Service		15	10
County Government Officials – County Executive Ministers, Member of County Assembly		20	15
Religious leaders		5	5
Businessmen	Borana	30	25
	Meru	25	20

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The instrument for collection of primary data for this study was the interview guide. Interviews are considered to be quite useful in collection and verification of data collected. It is a reciprocal conversation that gives the interviewer opportunity to participate and seek clarifications on answers that may not be necessarily clear. This method was considered appropriate for this study since there is need to have a deeper understanding of the role of devolution in resolution of conflict.

Secondary data was generated through review of literature relating to peace building and conflict resolution in Isiolo County. It included the use of texts and documents including government publications, other publications and documents by various stakeholders relating to the subject matter. Lastly, attention was also given to the happenings in Isiolo through newsletters, magazines and newspapers so as to support the data collected.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained a letter authorizing data collection from the University of Nairobi. Some appointments were made with the key informants to arrange for the dates for carrying out the interviews. The researcher started the interviews by introducing herself w and

informed the participants of the objectives as set out in the consent form document. The researcher assured the respondents that their identities would remain confidential.

3.8 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of information collected. It involves examining what has been collected and making deductions and references. The data collected was analyzed after the interviews in a systematic way, while looking into the trends in the information collected. Coding was used to organize the research data into manageable summaries.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher endeavored to ensure that research ethics was upheld during the research. The respondents were involved from the get go by being informed what the research ensured that each respondent understood what the study was all about. In addition, the researcher assured the respondents of anonymity and confidentiality and informed the participants that they had a choice as whether to take part in the interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the research findings on the role of devolution in the resolution of inter-communal conflict between the Meru-Borana. The results have been sub-divided based of the objectives of the study. The subsections are devolved system of governance and how it has promoted the interests and rights of minorities in Isiolo County, devolution and how it has promoted public participation in decision making on development and how devolution has promoted political representation at the local level.

4.2 Response rate of Respondents

The researcher selected 15 key informants from county government, 10 government officials and about 55 businessmen and religious leaders from the Meru and Borana communities in the selected areas within Isiolo town. Out of these, 7 key informants from county government participated, 6 government officials while 25 businessmen and 3 religious leaders from the Meru and Borana participated in the study.

The response rate is presented in **Table 4.1**.

Category		Sample size	Participated	Response rate
National Government Officials- County Commissioner, Chiefs, National Police Service (OCS)		10	6	60%
County Government Officials – County Executive Ministers, Member of County Assembly		15	9	60%
Religious leaders		5	3	60%
Businessmen	Borana	25	15	75%
	Meru	20	10	50%

4.3 Devolved system of governance and the interests and rights of minorities

The first objective of the study sought to find out the extent devolved system of government has promoted the interests and rights of minorities in Isiolo County. This section presents information of the opportunities created by county government for minority inclusion in decision making and whether minority groups in Isiolo County participate in county governance.

The researcher found that the onset of devolution had improved the recognition of rights and interests of minorities within Isiolo county. On the question as to whether all citizens including the minority in Isiolo County participate in county governance, the respondents stated that devolution has improved the prospects of minorities in the county. The county officials pointed out that the creation of county seats and county assembly seats had opened up the political space for inclusion of communities. In the previous election, particularly, 2013 general elections, minority groups managed to have one of their own, Joseph Samal Lomwa, a Turkana, win the Isiolo North Member of Parliament seat.

On the question as to what extent would the county government has created opportunities for minority inclusion in decision making, respondents, mainly county officials, stated that the existence of the County Public Service Board, which is involved in the recruitment of county staff was able to bring about diversity as people from diverse communitites get a chance to be employed. Moreover, the constitutional requirement that county appointments and the assembly should reflect the national outlook as well as not more than a third of a particular gender had been met. This means that the minority have had opportunities to participate in governance.

