

# Impact of Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments on National Unity and Peacebuilding in a Multiethnic Societies of Nakuru County in Kenya

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90700056>

Received: 20 June 2025; Accepted: 01 July 2025; Published: 29 July 2025

## ABSTRACT

The impact of ethnic balance in public political appointments on national unity and peacebuilding in multiethnic Kenya. It focused on how inclusive governance contributes to social harmony, reduces ethnic tensions, and strengthens public trust in government institutions, particularly within the counties of Nakuru and Trans Nzoia. A descriptive research design was adopted, employing a mixed methods approach to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The target population included 4,000 stakeholders such as public officials, community leaders, civil society actors, and ethnic advocacy representatives. A sample size of 351 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, with participants selected through cluster and simple random sampling. An additional 30 individuals were purposively selected for key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression. Qualitative data were gathered via key informant interviews and FGDs, then analyzed thematically to extract in-depth narratives and contextual insights. The findings revealed that ethnic balance in public political appointments plays a vital role in promoting national unity by enhancing inclusivity, reducing feelings of marginalization, and fostering fairness among ethnic groups. Respondents reported that equitable representation strengthens trust in public institutions and facilitates cross-ethnic collaboration and dialogue, which are essential for peacebuilding. However, challenges such as politicization, ethnic patronage, and tokenism were identified as obstacles to achieving meaningful ethnic inclusivity. These issues sometimes led to perceptions of exclusion and undermined the legitimacy of public appointments. The study recommends institutional reforms and the implementation of transparent policies that ensure both ethnic balance and merit-based appointments. It also advocates for sustained community engagement to build public trust and foster a collective vision of unity beyond ethnic identities. Such measures are essential to enhance the peacebuilding potential of public appointments and support national cohesion in Kenya's multiethnic society.

**Key words:** Conflict resolution, Equitable representation, Ethnic balance, Ethnic patronage, Inclusive governance, Inter-ethnic relations, Multiethnic societies, National unity, Peacebuilding, Political expediency, public appointments, Tokenism.

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In an increasingly interconnected world, national unity and peacebuilding remain foundational pillars for sustainable development, especially in multiethnic societies (Odu, 2024). The existence of diverse ethnic identities within a single nation-state can be both a strength and a challenge (Green, 2020). While diversity offers rich cultural, social, and economic potential, it also creates grounds for division when poorly managed (Condorelli, 2018). Ethnic competition for power, resources, and recognition has historically been a major trigger for conflict, social exclusion, and political instability (Baker, 2024). As a result, the pursuit of national unity and peacebuilding in multiethnic states is not just a political ideal but a necessary condition for cohesive nationhood and long-term stability (Gjeta, 2019). Globally, numerous multiethnic nations have struggled to balance diversity with unity. In Yugoslavia, ethnic nationalism tore apart the nation in the 1990s, resulting in

violent conflicts and eventual fragmentation (Filic, 2018). Sri Lanka experienced decades of civil war largely fueled by ethnic tensions between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority, despite post-war efforts to promote reconciliation (Keethaponcalan, 2019). Myanmar remains embroiled in interethnic and religious tensions, with the Rohingya crisis being a stark example of how ethnic divisions can escalate into humanitarian disasters (Ahmed et al., 2021).

The African continent has also faced its share of challenges regarding national unity in multiethnic societies. In Nigeria, persistent ethno-religious conflicts, notably in the Middle Belt and the Niger Delta, continue to undermine peace and development (Longba'am-Alli, 2022). South Sudan, the world's youngest nation, has witnessed brutal internal conflicts often along ethnic lines, raising questions about the nation-building process (Mathelemusa, 2021). In Ethiopia, ethnic federalism has been both a solution and a source of tension, as witnessed in recent violent clashes among various ethnic groups (Birhan & Christopher, 2024). In Kenya, the journey towards national unity has been complex and turbulent. The 2007/2008 post-election violence, largely along ethnic lines, revealed deep-rooted divisions and mistrust among communities (Tartarini, 2015).

