

Pokot-Turkana Conflict in Kenya: Interrogating Its Causes and Persistence

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Abstract

The 43 Kenyan ethnic communities have coexisted at various times in peace and conflict throughout the six-decade long period since the founding of the nation. Conflicts typically arise from differences in the political parties or candidates that the protagonist communities support, tendencies for territorial expansion, and competition for natural resources. While the intervention of the State and some non-state actors, including the Catholic Church, has led to the settlement or resolution of some of these conflicts, many others, especially between pastoralist communities remain, outstanding and unresolved. The conflict between the Turkana and the Pokot ethnic communities is among such unresolved problems. This paper revisits the Turkana-Pokot relations in an attempt to establish the salient variables that account for inability of the combined government and NGO intervention to resolve the persisting conflict between the two communities. The Catholic Church has a pervasive presence throughout the Pokot-Turkana conflict environment and is involved in education, medical care and justice-peace activities, among other spheres. This paper is based on the PhD study by Patrick Devine that examined the interface between political, economic, environmental, social and cultural forces and factors that underpin Pokot-Turkana conflict's underlying causes and persistence. Data for the study were obtained from field research based on the three hypotheses, namely, that the conflict persists because: 1) the underlying causes have not been addressed: 2) of ineffective approaches by the State in managing the conflict: 3) of ineffective activities by the Catholic Church in managing the conflict (Devine, 2024: p. 81).

Keywords

Conflict, Underlying Causes, Ineffective Approaches, Persistence

1. Introduction and Issues of Theory

Conflicts are inevitable outcomes of human interaction at all levels: global, regional, national, community and family. Nevertheless, conflicts fall in different categories: large scale and small-scale conflicts, and violent and non-violent conflicts. Manifestly violent conflict is the most destructive and disruptive form of human interaction, leading to physical injury and loss of life, displacement, destruction of property, distrust among conflicting parties and their allies, and disruption of means of livelihood and development, broadly defined.

Conflict is a pointer to existence of disagreement among concerned parties, though the particular cause could differ both in time and space. The causes of one conflict may be very different from those of another conflict between and among the same parties, despite similarity of expression of the conflicts. Therefore, similar conflicts could have different causal factors. Also, a particular conflict could have more than one causal factor while another conflict with similar characteristics could be caused by a significantly different factor or set of factors. Likewise, different explanations can be found for the persistence of similar conflicts. This paper argues therefore that each conflict has to be analysed in its context, taking into account the history, timing of the conflict and the actors involved. In addition, the type or category of the conflict such as manifest conflict or latent structural conflict matters.

Manifest conflict is exhibited in behavioural direct physical and visible violent actions. Latent conflict is invisible and is embedded in a society's structure of relationships and interactions. This paper has attempted to place the Pokot-Turkana case in a proper category of conflicts, or the categories the conflict might straddle. This categorization is essential in the analysis to the extent that different categories of conflict demand different strategies and approaches toward their resolution. State and non-governmental organizations Scholars have also attempted to analyse the Turkana-Pokot conflict in efforts to find more workable strategies for redress. Patrick Devine, one of the authors of this paper, conducted a study for PhD work in 2016. The study set out to investigate the knowledge gap in in existing perspectives on Turkana-Pokot conflict that if bridged could assist in finding effective strategy for transformation of the violent conflict into a peaceful coexistence (Devine, 2024).

Studies show that behavioural direct physical violent conflicts are the most devastating, yet most difficult to bring to a permanent end mostly due to adoption of inappropriate conflict resolution approaches and methods that fail to address both the underlying causes of the conflict in question. This failure leads to the persistence of the problem. Frequently, the proximate or trigger causes are all that are addressed, as distinct from the underlying factors.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2004), Grispin (2006) and Lederach (2014) argue that all conflicts have trigger, proximate and underlying (structural) causes which need to be studied before the adoption of management approaches to the conflict. The foremost theoretical frameworks applied in

existing attempts to explain the Pokot-Turkana conflict have focused on ethnicity, cultural and environmental factors. They fail to address the underlying structural causes of the conflict. Structural violence theory maintains that underpinning trigger and proximate causes are structures that determine whether or not violence can emerge. According to [Galtung \(1969\)](#), Structural violence is the condition where, “violence is present when human beings are influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realization are below their potential realizations.” It exists when an actor or group are unable to fulfil their potential either because of the way a society is structured or due to the way the structures of a society are operationalized ([Groom, 1990](#)).

Failure to understand and appreciate the contribution of structures to the Pokot-Turkana conflict will lead to the use of inappropriate approaches to the management of the conflict. These approaches may be adopted by either the State or the Catholic Church, the two major actors attempting to bring the Pokot-Turkana conflict to an end.