On the question on how the observation of minority rights and interests has influenced the resolution of conflict between the Meru and Borana communitites, respondents stated that it had not resolved the dispute. They pointed out a number of challenges with regards to this. They stated that the continued dominance of the majority, in this case, the Borana community, has led to political, social and economic discrimination of the minorities. Subsequently, some of the minority communities had in the past come together to fight for

inclusion and challenge the perceived long-term political dominance by the Borana community. They believe that been left out of government had shortchanged their communities from benefiting from economic development and political positions. Further the politicization of ethnicity as one of the campaign tools by the political class had resulted in suspicion and unhealthy competition between the majority and minority ethnic groups within Isiolo county.

On the question as to what can be done to improve minority representation in governance at the County level, respondents stated that a lot needed to be done and some suggested that negotiated democracy in the county. They opined that if all communities are brought on board and the political positions negotiated and agreed upon, then all communities could have a sense of belonging and security that their interests are being served. The respondents also suggested for the improvement in nomination of county special elect assembly members from all communitites to cater for the minorities including women and youth

While it is clear that the newly introduced devolved system has generally improved ethnic inclusion, it does not mean that the majority-minority (Borana – Meru) political tension has been resolved. As some of the respondents pointed out before, the majority still dominate governance issues within the county at the expense of the minorities. This means that tension and violent conflict is bound to resurface at any time. Moreover, opportunities for minority groups to inclusion in government is still dependent on the good will of the existing majority group. There are no policies for the institutionalization of minority groups within the political structures in the counties apart from marginalized groups such as women and people living with disabilities.

4.4 Devolution and public participation in decision making

The second objective of the study sought to find out the extent devolved system of government promoted public participation in decision making on development. This section presents information on factors influencing citizen participation and effectiveness of the awareness strategies by county government.

On the question as to what issues influence citizen participation in Isiolo County, the respondents stated that availability of information and willingness of the citizens are some of the key issues that determine level or extent of participation. Some of the interviewees stated that they are aware of the general provisions that encouraging citizen participation in the county government within the Kenyan Constitution and also embodied in the County Government Act, 2012. However, for the respondents, mainly businessmen, they stated that these provisions remain largely unknown to them and their reason for lack of familiarity with the provisions, was the failure to read the Constitutional provisions fostering public participation. Therefore, this reduced their levels of participation as their roles were not clear to them.

Others had a limited opinion on the role of citizens in governance while others opined that since the citizens had voted in leaders they trusted or one of their own, then their interests were adequately represented. Those who were aware of the right to participate chose to stay away due to the perception that their views would not be taken into account. Other interviewees also thought that the public have no capacity to participate while others are unfamiliar with what they are supposed to do in public participation. They reasoned that this could be due to lack of or ineffective civic awareness programs or lack of information from the county government.

As to the question on what initiatives have been set by the county government to create awareness among the public on their rights and ways of participation in County government, there were conflicting answers between the county officials and the businessmen. The county officials believed that they had set out different initiatives and opportunities for citizen participation. Respondents from the business community however thought that the initiatives and opportunities set by the county government were not adequate. They stated that poor communication was the main challenge as they got to know about such opportunities when its late.

Members of the Isiolo county government interviewed also revealed that opportunities had been created for public participation. Various platforms had been provided through which

citizens preferences could be communicated through public meetings where people have a chance to give feedback on policies made. County officials interviewed also revealed that information and relevant documents are usually uploaded in the county government's website for the public to access.

On the same question, the respondents, particularly the businessmen from the majority group, felt that the opportunities were adequate while a section of the minority such as the Meru, felt that the opportunities created were biased and claimed that information calling on participation was only provided to those closely related to the leaders. Subsequently, this left them out of the process in decision making on matters affecting them.

Respondents were also asked how effective the strategies for creation of aware on public participation on governance are. They stated that they could be effective but a number of challenges or setbacks did affect the process. The respondents stated that as much as the county government was using the county website as a tool for communication on policies and upcoming meetings, many people in the county lacked capacity and technological know-how to access the website for information. Moreover, network is unavailable in the far-flung areas within the county.

Respondents also faulted the county government for lack of regular feedback on some of the issues raised in public participation forums. They said that there was no follow up and therefore members of the public could not ascertain whether their contributions were worthwhile.