Despite interventions such as the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC), unity remains fragile (Juma, 2022). The Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) attempted to address some of these issues, but its legal and political setbacks demonstrated the limitations of elite-driven solutions (Owuoche, 2021). Furthermore, in regions like, Mt. Elgon, and parts of Trans Nzoia, recurring ethnic clashes and land-related disputes reflect ongoing challenges in building a united national identity (Mukoya, 2015). Given the repeated failures and partial successes of past efforts, there is a compelling need for a new study that examines the current status of national unity and peacebuilding in multiethnic societies, particularly in Kenya. This new study seeks to assess the Impact of Ethnic Balance in Public Appointments on National Unity and Peacebuilding in a Multiethnic society. A Case Study of Trans Nzoia County, Kenya.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Peace and national unity are the cornerstones of a stable, democratic, and multiethnic society. In such a context, public political appointments should be guided by the principles of ethnic inclusivity, fairness, and meritocracy to foster cohesion and sustainable peacebuilding. Ethnic balance in public service is expected to serve as a mechanism for equitable representation, alleviation of historical grievances, and the cultivation of a shared national identity. However, in reality, public political appointments in many multiethnic states, including Kenya, remain disproportionately skewed toward dominant ethnic groups, leading to the systematic marginalization of minority communities. This persistent imbalance fuels feelings of exclusion, deepens mistrust in public institutions, and hampers efforts toward national reconciliation and peace.

Despite the existence of constitutional provisions, national integration policies, affirmative action measures, and ethnic monitoring mechanisms, the translation of these frameworks into practice remains weak. Political interference, lack of accountability, and insufficient enforcement have rendered many of these initiatives ineffective, allowing ethnic favoritism and clientelism to persist unchecked. As a result, public discontent resurfaces, particularly during election cycles, heightening ethnic tensions and destabilizing peacebuilding progress. These recurring patterns signal a critical disconnect between policy intentions and the lived realities of governance in multiethnic contexts. There is, therefore, an urgent need for a focused empirical inquiry into how ethnic balance in public political appointments influences national unity and peacebuilding a multiethnic Kenya.

## **Objective of the study**

The objective of the study is to assess the impact of ethnic balance in public political appointments on national unity and peacebuilding in a multiethnic Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Review

The study is anchored on Consociational Theory propounded by Arend Lijphart (1969). According to Lijphart (1969), Consociational Theory explains how stability and peace can be maintained in deeply divided societies by ensuring power-sharing among different social groups, especially ethnic groups. The theory posits that in plural societies, governance is most effective when there is cooperation between elites from all major segments, achieved through mechanisms such as grand coalitions, mutual vetoes, proportionality in political representation, and segmental autonomy. Consociational Theory suggests that ethnic balance in public appointments can foster national unity by giving all significant ethnic groups a stake in governance. This inclusive approach reduces feelings of marginalization and conflict, promoting peacebuilding by managing ethnic diversity through power-sharing rather than exclusion or domination by a single group. Applying this theory to Kenya's multiethnic context explains how equitable public appointments can contribute to lasting national cohesion and stability, although challenges may arise if groups perceive imbalances or unfair treatment.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationship between ethnic balance in public appointments and its effects on national unity and peacebuilding in Kenya's multiethnic context. The framework suggests that ensuring ethnic inclusivity and fairness in political appointments to public offices can foster trust in government institutions, reduce ethnic grievances, and enhance both national cohesion and peacebuilding efforts.

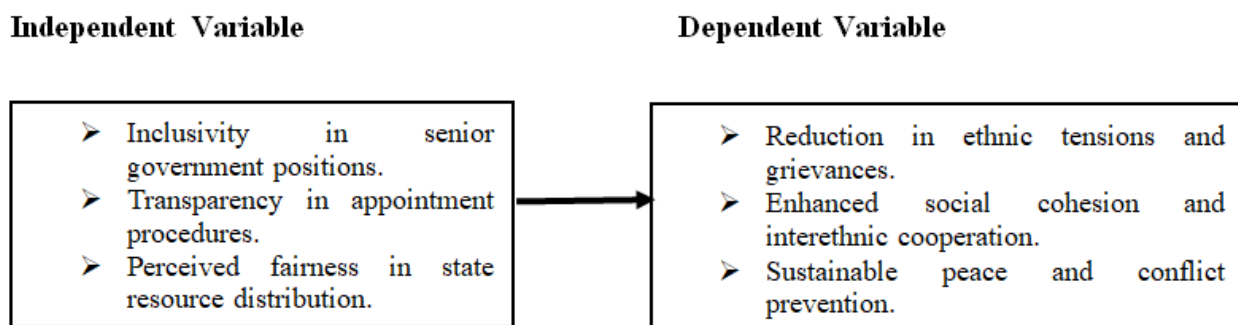


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.

