

To Explore Community Perception on Social Cohesion in Laikipia North Sub – County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This research explored community perception on social cohesion in Laikipia North Sub – County, Kenya. The study utilized relative deprivation theory. This study employed mixed methods approach due to its ability to provide complementary insights by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. The primary respondents for this study mainly comprised marginalized communities drawn from the Samburu, Turkana, Maasai, and Pokot living in Laikipia North Sub-County. The sample size for quantitative data was 388 respondents. For the key informants, the researcher purposively sampled 2 Chiefs, 2 Assistant Chiefs, 2 elders, and 3 Ward Administrators, totaling nine (9) participants. This brought respondents for the study to 397. The researcher used structured questionnaires and interview guide. The quantitative data presented in form of structured questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. In the qualitative data admitted through interviews, they were then examined in a thematic way using the transcribed data. The findings reveal that while many residents of Laikipia North Sub-County recognize the importance of inclusive development, equity, and security, a majority still believe economic growth can occur without social cohesion, reflecting persistent perceptions of inequality, exclusion, and weak participatory governance that, if unaddressed, risk undermining long-term stability and communal harmony. The research concluded that although community social cohesion concept has been understood by a majority of people in the Laikipia North Sub-County as peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and collective involvement of the ethnic communities including the Samburu, Turkana, Maasai, Pokot, among others, it does not necessarily equate to equal or similar perceptions and experiences at the local levels. The study recommended that policymakers and development stakeholders in Laikipia North Sub-County should strengthen the link between economic development and social cohesion by fostering inclusive and participatory approaches that engage all ethnic groups particularly the Samburu, Turkana, Maasai, and Pokot in joint decision-making and development initiatives.

Keywords: community perception, social cohesion, and Laikipia North Sub – County,

INTRODUCTION

Background Of the Study

Internationally economic disparities are widening becoming a defining challenge of the 21st century. The richest 1% now hold 50% of the world's wealth, reflecting a widening gap between the rich and poor (Iglesias et al., 2020), with the top 1% owning 43% of global financial assets (Oxfam, 2025). These disparities erode social cohesion by fostering resentment, weakening interpersonal trust and undermining the perceived fairness of institutions (Peters & Jetten, 2023).

Social cohesion, the degree of social integration, shared identity, trust and collaboration within a society has increasingly come under pressure in the face of rising economic inequality and marginalization. Income disparities have worsened, with two-thirds of countries experiencing increased inequality between 1990-2000 driven by neoliberal policies, technological change, weak tax governance, and corporate influence on politics (Coccia, 2018).

In Latin America, economic inequality undermines national cohesion, social stability and sustainable development (Ferranti et al., 2004; López & Perry, 2008). Similar studies highlighted in the recent research revealed that decline in social cohesion in Western Societies have been attributed also largely to increasing immigration and the resulting ethnic diversity. Putnam (2020) revisited earlier findings on the relationship between diversity and social trust, emphasizing that while diversity can initially challenge social bonds, inclusive policies and community engagement can mitigate these effects. Similarly, Vertovec. (2019) introduces the concept of “super – diversity”, highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of contemporary immigration patterns, which traditional models of social cohesion struggle to address.

In Africa, evidence reveals that studies reveal that where the society is not cohesive, a lot is likely to be lost through conflict leaving limited room for development. For example, Navarrete (2025), pointed out that implication of insecurity for sustainability are manifold; first substantial portion of government resources goes to strengthen security apparatus diverting funds meant for critical ministries such as education, health and environmental protection. The second point is that insecurity weakens the community network and erode social capital essential for cooperative resources management. In regions affected by structural violence, communities are less likely to participate in environmental projects, sustained collective action or public consultation processes.

Cattle banditry, once a traditional practice, has morphed into a major security challenge in Kenya, threatening social cohesion especially, in Baringo, Laikipia, Turkana, Isiolo and, Elgeyo Marakwet counties. Chairperson of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) outline that insecurity and banditry in regions like Meru, Isiolo, Samburu and Kerio Valley is one of the key factors affecting social cohesion in Kenya as the country reaches the midpoint of 2024 (KBC, 2024).