2. Historical Overview of the Conflict

The Pokot and Turkana interface with each other along a boundary that is approximately 250 kilometres. The specific area that constituted the research area is the stretch of terrain thirty-to-fifty kilometres at either side of the entire length of the boundary that runs south-eastern to north-western. Scholars have presented more than one version of the account of the migration and original settlement of the Pokot and Turkana communities prior to their arrival in their present homeland. One version is that the Pokot originally lived in an area in present day southern Ethiopia and migrated southwards in the sixteenth century ([Bohanan & Curtin, 1995](#); [Fedders & Salvadori, 1979](#)). Another version is that the Pokot originated from an amalgamation of refugees from wars between and among nearby ethnic communities ([Harold, 1953](#); [Peristiany, 1951](#)). Today, the majority of the Pokot reside in the northern part of the Rift Valley region of Kenya with a small area of customary Pokot-land straddling the Kenya Uganda border. This spillage is a result of failure of British colonial policy to respect the unity of an ethnic group in demarcating colonial boundaries throughout eastern Africa, including administrative structures ([Devine, 2024, 2026](#); [Kitonga et al., 2025](#)). The Pokot community is generally categorized into two distinct subdivisions: the pastoralist Pokot, who to this day interface with the Turkana in violent behavioural conflict along approximately 250 kilometres-semi arid desert frontline ([Eaton, 2008](#); [Krätli & Swift, 1999](#); [Mkutu, 2008](#); [Noonan, 2025](#)). The other subdivision is the agriculturalist Pokot, residing south of the pastoralists ([Devine, 2024](#); [Dolan, 2006](#); [Grahm, 2005](#)). This group have less direct engagement with the Turkana than the pastoralist Pokot.

According to accounts, the Turkana migrated before the Sixteenth century from what is presently Southern Sudan into what is today Northern Uganda and moved into the present-day Turkana-land in North Rift in the eighteenth century

(Barrett, 1998; Gulliver, 1955; Thomas, 1966). Two versions are presented for their migration. First, aggressiveness and militant territorial expansion tendencies of the community (Lamphear, 1992; Lonsdale, 1977) and, second, the community travelled down the Dodoth escarpment into what is the North Rift due to decreasing environmental carrying capacity for their livestock. Increase in human and animal population in northern Uganda, the dispersal area of both Karamojong and the Turkana created strain on environmental sustainability (Berman & Lonsdale, 1992; Dietz, 1987; Mazrui, 1977). The Turkana encountered other ethnic communities including the Pokot in the course of relocation to their present homeland, driving the Pokot south into the Pokot Hills by a series of wars during the nineteenth century (Gulliver, 1955; Lamphear, 1988). The fault lines of Pokot-Turkana customary interfacing borders had largely stabilized by 1900 (Lamphear, 1988). The majority of the Turkana people today live in Kenya, with small segments straddling the border with Uganda and the Republic of South Sudan, within the Ilemi Triangle to the north (Devine, 2026; Mburu, 2007).

The interaction between the Pokot and Turkana was not always conflictual. The interaction entailed also peaceful coexistence, relocations due to threats, perceived insecurity, assimilation and raiding (McCabe, 1990, 2004). They raid and counter raid each other for domestic animals especially cattle. Perceived insecurity facilitated self-control with a result that fighting between Pokot and Turkana was averted sometimes. These were adaptive behaviour occasioned by economic, socio-political, cultural and ecological variables. This appears to have been one of the mechanisms and strategies both communities applied to minimize incidences of conflict. Flaring of impulses in Pokot due to wrongdoing or untoward activity on the part of the Turkana, and vice versa would prompt conflict, depending on circumstances of the particular situation or moment (Devine, 2024; Eaton, 2008; Good, 2007; Noonan, 2025; Osinde et al., 2023; Wanyonyi et al., 2025).

3. Beginning of the Conflict

The Pokot-Turkana conflict began in pre-colonial times, although the exact date remains unknown. The colonial government failed to bring the conflict to an end, possibly due to insignificant effects of the conflict on the interests of colonial rule. Therefore, the conflict had opportunity to grow and become a routine affair that the colonial authorities appeared to condone. Furthermore, colonialism contributed to generation of the conflict to the extent of having brought the two communities as did other ethnic groups under a common administration by virtue of the arbitrary territorial boundaries. In any case, as mentioned above, the Pokot are generally categorized into two distinct subgroups: the pastoralists and agricultural Pokot, with the latter residing south of the pastoralists (Dolan, 2006; Grah, 2005) and do not have direct engagement with the Turkana as much as the pastoralists do. The conflict has therefore been largely between the pastoralists Pokot and the Turkana.