### Empirical Review

Ethnic balance in public political appointments has been widely studied as a mechanism for promoting national unity and peacebuilding, particularly in ethnically diverse societies (Cox & Sisk, 2017). In multiethnic nations, state appointments often reflect broader political struggles, and imbalances can deepen mistrust, fuel marginalization, and trigger conflict (Malik, 2019). Conversely, deliberate inclusion of diverse ethnic groups in state institutions fosters a sense of belonging, equitable representation, and shared national identity (Moleka, 2024). Empirical evidence from around the world underscores how inclusive public administration systems contribute to post-conflict recovery, state legitimacy, and sustainable peace (Reddy, 2024). Mochtak and Muharemović (2024) examine two decades of parliamentary debates in Bosnia and Herzegovina, revealing how persistent ethnic divisions have dominated political discourse and hindered national cohesion. Their analysis shows that political elites repeatedly use wartime narratives to reinforce ethnic identities and rivalries, limiting constructive dialogue and reconciliation.

Additionally, Kadirgamar (2020) examines how deep-rooted political polarization and ethnonationalism in Sri Lanka have sustained a pattern of majoritarian dominance even after the end of its civil war. The study highlights that despite post-war hopes for reconciliation, Sinhala Buddhist nationalism continues to marginalize minority groups—especially Tamils and Muslims—thereby reinforcing exclusionary politics and

undermining democratic pluralism. This persistent majoritarianism, fuels instability and hinders genuine peacebuilding. In the state of Myanmar, Debnath (2024) examines how Myanmar's deep-rooted ethnic divisions have fueled the rise and persistence of armed insurgent groups across the country. The study highlights that long-standing political marginalization, cultural exclusion, and economic disparities among ethnic minorities—particularly in border regions—have driven these groups to resist central authority through armed struggle. It emphasizes that the failure of successive governments to build inclusive governance and address ethnic grievances has sustained conflict and instability in Myanmar.

Africa continues to experience persistent conflicts driven by a mix of ethnic tensions, political instability, resource competition, and weak governance structures, with regions like the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and parts of Central Africa being particularly affected. A study by Berebon (2024) examines the roots and ongoing impact of identity conflicts in Nigeria, tracing their origins to colonial-era policies that exacerbated ethnic and religious divisions. The study highlights how these historical legacies continue to fuel tensions and violent clashes in the present day, particularly through competition over political power, resource allocation, and regional autonomy. Berebon argues that unresolved grievances and weak national integration mechanisms have perpetuated cycles of mistrust and instability, calling for inclusive governance, historical reconciliation, and equitable development as paths toward lasting peace. Further, Kulang (2021) examines the persistent ethnic conflicts in South Sudan and how they have undermined the process of building a stable and unified state. The study finds that deep-rooted ethnic divisions, political exclusion, and competition over power and resources have fueled violent clashes, weakening national identity and governance structures. It concludes that without inclusive political dialogue, equitable resource distribution, and reconciliation efforts, statehood in South Sudan will remain fragile and contested.

Kenya's periodic conflicts driven by ethnic tensions, competition over land and resources, political rivalries, and historical injustices, often intensified during election periods and in regions with weak governance and marginalization. Mati (2019) examines how ethnicity continues to shape Kenya's political landscape, highlighting those ethnic identities are often mobilized by political elites to gain and maintain power. The chapter explains that political competition in Kenya is frequently organized along ethnic lines, which fuels exclusion, patronage, and tensions among communities. Mati argues that while ethnicity plays a central role in shaping political behavior and alliances, it also undermines national cohesion and deepens societal divisions, making democratic consolidation and equitable governance more challenging. Again, a study by Bedasso (2015) finds that Kenya's political stability is heavily influenced by ethnic divisions and intra-elite competition, where political elites mobilize ethnic identities to secure power and resources.

The study argues that while ethnicity plays a key role in shaping political alliances, it is the fragmentation and competition among elites within ethnic groups that often trigger instability. By highlighting how intra-elite differentiation affects the broader political landscape, the study underscores the need for inclusive governance and institutional reforms to mitigate ethnic tensions and promote national cohesion. While most studies in Kenya focus on national-level appointments or post-conflict transitions, yet little empirical work has been done to evaluate the long-term effects of ethnic balance policies on community perceptions of inclusion and peacebuilding in multiethnic counties. Furthermore, there is a need for disaggregated data on how ethnic balance in political appointments affects trust in government institutions at the grassroots level, especially in historically marginalized regions. This study intended to fill this gap by examining how ethnic balancing in public appointments influences national unity and peacebuilding efforts in a multiethnic Kenya.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design to explore the impact of ethnic balance in public political appointments on national unity and peacebuilding in a multiethnic Kenya. The target population consisted of 4000 stakeholders, including public officials, community leaders, civil society actors, and representatives from ethnic advocacy organizations across two ethnically diverse counties of Nakuru and Trans Nzoia, counties in Kenya. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, a sample size of 351 respondents was selected by the help of cluster sampling and simple random sampling. 30 individuals were identified purposively for participation in key informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). A mixed methods approach was employed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was