Laikipia County illustrates these challenges at a micro level. Despite its strategic location and ethnic diversity, Laikipia faces deep development disparities. In Laikipia North Sub- County, home to various pastoralist communities, persistent insecurity, food scarcity, inadequate infrastructure and historical neglect have weakened social trust and intergroup cooperation. In Laikipia North Sub – county to be specific low education level, insecurity, nomadic lifestyle, poor roads, limited electricity, climate induced drought and inadequate health facilities are some of the challenges causing marginalization (Ngeno, 2023). Ethnic tensions, low – intensity conflict and land disputes continue to hinder peace and community development (Kamais & Mosol, 2022).

Statement Of the Problem

The 2030 Agenda seeks to address concerns about fragmentation of societies and committed “to combat inequalities within and among countries; and to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies” (UNGA, 2021). Objective of this policy is in line with current developments, since social inequality and the perception that society is disintegrating has grown to be significant issues in many OECD nations and developing nations recently.

Despite article forty-three (43) of the Kenyan 2010 Constitution guaranteeing every citizen economic and social rights, marginalized communities in Laikipia North Sub – County continue to face challenges which include high poverty, limited access to health care and sanitation, limited or no access to clean water and low level of literacy. (NGEC, 2021). Similar findings by Ngeno. (2023) revealed same findings, which undermines the intended inclusivity, sustainable development and equity championed through advocacy especially from civil society and marginalized groups (Njiru, 2020).

The Constitution established a devolved system of governance to promote equitable resource distribution and created the Equalisation Fund to uplift marginalized regions. Various ministries and county governments tasked with implementing policies to realize these rights, and courts are in place as avenues for enforcement when denied rights (Kahakula, 2015). Despite these efforts, Laikipia North remains on the periphery, characterized by economic underdevelopment and a lack of proper coordination and cooperation among community members and the devolved government (Mwangi, 2021). The persistence of pastoralism has not significantly transformed the Sub-County, meaning that much still needs to be done to liberate the region from

economic hardships that hinder social cohesion (Nene, 2022). It is on this basis that the study aimed to explore community perception on social cohesion in Laikipia North Sub – County, Kenya.

General Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to explore community perception on social cohesion in Laikipia North Sub – County, Kenya.

Specific Objectives

To explore community perception on social cohesion in Laikipia North Sub – County, Kenya.

Research Questions

How do communities perceive social cohesion in Laikipia North Sub – County?

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation Theory was first introduced by Samuel Stouffer in 1949 and later expanded by Garry Runciman and Ted Gurr in 1970. According to this perspective, extreme poverty may lead to indifference and apathy, while comparisons with more affluent members of the same society can trigger radical behavior, including violence (Pettigrew, 2015). Relative deprivation can manifest in political, cultural, or socioeconomic spheres. For instance, when individuals observe other regions enjoying economic progress, it highlights their own disadvantaged situation, a phenomenon referred to as relative economic deprivation. Similarly, when individuals or groups are denied equal opportunities to participate in governance such as being excluded from high-level government appointments or when political elites from certain towns or regions are overlooked political relative deprivation arises. Relative deprivation theory helps explain how uneven economic development and political exclusion among marginalized communities in Kenya fuel feelings of inequality, which in turn weaken social cohesion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Literature Review

The 2030 Agenda commits to address the issues of societies becoming more fragmented, “to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies” (UNGA, 2021, p.3). This policy goal is in line with current trends, as social inequality and the fear of social disintegration have grown to be significant issues in many emerging and OECD nations in recent years.

Politicians have not only emphasized the value of social ties and cohesiveness in global public debate, but social cohesion has been specifically mentioned in policy agendas, such as in the 2018 European union council, which Bulgaria presided over. Depending on the national context, the cohesiveness of society is being challenged to varying degrees by growing social cohesion and societal cleavages along ethnic, religious, and class lines. Both have the potential to cause societal instability and an increase in protests (Sommer, 2020).

Future pressures on social cohesion will come from significant changes in societal structure brought on by economic structural changes, shifting age distributions in societies, rural-to-urban migration, and growing income and resource distribution inequality. This occurs in both developed and developing countries (Sommer, 2020). The recent research has highlighted the decline in social cohesion in Western societies, largely attributed to increasing immigration and the resulting ethnic diversity. Putnam (2020) revisited earlier findings on the relationship between diversity and social trust, emphasising that while diversity can initially challenge social bonds, inclusive policies and community engagement can mitigate these effects. Similarly, Vertovec. (2023) introduces the concept of “super – diversity”, highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of contemporary immigration patterns, which traditional models of social cohesion struggle to address.