Most of the respondents though that the public are not aware about public participation meetings. They faulted the county government for what they think is lack of effective communication. The county government uses daily newspapers adverts, local radio stations and their website to inform the public about upcoming public participation forums. However, lack of time and resources made it difficult for the locals to access the information. Respondents also blamed short notices by count government for lack of timely awareness in order to participate.

The study also found out that the awareness programs by the county government are fairly effective but the challenge is in the implementation stage in ensuring that all communities are involved in decision making processes. The challenges revolve around negative attitude, lack of willingness of the public to participate especially amongst the minorities, lack of political goodwill, inadequate information on seminars to be held and varying interests within the political class influencing the extent of participation.

Majority of the respondents also stated that there are designated areas for public participation. This presents a challenge in realizing highest possible public participation in the county. The County government holds majority of its meetings either at the county headquarters or in several venues leaving locals unsure of where to go. Moreover, by holding meetings only at the county headquarters, most locals across the county could not attend the forums due to lack of transport and time to travel to and fro.

Majority of the respondents thought that most of the citizen lacked time to attend public meetings as most are busy trying to make a living and therefore attending such meetings would be a waste of time and resources. Other respondents complained over the technical language used in some of the forums or documents availed to the public especially those relating to the budget. This made it hard for most to understand what goes on in the public meetings and therefore could not make their contributions.

On the question on how has public participation has contributed to resolution of conflict between the Meru and Borana communities. The respondents stated that it had not contributed significantly in resolution of the conflict as the Meru, being one of the minority groups does not participate in decision making within the county. Majority of the Borana respondents opined that the Meru had their own county, Meru county and that they are just visitors. The Meru respondents on the other hand, stated that Isiolo is a cosmopolitan area and all communities should have unfettered access and opportunity in decision making processes. Therefore, this means that some level of exclusion was still being experienced which is one of the drivers of conflict between the two communities within the county.

While the Constitution and devolved governance has improved prospects for participation, the lack of knowledge on the part of respondents and locals in this case has had a negative impact on the level of participation. As a result of feeling left out from the process, a section of the community, particularly the Meru, has led to feelings of animosity which has a potential of heightening tension and violent conflict. More needs to be done to ensure the county government to create forums for participation and at the same time enlighten citizens on what their role is in participation.

4.5 Devolution and political representation at the local level

The last objective of the study sought to find out the extent devolved system of government promoted political representation at the local level. This section presents information on the issues influencing political representation in County governance and the effectiveness of the strategies for creation of aware on political representation on governance.

When asked what issues influence political representation in Isiolo county, respondents indicated that political and economic interests are a driving force in politics in the county. They averred that political competition in Isiolo is influenced by the anticipated developments such as the LAPSSSET Project. Subsequently, this raised the stakes in gaining control of key county political positions among local communities for fear of losing out. Isiolo town's planned economic expansion as part of the Vision 2030 agenda on local rivalries and resource conflicts. There are concerns that Vision 2030 has served to further reinforce rivalries and resource based conflicts between the ethnic groups as the different ethnic groups try to position themselves in such a way that they directly benefit from any windfalls that come as a result of the project.

The respondents were also asked how the clamour for political representation has led to intercommunal conflict between the Meru and Borana communities. They stated that the devolved system had brought about competition at the local arena and therefore county politics have become a breeding ground for conflict within the county. The race for power has brought about divisive politics and heightened intolerance between the two communities as well as other communities within the county such as the Samburu and Turkana. They gave an example of how the previous general elections in 2013 and 2017,

the county witnessed alliances amongst the various communities in an attempt to capture the powerful political seats mainly against the dominant Borana. This led to incidences of violent conflict in the run up to the elections leading to loss of lives and displacements.

The respondents also pointed out that most minorities, by virtue of their numbers, have been unable to succeed in having a member of their own community win the coveted gubernatorial position and other key political seats in the county. This lack of political representation for the minorities, in this case, the Meru, has increased the sense of exclusion, tension and suspicion leading to intercommunal conflicts. Therefore, the devolved system has partially contributed to heightened tension and conflict as local positions have become worthwhile leading to competition for control and dominance of power at the county government to gain control of economic resources.