collected through structured questionnaires administered to the sampled respondents, while qualitative data was obtained through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with selected government officials, peacebuilding practitioners, and ethnic group representatives. Participants for the interviews were identified using purposive sampling to ensure representation from all key groups. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages. Additionally, correlation and regression analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between ethnic balance in public political appointments and indicators of national unity and peace. Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis and presented narratively to capture diverse perspectives and contextual insights. The influence of ethnic balance in public political appointments on national unity and peacebuilding was further assessed using a simple linear regression model expressed as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- Y represents national unity and peacebuilding outcomes,
- X denotes ethnic balance in public appointments, and
- $\varepsilon$  is the error term, assumed to be normally distributed with a mean of zero.

In this model, Y represents the dependent variable, which is the level of national unity and peacebuilding outcomes, while X denotes the independent variable, specifically the extent of ethnic balance in public appointments;  $\varepsilon$  represents the stochastic or error term, which captures all other unobserved factors that might influence national unity and peacebuilding, and is assumed to follow a normal distribution with a mean of zero. The formulation of this model was instrumental in quantifying and analyzing the influence of ethnic balance in public political appointments on the broader goals of promoting national cohesion and peace within a diverse, multiethnic society such as Kenya.

By establishing a linear or causal relationship between the fairness and inclusivity of ethnic representation in public positions and the resultant societal harmony or discord, the model allowed for a systematic examination of how perceptions and realities of ethnic inclusivity either strengthen or undermine efforts aimed at fostering peaceful coexistence, trust in public institutions, and a shared sense of national identity. This was particularly critical in the Kenyan context, where ethnic affiliations often play a central role in political processes, resource allocation, and governance, thus making the pursuit of ethnic equity in appointments a potentially powerful mechanism for conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding.

## DISCUSSION OF STUDY FINDINGS

### Response Rate

The study targeted 351 participants drawn from various stakeholders involved in public service, civil society, and community leadership across Kenya, to respond to questionnaires. Additionally, 30 individuals were identified for participation in key informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Out of the total number, 273 respondents returned duly completed questionnaires, representing a response rate of 78%. Meanwhile, 26 individuals took part in the interviews and FGDs, resulting in an 87% response rate. These rates were considered adequate for analysis based on Mugenda and Mugenda's (2003) assertion that a response rate of at least 50% is acceptable for drawing meaningful conclusions. The objective of the study was to examine the influence of ethnic balance in public political appointments on national unity and peacebuilding in Kenya. This section presents the findings related to this objective, including descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis, and results from univariate regression models to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between ethnic inclusivity in public appointments and indicators of unity and peace among communities.

## Descriptive Statistics on Perceptions of Ethnic Balance and Public political Appointments

This section presents descriptive statistics on respondents' perceptions of the influence of ethnic balance in public political appointments on national unity and peacebuilding in a multiethnic Kenya. The analysis utilizes both measures of central tendency—specifically the mean and standard deviation—and a frequency distribution of responses derived from a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”, as well as thematic analysis. The aim was to gauge the extent to which the ethnic composition of public offices is viewed as either promoting or undermining national cohesion and peaceful coexistence among Kenya's diverse communities.

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with several key statements related to fairness, representation, marginalization, and inclusivity in public appointments. The results provide insights into prevailing attitudes, revealing not only general trends but also the intensity of opinions across the sampled population. The summarized findings, as presented in Table 1, highlight patterns that are critical for understanding the social and political implications of ethnic representation in governance.

Table 1: Perception of Respondents on Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments.

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ethnic balance is not considered in most public political appointments	11.7	17.6	5.1	32.6	33.0	3.5751	1.40209
There is no transparency in the ethnic composition of public political appointees	13.9	20.1	4.4	28.2	33.3	3.4689	1.47028
Public political appointments are rarely inclusive of minority ethnic groups	11.7	17.2	7.7	29.7	33.7	3.5641	1.40525
The appointment process ignores the principle of ethnic equity	11.0	16.5	4.4	32.2	35.9	3.6557	1.39278
Public appointments are dominated by individuals from a few ethnic communities	12.5	17.9	5.5	30.0	34.1	3.5531	1.42906
Ethnic favoritism is common in political appointment decisions	12.8	16.8	4.0	30.8	35.5	3.5934	1.43725
Merit is often compromised due to ethnic bias in appointments	13.2	18.7	5.5	29.3	33.3	3.5092	1.44536
Public political appointments reflect deep-rooted ethnic discrimination	9.2	16.8	4.8	33.3	35.9	3.6996	1.34952
There are no effective mechanisms to ensure ethnic balance in appointments	12.5	18.3	4.8	30.4	34.1	3.5531	1.43163
The government does not prioritize ethnic diversity in its political appointments	12.5	17.9	5.5	30.0	34.1	3.5531	1.42906