Political responses to these challenges have become increasingly prominent in countries such as the UK, Germany and France where agenda aimed at reinforcing social cohesion have gained traction. Kymlicka and Banting. (2022) argue that multiculturalism, when paired with inclusive political frameworks can strengthen social cohesion by promoting recognition and equality among diverse groups. In liberal models the UK and US, the primary threat to cohesion stems from reduced social mobility rather than cultural diversity. These concerns have prompted systematic investigations into social cohesion, its theoretical foundations and measurement methods (Dragolov et. al., 2020).

International communities, states and other stakeholders around the world have taken up measures to strengthen and protecting social cohesion. The goal of social cohesion has grown in importance placing it high on their agendas. For example, Development Programme of the United Nations developed a social cohesion framing for programming and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) have made social cohesion a key topic for future development policy (UNDP, 2020). People's active participation in-group and political decision-making is key for balanced growth minding both the outcome and procedures. Citizens when always feel respected when they participate in the decisions that affects their lives (Global Solution Initiative, 2025).

The implementation of the approach of the globalization is lacking legitimacy, this is according to current trends Critics view it as having taken - over by large businesses and financial organizations and plagued by a lack of accountability and transparency to the public. Ant-establishment protests are a reflection of the general belief that avaricious and self-centred elites have violated the social compact by fostering an environment where many choices made without enough responsibility or consultation with the impacted populace. For instance, studies conducted among the impoverished communities showed that, despite the seeming primacy of economic hardship, these group's top concerns are not only their financial circumstances but also their participation, respect and dignity (ATD Fourth World, 2021).

Canada's multicultural inclusion and community partnerships have seen adoption and implementation of inclusive laws and policies that allow immigrants join in political, communal, financial and traditional life through whole of society approach which emphasizes mutual community engagement and adaptation to build sense of belonging and trust (Zhuang, 2023). Similar studies in Colombia with the help of UNDP policies implemented witnessing immigrant's access finances; markets and setting up businesses also marginalized groups including women and indigenous population targeted to foster economic and social integration (Graham et.al, 2020).

Rwanda adopted citizen centred governance strategies after the aftermath of 1994 – 1999 genocide allowing public to participate in implementation, evaluation of policies and programs meant for social and economic development. The research findings indicates that elected leaders consults people on key policy issues affecting them demonstrating the value of citizen participation as an important tool for governance (Never Again Rwanda & Interpeace, 2023). In addition, Women's participation in running of government affairs in elective positions have led to more inclusive and cohesive society in Rwanda. Another good example is how budget-making process is undertaken in Ghana where citizen channel their view either in person, meeting or through provided email demonstrating the importance of engaging citizen in decision making. (Emmanuel. & Tarisai, 2022).

Kenya have made strides in promoting inclusive participation on matters touching the common citizen with challenges noted non-inclusion of their views whenever made. This is possible due to the legal framework embedded in Kenya's constitution and the national County Government Act (CGA). Some of the notable initiatives include, county level structures where citizens are involved in decision making at grassroots levels. Makueni and Isiolo Counties made significant strides by actively involving community members and key stakeholders in development planning and governance in sectors such as education, health and finance (Saferworld, 2023).

The Community Led Development (CLD) being a global led initiatives have been adopted in most counties in Kenya to enhance compliance of article 10 (2) of the constitution which provide for citizen participation, which is not yet fully realized. The initiative is key as it evidence based through documentation and sharing

best practices (Ogotu, 2021). Inclusive participation efforts in Laikipia County through peacebuilding initiatives, integrated development planning (smart towns) and community engagements. Additionally transition to community land tenure from group ranches was possible through community engagement leading to communal ownership and resource management reducing tensions related to land insecurity (Mutembei, 2025).

The research on equity and social cohesion in Africa has highlighted the complex interplay between social cohesion, development and ethnicity (Berman & Takahashi, 2023). In South Africa adopted redistributive policies to address socioeconomic inequalities in land ownership, minimum wage and business investment, which undermine social cohesion (Khambule & Siswana, 2021). A case study in Stellenbosch proves how a well – intentioned football development project inadvertently aggravated social division between African and coloured communities, reviving apartheid – era stereotypes and hampering social cohesion efforts (Cubizolles, 2021). These studies underscore the significance of prudently considering the allocation and implementation of development initiatives to avoid unintended concerns that may further fragment society along ethnic or racial lines.