We delve into the history of the conflict because we believe that it contributes

to an understanding of nature, dynamics and management challenges of the conflict. But the historical forces and factors must be carefully analyzed. History in and of itself cannot and does not explain the conflict. It is the hypothesis of this paper that an understanding arising from this historical analysis is critical for adopting appropriate conflict management and resolution approaches and activities. Contemporary factors are also significant in the analysis for policy making and action regarding the conflict and its management. Scholars have also not provided significant insights into the traditional conflict management structures and how these could still be used to inform current conflict management approaches.

4. Explaining the Conflict

Scholars have advanced many explanations for the origin of the Pokot-Turkana conflict, but most tend to fall among what may be described as popular qualitative explanations. Explanations in this category are devoid of empirical basis and the approaches to manage the conflict that they propose are therefore weak. For example, academic explanations of the conflict have focused on the cultural, ethnic and environmental variables without empirical data. These explanations end up largely as conjecture. The underlying causes therefore require rigorous empirical research and analysis.

Any conflict is likely to be caused by one or a combination of factors. It is against this backdrop that in addition to the history of the Pokot-Turkana, interrogating the persistence of the Turkana-Pokot conflict, we must take into account the dynamic forces and factors at play at any time in the conflict. A similar consideration must also inform any attempts to explain the persistence of a conflict.

A number of factors have been proffered by scholars and even politicians to explain the Pokot-Turkana conflict. First, the conflict is treated as part of the general conflicts in the wider northern part of Kenya that are said to arise from the lack of development. In reaction to this [Devine \(2024\)](#) observes that if conflict is equated with lack of peace, then it follows that there is a positive relationship between peace and development. However, he goes on to point out that the relationship is neither simple nor direct. It is complex and must go beyond the synchronic image that such explanations focus on and provide a diachronic purview ([Devine, 2024](#)). One of the fundamental facts about this conflict in an attempt to explain its causes, is the role of the colonial government. Whereas the conflict predates the establishment of British colonial rule, colonization by its nature is structural violence to the extent that it involved systematic marginalization of communities, including the Pokot and Turkana communities. Colonization is a factor that was both political and economic and which ought to be considered in the analysis. Colonization brought the two communities under one boundary as opposed to the precolonial period when the two lived, by and large, as independent entities. This in itself has had implications for the relationship between the two communities. The research by [Devine \(2024\)](#) found that the Pokot, for the most part, acquiesced to colonial rule in the early stages of colonization as self-preservation

strategy against the Turkana attack. At the same time, the Pokot continued raids on the Turkana since they knew that the colonial government was unlikely to subjugate them to the same magnitude of its firepower violence. Unlike the pre-colonial Turkana-Pokot conflict in the form of raids, which was predictable, the conflict between the Turkana on the one hand and the colonial government, the Pokot, and the settlers on the other hand, did not lend itself to easy prediction. The conflict could be triggered off any time by any of five contingencies. First, actual Turkana intrusion into Pokot grazing territory/area as explained earlier in terms of territorial imperative. Second, Pokot exaggerating to government authorities the seriousness of damage inflicted on them by Turkana raiding. Third, Pokot lying to government authorities that the Turkana were planning to attack, which prompted the sending of the Kenya African Rifles (KAR) askari or Police for a supposedly pre-emptive strike against the Turkana. Fourth, as a rash speech (harangue) by a British official (commissioner or garrison commander): in some cases, the speech was the immediate prologue to quick and heavy-handed reprisal against the Turkana by KAR /police garrison. Fifth, the violence on the Turkana could be used as a species or form of sport for the British. This last contingency was, in particular, unrelated to the possibility of the Turkana thwarting British colonial ambitions in the North Rift raiding of the Pokot, and the Turkana posing a threat to settler community interests. It was psychological, not environmental, and constituted a totally unprovoked violent aggression against the Turkana. The unprovoked violence was practiced against the Turkana as a form of sporting activity as borne out by the words of Eric Von Otter, an administrator in Turkana District in the 1910s (Lamphear, 1992):

The Turkana... consider the government as the biggest raiders of them all... I do not doubt that on very many occasions the innocent were punished...orders show that natives were fired on at sight and the Turkana referred to themselves on more than one occasion as wild animals hunted through the bush by the government. (p. 198)

But as Maslow (1970) and Burton (1991) assert, for humans to historically exist and develop, certain basic and ontological needs must be satisfied. These needs are inextricably intertwined with livelihood social, political and economic issues and structures underpinning their operationalization. What is assayed in this paper is that: first, politics and economics are embedded and secondly, that violence as politics is a means of economics. Lastly, economics as marginalization along ethnic lines generates counter-marginalization praxis in the form of identity politics, which finds expression in either violent conflict behaviour between “us” and the neighbouring ethnic “other” and /or organized subversion of state legitimizations, institutions and functionaries’ roles. Attempts to explain the Pokot-Turkana conflict must take this reality into account. It would be erroneous to focus exclusively on either politics or lack of economic development when interrogating the conflict between the Pokot and the Turkana ethnic groups.