**Key: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree**

The perception of respondents on ethnic balance in public political appointments reveals considerable dissatisfaction with how ethnic representation is managed. A combined 65.6% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ethnic balance is not considered in most public political appointments, with a mean score of 3.58. Qualitative findings reinforce this view. In one key informant interview (KII-04, 2025), a county

official reported that “*you will often find that one community dominates every major office—it’s like others don’t exist.*” This sentiment mirrors widespread concern that ethnic dominance has become normalized, sidelining the principles of inclusivity and equitable representation.

Similarly, 61.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there is no transparency in the ethnic composition of public political appointees (mean = 3.47). These perceptions were echoed during a focus group discussion (FGD-02, 2025), where a participant from a minority ethnic group observed that “*we only hear of appointments after they are made—there is no clarity about the criteria or whether any effort was made to balance communities.*” The lack of transparency appears to feed into broader skepticism about fairness, creating an atmosphere of exclusion, especially among minority groups. Additionally, 63.4% of respondents agreed that public political appointments rarely include minority communities (mean = 3.56), confirming a sense of invisibility among smaller ethnic groups.

Concerns about equity are further underscored by the 68.1% agreement with the statement that the appointment process ignores the principle of ethnic equity (mean = 3.66). Participants highlighted that while national policies advocate for ethnic inclusivity, actual practice diverges sharply. A youth leader in a key informant interview (KII-05, 2025) commented that “*equity is something leaders talk about during elections, but when it comes to sharing positions, it’s the same faces from the dominant groups that benefit.*” Similarly, 64.1% of respondents felt that public political appointments are dominated by a few ethnic communities (mean = 3.55), reinforcing the perception of a skewed and entrenched system.

Ethnic favoritism in political appointments was also viewed as prevalent, with 66.3% agreeing or strongly agreeing that favoritism is common (mean = 3.59). This is closely related to the 62.6% who believed that merit is often compromised due to ethnic bias (mean = 3.51). These views were echoed by a civil society representative (KII-06, 2025) who noted that “*qualified people are sidelined simply because they come from the wrong tribe, while others get in regardless of their competence.*” Such sentiments suggest that public trust in appointment processes is being undermined by a belief that ethnicity takes precedence over qualifications.

Finally, 69.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that political appointments reflect deep-rooted ethnic discrimination (mean = 3.70), and 64.5% agreed that there are no effective mechanisms to ensure ethnic balance (mean = 3.55). Moreover, 64.1% expressed that the government does not prioritize ethnic diversity (mean = 3.55). A female respondent in an FGD (FGD-03, 2025) stated that “*every administration says they care about diversity, but nothing really changes—we just keep rotating the same privileged communities in power.*” These perspectives collectively paint a picture of a system where ethnic diversity is underprioritized and inclusivity remains more aspirational than actual. The results emphasize an urgent need for transparent, equity-driven reforms in public political appointment processes.

The findings reveal widespread dissatisfaction with ethnic balance in public political appointments, as most respondents perceive the process as lacking transparency, dominated by a few ethnic groups, and influenced by favoritism over merit. High agreement levels (above 60%) across several items indicate that minority communities feel excluded and that ethnic equity is largely ignored in practice. Qualitative data reinforce these concerns, highlighting the normalization of ethnic dominance and the absence of mechanisms to ensure inclusive representation, underscoring the need for transparent and equity-driven reforms.

Table 2: Perception of Respondents on National Unity and Peacebuilding.