Recent research on equity and social cohesion in Ethiopia highlights significant challenges in social justice, higher education and infrastructure distribution. Studies indicates that social injustice and infrastructure inequity stem from a lack of democratic decision making and accountability leading to low social cohesion and potential conflicts (Ambaw & Nguissie, 2022). For social cohesion to prevail and avoid conflict due to social injustice and inequity the findings underscore the need for transparency in equitable distribution of development.

Disparities exist in access to quality education in Kenya especially in marginalized communities occasioned by factors such as economic barriers, gender disparities, regional inequalities and resource constraints (Mwangi, 2024). Education sector report – FY 2024/25 – 2026/27; also highlighted similar challenges such as inadequate learning infrastructure, inadequate human capital, cyber bullying , inadequate funding for research and mental health and wellness. The report recommends integration of safety, health and wellness issues in the sector and progressive funding¹ increase to research from the current 0.8% to 2% of GDP.

Marginalized communities continue to face challenges resulting them to be of low socio- economic standing because of historical injustices and the unfavourable environment. The challenges include high poverty, limited access to health care and sanitation, limited or no access to clean water and low level of literacy. (NGEC, 2021).In Laikipia North Sub – county to be specific low education level, insecurity, nomadic lifestyle, poor roads, limited electricity, climate induced drought and inadequate health facilities are some of the challenges causing marginalization (Ngeno, 2023). One of the challenges facing marginalized communities is lack of peace due to banditry that is associated with culture; however, today has been commercial due to high demand of meat from the market. It has resulted to loss of lives, property and loss of many opportunities for development to occur. The overarching impact is communities becoming fragmented resulting to absence of social cohesion.

Sweet et al. (2021) on their research on peace perception among marginalized communities indicates complex dynamics. Economic well – being perception influence conflict onset and resolution, which perceived deprivation among marginalized groups associated with earlier delayed peace and war onset. In Nigeria for instance, land and water disputes between herders and farmers occasions large scale conflict which is also amplified by inter- ethnic, inter – religious rivalries as well as political narratives (Adigun, 2022). In North rural Nigeria, diminished user rights and reduced access to land for pastoralist affected pastoral economy triggering social instability exacerbated by acquisition of large tracks of land by political elites. Karamojong of Uganda and Turkana of Kenya attributed cattle rustling to lack of political will by both government to offer security. Failure of government to provide protection, redress and justice leads to self – defense and revenge becoming habitual and everyday peace id lost (Conciliation Resource, 2024).

Study by Elder et al. (2024) revealed that individuals displaced in Germany and Kenya perceives peace across collective, individual and structural dimensions, shaped by intersectional features such as religion, family and gender. Many lives have been lost and scores injured in Baringo South due to banditry incidents which

negatively affects the average income levels of local through its outstanding effects on aspects such as, displacements, disruption of businesses, scaring of investors and poverty. In addition, schools closure due to learners and teachers fearing attacks (Chemase. & Muhindi, 2024).

In Laikipia County sources of conflict emanates from wildlife and banditry and during security tour by the Deputy President of Kenya Professor Kithure Kindiki intimated that “security in Laikipia has improved significantly because of raft of measures implemented by the government when we took over in 2022. Most areas are enjoying peace courtesy of the interventions, which will be intensified in other unstable parts”. He promise more reservist and tarmacking of Nanyuki – Doldol highway a critical project that will ensure quick response during security operations (The Eastleigh Voice, 2025).

It is therefore prudent that the government prioritize security and safety of all as enshrined in the UDHR and working closely with locals through their established institution of elders to realize sustainable peace. Key also is to offer leadership solution on the root causes of the conflict

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables

COMMUNITY PERCEPTION ON SOCIAL COHESION

- Inclusive participation
- Conflict
- Equity



Dependent Variable

SOCIAL COHESION.

- Participation
- Equity
- Peace

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed mixed methods approach due to its ability to provide complementary insights by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. An explanatory sequential research design employed to investigate economic development and social cohesion among marginalized communities in Laikipia North Sub-County.

Target Population

The primary respondents for this study mainly comprised marginalized communities drawn from the Samburu, Turkana, Maasai, and Pokot living in Laikipia North Sub-County. These groups shared commonalities, particularly in their economic activities such as livestock keeping and subsistence farming (County Government of Laikipia, 2018). The study also engaged key informants, including chiefs, assistant chiefs, elders, Sub-County ward administrators, and religious leaders, as they possessed valuable knowledge and played a crucial role in facilitating access to the primary population.