When asked what are some of the initiatives at the county government aimed creating awareness among the public on their rights and opportunities of representation in County government, respondents state that civil awareness by the government and some of the non-governmental organizations and civil rights have been key. They believed that such programs have given confidence to most people to come out and vie for positions despite the ethnic background. More so, the programs have also been key in improving the political representation of women in Isiolo as many women have come out to vie for positions.

Respondents also stated that the strategies adopted in creation of awareness in political representation on governance issues was satisfactory as it has yielded some results in recent general elections compared to previous elections before promulgation of constitution. the onset of devolution has created opportunities for political representation in county government especially the minority groups, who now have a chance at representation.

The researcher also found out that the representation of women in politics was still a challenge. Some headways had been made with the election of a woman senator. Women are still marginalized in occupying some of the positions whereby they can be involved in decision making within the county despite the provisions of the Constitution of Kenya

providing for the right to equal opportunities for all genders whether in political, economic, cultural and social spheres.

When asked what recommendations could be taken into account to improve political representation in governance at the County level, respondents stated that more civil awareness programs should be held regularly to enlighten and embolden the people especially those from marginalized or minority groups within the county.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study on the the role of devolution in the resolution of inter-communal conflict between the Meru and Borana communities. The areas of focus include devolved system of governance and interests and rights of minorities, devolution and public participation in decision making on development and devolution and its promotion of political representation at the local level and how all these contribute to devolution as a conflict resolution mechanism.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study findings show that devolution has to some extent protected the right and interests of minorities within Isiolo County. Unlike in centralized system of government, the subsequent elections that have been held after the promulgation of the Constitution have provided an opportunity for minorities to be represented in Isiolo local government. However, despite the positive strides made, some level of political exclusion of minorities in the County still exists. Moreover, there are no policies for the institutionalization of minority groups within the political structures within the county government.

The study also finds that out the existence of the different ethnic communitites does not in itself cause intercommunal conflicts, rather, ethnic conflicts are majorly driven by competition over resources and also elevated by the political class. The politicization of ethnicity as one of the campaign tools by the political class has resulted in suspicion and unhealthy competition between the majority and minority ethnic groups within Isiolo county. Moreover, the dominance by the Borana community in the county has led to some form of ethnic balkanization leading to further exclusion of the minority groups such as the Meru.

It is also the finding of this study that devolution has promoted public participation. Currently, citizens have opportunities and arenas through which their grievances and concerns can be raised. Further, locals can also hold their leaders accountable through such

fora. However, a lot needs to be done in the implementation stage so as to bring all citizens on board. A lot of challenges at this stage were identified to include negative attitude, lack of willingness of the public to participate especially amongst the minorities, lack of political goodwill, inadequate information on seminars to be held and varying interests within the political class influencing the quality of participation.

The researcher also found out that devolution has increased the chances for locals to determine their representation. However, the prospects of controlling the political power and resources in the coveted county government especially the gubernatorial position, has raised the stakes making political representation attractive to all communities within the county. In turn, this has heightened political competition amongst the communities leading to intercommunal conflict between the Meru and Borana communities within the county.

5.3 Conclusions

The study hypothesis is that devolution has promoted resolution efforts of inter-communal conflict between the Meru and Borana communities within Isiolo county. From the findings, the study concludes that devolution has generally improved governance in general and if the devolution policy is properly implemented, then it can contribute positively and significantly to the efforts conflict resolution in the county by policy makers.

Through recognition of rights and interests of minorities, devolution has renewed hope in previously marginalized groups. By providing opportunities for public participation and ensuring political representation, devolution has also reduced the previous electoral battles for the national political position. Devolution has had a positive impact on some aspects or deep-seated issues that contribute significantly to the conflict between the Meru and Borana communities such as unequal distribution of resources, exclusion and lack of accountability or transparency.

Therefore, the role of devolution in resolution of inter communal conflict between the Meru and Borana communities in Isiolo county is a significant. However, it is a partial solution to a conflict that is marred or influenced by a variety of underlying factors. Moreover,

devolution is yet to accomplish a level of participation and inclusivity of minority groups within the county that is likely to lower the incidence of conflict. The analysis also reveals that historical injustices, insecurity and conflict over resources in Isiolo County continue to have an impact.