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ethnic imbalance in public appointments does not enhances national unity	11.7	17.6	5.1	32.6	33.4	3.5751	1.40209
Ethnic non-representation in top government positions increases ethnic tensions	13.9	20.1	4.4	28.2	33.3	3.4689	1.47028

Non-Inclusion of marginalized ethnic groups in public service undermines peacebuilding	11.7	17.2	7.7	29.7	33.7	3.5641	1.40525
Un-Fair ethnic balance does not build trust among communities in government institutions	11.0	16.5	4.4	32.2	35.9	3.6557	1.39278
Skewed ethnic appointments lead to feelings of exclusion and unrest	12.5	17.9	5.5	30.0	34.1	3.5531	1.42906
Un-balanced ethnic appointments reduce public confidence in governance	12.8	16.8	4.0	30.8	35.5	3.5934	1.43725
Ethnic exclusion in public appointments destroys a sense of belonging	13.2	18.7	5.5	29.3	33.3	3.5092	1.44536
Inequitable ethnic distribution in appointments promotes political violence	9.2	16.8	4.8	33.3	35.9	3.6996	1.34952
Ethnic unfairness in public jobs hinders long-term national cohesion	12.5	18.3	4.8	30.4	34.1	3.5531	1.43163

**Key: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree**

The findings on respondents' perceptions regarding national unity and peacebuilding suggest that ethnic imbalances in public appointments negatively impact cohesion. Specifically, 66% of respondents either agreed (32.6%) or strongly agreed (33.4%) that ethnic imbalance in public political appointments fails to enhance national unity. A youth leader emphasized that favoritism often alienates communities, saying, *"People believe appointments are predetermined and only individuals from certain tribes are considered worthy."* (KII-04, 2025). Such perceptions underscore skepticism around inclusivity in governance.

The data further reveal strong concern over ethnic exclusion and its consequences. On the statement that non-representation of ethnic groups in top government positions increases ethnic tensions, 61.5% agreed or strongly agreed, yielding a mean of (3.47). Similarly, 63.4% supported the view that non-inclusion of marginalized groups undermines peacebuilding, with a mean of (3.56). These responses highlight widespread awareness that lack of inclusivity fosters division and insecurity. A representative from a women's group noted, *"When we see no one like us in top offices, we feel this country is not for us."* (FGD-02, 2025), reinforcing the sentiment that government representation is key to national belonging. Another informant affirmed, *"Lasting peace cannot be achieved when some communities are systematically left behind."* (KII-06, 2025).

A consistent pattern emerged around the impact of skewed appointments on public trust and peace. On whether unfair ethnic balance builds trust in government institutions, 68.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and the item recorded a mean of (3.66). Likewise, 64.1% felt that skewed ethnic appointments lead to feelings of exclusion and unrest (mean = 3.55), while 66.3% believed that unbalanced ethnic appointments reduce public confidence in governance (mean = 3.59). One elder explained that unrest emerges *"not because people hate the government, but because they feel invisible and voiceless"* (KII-05, 2025). These responses reflect a growing public frustration with inequitable governance practices and a perceived lack of accountability.

Finally, the perception that ethnic exclusion erodes national identity and threatens stability was strongly expressed. Over 62.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ethnic exclusion in appointments destroys a sense of belonging (mean = 3.51), and 69.2% linked inequitable distribution of political appointments to political violence (mean = 3.70). Additionally, 64.5% agreed that ethnic unfairness in public jobs hinders long-term national cohesion (mean = 3.55). A participant from a minority group remarked, *"In our county, youths feel there is no future unless you belong to a favored tribe"* (FGD-04, 2025), capturing the frustration and disillusionment caused by persistent ethnic disparities. These findings reinforce the notion that ethnic equity in public service is essential not only for justice but also for sustainable peace and national unity.



## Application to the findings to Consociational Theory.

The findings strongly align with Arend Lijphart's (1969) Consociational Theory, which emphasizes power-sharing, group autonomy, and proportionality in ethnically divided societies as essential for stable governance and peace. The widespread perception among respondents that public political appointments in Kenya lack ethnic balance, transparency, and inclusivity directly challenges the core principles of consociationalism, particularly proportional representation and elite cooperation across ethnic lines. Both quantitative and qualitative data demonstrate that ethnic favoritism, exclusion of minorities, and the dominance of a few ethnic groups in appointments undermine trust in government, erode national cohesion, and foster resentment—trends similarly noted in prior studies on ethnic politics in divided societies. The findings echo earlier research showing that perceived injustices in state representation can fuel social unrest and alienation among marginalized groups. Thus, the data not only validate Lijphart's theoretical assertions but also underscore the urgent need to institutionalize mechanisms that guarantee ethnic equity in public appointments to promote inclusive governance, trust, and sustainable peace in Kenya's plural society.