Sampling Design

The sample size for the target population consisted of adults aged between 20 and 100 years and was derived using Yamane's (1967) formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{K + N(e)^2}$$

Of which:

e= is the margin error (+/-0.05).

N = Target Population

n= Sample size

K= Constant (1)

Therefore, $n = N / (K + N(e)^2)$

$n = 13,613 / (1 + 13,613(0.05)^2)$

$n = 13,613 / (1 + 13,613(0.0025))$

$n = 13,613 / 1 + 34$

The sample size for quantitative data was 388 respondents. For the key informants, the researcher purposively sampled 2 Chiefs, 2 Assistant Chiefs, 2 elders, and 3 Ward Administrators, totaling nine (9) participants. This brought respondents for the study to 397.

Data Collection

The researcher used structured questionnaires to gather the quantitative data, and they contained both closed and open questions (Creswell, 2018). These questions addressed much including economical programs among the community, issues which affected communities in regards to social cohesion, interrelation of economic development and social cohesion among other aspects.

To enrich and fill the gaps in the data acquired by questionnaire, the researcher interviewed some key informants.

Data Analysis and Presentation

To get a clear picture of research findings, the researcher utilized both quantitative and qualitative research methods to interpret the data, which is regarded as an optimum method in mixed methods of research (Creswell & Plano, 2016).

The quantitative data presented in form of structured questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. This software aided in the clarification, coding and numerical analysis of the data so that the researcher could carry out descriptive and exhaustive statistics to draw out trends, correlations and patterns in the data (Creswell, 2016).

In the qualitative data admitted through interviews they were then examined in a thematic way using the transcribed data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response Rate

No. of respondents	No. of questionnaires Returned	Response Rate (%)
388	311	80

The researcher distributed 388 questionnaires to the respondents, out of which 311 received from the field and accepted as correctly filled, translating to an 80% response rate. This response rate was acceptable for this

study.

Community perception on social cohesion.

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on community perception on social cohesion in Laikipia North Sub – County, Kenya.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly disagree	Not sure
Frequency (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
In your view, would you agree that economic development can occur in absence of social cohesion	109 35%	117 37%	30 10%	25 8%	23 7%	7 2%
Do you agree that inclusive economic development promotes equity (fairness) and trust within the communities	100 32%	101 32%	21 7%	37 12%	43 14%	9 3%
Do agree that participating in community economic development forums reduce inequalities	110 35%	84 27%	35 11%	33 10%	40 13%	9 3%
Wider gap exist between the rich and the poor	99 32%	96 31%	50 16%	26 8%	34 11%	6 2%
Low-income group receive adequate support from the County government	106 34%	98 31%	44 14%	29 9%	30 10%	4 1%
My security protection is guaranteed	102 33%	83 27%	42 13%	32 10%	36 10%	16 5%
I am involved in participation of socio- economic development in my areas	99 32%	81 26%	28 9%	32 10%	53 17%	18 6%

The findings show that the majority of respondents in Laikipia North Sub-County believe economic development can proceed without social cohesion, with 72% (35% strongly agree, 37% agree) holding this view, while only 17% (10% disagree, 7% strongly disagree) consider social cohesion essential to development, and 10% remain neutral or unsure. This suggests that many residents may prioritize material progress over communal harmony or may not fully understand the interconnectedness of social stability and economic growth. On the role of inclusive economic development in promoting equity and trust, 64% (32% strongly agree, 32% agree) believe it fosters fairness, though 21% disagreed and 15% were neutral or unsure, indicating the need to improve transparency and perceived inclusivity in development processes. Similarly, 62% (35% strongly agree, 27% agree) felt that participation in economic forums helps reduce inequalities, but 24% disagreed and 13% remained uncertain implying that these forums may not be reaching or empowering all community segments equally. Notably, 63% (32% strongly agree, 31% agree) acknowledged a wide gap between the rich and poor, a perception that underscores underlying socio-economic inequality that could threaten social cohesion if left unaddressed. When asked about support for low-income groups, 65% (34% strongly agree, 31% agree) felt the County government provides adequate support, though 24% disagreed and 10% were unsure, suggesting that while social protection programs exist, their impact may be unevenly felt or communicated. Regarding security, 60% (33% strongly agree, 27% agree) believe their protection is guaranteed, while 23% feel insecure and 15% were uncertain, reflecting a potential lack of consistent safety or

confidence in local enforcement. Lastly, 58% (32% strongly agree, 26% agree) reported involvement in socio-economic development, yet 26% (9% disagree, 17% strongly disagree) felt excluded, and 16% were unsure indicating gaps in participatory governance or information dissemination.