A conflict arises between two or more parties if the parties to a conflict are pursuing incompatible and irreconcilable interests or goals (Devine, 2024; 2026; Mwagiru, 2006). Each party to the conflict may consider its interest and goal as non-negotiable and therefore not willing to listen to the other party including those trying to manage the conflict. To what extent this applies to the Pokot-Turkana conflict should also be investigated as part of an effort to understand the causes and indeed the persistence of this conflict. In this regard it is not enough to only attribute causes of the conflict to competition for pasture for livestock between the two pastoralist communities.

It is also possible for a conflict to escalate when one or more conflicting groups or a section of it benefit directly or indirectly from the conflict. The benefiting parties may include those directly involved in the conflict as well as those not directly involved in the actual conflict. Organizations and even individuals tasked with managing a conflict may also get involved in either abating the conflict if they directly or indirectly benefit from a continuation of the conflict. Politicians are particularly vulnerable to this kind of situation. If by fuelling the conflict, they can get political support, politicians are likely to fuel the conflict. The statements made from time to time by politicians from the Pokot and Turkana communities may not help end the conflict. Many times, these politicians make inflammatory statements that only fuel the conflict. It is also possible for some actors in a conflict to derive economic benefits from prolongation of the war. These too must be interrogated when seeking to understand the nature, causes and persistence of the Pokot-Turkana conflict.

The Pokot and Turkana ethnic communities are pastoralists who largely depend on livestock for their livelihood in their arid and semi-arid environment. Water and pasture are therefore critical resources. At times they travel long distances with their livestock in search of pasture and water for their livestock as rainy and dry seasons alternate. The two communities often compete for access to these scarce resources in the course of nomadic movements, due to threats of access to these resources for their existence. Extremely volatile conditions are generated that contribute to the emergence of conflict (Devine, 2024; Keter et al., 2026). The two communities have also historically and culturally developed stereotypes of each other that date back to pre-colonial time. The communities have a rather negative image of each other, though this is common among neighbouring communities in Kenya (Rogei, 2026). This factor alone may therefore not explain the cause of the conflict between the two communities because not all communities that compete for a common resource always engage in conflict. If they do, the conflicts are not only sporadic but also are resolved rather quickly. The Massai and the Kuria communities is an example. There must therefore be another factor or combination of factors at play in the conflict between the Pokot and Turkana communities.

There have been suggestions especially by politicians that this conflict is caused by cattle rustling. But this can only qualify as a description of the form the conflict

assumes. This is associated with the competition for resources in the form of grazing land. As indicated earlier, the two communities are livestock keepers and require pasture and water for their cattle. As a result of living in arid and semi-arid parts of the country pasture for their animals is scarce and especially during the dry spells. The communities are compelled by circumstances to compete these resources. It is assumed that this is what encourages the conflict. It is thus often called a resource-based conflict. This argument, has not been established through quantitative research. It has also not been established that the conflicts occur only during the dry periods. It is also not quite clear what the communities do with the stolen cattle. Do they sell them, keep them to increase or replenish the size of their herds? If they sell them then to who and why has this market not been dismantled especially by the government of Kenya? Could it be that some powerful government officials are benefiting from these cattle raids and are therefore protecting the culprits of this devastating conflict?

Another popular explanation has been that these two communities are habitually warlike. This view suggests that it is the aggressiveness and militant territorial expansion tendencies that were characteristic of the Turkana that caused them to migrate to the present homeland in Kenya (Lamphear, 1992; Lonsdale, 1977). It is suggested that war is part of their cultural upbringing so to speak. Consequently, it is argued, they will fight at the slightest provocation. This argument is also difficult to sustain, for it leaves several questions unanswered. For example, what evidence exists to prove that the two communities are socialized to fighting? These weak explanations regarding the causes of this conflict have largely informed the management approaches to the conflict. Attempts have, for example, been made by the government to disarm the communities, yet the conflict and rearmament persist. In some cases, conflicts are dismissed as political while in other cases they are explained as ethnic or as having ethno-cultural causes especially by politicians. The question however, is why is it that there are other ethnic communities including those that keep cattle and experience scarcity of pasture like the Pokot and Turkana communities do not engage in persistent conflict?