## Regression Analysis

The assumptions underlying the use of the least squares estimator in regression analysis are critical to ensuring the validity and reliability of the model's results. These assumptions include the requirement that the predictor variables should not be highly correlated with one another (to avoid multicollinearity), the error term should exhibit a normal distribution (normality), there should be a constant variance of the error terms across all levels of the independent variables (homoscedasticity), the mean of the error terms should be zero, and the error terms should not be correlated with each other (no serial correlation). Violating any of these assumptions can lead to biased estimates, incorrect inferences, and a weakened explanatory power of the model. This section of the study focuses on testing these key assumptions to validate the use of the regression model in analyzing the influence of Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments on National Unity and Peacebuilding. Specifically, the normality of the error term was tested graphically using both the P-P (probability-probability) plot of regression standardized residuals and the normality histogram, which are commonly employed visual methods to assess whether the residuals follow a normal distribution. Figure 2 illustrates these plots, and their interpretation provided the basis for concluding whether the normality assumption holds true in this analysis. Ensuring that these assumptions are met before proceeding with regression modeling is essential in producing statistically sound and interpretable results regarding the relationship between ethnic balance and the outcomes of national unity and peacebuilding.

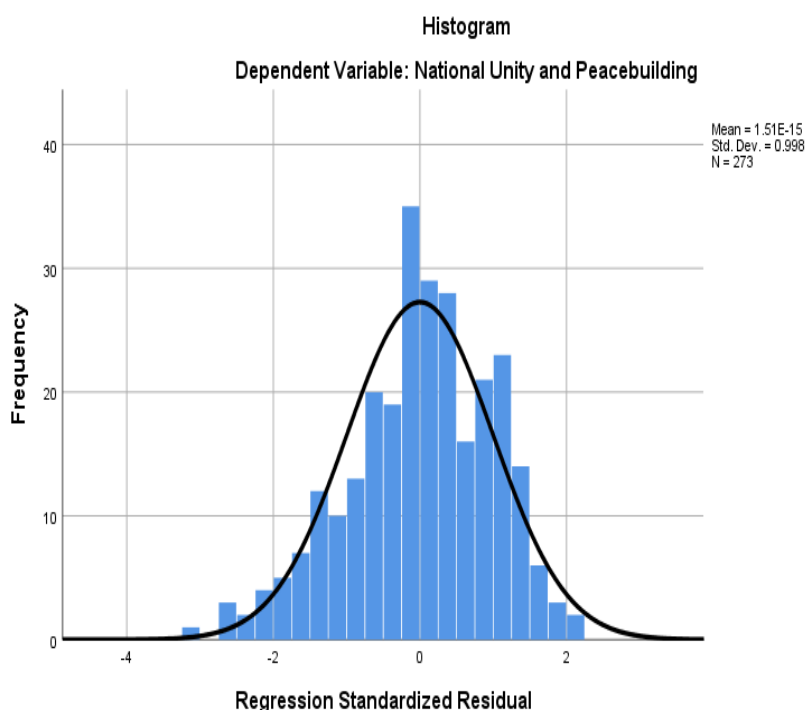




Figure 2: Normality test of the regression residual

The graphical results on the normality of the residual term using both P-P plots as well as the normality plot as shown in Figure 2 showed that the residual of the regression was in form of a bell-shape as required. Therefore, it did not violate the assumption of normality. Another assumption is that autocorrelation which was tested using Durbin Watson (DW) method that requires the DW statistic to be between 1.5 and 2.0 to imply absence of serial correlation. The results are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Durbin Watson test of autocorrelation.

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.413 <sup>a</sup>	.170	.167	.61687	.170	55.624	1	271	.000	1.876
a. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments										
b. Dependent Variable: National Unity and Peacebuilding										

Source: Survey Data (2025).

As shown in table 3, it was established that the DW value of 1.876 lied between 1.5 and 2.0 which implies that there was absence of serial correlation. Therefore, it was suitable to use a least square estimator regression model. The assumption of Heteroscedasticity was also tested using Breusch Pagan method which requires that the P-Value is not significant so that the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity is upheld. The results are shown in table 4.

Table 4: Breusch Pagan test of heteroscedasticity.

Breusch-Pagan Test for Heteroskedasticity <sup>a, b, c</sup>		
Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
.234	1	.629
a. Dependent variable: National Unity and Peacebuilding		

b. Tests the null hypothesis that the variance of the errors does not depend on the values of the independent variables.

c. Predicted values from design: Intercept + OBJ1

Source: Survey Data (2025).

As shown in table 4, the P-Value (0.629 is greater than 0.05) meaning that the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity is upheld. This implies that the error term had constant variance as required. Therefore, it was suitable to use a least square estimator regression model. Since all the assumptions of using an OLS had been tested and met, the study used a bivariate regression method to determine the nature and magnitude of the relationship between Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments and National Unity and Peacebuilding. The univariate regression results present the model summary results, ANOVA and regression coefficients results. The coefficient of determination results (R-square) in table 5 indicates the variation in the dependent variable (National Unity and Peacebuilding) accounted for by the independent variable (Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments).