These findings imply that while there is a generally positive perception of community cohesion and development in Laikipia North, significant portions of the population still feel excluded, unsupported, or disconnected from communal initiatives. The belief that economic development can occur independently of social cohesion poses a risk to long-term stability, as it may undermine efforts toward inclusive governance and peaceful coexistence. The perception of inequality and exclusion, if not addressed, could erode trust and escalate ethnic or class tensions, particularly among marginalized groups like the Turkana, Samburu, Pokot, and Maasai. Policymakers and development stakeholders must therefore strengthen inclusive practices, enhance equitable access to development forums, and ensure that social protection and security measures visibly and equitably distributed to sustain both economic growth and social harmony in the region. These findings align with the conclusions of Sommer (2019), noting that the increasing societal divisions due to disparities in income, ethnic fragmentation, and unequal resource accessibility are posing a terrible advantage to social equilibrium and they may trigger social unhappiness or instability. The fact that 63 percent of the respondents feel that there is a huge gap between the rich and the poor in Laikipia North supports the statement that inequality questions cohesiveness in society, especially in a multicultural state context. The persistence of the view by 72 percent of the respondents that economic development is still feasible without social cohesion also coincided with the findings by Ambaw and Nguissie (2022), who indicated that in Ethiopia, there is a general lack of social cohesion in the country due to poor distribution of infrastructures and democracy in decision making.. This highlights the critical need to balance material progress with inclusive social structures. Finally, the finding is supported by Ogutu (2021), who noted that although community-led development has been adopted in many Kenyan counties, full realization of citizen participation as envisioned in Article 10 of the Constitution remains inconsistent, leading to feelings of exclusion and fragmented communities. The findings were supported by key informants who stated that: Community's perception of social cohesion varies across regions and ethnic groupings. In areas where communities have benefited equally from development projects and service delivery, social cohesion viewed positively people coexist peacefully, intermarry, and engage in joint economic activities. However, in areas prone to resource-based conflicts, historical mistrust, and marginalization, social cohesion is fragile. The first, third and the fifth informants noted that inter-ethnic relations have improved, especially where peacebuilding forums and cultural exchange events held. The second, fourth and the sixth informants expressed concerns that tensions still exist, often inflamed by competition over land, water, and political favoritism. Specifically, the Chiefs and elders mentioned that younger generations appear more willing to embrace coexistence, while older generations are more cautious due to past grievances.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Conclusion

The research concluded that although community social cohesion concept has been understood by a majority of people in the Laikipia North Sub-County as peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and collective involvement of the ethnic communities including the Samburu, Turkana, Maasai, Pokot, among others, it does not necessarily equate to equal or similar perceptions and experiences at the local levels. Even though, most of the respondents positively addressed the role of inclusive economic development in promoting equity and trust, most of them were left with the perception that economic progress could happen regardless of social cohesion and this is the disconnect that could jeopardize the continuity. The data also informed that issues of inequality were a matter of concern because large proportions of the population felt that there was a vast disparity between the rich and poor, non-consistent support of the low-income populations, and unequal access to the development discussion forums. There was also mixed views on security and participation in socio-economic endeavors; a significant number reported that they feel alienated, or lack that are not clear on the engagements. These findings highlight the need for enhanced inclusive governance, equitable service delivery, and deliberate efforts to bridge ethnic and socio-economic divides to ensure that both economic development and social harmony sustained in the region.

Recommendations

The study recommended that policymakers and development stakeholders in Laikipia North Sub-County should strengthen the link between economic development and social cohesion by fostering inclusive and participatory approaches that engage all ethnic groups particularly the Samburu, Turkana, Maasai, and Pokot in joint decision-making and development initiatives. Make efforts to promote peaceful coexistence through culturally sensitive programs that encourage intergroup collaboration, shared values, and conflict resolution without violence. Additionally, address the belief economic development can occur in the absence of social cohesion through community sensitization and civic education to emphasize the interdependence between social stability and sustainable growth. Introduce development forums should be more accessible and representative to ensure equitable participation, and targeted interventions to reduce the perceived inequalities and marginalization, especially among low-income groups. Furthermore, security protection measures should be improved and communicated effectively to enhance public confidence. While social protection programs be equitably distributed to ensure all communities feel supported and included in the county's development agenda

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