If the conflict is undesirable and is caused by competition for resources, then why are the actors involved in attempting to solve such conflicts unable to reduce the competition for these resources? Stated differently, why are the actors attempting to end a conflict and especially governments not improving the resource situation so that the competing ethnic groups don't engage in violent conflict? Is the persistence due to failure to understand the causes and therefore put in place the right solutions, or is it due to the interest of the major and especially the powerful and official actors in the conflict?

In this paper which benefited from actual empirical field research on the conflict, we hypothesize that the Pokot-Turkana conflict is caused by a combination of dynamic factors. The primary actors are of course the Pokot and Turkana communities and particularly the warriors. The second group of actors are the political leaders from the two communities. They include the elected leaders, namely mem-

bers of parliament, members of local councils and assemblies, senators (since the introduction of devolution under the Constitution of Kenya 2010). These leaders can possibly participate in the conflict at least at two levels. First, they encourage their respective warriors to win the war or defeat the opponent to achieve their personal political and economic interests. Secondly, the leaders condemn the violent conflicts and appeal to their warriors to cease hostilities. The third group of actors is the state or government officials, notably the local administration especially chiefs and assistant chiefs, and the security personnel comprising the police and, occasionally, the military. Security personnel are typically invited to quell the fighting, conduct disarmament and subdue the warriors.

The Catholic Church has also participated in attempts to resolve the conflicts (Devine, 2024). The church does this by providing refuge to the displaced persons and those fleeing the violence, providing food, clothes, blankets and medical assistance to distressed individuals and families. The Church also attempts mediation between the warring parties, though without much success, and conducting evangelism in effort to change the attitude of the communities from conflict to peaceful coexistence. Other NGOs as well as international bodies such as UNICEF also provide humanitarian assistance to the communities involved in this conflict. Nevertheless, the conflict persists.

The Shalom Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation (SCCRR), an NGO, has also intervened in the conflict (Shalom-SCCRR, 2024). The Center works in close collaboration with communities in conflict, faith-based organizations and others in the affected region. The organization conducts training programs for selected influential opinion shapers from the two communities on conflict transformation skills and peace building techniques. As conflict transformation progresses between the two communities SCCRR assists them with the development of mutually agreed infrastructural initiatives, especially school/educational projects. From these activities it is hoped that the trained individuals will enhance their capacity to further engage the conflicting parties. The activities of the Center are also aimed at researching and enhancing an understanding of the underlying causes of the conflict and why it persists.

5. Management of the Conflict

The Pokot-Turkana conflict has persisted despite interventions by both the government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) including the Catholic Church. The state has been particularly guilty in this regard. To start with, the state has not quite explained to the public what the actual underlying causes of the conflict are. The state has tended to assume that the use of force, occasional disarmament, peace talks and establishment of peace committees would end the conflict. The use of force in the form of deployment of armed police and other security apparatus including the General Service Unit, (GSU) a paramilitary unit has not achieved the intended objectives. The state has also continued to hold peace meetings at which government officials appeal to the affected communities to adopt

peaceful means of resolving their differences. In addition, the state has on some occasions recovered stolen livestock and returned them to the original owners in the hope that this would encourage the communities to embrace peaceful coexistence. But these interventions have not produced the expected results. Instead, the interventions have hardened the two communities who seem to respond by daring the state to continue attempting to subdue them.

The use of force by the state has led to death and injuries to people including those not directly responsible for the conflict. The conflict has also disrupted any efforts by the people to engage in meaningful socio-economic development. The persistence of the conflict especially in its violent form negatively affects meaningful development compared to other parts of the country where there is peace. It can only perpetuate underdevelopment in the region occupied by the warring communities. The persistence of this conflict despite the many interventions by different actors suggests that the fundamental causes of the conflict have not been identified and if they have, then the management methods being used are not appropriate and/or effective. The don't address the underlying causes of the conflict.

6. Hypotheses

This research was underpinned by the following hypotheses:

- 1) The conflict persists because the underlying causes have not been addressed.
- 2) The conflict persists because of ineffective approaches by the State in managing the conflict.
- 3) The conflict persists because of ineffective activities by the Catholic Church in managing the conflict.

7. Methodology

The study used quantitative cross-sectional survey design. Cross-sectional research is designed to understand relationships among variables that have to do with the conflict, by observing their values during a particular period in time. All measurements and observations were made on a single occasion over a time period of three months with no follow up period. This design was underpinned by the need to find out how or why the phenomena, varied and wide ranging, of Pokot-Turkana violent conflict operate or function by looking for evidence of cause-and-effect relationships in the data. By measuring the variables involved, relating them to one another and understanding how and why they operate enabled the researcher to provide an overall picture of the conflict and why it persists.