It is noteworthy that devolution has been in place for about 8 years and that its implementation is work in progress. So its contribution to conflict resolution cannot be entirely brushed off. A lot of measures need to be put place at the county level to streamline some of the aspects of devolution to make it a more effective policy.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations were highlighted:

To improve on the aspect of recognition of rights and interests of minorities, the county government of Isiolo should take measures to ensure that all communities are well represented in the county. This could be through maximizing on transparency in issuance of tenders, job opportunities and subsequent allocations and appointments. The county government of Isiolo can also consider maximizing on the inter-cultural events to enhance cultural diversity so as to do away with negative attitude and perceptions between the Meru and Borana communities.

To provide better opportunities in public participation, more should done by carrying out regular civic education to sensitize citizens on their roles and responsibilities when it comes to public participation. Isiolo county government should engage relevant and key stakeholders such as local leaders, opinion shapers and elders in coming up with strategies to encourage citizen participations in decision making processes. The county government should provide information on public meetings so that citizens can be familiar with what they are supposed to do in such forums. The information should also be in a format that is easily understandable to locals as well as persons with disabilities.

The study further recommends that members of the public should change their attitude towards participation in governance and create time within their busy schedules.

To reduce the conflict between the two communities with regards to political representation, both the National and County government should ensure the participation and inclusion of all communities within the county in the Vision 2030 development plans. This can be done by having all communities brought on board to participate in the economic development projects through equal employment opportunities and competitive tender processes. This is likely to reduce conflict over political positions or the lack of representation of some communities.

Both the National and County governments should come up with early warning systems so as to detect conflicts and come up with suitable conflict resolution mechanisms. The Government of Kenya should undertake relevant legislative reforms to take care conflicts arising from historical injustices or post-independence land adjudication. The government can consider coming up with a taskforce that has been approved by the conflicting parties and implement its findings on the demarcation issues. This is likely to make inroads in resolving of the boundary disputes and help combat some of the persistent conflicts within Isiolo county and the country at large.

5.5: Further Research

Further research could be considered on the prevailing conflicts within Isiolo county between other communities as well as the impact of devolution on land administration in Isiolo county.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guide

I am a Masters student at The University of Nairobi carrying out a research on the limitations of devolution in the resolution of inter-communal conflicts in Kenya: the case of Meru-Borana conflict in Isiolo county 2012-2017. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you about citizen participation in governance. Please be free to say when you are not ready to answer any of the questions.

Interviewee's Background information

Date _____

Area _____

1. Which is your ethnic group? Meru () Borana () Others, (specify)
2. Position in National/ County Government/ Occupation?

Devolution and Minority Rights and interests

3. Do all citizens including the minority in Isiolo County participate in county governance?
4. To what extent would you say the county government has created opportunities for minority inclusion in decision making?
5. How has the observation of minority rights and interests influenced the resolution of conflict between the Meru and Borana communities?
6. What would you recommend to be done to improve minority representation in governance at the County level?

Devolution and Public Participation

7. What are some of the issues influencing citizen participation in Isiolo County?
8. What are some of the initiatives at the county government aimed creating awareness among the public on their rights and ways of participation in County government?
9. How effective are the strategies for creation of aware on public participation on governance?

10. How has public participation contributed to resolution of conflict between the Meru and Borana communities?
11. What would you recommend to be done to improve public participation in governance at the County level?

Devolution and Political Representation







12. What are some of the issues influencing political representation in County governance in Isiolo County?
13. What are some of the initiatives at the county government aimed creating awareness among the public on their rights and opportunities of representation in County government?
14. How effective are the strategies for creation of aware on political representation on governance?
15. What would you recommend to be done to improve political representation in governance at the County level?

Thank you once more for taking time to discuss with me about the role of devolution in conflict resolution between the Meru and Borana communities in Isiolo County.

Appendix II: Map



Source: e-limu.org

<u>Key</u>	
	Main roads
	Minor roads
	Towns
	County Capital
	Permanent river
	Seasonal river