Table 5: Model summary

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.413 <sup>a</sup>	.170	.167	.61687	.170	55.624	1	271	.000	1.876
a. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments										
b. Dependent Variable: National Unity and Peacebuilding										

Source: Survey Data (2025).

The results are presented in table 5 demonstrate that Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments has a positive association with National Unity and Peacebuilding to mean that an improvement in Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments is associated with an improvement in Nature of National Unity and Peacebuilding (R = 0. 413). In addition, the results showed that Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments account for up to 17% of the variation in National Unity and Peacebuilding (R-Square = 0.170). Other than that, the remaining variation can be predicted by other factors. The study also tested for the fitness of the regression model linking the two variables through ANOVA. The results are presented in table 6.

Table 6: ANOVA (Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments and National Unity and Peacebuilding).

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.166	1	21.166	55.624	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	103.122	271	.381		
	Total	124.289	272			

a. Dependent Variable: National Unity and Peacebuilding
b. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments

Source: Survey Data (2025).

As shown in table 6, through the F test, the ANOVA table provided F-statistic of 55.624 with a p-value of .000 indicates that the model is highly significant. This is confirmed by a significant P-value (Sig = 0.000 < 0.05) implying that the regression model linking Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments to National Unity and Peacebuilding was significant and fit. Therefore, any conclusions drawn from it are relevant. The regression model coefficients results were presented in table 7.

Table 7: Model coefficients

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.848	.237		7.810	.000
	Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments	.486	.065	.413	7.458	.000
a. Dependent Variable: National Unity and Peacebuilding						

Source: Survey Data (2025).

The regression model coefficient results in table 7 demonstrate that other factors held constant, Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments has a positive and significant effect on National Unity and Peacebuilding ( $\beta = 0.486$ ) This implies that a unit improvement in Ethnic Balance in Public Political Appointments would result to an improvement in the National Unity and Peacebuilding up to 0.486 units. This finding aligns with comparative international evidence, which consistently shows that ethnic exclusion and imbalance in political representation led to division, conflict, and instability. For example, Mochtak and Muharemović (2024) found that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, entrenched ethnic narratives in politics have undermined reconciliation and national unity. Similarly, Kadirgamar (2020) shows how Sri Lanka's ethnonationalism has sustained exclusion and hindered democratic pluralism, while Debnath (2024) documents how Myanmar's failure to address ethnic grievances has perpetuated armed conflict and instability. In the African context, consistent findings are observed. Berebon (2024) traces Nigeria's violent ethnic conflicts to colonial legacies and ongoing identity-based exclusion, emphasizing the need for inclusive governance. Kulang (2021) identifies similar dynamics in South Sudan, where ethnic marginalization has destabilized state-building. Kenya is not exempt. Studies by Mati (2019) and Bedasso (2015) reveal that Kenya's Ethnicized political competition has deepened divisions, particularly during elections. These studies contrast with the regression result, demonstrating that where ethnic balance is lacking, national unity suffers; thus, Kenya stands to benefit greatly from institutionalizing ethnic inclusivity in public political appointments.

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals a significant gap between Kenya's constitutional ideals of ethnic inclusivity and the actual practices surrounding public political appointments. Empirical evidence shows high levels of public dissatisfaction, with more than 60% of respondents consistently agreeing that ethnic equity, transparency, and meritocracy are largely ignored. Qualitative insights further expose a deep-seated perception of ethnic favoritism, exclusion of minorities, and lack of accountability in appointment processes, all of which erode trust in governance and fuel feelings of alienation. These findings strongly support Consociational theory,



indicating that failure to implement inclusive power-sharing undermines national unity and peace. Therefore, the study concludes that ethnic imbalance in political appointments is not merely a representation issue but a fundamental governance failure that threatens Kenya's long-term cohesion and stability.

## RECOMMENDATION

To translate these findings into actionable reforms, the government should institutionalize a legally binding Ethnic Equity Audit Framework for all public political appointments, monitored by an independent Ethnic Representation Oversight Commission. This commission should publish real-time disaggregated data on ethnic composition in appointments to ensure transparency and public accountability. Additionally, Article 232 of the Constitution on fair representation should be operationalized through enforceable quotas that reflect Kenya's ethnic diversity at national and county levels. Public participation and civil society oversight should be embedded in the appointment process to promote trust and inclusion. Lastly, civic education campaigns should sensitize citizens on the value of diversity in governance to foster a culture of merit, equity, and peaceful coexistence.

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