8. Population

The population of Turkana-land was about 857,000 and that of Pokot-land was about 526,000 when this study was conducted (Devine, 2024). The vast majority of the population are pastoralists—even as there are significant differences between Turkana and Pokot, and particularly the highland Pokot.

9. Sampling

Two considerations determined sampling: first, was that the population was geographically dispersed, and secondly, there was a need or requirement to achieve randomization and representativeness of sample elements as a whole since this was a sample survey. Since the population was dispersed across widely scattered villages (*manyattas*), cluster sampling was used. The villages (clusters) were the natural groupings, namely: Amakuriat, Seker, Naipokure, Kositei, Nasorot and Napukut on the Pokot side interfaced with the Naipa, Kataruk, Kainuk, Katilu, Lopur and Lokori on the Turkana side. A sample of 381 cases, comprising of 190 Pokot and 191 Turkana consisting of men and women was selected from the twelve clusters.

The manyattas were sampled so that individuals in their upper teens or above could be surveyed. This was informed by the fact that since the Pokot and Turkana are pastoralists, the best way to locate them was through manyattas. On the Pokot side of the Pokot-Turkana boundary, there were about forty clusters of villages (manyattas) and on the Turkana side there are about thirty manyattas. There was however no difference between the Pokot and the Turkana in terms of the people who lived in each manyatta. On either side of the boundary between the two communities, the number of residents per manyatta ranged from three hundred to five hundred. Six manyattas (clusters) were randomly selected on the Turkana side of the boundary and six on the Pokot side were also randomly selected. In total twelve manyattas (clusters) were sampled.

The selection was stratified by gender and age. The strata were: women in which age is a fixed variable (40 percent% of the sample), men who are 31 years old and above in which age is a fixed variable (30% of the sample), and young men aged 17 through 30 years—the “morani” or warrior age group (30% of the sample).

Besides cluster sampling, focus group discussion—supplemental to cluster sampling—was employed. Focus group discussions were conducted on the Pokot and Turkana separately. The criteria of knowledge of the local milieu, high regard, and significant level of respect among the local population guided the researcher in the selection of participants for the focus group discussion. The individuals were recruited from the local administration (chiefs and assistant chiefs), local Church (pastors and catechists) local Non-Government Organizations (peace and development workers) and other respected opinion shaping groups in the society, such as teachers.

Four criteria informed the decision to have a sample size of 381 respondents: first, the type of data that was to be collected, secondly, the interest in detecting significant relationships among variables and this depends on how large a sample size is. Thirdly, the fact that cluster sampling requires a large sample size to achieve precision because cases within clusters tend to be similar. Fourth, the need to use factor analysis that requires a large sample size, in order to identify or uncover underlying dimensions (causes) of the research object, which is the Pokot-Turkana violent conflict. Since the target population was known, the sample size re-

quired to be representative of it was calculated with the following formula.

Where:

$$S = X^2 NP(1 - P) \div d^2 (N - 1) + X^2 P(1 - P);$$

s = required sample size.

X^2 = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841).

N = the population size.

P = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size).

d^2 = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05).

For more on this, see [Krejcie & Morgan \(1970\)](#) Determining Sample size for Research Activities, Educational and Psychological Measurement.

The researcher did not encounter any problems in data collection because the researcher had carried out proper groundwork prior to going to the field. The response rate was impressive with no households or individuals declining to participate in the interviews. The researcher did not experience any security and safety challenges.

The data analytic used in this research were factor analysis, Pearson correlation, skewness, multiple regression and multiple correlation. The selected techniques are most suitable in terms of rigor that the testing of the research hypotheses in this study required. Factor analysis was applied because it firstly has to do with the underlying or latent variables and secondly because in this study's first hypothesis the thrust of analysis testing is identification of the underlying causes of recurring incidences of violent conflict between the Pokot and Turkana ethnic communities.

10. Data Collection Instruments

The main data collection instrument was a questionnaire in Pokot, Turkana, and English languages. It was supplemented by an unstructured interview and a focus group discussion. The instruments were designed to tap data on five distinct types of question content: behaviour (what people do), beliefs (what people think is true), knowledge (establishing the accuracy of beliefs—i.e. facts), attitudes (establishing what they think is desirable), and attribute (obtaining information about the respondents' characteristics). Before data collection, the instruments were pilot-tested at the research site. Multivariate analysis (factor analysis, correlation, regression, skewness) was applied to the data in line with academic procedures; for more on this, see [Tabachnick & Fidel \(2001, 2014\)](#). Data tapped on most of the variables of this research were quantitative. Variables at nominal and ordinal scales of measurement were quantified through dummy variable coding, thereby rendering them amenable to statistical analysis, as is done with variables at interval and ratio scales of measurement. The data-analytic techniques used in this research are: factor analysis, Pearson correlation, skewness, multiple regression, and multiple correlation. As already pointed out these selected techniques are the most

suitable in terms of rigor that the testing of the research hypotheses requires.

11. Research Findings

Before this research on the persistent conflict between the Pokot and Turkana was conducted no scholarly study had been carried out to determine the underlying causes for the persistence of the conflict. As already indicated the earlier research on this conflict has focussed on trigger and proximate explanations emerging from the ethnic, cultural and environmental resource schools of thought assumed to cause the conflict. The present study did not come across any research using multivariate quantitative data analytic technique applied in sync with structural violence theory. It is evident from this research that the structures in the form of institutional arrangements to counteract the underlying causes of the manifest violent conflict are inappropriate and deficient in the area where conflict is an aspect of Pokot-Turkana interaction. The deficiencies of structures in the form of flawed institutional arrangements underpin the socially patterned conflict behaviour between the two communities. The underlying causes of the conflict are inseparable from the structures that underpin these phenomena, since structures predominantly determine patterned social behaviour.

Concerning the first hypothesis which states that the conflict persists because the underlying causes have not been addressed, the three major causes in their order of importance were identified using Factor Analysis (Devine, 2024: pp. 111-173):

- 1) Core Resources,
- 2) Political Economy,
- 3) Infrastructure-Insecurity.

The variables that Loaded on Factor Core Resources are: perennial shortage of water, perennial shortage of pasture, death/loss of livestock through prolonged drought, grinding poverty, famine and hunger.

The variables that Loaded on Political Economy are: contested control/occupation of territory (land), influential people (ethnic notables), firearms, relief food, politicization of Pokot-Turkana relations, political/economic wrangles, and revenge.

1) The variables that Loaded on Infrastructure-Insecurity are: elders' meetings, State security personnel (protection of life and property), firearms, greed, distrust, educational facilities, road-communication, and health care facilities. The Rotated Component Matrix below indicates the principal factor loadings on the three factors, namely Core Resources, Political Economy and Infrastructure-Insecurity. The variable famine whose correlation with core resources is .875 is the most highly loaded on factor core resources. Similarly, the variable community influential/notables whose correlation with political economy is .826 is the most highly loaded on factor Political Economy. Likewise, the variable security personnel whose correlation with infrastructure-insecurity is .810 is the most highly loaded on factor Infrastructure-Insecurity.

Table 1. Rotated component matrix (Devine, 2024, p. 116).

Variables	Component		
	1	2	3
Death/loss of livestock	.820		
Poverty	.834		
Water	.737		
Pasture	.731		
Famine	.875		
Hunger	.819		
Politicization of Pokot-Turkana relations		.637	
Relief food		.571	
Wrangles		.659	
Revenge		.776	
Contested territory		.772	
Community influential/notables		.826	
Health care facilities			.790
Learning facilities			.724
Communications			.663
Security Personnel			.810
Elder's meetings			-.453
Firearms			.563
Distrust			.779
Greed			.519

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis, Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Factor Names: 1 = Core resources, 2 = Political Economy, 3 = Infrastructure Insecurity.

The variables in **Table 1** above are the ones found to be significant out of a larger number of variables concerning the testing of the first hypothesis. This hypothesis states that the conflict persists because the underlying causes have not been addressed.

Understanding and addressing these three underlying causes are crucial for both the State, the Catholic Church and other concerned actors in applying appropriate approaches and effective activities respectively towards managing the conflict.

Regarding the second hypothesis that the conflict persists because of ineffective approaches by the State in managing the conflict, there is no evidence in the existing literature to suggest that the State engaged in quantitative empirical research aimed at identifying the underlying causes of the conflict under study. The failure of the State in this regard contributes substantively to the ineffectiveness of the

approaches applied to this conflict by the State. To understand the complexity of approaches contextualized in their description as ineffective, multiple indicators and measures of what the approaches are constituted as a variable were used. In concrete operational terms, approaches designate role performance activities of State functionaries according to State policy in so far as they wholly or partly, directly or indirectly, pertain to recurring incidences of violent conflict between the two communities. The functionaries are: Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs, District Commissioners, District Officers, Provincial Commissioners, Police, Parliamentarians, Councillors, Magistrates and Judges. The role activities of these State functionaries directed at managing the conflict constitute approaches as a variable. Data was collected on various role activities of these functionaries individually and collectively (Devine, 2024).

Testing the second hypothesis involved addressing the issue of conflict on the one hand and management of the conflict by the State on the other hand (Devine, 2024: pp. 174-221). The hypothesis is supported by the data of this research on the grounds that for most of the variables there is a negative correlation between conflict management variables and conflict variables. The conflict is not decreasing despite the State management approaches applied to it; this is verified by the correlations of the research. The hypothesis is supported. Furthermore, the research indicates specific variables where the ineffectiveness is most apparent.

The third hypothesis states that the conflict persists because of ineffective activities of the Catholic Church in managing the conflict. The variables in question, being sets of activities of the Catholic Church that pertain directly or indirectly to the management of the conflict are: preaching (persuading) peace, facilitating peace meetings, promoting harmonious relations fostering tolerance of ethnic differences, assisting the displaced due to interethnic violent conflict, assisting the injured in the interethnic conflict, giving food to the starving, promoting entrepreneurship, sponsoring students, sponsoring children's homes, advocating for citizens' rights or civil liberties, drilling water bore holes, building /sponsoring schools, building/ sponsoring hospital and health clinics, effectiveness of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission(CPJC), Church paying attention to causes of conflict, Church structures and process in relation to interethnic interaction (Devine, 2024: p. 220).

The Catholic Church is generally considered the second most widespread institutional actor in the conflict environment under study providing education, medical care and conflict management interventions, among other social services. The Church complements the role of the State in management of this conflict. While State Security Policy is monopolized—decided upon and designed—by the State, the Church continuously tries to influence it by its public activities concerning the affected communities, including proclamations, on conflict issues. The study focused on the field activities of the church in assessing its contribution in managing the conflict, particularly the Church's Justice and Peace Commission. The Commission coordinates implementation and monitoring of the programs of the

Church.

On the basis of the data analysed the hypothesis that the conflict persists because of ineffective activities by the Catholic Church in managing the conflict, yielded mixed results (Devine, 2024: pp. 213-254). Overall, the activities with respect to conflict management effectiveness were below average as measured by skewness indicated by negative scores. The Church through its Justice and Peace Commission performed well in some activities and not in others. An example where the Church does well is in advocating for citizens' rights and where it has little impact is in its effort to foster tolerance of ethnic differences. However, overall, the Church's limitations as a conflict management actor are explained in terms of inadequate qualified conflict management capacity.

12. Conclusion

This paper set out to explain the persistence of the violent conflict between the Pokot and Turkana communities. Causes of conflicts vary as do their nature and duration. The emergence of conflict connotes the existence of goals that parties to a conflict believe are not compatible. To address a conflict and propose workable policy on the conflict requires that its fundamental causes are properly identified and understood. The paper argued that the factors or forces that help perpetuate its continued persistence must also be identified if the solution is to be found. This is because knowledge of the underlying causes provides an opportunity to adopt appropriate methods and management strategies to end the conflict. The Pokot-Turkana conflict has persisted for over a century, despite the numerous efforts by state agencies, NGOs including the Catholic Church and international bodies to bring the conflict to an end. Quantitative analysis showed that the conflict has metamorphosed over time, with actors in the conflict having also included parties beyond the Turkana and Pokot. The actors include the state, NGOs, the Catholic Church and International Development Agencies and local politicians. This too has complicated the nature of the conflict and the management efforts being used to end the conflict. Indeed, the study found that the capacity of the Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) of the Catholic Church, to effectively contribute to the management of the conflict is inadequate, particularly concerning knowledge competence and technical mastery. The research found that Catholic Church actors involved in the management of the conflict should be given more foundational training in terms of theory-based knowledge, analytical skills, peacebuilding techniques and other relevant specializations. Besides, the Church in general should rethink its activities and re-evaluate her structures vis-à-vis the persistent conflict in question.

As of now the state has tended to adopt reactive as opposed to proactive management approaches and strategies. Again, this is informed by its failure to correctly understand the underlying causes of the conflict and why it is persisting. The strategies used by the state are in actual effect addressing proximate and trigger causes, symptoms or immediate impacts of the conflict rather than the under-

lying causes hence the persistence. The perceptions are routinely distorted through partisan accounts of social-historical experiences of dominant actors inside and outside the government as a function of the interplay between matters economic and matters political structured by matters ethnic.

This research was a cross-sectional survey designed to understand relationships among variables that have to do with the Pokot-Turkana conflict by observing their values during a particular period in time. However, conflict dynamics do evolve over time as do the various actors, issues and interests. The Pokot-Turkana conflict is no exception to these changes and thus ever open to further research on its causes, persistence and the structural interventions needed from conflict management actors.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, P.D.; methodology, P.D. and P.W.; validation, P.D. and P.W.; formal analysis, P.D. and P.W.; resources, P.D. and P.W.; data curation, P.D. and P.W.; writing—original draft preparation, P.D.; writing—reviewing and editing, P.D. and P.W.; supervision, P.W.; project administration, P.D. and P.W. (Both authors have agreed to the published version of the manuscript).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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